VIDES: MLA Volume of Interdisciplinary Essays. Volume 1

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Introduction

Welcome to the first edition of VIDES, the online journal produced by the students of the Department for Continuing Education, University of Oxford, as part of their Master’s degree in Literature and Arts. As the name of the degree suggests, the course covers many different academic fields alongside literature: philosophy, history, material culture, history of art, theology and architecture. The journal features essays that combine these disciplines, enlightening understanding in one field through study of another. This edition brings together essays that explore connections between two artefacts, which for the purposes of this collection can include texts, objects, buildings and images. The authors integrate detailed research with new interpretations, addressing contemporary debates that spill over the confines of a particular period or specialization.

Martha Doerr Toppin looks at an early period of English expansionism, the claiming of ‘Nova Albion’ on the Californian coast by Francis Drake. Toppin’s article compares an early written account with an Elizabethan world map, and examines how both artefacts reinforce England’s claim to an ‘undiscovered’ region of North America. Geoffrey Stone begins his study in Italian antiquity, but concentrates his attention on early nineteenth-century depictions of a Grecian vase and an Etruscan tomb. His article considers how attitudes to the past can change over time, and how this can affect the perceived value of such artefacts.

British responses to other cultures are further examined in Joe Dunnage’s article, looking at the practice of opium smoking. Comparing a nineteenth-century magazine article with a contemporary opium pipe, Dunnage discusses how such artefacts became symbolic not just of an oriental exoticism but of a perceived ‘cultural contagion’. He contrasts this with an examination of the real extent of opium use in Victorian England. Siri Kohl’s article considers two very contrasting British responses to the German composer Richard Wagner. Kohl demonstrates that in Aubrey Beardsley’s The Wagnerites, the composer’s work is portrayed as appealing to a feminine degenerate morality, whereas George Bernard Shaw sees in the Ring Cycle, and especially in the figure of Siegfried, a justification for his own Fabian socialist values. Peter Tuite’s article addresses Matthew Arnold’s perspective on the Irish political situation, and the role of culture as a redemptive, evolutionary force. By examining the ‘Byzantium’ poems of W. B. Yeats, Tuite identifies areas of comparison and disagreement between Yeats’s and Arnold’s approach to Irish culture.

Issues of British political culture are the subject of the next four articles. Paul Stephens offers a close examination of Percy Bysse Shelley’s ‘Men of England &c – A song,’ and interprets its issues of economic and social injustice in comparison with William Cobbett’s ‘Address to the Journeymen Labourers’. David Potter discusses two vivid portrayals of the pre-reformed electoral hustings, in the engravings of William Hogarth and the novels of Anthony Trollope. Despite originating in two different centuries Potter demonstrates a surprising level of commonality between the two. Darren Ormandy’s article is also concerned with nineteenth-century politics, comparing Disraeli’s novel about Chartism, Sybil, with the imagery on a Chartist membership card, arguing that both subjects look to interpretations of English history as justification for their political agenda. Ian Hunter’s article looks at the question of historical justification from the opposite end of the political spectrum, examining how the Victorian monarchy employed neo-medievalist themes in art and sculpture to reinforce Victoria’s royal authority, and to incorporate Prince Albert’s German ‘foreignness’ into a reinvented British cultural heritage.

The next group of essays deals broadly with aspects of gender politics. Philippa Toogood looks at the portrayal of Josephine Butler, in an 1855 bust by pre-Raphaelite sculptor Alexander Munro, and the obituary of Butler which appeared in The Times in 1907. The lacunae left by each of these artefacts are as telling as the statements they deliberately make,
and Toogood's paper explores the legacy of this remarkable campaigner as seen through these very different lenses. Kenya Hunt uses an 1863 photograph by Lady Clementina Hawarden to illustrate Edward William Godwin's 'A Lecture on Dress.' An expression of the Victorian opposition between nostalgia and fast-paced change, the Aesthetic Dress movement deeply influenced today's fashion industry. It gave Victorian women the opportunity to escape the strictures of the corset, and express their individuality in new ways. Karen Walker's paper also involves the concept of nostalgia, this time using George Elgar Hicks's 1857 watercolour The Sinews of Old England as a starting point in an essay which connects discourses of gender and class within the image with those apparent in an advertisement for Cadbury's Cocoa from some thirty years later. By invoking an idealistic, idyllic rural past, both images make statements about desirable standards of behaviour for men and women in the mid- to late-nineteenth century. Anna Attwell focuses on representations of Jane Morris created by her husband, William Morris. She finds correlations between Morris's early poem 'The Defence of Guenevere' and his only surviving oil painting, La Belle Iseult. These both portray Jane as a character in a mythical love triangle, which was echoed in the couple's own lives by Jane's long-standing affair with their mutual friend, artist Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Attwell shows here that Morris found artistic inspiration and ideological contradiction in the situation, and that he was all too aware of the dichotomies in both his public and private lives.

Several of the articles above also link with others which deal with a common theme of aesthetics. David Lamoureux finds a successor to John Ruskin in William Lethaby, whose Eagle Insurance building in Birmingham stands as a bridge between Ruskin's moral criticism of nineteenth-century society and William Morris's socio-economic critique. For Lamoureux, Lethaby's architecture is a statement which combines Ruskinian ideals with modern industry and science. Penelope Fraser stays with Morris, delving deeper into his famous ideologies about art, labour and home decoration, using as her example a terracotta garden pot made by the Compton Potters' Arts Guild. Founded by Mary Watts and funded largely by the artistic career of her husband, George Frederick Watts, the pottery invites an examination of the contradictions between ideology and commercialism, directly applied to the decorative arts of which Morris was such a champion. Moving towards the commercial activities of Morris himself, Elan Preston-Whyte explores decorative minstrel angels on a fourteenth-century crozier and a nineteenth-century stained-glass church window. Linking imagery created centuries apart, this article gives a fine example of the direct inspiration which the late-nineteenth century Arts and Crafts movement took from medieval art. Staying with the theme of applied religious art, two essays tackle the controversial issue of later additions to church interiors. Shanna M. Patton re-examines stylistic and historical parallels between Sir Christopher Wren's original, unexecuted design for the altar and reredos at St Paul's Cathedral with that installed by Thomas Garner in 1888. She finds much common ground between the two, contrary to previous scholarship. Christine Armstrong charts the physical alterations to a Cheshire church which reflected the changing attitudes to worship in the nineteenth century. The influence of the Oxford Movement can be seen in the shifting priorities of clergy and congregation, and the installation of a reredos obscuring part of the east window is an unassailable symbol of the influence of High Church ideals.

All of the essays in the final section compare a literary text with a visual artefact; an image or a building. Anna Trotter's work suggests a single new originator for both of her pieces: The Continence of Scipio by an as yet unknown artist and the play 'Hannibal and Scipio', popularly ascribed to Thomas Nabbes. The essay explores the suggestion of similarity in the painting’s possible presentation of Katherine Manners as Lucretia, as well as Manners’ potential involvement in a printed edition of the play. Similarly, Richard Lamont analyses the interplay between William Kent's illustration of 'Spring' in James Thompson's The Seasons, the grotto in Marlborough, Wiltshire designed by Lady Hertford and the possibility of Lady Hertford herself as muse of both poets and artist. Laura Bouttell's analysis steps away from
muses to the goddess of love, in her examination of two interpretations of the story of ‘Venus and Adonis’ from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. Boutell argues that William Shakespeare’s narrative poem, ‘Venus and Adonis’, and J. M. W. Turner’s painting *Adonis Departing for the Chase*, both adopt a similar narrative focus which rejects that suggested by Ovid’s text.

Two of the other essays in this group consider the impact of specific buildings and an associated text. Virginia Brookes notes the link of John Wesley between the Methodist church in New Inn Hall Street, Oxford and the novel *Adam Bede* by George Eliot. Brookes explores the ‘bold face’ of Methodism depicted through the building of bigger churches to house the escalating congregations and the open air preaching of Dinah Morris, a character in the novel. Where this essay engages with realism in its presentation of Methodism, Jeremy Newton’s article veers in the opposite social direction. Newton’s study of the Banqueting House in Whitehall, designed by Inigo Jones, and Ben Jonson’s ‘Masque of Augurs’, demonstrates the metatheatrical nature of a play which was specifically designed for this newly built space. Elaine Hernen’s paper departs from the idea of a building as artefact, analysing instead the importance of the visiting card in light of Oscar Wilde’s *De Profundis*. Hernen shows how high society at this time was preoccupied with categorisation, with the visiting card acting as a fragment of the person it represented.

These comparative studies of artefacts demonstrate how interdisciplinary analysis between often quite discrete fields of academic research is able to highlight connections and develop greater understanding, shedding light on aspects of both that have hitherto remained obscured. Many of the subjects investigated will be examined in greater depth, as part of the Master’s dissertations which will conclude the degree in Literature and Arts, and in some cases will continue into areas of doctoral research.
Abstract: In this essay I will examine two accounts of Sir Francis Drake’s acquisition of Nova Albion for England. I will compare and contrast a text, ‘The famous voyage of Sir Francis Drake’ from Richard Hakluyt’s *Principall navigations, voiages and discoveries of the English nation* (1589) and a map, Jodocus Hondius’s *Vera Totius Expeditionis Navticae* (c. 1590-1595). I will explore the role of Nova Albion itself, the two depictions, the motivating impulses of Hakluyt and Hondius, and the place of all of this in the political, commercial, and religious ambitions and wars of the late sixteenth century.

One June or July day during the summer of 1579, Francis Drake, not yet Sir Francis, accepted in the name of England and Queen Elizabeth the free gift of an undefined extent of what is now California from the Coast Miwok Indians, whose ancestors had lived there for thousands of years. The incident was only acknowledged in print for the first time a decade later in Richard Hakluyt’s *The principall navigations, voiages and discoveries of the English nation*, 1589.¹ The incident was illustrated in Jodocus Hondius’s engraved map *Vera Totius Expeditionis Navticae*, prepared in London c.1590, issued in both London and Amsterdam, c.1590-1595.² In the ten years while all mention of Nova Albion, officially a state secret, was suppressed, Nova Albion acquired a symbolic significance for the promoters of an expansionist policy that, they claimed, would guarantee to England her rightful place among the powers in the New World. Narrative and map are alike in the story they tell; on first glance they could not seem further apart in mood. This essay will follow the path from event to the two recordings of the event to its apotheosis as herald for a new imperial England.

Richard Hakluyt (1552?-1616), MA Christ Church, Oxford, 1577, ordained priest, lecturer on maps, globes, and navigational instruments, chaplain to Sir Edward Stafford in Paris 1683-8, and advocate for English commercial and colonial expansion, was a forager and collector of every scrap of information on English discoveries and naval triumphs from the mythical past to the most recent. His 825-page folio volume had already been licensed for publication and prepared for binding and distribution when six unnumbered leaves were inserted between pages 643 and 644. (Figure 1) Folded in folio, the six leaves became the twelve pages entitled ‘The famous voyage of Sir Francis Drake into the South Sea, and there once about the whole Globe of the Earth.’ [‘The famous voyage’.] A note was added at the bottom of the title page: ‘Whereto is added the last most renowned English Navigation round the whole Globe of the Earth.’ (Figure 2) Printed on the ‘pot’ paper commonly used by the Queen’s printer, with woodcut designs for occasional decoration, an estimated 1000 copies were sold at prices ranging from 9s (probably unbound) to 10s or 11s. One hundred and thirty copies survive.³

Figure 1: *The principall navigations, voyages and discoveries of the English nation, 1589.* This item is reproduced by permission of The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

Figure 2: Title page from Richard Hakluyt, *The principall navigations, voyages, and discoveries of the English nation, 1589.* This item is reproduced by permission of The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.
Jodocus Hondius of Ghent (1563-1612) arrived in London in 1583, a Protestant refugee from religious war and oppression in Flanders. His copperplate engraved map shows two hemispheres, each 28cm in diameter, on a sheet of paper measuring 40cm x 56cm. The mid-ocean intersections of the heavily drawn equator and meridians command the reader’s eyes. The oceans and coasts are the important points on this map, not the landmasses, which are split and shoved apart. The map is signed, but bears no date or place of publication. It is thought to have been prepared in London and printed first in London and then, following Hondius’s return to the Netherlands in 1593, in Amsterdam. Six copies survive.4 (Figure 3)

![Map](image)

Figure 3: Map. Jodocus Hondius, *Vera Totius Expeditionis Nauticae*, (London and Amsterdam: 1590-1595). Courtesy of the Bancroft Library University of California, Berkeley

The first half of Hakluyt’s ‘The famous voyage’ is a brisk account, one aimed to appeal alike to armchair travellers seeking vicarious adventure and improved geographic knowledge, and to alert investors seeking possible future enterprises. Dates, degrees of latitude are frequently cited, but no map accompanies the text, leaving the sixteenth or seventeenth century readers to refer to one of the popular new atlases coming out of Antwerp or to paint scenes in their imaginations: harbours and anchorages where the fleet took on water and provisions, islands described as

rich and fruitful, a very faire and pleasant country with exceeding fruitful soil, very ripe and sweet grapes, goats and wild hens a great store of large and mightie deer, [seals] whereof we slew to the number of 200-300 in the space of an hower, a great store of foule which could not flie, of the bignesse of geese, whereof we killed in lesse then one day 3000, and victualed ourselves thoroughly therewith.  

Increasingly the account lists the names of ports ransacked of their charts and maps and chalices, of shanghaied Spanish and Portuguese pilots taken on board, of ships commandeered and relieved of their cargoes:

a good store of wine, 25000 pezos of very pure and fine gold, 13 barres of silver which weighed 4000 duckets Spanish, linen cloth and fine China dishes of white earth, and a great store of China silks, of all which things wee tooke as we listed.

Hondius’s map is an extravagantly decorated representation of the same voyage, together with that of Thomas Cavendish, the second Englishman to circumnavigate the globe (1586-1588), framed in scrolls, swirls, strange birds, exotic plants, and winged cherubs ascending the bulging curve of the globe with the aid of stilts. Provided that one knows where to begin in England, one can follow the stippled track of Drake’s five ships that seem to bob in full-sail south along the coast of Africa, across the Mar del Nors, south-west along the coast of Brasilia, through the Straits of Magellan, the fleet of five now reduced to three, and then to one, (the Marigold having been lost in a storm and the Elizabeth having returned to England). The Golden Hind continues north along the coast of Peru to latitudes north of Nova Albion, then across the great ocean through the archipelagos of the Moluccas, across the Mar de India, rounding Cape Horn, heading north and sailing well out to sea to elude the Spanish, before finally reaching England and home.

The second half of ‘The famous voyage’ describes Drake’s return to England, during which time he scored three diplomatic triumphs – the acquisition of some part of western North America, the establishing of cordial relations and trade initiatives with the Sultan of Ternate in the Moluccas and the rajas of Java. He and his men had also survived one near disaster – the grounding of the Golden Hind on a reef in the Celebes Sea. Hondius shows the same four events in the insets at the corners of his map. Why was Nova Albion, faded from modern memory, awarded such prominence in these, two of the earliest accounts of the voyage?

By the spring of 1579, the Golden Hind lay heavy in the water and Drake determined to set a course for home. He would not return by the Strait of Magellan; the Spanish, expecting him to return the way he came, would be lying in wait. Unless he chanced upon the yet-undiscovered Northwest Passage, he would have to return by way of the Moluccas. Before he attempted the Pacific crossing, the now-leaking Golden Hind would have to be scraped, caulked, and made fit for the long voyage home. A suitable and safe anchorage was found, ‘a fair and good Baye’ somewhere on, or very near, the Point Reyes peninsula, a splintering shard on the coastline some thirty miles north of San Francisco, the creation of earthquakes and grinding tectonic plates. In 1579, as for thousands of years, Point Reyes was the home of the Coast Miwok Indians, who lived without metals or writing, traded the shell and feather ornaments they made for the obsidian of tribes further inland, and almost certainly had never seen a European. Drake and his men were with the Coast Miwok from 17th June to 23rd July 1579, roughly the half-way mark of their three-year journey.

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5 ‘The famous voyage’. All twelve pages of ‘The famous voyage’ are unnumbered.
6 ‘The famous voyage’
According to ‘The famous voyage’, Drake and his men and the Miwok entered into cautious diplomacy. They exchanged presents: Drake ‘liberally bestowed on them necessarie things to cover their nakednes, whereupon they supposed us to be gods, and would not be perswaded to the contrarie: the presents which they sent to our Generall, were feathers, and cals [cauls] of networke.’ In language that might apply to an embassy to the English court, ‘The famous voyage’ describes the Miwok coming to Drake’s camp with guards and ambassadors, their king escorted by a sceptre-bearer carrying crowns. ‘The crowne was made of knit worke wrought artificially with feathers of divers colours: the chains were made of a bonie substance.’ The sceptre-bearer sang and danced, soon joined by the king and all the Miwok.  

They made signes to our General to sit downe, to whom the King, and divers others made several orations, or rather supplications, that he would take their province & kingdom into his hand, and become their King, making signes that they would resigne unto him their right and title of the whole land, and become his subjects. In which, to persuade us the better, the King and the rest, with one consent and with great reverence, joyfully singing a song, did set the crowne upon his head, inriched his necke with all their chaines, and offered unto him many other things, honouring him by the name of Hioh, adding thereunto as it seemed, a signe of triumph: which our Generall thought not meete to reject, because he knewe not what honour and profite it might be to our Countrie. Wherefore in the name, and to the use of her Maiestie, he took the scepter, crowne, and dignitie of the said Countrie into his hands, wishing that the riches & treasure thereof might so conveniently be transported to the inriching of her kingdome at home, as it aboundeth in the same.  

To the Miwok, ornaments of feathers and shells conveyed status. Whether their cauls and chains represented the same authority as the golden crowns and jeweled regalia of the courts of Europe was not entertained by Drake or his men. A claim in America would be seen in both England and Spain as a challenge, a taunt, a slap in the face of Spanish imperial pretensions. Drake seized the opportunity, naming the land Nova Albion, ‘in respect of the white bankes and cliffs, which lie to wards the sea: and [..] because it might have some affinitie with our Country in name, which sometime was so called.’ Before setting off on the homeward journey across the Pacific, Drake registered England’s claim on a metal plate which he nailed upon a faire great poste, whereupon was ingrauen her Maiesties name, the day and yeere of our arrival there, with the free giving up of the province and people into her Maiesties hands, together with her highness picture and armes, in a peec of siece pence of currant English moneye under the plate, where under was also written the name of our Generall.  

On Hondius’s map Drake’s encounter with the Miwok is illustrated in the inset in the upper-left corner. The Golden Hind rides at anchor in Portus Novae Albionis. A small crowd of the Miwok approach, tearing their faces with their fingernails until the blood runs, which, the caption explains, was evidence that the Miwok recognized Drake and his men as gods. A

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7 ‘The famous voyage’
8 ‘The famous voyage’
9 ‘The famous voyage’
10 ‘The famous voyage’
stockade with rows of neat houses is shown at the top. Here Drake was crowned twice, the caption reads, and the people wept when he departed.

In England a year and a half later, Drake’s return was celebrated. Drake’s ‘name and fame became admirable in all places, the people swarming daily in the streets to behold him, vowing hatred of all that durst mislike him.’¹¹ Elizabeth ordered the Golden Hind to Deptford, where she knighted Drake on 1st April 1581, passing her sword to the French Ambassador to perform the accolade, thereby implicating France in a blatant show of defiance against Spain.

The details of Drake’s voyage were suppressed. That Drake had entered the South Sea and raided ports on the coast of Spanish America could not be denied. The extent of his encroachment into ‘the Spanish lake’, a true accounting of his staggering booty, details of his encounters and discoveries, the fact of the circumnavigation itself was all information too valuable to be allowed to fall into Spanish hands. That the investors in Drake’s voyage, who had profited enormously from it, included some of the most powerful figures at court, the Earl of Leicester and Sir Francis Walsingham among them, would add to the embarrassment.¹² Drake’s sailors were pledged ‘not to disclose the route they took, on pain of death,’ wrote the Spanish ambassador, Bernadino de Mendoza, to Philip II.¹³ Drake himself claimed to have been at Lima only the previous year (he was in fact in mid-Pacific), leading Mendoza, who referred to Drake as ‘the master thief of the unknown world,’ to conclude that he had returned to England by way of the Strait of Magellan. Cartographer Gerard Mercator speculated that Drake ‘must have found very wealthy regions never yet discovered by Europeans’ and returned by the Northeast Passage which, Mercator believed, skirted the northern coast of Russia.¹⁴ So effective was the secrecy in England that four years after Drake’s return the English ambassador in Paris observed that the French knew more about Drake’s activities than he did.¹⁵

In his first interview with the Queen, Drake handed over his log, ‘a diary of everything that happened during the three years he was away’, and a very large map.¹⁶ Drake’s log and illustrated journal disappeared. The map, known as the Queen’s Map, remained on limited view, until it too disappeared, thought to have been burnt in the fires that destroyed Whitehall Palace in 1698. Samuel Purchas saw it in 1625 still hanging ‘in His Majesties Gallerie at Whitehall neere the Privie Chamber’ and described it in such detail that it is possible to establish three other maps as derivatives of it.¹⁷ The engraved map by Jodocus Hondius is one of these three. Drake retained for himself the journal kept by Francis Fletcher, his chaplain on the voyage, which has been identified as one of Hakluyt’s sources for ‘The famous voyage.’¹⁸ Other contemporary accounts, English and Spanish, are scattered in archives in England and Spain.

One of the people who chafed under the censor’s restrictions was Richard Hakluyt. Drake’s circumnavigation should be proclaimed, not censored, he believed. Hakluyt preached a vision of England as the equal of any other nation, no matter how mighty or overbearing, in a future where King Philip, ‘our mortalle enemye’, had been properly humbled and cut down

¹⁵ Wallis in Thrower, p. 139.
¹⁶ Mendoza to Philip II, 16 October 1580.
to size. Driven by the ‘ardent love of my country,’ Hakluyt urged commercial and colonial expansion.

I maruaille not a little [he wrote in 1582] [...] that since the first discoverie of America (which is nowe full fourscore and tenne yeeres), after so great conquests and plantings of the Spaniardes and Portingales there, that wee of Englane could neuer haue the grace to set fast footing in such fertill and termperate places as are left as yet vnpossessed of them. [...] I conceiue great hope that the time approacheth and noew is, that we of Englane may share and part stakes (if we will our selues) [...] in part of America and other regions, as yet vndiscouered.

Before the decade was out, he had pushed the limits of censorship, publishing two maps, one noting English explorations in western North America, the other clearly pointing ‘Nova Albion, discovered by the English in 1580.’ In the wake of the defeat of the Armada and Cavendish’s return from his voyage of circumnavigation, restrictions relaxed to allow the first published account of Drake’s circumnavigation and the claim to Nova Albion. Hakluyt’s ‘The famous voyage’ describes the voyage from the fleet’s departure on 15 November 1577, to Drake’s return on 26 September 1580. To the bare, bald facts of almost three years at sea Hakluyt added the lure of possible future enterprise and profit. The account of Nova Albion concludes: ‘There is no part of the earth here to be taken up, wherein there is not a reasonable quantitie of gold or silver.’

Jodocus Hondius of Ghent had arrived in London, age 20, already with an established reputation as a master engraver of maps and charts. A staunch protestant, he had declined commissions offered by the duke of Parma, commander of the Spanish forces in Flanders, and fled to England. Setting himself up in Southwark, he published nautical charts and maps of new trade routes and discoveries and ‘associated with prominent English seamen,’ including Drake, Cavendish, and Sir Walter Raleigh. He was commissioned to engrave the copper plates for the first globes published in England. Engraved portraits of Drake and Queen Elizabeth are ascribed to him. And he published the third of the maps known to have been derived from the Queen’s Map.

The earliest of the three derivatives exists in manuscript; the second was probably published in France and Antwerp. Hondius’s was the first map of Drake’s voyage to be printed and published in England. All three maps identify Nova Albion across a generous span of western North America. Hondius’s alone includes an inset featuring Drake’s coronation in Nova Albion.

Compared with the direct telling of Hakluyt’s ‘The famous voyage’, Hondius’s map is exuberantly flamboyant. No mere geography lesson, its celebration of Drake’s voyage is proclaimed in every iota of space on the page. In the lower left corner the Golden Hind is

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21 Map ‘De Orbe Novo’ in Thrower, p. 141. ‘Nova Albion, Inventa An 1580. ab Anglis.’
22 ‘The famous voyage’.
23 Quinn, in Hakluyt Handbook, ii, pp. 476-496.
25 Wallis, The Voyage of Sir Francis Drake, pp. 7-10, 19-21. The earliest, manuscript map, the ‘Drake-Mellon map’, is in the Paul Mellon Collection of the Yale Center for British Art, Yale University. Copies of the second derivative of the Queen’s Map by Nicola Van Sype can be found in the British Library and the Library of Congress, Washington D.C.
shown welcomed into harbour at Ternate in the Moluccas, towed by four canoes so finely
drawn that only with a magnifying glass can one count the heads of the oarsmen and their
oars, or pick out Drake’s trumpeter and drummer on the deck, or make out the pattern of the
planking on the hull. In the lower right inset the *Golden Hind* is shown very much on her
side, when, having struck a reef, she was grounded for twenty hours in the open sea. One can
make out the jettisoned barrels of victuals and cloves being carried off by the waves. These
insets show the honours bestowed by powerful princes upon Drake, and by extension the
Queen and all England – by the Miwok who crowned him their king, by the Sultan of Ternate
and the rajas of Java who seemed hopeful of trade, and by God, who by rescuing the *Golden
Hind* from the reef, signalled his indisputable blessing on the entire venture. The banner
headline tells of Drake’s return to Plymouth ‘in great glory and with the admiration of all’.
The Queen is portrayed wearing a headdress of conch shells under the royal coat of arms and
the motto, *Dieu et mon droit*.

In hindsight, of all of the events described in ‘The famous voyage’ or portrayed in the
insets in the Hondius map, the encounter with the Miwok was the most innocuous. No
English colony, trading station, or military outpost was ever attempted at Nova Albion. Nova
Albion offered nothing beyond a new name on the map. That alone was enough, proclaiming
England to have a rightful stake in America equal with Spain and France. Separately or
together, ‘The famous voyage’ in Hakluyt’s *Principall navigations* and Hondius’s map give
witness to that moment when England took stock of her present state and launched into the
world of empire.

![NPS Photo](www.nps.gov)

Figure 4: Drake’s Bay, Point Reyes National Seashore. National Park Service. [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov)

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In memory: Albert E. Doerr.
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Primary Sources


Map


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**Unpublished papers**

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From Grave Goods to Democratic Ownership, an Engraving of the Trebbia Tomb and the Hamilton Vase

Geoffrey Stone

Abstract: This paper provides a case study of two objects, an ancient vase and an engraving illustrating the opening of an Etruscan tomb dating to the third century BCE. Both illustrate the reception of antiquity into the modern world and, in parallel, this essay contextualises them. Grave goods in the Trebbia Tomb date from circa 420 BCE while the Hamilton Vase was created some 75 years later. The creation of the artefacts and the nexus of trade and culture between the Greeks and Etruscans are examined. The means of accessing vases from antiquity in the eighteenth century CE is explored, whilst a detailed examination of the two artefacts demonstrates their symbiosis. It concludes by exploring the changing values ascribed to the Hamilton Vase and the Trebbia tomb through a 2,400 year period.

The art historian, Sir E.H. Gombrich (1901-2001) wrote that:

We cannot write the history of art without taking account of the changing functions assigned to the visual image in different societies and different cultures.¹

This paper considers Gombrich’s observation in relation to the two artefacts. It is multidisciplinary and, whilst retaining the focus on the two objects shown as Figures 1 and 2, it encompasses ancient technology, art history, religious belief, the eighteenth-century Enlightenment and the rise of the democratic museum.

Figure 1: (above) The engraving of the opening of an Etruscan tomb at Trebbia from d’Hancarville’s “Antiquités étrusques, grecques et romaines” (1766–67). Photo: Author.

Figure 2: (right) The Hamilton Vase in the British Museum. Photo: Author.

¹ E.H. Gombrich quoted in T. Rasmussen and N. Spivey (Eds.) Looking at Greek Vases (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) p.133.
There are interlocking characteristics between the two artefacts. The engraving illustrates the emptying of an ancient tomb while the Hamilton Vase is a product of such activity. Greek craftsmanship and Etruscan use of it demonstrate a syncretistic relationship between two cultures. It was Sir William Hamilton, Minister Plenipotentiary to the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, 1764-1800, who was responsible for making both artefacts known, and one of the first great vase collectors. The engraving romanticises the random removal of grave goods in this period, while the Hamilton Vase itself offers the viewer an opportunity to examine closely both skills of craftsmanship and the iconography of a magnificent South Italian vase. Both are illustrated in D’Hancarville’s Antiquités étrusques, grecques et romains tirées du cabinet de M. Hamilton, (AEGR), a work commissioned by Hamilton to publicise his vase collection. The influence of this work was enormous, consulted by contemporary European aristocrats and scholars. Personal failure to meet publication costs was a significant reason for Hamilton selling the entire first vase collection to the British Museum.

Along with hundreds of others, both the Trebbia Tomb (Figure 1) and the Hamilton Vase (Figure 2) were found in the Naples area in the early eighteenth century, a period before the modern discipline of archaeology was established. For example J.J.Winckelmann (1717-1768) pilloried R.J. Alcubierre, chief archaeologist for the Vesuvius area from 1738-1780, as being ‘as familiar with antiquity as the moon is with lobsters’. Alcubierre was an army captain with a background in mining, and his methods involved the rapid removal of infilling material and the removal of artefacts without significant recording. In parallel, there was clandestine anarchic robbing of thousands of Etruscan tombs. Such was the milieu from which the Trebbia tomb and Hamilton Vase emerged.

Figures 3,4,5: The cork model of the Trebbia Tomb illustrates (Figure 3) the shape of the tomb, (Figure 4) the grave goods (Figure 5) and the wall paintings inside the tomb. Photos: Author.

The Trebbia Tomb displays typical Etruscan features (Figure 1 and Figures 3, 4, 5). As an ethnic group they were easily distinguished by their language, unique written script and culture. To a degree Etruscan society was dominated by religion. Their gods communicated with them through natural events. Not unnaturally this led to a preoccupation with death and its consequences, rendering funerary customs matters of great significance. The living feared that, if denied funeral rites, the dead might become malevolent. Consequently, tombs were sturdily constructed so that the deceased might find comfort in their last dwelling and enjoy the afterlife. They were furnished and decorated with an array of grave goods. Vases are a common feature, frequently decorated with lively scenes.

2 From a lower diplomatic rank, he was promoted to this position in 1767.
5 For further information on Etruscan religion see http://www.mysteriousetruscans.com/religion.html
Although absent from the Trebbia Tomb, sculpture is found in some Etruscan tombs as grave goods, sometimes depicting couples reclining at a symposium. Wall paintings helped to evoke a *joie de vivre* which, in terms of the Etruscan morbid obsession with death, appears curious. Their culture assimilated aspects from the Italian Greek colonies. Homeric funeral rites were respected by them, whilst their guardian of the underworld, the fearsome Charun is sometimes painted with a blue hue to evoke decomposing flesh.

Greek and Etruscan cultural intercourse was not fully understood in the eighteenth Century. The theory of a significant Greek influence met with hostility from the local population, aligned to the prevailing view of the Etruscans as an autochthonous civilisation from whom the Italians partially descended. It proved unsustainable. J.J. Winckelmann, author of the highly influential *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums* (1764) was in contact with Hamilton and viewed his collection of vases, including the Hamilton Vase. Subsequently he accepted that the ‘Etruscan’ vases were Greek in origin. As Figure 5 shows, the walls of Etruscan tombs were frequently painted. Hamilton observed:

> The style of the paintings so closely corresponds to the figures on the vases that it cannot be doubted that they were executed by the same people as fabricated them and I have reason to believe that they were Greek and not Etruscan.

The Trebbia Tomb demonstrates Hamilton’s enthusiasm for both excavation and collecting. Trebbia is in the mountains some ten miles above Capua. It took considerable stamina to reach the spot, located no doubt through local knowledge. D’Hancarville described it as being accessed by ‘untrodden and toilsome paths’. It is an idyllic setting with the environment and secrecy of the enterprise engendering early romantic notions, even in the period of the Enlightenment. Once the tomb was opened, it was apparently sketched *in situ* by Hamilton, worked up professionally by Pietro Bracci, then engraved by Carlo Nolli for publication in AEGR (Vol.2). The engraving itself adds detail to Hamilton’s field sketch, that would fit with the later Romantic movement. Figure 1 conjures a timeless, tranquil scene. Note the overhanging foliage, the solid masonry block leaning, as if for countless ages, against the tomb’s side. The shaft of light penetrates 2200 years of darkness inside the tomb, revealing the mortal remains of an Etruscan notable.

Reality was different. Hamilton’s labourers had hacked out the masonry block, doubtless with noise and mess. In consequence the crude insertion of the tree trunk was essential to prevent the collapse of the entire edifice. It is in keeping with the mores of the age that scenes should be ‘improved’. The engraver has generated a timeless serenity. The British Museum has partially reconstructed the grave goods within the tomb from items included in Hamilton’s first vase collection, using his sketch and the cork model. (Figures 4, 5, 6) Both items derive from the excavation itself.

The finely articulated skeleton was reduced to dust on exposure to the elements (Figure 1). Behind the head can just be discerned a fan of six metal rods and two candelabra, presumably items with religious significance. The grave goods ensure a pleasant afterlife. The strigil points to a healthy athletic life. A bronze wine strainer, the bell krater and the two handled ceramic jug are all associated with the symposium, good conversation and alcohol-

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6 A sculpture showing a couple reclining in an Etruscan tomb. [http://www.historyfiles.co.uk/kinglistsEurope/ItalyEtruscans.htm](http://www.historyfiles.co.uk/kinglistsEurope/ItalyEtruscans.htm)


9 Homer, *The Iliad*, Chapter 23.


fuelled entertainment with a hint of eroticism. Such artefacts and wall painting leads to the conclusion that the Etruscan after-life was perceived as lively.

Both the model and the engraving have aided modern vase scholars, who are now able to determine the geographical area in which a vase was created and, in many cases, to identify individual painters by their style. Using the Trebbia Tomb engraving and Hamilton’s first collection, modern vase scholarship has given the red figure bell krater from the tomb a terminus post quem of 440-420 BCE (see below). It is attributed to the Lykaon Painter, active between 440-420 BCE. The krater is of Athenian provenance, not South Italian, and may have been produced specifically for the Etruscan market. This vase shows a symposium in progress, a common motif for Etruscan tombs. The walls of the Trebbia Tomb were painted in the style used by Greek artists in Magna Graecia. (See Figure 5)

There are contradictions within Hamilton. Tomb robbing was only one of the ways by which he acquired vases. Existing collections might be purchased. Antiquarian dealers held stocks of vases for sale. His collecting appetite was voracious. Undoubtedly he was a dealer in antiquities, even if an exalted one, but of himself he commented that ‘I am delicate as to the manner of collecting as I should not like to be looked on as a trader’ Again he showed himself sensitive to the consequences of the mass removal of artefacts from antiquity, an activity into which he wholeheartedly immersed himself commented ‘I think Italy is in great danger of being completely plundered and ruined.

Even if the purchase of vases from existing collections and dealers was legitimate, there were laws in place that prevented their export. Hamilton seems not to have allowed legalities to thwart his collecting instinct. Within two years of his arrival he had secured a large vase collection. Such is the context in which the Hamilton Vase reappeared after 2,300 years of darkness.

Figure 6: Objects from the Trebbia Tomb in the British Museum. Photo: British Museum, with permission.

The focus now shifts to the Hamilton Vase itself which most probably emerged from an Etruscan tomb, now unknown. It is painted in the South Italian mode and decorated by the Baltimore Painter, so called because the painter’s ‘name vase’ is in the Baltimore Museum.

Working in about 325 BCE, most of his vases that have been discovered are from the Apulia district, near Canosa. He painted several large vessels often with funerary scenes (as with the Hamilton Vase). Some 90 centimetres tall, it has on one side a naiskos, (a small temple), with a figure inside it displayed as the heroic nude warrior, in this case a

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12 BM. GR. 1772.3. Beazley ARV. 1045.8.
14 Ibid, P.478.
15 A. Trendall, Red Figure Vases of South Italy and Sicily. (London, Thames & Hudson, 1989) p. 97.
16 http://art.thewalters.org/detail/30814/volute-krater/
cavalryman. It is a Classical Greek trope. His armour rests behind his muscular form (Figure 7).

Figures 7 & 8: The Hamilton Vase. Figure 7 shows the front of the vase, Figure 8 the reverse. Photo: Author.

That the figure is white as distinct from the red of all others depicted may mark out the dead from the living. Architecturally, the naîskos is a Classical Greek structure with its Doric columns, pediment and acroteria. The horse behind the warrior is a declaration of status. The grave stele on the reverse (Figure 8) is an icon replicated frequently in both sculpture and art from the Greek mainland. 17

Figure 9: Images within the volutes of the Hamilton Vase, perhaps giving it apotropaic power.

Some of the iconography is open to debate. What of the woman’s head on the neck of the vase? (See Figure 1) South Italian Greek pottery has the ‘lady of fashion’ icon repeated ad nauseam. (See Figure 10). Perhaps it is nothing more than a stylistic notion. It is a common feature on many vases of this kind.

Figure 10: The stereotypical ‘lady of fashion’ found on large numbers of South Italian vases. Photo: Pyxis from author’s collection.

In AEGR, the Hamilton Vase is lavishly displayed in a two-dimensional patterned format.\textsuperscript{18} There is also a black and white line drawing offering the viewer some concept of the original vase, together with exact measurements. The main illustrations of the vase transformed it into flat, two-dimensional patterns (Figures 11 and 12). It remains a thing of beauty but has become a different object. Now it is a pattern to be adapted wherever its design might be of use. The female face above the naïskos is given a huge four-sided spread (Figure 12). The printing technique gives the appearance of a heavy gouache overlay. It renders the face softer, while the hair colouring is changed from the original. Likewise, the foliage surrounding the head has been much simplified. Such ‘improvements’ were within the norm of eighteenth century practice.

Figure 11: The Hamilton Vase extruded as a two dimensional object in Volume 1 of AEGR. Photo: Author.

Figure 12: The extruded, but altered, face on the neck of the Hamilton Vase in AEGR Volume 1. Photo: Author.

\textsuperscript{18} AEGR Vol 1. Plates 52-56.
In common with most South Italian vases, the Hamilton Vase shows a heavy dependence on the Athenian and Corinthian tradition of vase production. (Figure 13). The rim of the vessel illustrates this. The top frieze is of dentils, a design used in both pottery and sculpture. Below it, a row of waves is native to Athenian vase design. The third frieze is one of circular, almost floral designs, developed from the Corinthian tradition. The Hamilton Vase is covered with decoration, detracting from an overall elegance in some eyes, whereas the Athenian originals were far more sparing in detail allowing a greater focus on a central image.

Wedgwood cannot be ignored in this context. Long in communication with Hamilton whom he described as ‘legislator of taste’, he was thrilled with the imagery and design within AEGR, so appropriate to the age of classical revival. Many of his vase designs show dependence on it. Wedgwood knew the Hamilton vase, both in AEGR and as displayed in the British Museum.

Hamilton’s sale of his first vase collection to the British Museum in 1772, purchased for £8,400, through a Parliamentary grant, was the start of the Museum’s antiquities collection. Hamilton became a trustee of the Museum and was able to have the vase collection in well lit spaces and viewed at eye level. This was to be the final destination for both the Hamilton Vase and the cork model of the Trebbia Tomb.

The Trebbia tomb was built and furnished to please and appease the departed. Later, those revealing the tomb site to Hamilton were driven by financial motives. Hamilton then removed the grave goods, now considered aesthetically important. In the eighteenth century, apart from their wall paintings, the tombs themselves were seen as of little consequence. To contemporary Etruscan scholars, they are of the greatest value as primary evidence.

Public perception of the Hamilton Vase has varied enormously over time. The Baltimore Painter of 325 BCE created it as yet another object for the Etruscan market. The motive was profit. Its purchasers gave it a sacred significance within a grave. Some 2100 years later it re-emerged through persons unknown, with financial gain as the likely motive. Once in Hamilton’s hands, its new role was as an object of aesthetic worth. Hamilton perceived the vase, *inter alia*, as exemplar material for design, where it became a two dimensional pattern in Volume 1 of AEGR.

After Hamilton’s collection was sold to the British Museum, the Hamilton Vase, the engraving in AEGR and the cork model of the Trebbia Tomb together with its actual contents, became objects belonging to the nation. The Museum has remained true to its

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19 It is currently exhibited in BM, Room 73, ‘The Greeks in Italy’.
20 It can be viewed in the Enlightenment Gallery of the BM.
founding objective in 1759, of making cultural material open to ‘All persons desirous of seeing and viewing the collections and for the improvement, knowledge and information of all persons.’ The artefacts considered continue to be available, free of charge, to all who wish to view and consider their meaning.

This paper has identified the two artefacts as having been given six separate perceptions by different generations over a 2400 period. They illuminate Gombrich’s contention that artefacts change value according to the mores of those considering them, raising the question of whether human values can ever be absolute.

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An Opium Pipe in a Collection and in Journalism: A comparison between a Chando Pipe from the Bragge Collection at the British Museum and ‘East London Opium Smokers’, London Society: An illustrated magazine of light and amusing literature for the hours of relaxation, Jan 1862-Dec 1886 (July 1868)

Joe Dunnage

Abstract: Opium in Victorian English literature has long been associated with mystery and Eastern danger. From Wilkie Collins’ The Moonstone, through to Oscar Wilde’s The Picture of Dorian Gray, Oriental characters have handed out doses of oblivion to customers in East London. But, whilst opium’s power to transform and affect the body and mind of its users has garnered ‘a strange yearning’ and ‘superstitious dread’ from its Victorian audience, its appreciation is demonstrated through a continued desire to read and observe examples of it in collections and periodicals. In this essay I will compare a Chando Pipe from the Bragge Collection at the British Museum and the article ‘East London Opium Smokers’ (July 1868), noting how both the public and collectors’ enthusiasm for opium was not limited to the drug’s effects, but also the tools and craftsmanship of the pipes that facilitated its usage.

The opening paragraph of ‘East London Opium Smokers’, an article from London Society, printed in July 1868, suggests that, ‘[t]here exists a strange yearning to make more intimate acquaintance with the miraculous drug concerning which there is so much whispering, and at the same time a superstitious dread of approaching it.’ This intrigue highlighted by the anonymous author of this piece is, mirrored, to a certain extent, by a journalistic story printed two years later on 16th December 1870 in the Birmingham Daily Post where the writer exclaims, ‘On Wednesday night, some hundreds of people gazed with wonder on the magnificent collection of pipes of all nations collected during many years by Mr. Wm. Bragge, F.S.A.’ Both examples encapsulate a public interest in a recurrent theme across press and literature, in which the exotic paraphernalia for using tobacco and narcotics is exaggerated to a novel excitement for the unseen whilst at the same time cementing attitudes that these tools are ‘other’ and not English. As Barry Milligan highlights, ‘the lure of opium smoking for the uninitiated thus has nothing to do with a developed taste for the practice...it is instead due to the appeal of the exotic inherent in this purportedly Oriental luxury.’ In the periodical press, newspapers and literature, the exotic appeal of opium about which people enjoyed reading, generally focused on a relatively small area of London’s and Liverpool’s docks. Despite this restricted influence, individuals such as Reverend George Piercy reflected a national fear of Chinese contagion and unchristian behaviour. If the fear underlying this reaction was concerned with Chinese assimilation into British culture, then the exotic tool facilitating this contagion was the opium pipe. In this comparison I will assess the strange device capable of raising this curiosity and alarm, and differentiating opium from its use as an

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1 ‘East London Opium Smokers’, London Society: An illustrated magazine of light and amusing literature for the hours of relaxation, Jan 1862-Dec 1886 (July 1868) p.68.
2 Ibid, p.68
4 Milligan, Barry, Pleasure and Pains; Opium and the Orient in 19th-Century British Culture (London: The University Press of Virginia, 1995) p.100
everyday medicine for pain relief, to that of producing exotic oblivion. Taking an example of the remains of a Qing dynasty opium pipe from the collection of Mr. William Bragg (see Figure 1), and comparing it to the description of the pipe in ‘East London Opium Smokers’ I will explore how in each example the pipe serves as a gateway into, not only the apparent world of Lascars and bedraggled Chinamen, but through ornate designs and craftsmanship a more refined appeal of a romanticised Orient.

Figure 1: William Bragge ‘Chando’ Pipe

There are obviously several distinctions to be made between the two examples chosen for comparison, particularly the differing purposes of the two, one of utility and one of ornament. William Bragge, typifies the nineteenth-century collector: his career as a civil engineer and steel manufacturer, facilitating his compilations. He gathered a wide range of objects, arguably his two most famous collections being his 1500 volume anthology on the Spanish writer Cervantes, which was donated to the Birmingham Free Library in 1879, and his gathering of 13,000 pipes and other smoking paraphernalia and equipment, from which the physical example of an opium pipe is taken for this comparison. Of the thousands of objects that Bragge collected, only twenty five examples are listed in the Bibliotheca Nicotiana in relation to Chinese opium pipes. The example chosen is one of only two examples listed as ‘Chando’ pipes. In both examples the specific reference to Chando, highlights a knowledge of specific preparations for opium usage. Chando, or what we may presume to actually be Chandu or Chandoo, is a high quality form of opium prepared and primed for smoking. That Bragge chooses to differentiate the pipe by labelling it as ‘Chando’ asserts that they are of a specific design for a higher quality drug. The quality of the drug is also assessed in ‘East London Opium Smokers’ where our author describes in detail the process carefully carried out by Mr Chi Ki who charges his clients for the ‘trouble of frizzling

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6 Photo taken by Joe Dunnage, 3rd January 2013, with permission of the Asia Department of British Museum, (c) Trustees of The British Museum (Please see Online Collection Database Reg number – 1885.1227.85 for details).
8 Bragge, William, Bibliotheca Nicotiana (Birmingham: Privately Published, 1880).
and preparing the drug’. Whereas Bragge includes this description to specifically catalogue his ornament and differentiate it from pipes which may have used a lesser preparation of opium, the description of Mr Chi Ki’s opium is the key to understanding the dangerous delights of the drug in his establishment.

The Bragge pipe which is associated with a high quality preparation of opium offers the potential to draw comparisons between the quality of the craftsmanship of the pipe and the quality of the drug that is being imbibed through it. Although now Bragge’s example is missing the porcelain sections of the pipe, from the Bibliotheca Nicotiana we know of its blue and white detail as it was meticulously listed as the following:

[25.] Opium Pipe; 16½in. long; bamboo; globular head, porcelain, blue and white, 2in. diameter. (Chando)¹⁰

The other example of a Chando pipe within the Bragge collection is described similarly as;

[26.] Opium Pipe; 14in. long; bamboo; cylindrical head, porcelain, blue and white, 2in. x 1¾in. diameter (Chando)¹¹

What is clear about both these examples is that, as the journalist from the Birmingham Daily Post (1870) had suggested, these pipes had been transformed from their original purpose of smoking, to that of an object to be, ‘gazed [at] with wonder’, invoking instead an idealised image of smoking and oriental tradition, where the design carries as much power as the utility. This translation of the pipe’s primary function is further evolved with the later addition of a sticker reading; ‘Chando Pipe Intl Exn 1873’ (see Figure 2). In being labelled, documented and positioned on display the audience is made aware of the pipe’s original function, smoking, but is directed more towards the pipes decoration and craftsmanship. The labels allow for the ornament to decay over time but not detract from its ability to encapsulate a ‘strange yearning’ and interest. Without its attachments, the pipe is merely a piece of nineteenth-century bamboo. However, when understood in conjunction with the Bibliotheca Nicotiana, and the history of display and ornament in the nineteenth-century international exhibitions,¹² the pipe, although no longer fit for its utility, is still able to conjure a mystical, oriental image.

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¹⁰ Bragge, William, Bibliotheca Nicotiana. p.137.
¹¹ Ibid, p.137.
¹² At the date of publishing this essay I am still investigating which International Exhibition the pipe was shown at. However, based upon the records of World Fairs and International Exhibitions in 1873, we may suggest that it was The Third International Exhibition (1873) which was held in London.
Bragge is the first to acknowledge this transformation from smoking tool to ornament and rightly observed in the Preface to *Bibliotheca Nicotiana* that, ‘The decoration of pipes and of smoking appliances generally thus adds a new chapter to the “Grammar of Ornament.”’\textsuperscript{14} Owen Jones, the nineteenth-century architect, and author of *The Grammar of Ornament* outlined thirty-seven propositions which he advocates as the ‘general principles in the arrangement of form and colour, in architecture and the decorative arts’.\textsuperscript{15} Intended to condition the way in which people designed the ornaments of carpets, ceilings, wall elevations and fabrics,\textsuperscript{16} Bragge’s attempt to pull objects of everyday utility into categorisation can best be appreciated in parallel with proposition five; ‘Construction should be decorated. Decoration should never be purposely constructed.’\textsuperscript{17} The pipe, created primarily for its utility, is decorated in the Bragge example with blue and white porcelain, reminiscent of Chinese design, and although we cannot actually see the design of this porcelain on this example, the fact that the ‘globular head’ is decorated in the first place, lends credence to the suggestion that opium pipes were not merely tools for smoking, but could be appreciated as pieces of craft themselves. If Bragge wishes for his pipes to be considered in light of Jones’ philosophy, it is also useful to understand his opinions regarding Chinese design, and how he felt it should be interpreted. Whereas Jones initially acknowledges a ‘happy instinct of harmonizing colours’\textsuperscript{18} in Chinese ornamentation, he continues to suggest their porcelain is ‘remarkable for the beauty of their outline...but only in a minor degree.’\textsuperscript{19} What aligns the marvel and wonder of the Chinese ornament may then focus on its alien difference to Western art. Jones writes that ‘Chinese ornament is a very faithful expression of the nature of this peculiar people; its characteristic feature is oddness – we cannot call it capricious, for caprice is the playful wandering of a lively imagination; but the Chinese are totally unimaginative, and their works are accordingly wanting in the highest grace of art –

\textsuperscript{13} Photo taken by Joe Dunnage, 3\textsuperscript{rd} January 2013, with permission of the Asia Department of British Museum, (c) Trustees of The British Museum.
\textsuperscript{17} Jones, *The Grammar of Ornament*, p.5.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid, p.86.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid, p.86.
the ideal. By Jones’ reckoning, the aspects of the opium pipe that the public would be expected to wonder at are its oddness and foreignness, relating to Milligan’s suggestion that the uninitiated observer of opium was lured in by its exoticness.

Whereas the pipe in the Bragge collection demonstrates the translation of utility to ornament, and emphasises Oriental design, the opium pipe described in ‘East London Opium Smokers’ celebrates the eastern ‘miraculous’ and ‘superstitious’ aspects attached to the narcotic usage of the pipe. At first glance the author describes the pipe as, ‘an instrument like a flute, with a wooden cup with a lid to it screwed on at a distance of about three inches from the end. It was not a flute, however, but a pipe – the pipe.’ The emphasis on ‘the’ adds to the pipe’s infamy and establishing it almost as the Platonic ideal which fills the young customer with excitement making him, ‘lick his lips.’ On closer inspection of the text the pipe can draw several similarities to the Bragge’s example, yet these are of basic structure and nothing more. The author of ‘East London Opium Smokers’ describes the pipe as, ‘simply an eighteen-inch length of yellow bamboo with the cup of dark-coloured baked clay before mentioned fitted into a sort of spigot hole near the end.’ The main difference between the two pipes is the material used for the ‘bowl’: Porcelain for the Bragge example and clay for Mr Chi Ki’s. Both Bragge’s and Chi Ki’s pipes are of similar length, yet the author of ‘East London Opium Smokers’ distinguishes Chi Ki’s pipe as one primarily of utility, vacant of any beauty. The cup of ‘dark-coloured baked clay’ does not create an image of ornamental beauty unlike the blue and white porcelain of Bragge’s pipe. Furthermore, the finish of the bamboo in each example is worth our attention. The bamboo from the Bragge collection is polished and shaped to be smooth and refined, yet the bamboo in the article is ‘simply’ a length of yellow bamboo. Emphasis is placed on the rudimentary and basic nature of the design of the pipe in the article, focusing on the power the pipe has to be used as an object of addiction rather than one of aesthetic appeal. This difference in quality of finish is completed by the lack of accessory to the pipe where the author notes, ‘there is no mouthpiece to the pipe; the stem is cut sheer off, leaving something as thick as an office ruler to suck at.’ However, this lack of finish is ultimately of no consequence as the buyer of Mr Chi Ki’s opium takes, ‘the bamboo fairly into his mouth...the spirits of ten thousand previously smoked pipe-loads stirred to life.’

Although we may distinguish a discernible difference between the craftsmanship of these two pipes, and assume that these pipes carry an incomparable price, it is in the ‘ten thousand previously smoked pipe-loads’ that the worth of the pipe must be measured against. A distinction is needed to assert the difference between a pipe being used for its original purpose and a pipe being collected and shown at international exhibitions. The price of the pipe as an article is openly discussed at length, including the following conversational exchanges:

‘He’s been offered five pound for that pipe,’ remarked English Mrs. Chi Ki, who appeared to be almost as proud of it as was her husband. ‘A gentleman offered him five pound for it last autumn.’

‘Why didn’t he sell it, and buy another?’ was my natural question; but at this old Chi Ki chuckled, and hugging the pipe chafed its bowl tenderly with his jacket cuff.

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20 Ibid. p.87.
21 ‘East London Opium Smokers’, p.70.
22 Ibid. p.70.
23 Ibid. p.70.
24 Ibid. p.71.
25 Ibid. p.71.
26 Ibid. p.71.
‘It’s worth ten pounds,‘ said his wife; ‘it has had nothing but the best opium smoked in it these fourteen years.’

And she went on further to enumerate the many excellences of the pipe; from which I gathered that its value was not after all as fanciful as at first appeared; since half a given quantity of opium would yield more satisfaction when smoked in a ripe, well-saturated old pipe than the whole quantity in a comparatively new one. \(^{27}\)

The worth of the pipe is again further confirmed when Mrs. Chi Ki advises the author, ‘there are only two pipes, one for the parlour, and one for the best room – this room.’ \(^{28}\) Just as the level of craftsmanship in the Bragge pipe suggests that opium smoking was not reserved for the lower classes with the rich indulging in elaborate designs for their pipes, the end of ‘East London Opium Smokers’ raises a parallel interest in the process of opium smoking which is also classless and permeates all the way through to royalty. Mrs. Chi Ki confirms this by saying, ‘I was ill in bed when the Prince of Wales and the other gentlemen came up here to see the smokers.’ \(^{29}\)

The fact that opium can draw this level of interest is ultimately reflected by the text in which the article appears: *London Society; an illustrated magazine of light and amusing literature for the hours of relaxation*. This may call into question the reality of this described visit to an opium den; it does suggest that it is a topic that people wished to indulge in during their ‘hours of relaxation’. Furthermore, whether this account is wholly true did not detract from the article being republished as far afield as America, in which it appeared in the *Flag of Our Union*, under the re-titled, ‘English Opium Smokers’ in September 1868. \(^{30}\) It suggests that these articles had the power to create public opinion and shock, as can be seen in the way the American author introduces his text, suggesting that, ‘We take the following account of the manner in which opium is smoked in London, from an English journal. The practice is on the increase.’ \(^{31}\) Undoubtedly in capturing the public’s interest in this manner, there was a resounding influence on the literature that followed through to the end of the nineteenth century, from Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins through to Arthur Conan Doyle and Oscar Wilde. \(^{32}\) Milligan highlights that, ‘even before nineteenth century readers entered these authors’ fictional opium dens, they were veterans of the East End and its opium establishments, having vicariously traversed the narrow alleyways of Bluegate Fields in countless magazines, newspapers, and books presenting reports from “roving correspondents”’. \(^{33}\) Considering that the intrigue of the opium pipe for the collector depends on a mixture of the pipe’s back story and craftsmanship, it may well be perceived that the reaction and interest to pipes in the Bragge collection is born out of articles such as ‘East London Opium Smokers.’

Comparing these two pipes highlights that, just as any other tool or ornament, there was a range of craftsmanship in their execution. One area that has not been focused upon, yet is perhaps one of the most intriguing, is that both pipes are strongly associated with China. Although London imported opium from India and Turkey, it is the Chinese that garner attention most prevalently in the media. One of the underlying interests, and also a perceived danger associated with the opium pipe, can be linked to the nineteenth-century paranoia about Chinese contagion. Reverend George Piercy indulged in portraying the potential for Oriental

\(^{27}\) *Ibid*, p.70.
\(^{28}\) *Ibid*, p.72.
\(^{29}\) *Ibid*, p.72.
\(^{30}\) ‘London Opium Smokers’, *Flag of Our Union* (1854-1870); Sep 12, 1868; *American Periodicals*, p.589.
\(^{32}\) There are references to opium in Dickens’ *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, Collins’ *The Moonstone*, Conan Doyle’s *Sherlock Holmes*, and Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.
contagion through the use of opium and exclaimed, ‘It begins with the Chinese, but does not end with them!’ Yet ‘East London Opium Smokers’ does nothing to suggest that there is an impending epidemic surrounding opium usage. The author writes, ‘sometimes, I was informed, trade was so slack that not more than two or three customers would apply all day long.’ Yet, though there is contention due to the generic use of the term ‘Chinaman’ which included most references to Oriental, there is census evidence to suggest that the hysteria surrounding eastern contagion, although highly exaggerated, did reflect an increase in Chinese immigrants in the mid to late nineteenth century. Milligan notes, ‘most notably, the Chinese population in England had been growing rapidly over the previous three decades – from a meagre 78 in England and Wales in 1851 to 665 by 1881, with a sudden dramatic increase in the mid-1860s according to contemporary census reports.’ I suggest that this growth in population was of little consequence in terms of creating interest for opium smoking. Just as De Quincey had glamorised the use of opium in the previous century, Chinese immigration, and the smoking of opium, only created a new vessel in which the public could wonder at this exotic eastern drug.

Essentially, we may suggest that the collectors of opium pipes were merely individuals who played out an interest of the mysterious eastern drug to the next level. Instead of just wondering at the descriptions laid on in the periodical press, collectors bought the actual pipes and in doing so drew attention to not just the narcotic impact of the drug, but the range and breadth of craftsmanship associated with the ornament. Still this drug continues to appeal through its mysterious and Oriental nature well into the twenty-first century. Although many pipes were destroyed in the crackdowns on opium smoking in China, the fine examples that do exist still fetch great sums of money for their craftsmanship and design. On the 10th November 2010, Christie’s of London auctioned several lots of opium pipes belonging to the late Trevor Barton; all three lots surpassed their estimated valuation price, the highest, estimated at £1500-2000, being sold for £26,250. Sales such as this highlight our continued love affair with the instrument that could summon a ‘strange yearning’ and ‘superstitious dread’ just as it did in the nineteenth century.

36 Milligan, *Pleasures and Pains*, p.84.
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Face(t)s of British Wagnerism: Aubrey Beardsley’s drawing *The Wagnerites* (1894) and George Bernard Shaw’s essay *The Perfect Wagnerite* (1898)

Siri Kohl

Abstract: In the 1890s British Wagnerism was at its height. The works of Richard Wagner were admired and condemned equally for their daring musical innovations and unusual subject matter; namely, the artist’s precarious position in society in Tannhäuser, eternal love against all conventions in *Tristan und Isolde*, the end of divine rule and man’s ascent in the *Ring of the Nibelung* tetralogy. The Decadent movement reacted strongly to Wagner’s portrayals of eroticism, morbidity and suffering, as apparent in Aubrey Beardsley’s oeuvre (1872-98). Other artists, such as George Bernard Shaw (1856–1950), rejected these aspects in favour of socio-political readings of the operas. Through their works, this essay will explore some of the debates about Wagnerism and the implications of being a ‘Wagnerite’ in late 19th-century Britain.

When Richard Wagner’s operas were performed in England from the 1870s onwards, many heard in them ‘the voice of the future, especially as it announced itself as such’. What came to be known as ‘Wagnerism’ did not only denote enthusiasm for Wagner’s musical innovations but also for his theoretical writings, which aimed at opera as a Gesamtkunstwerk (total work of art) in which poetry and music no longer competed for attention but formed an organic whole. The realisation of these ideas in Wagner’s music dramas seemed artificial and tedious to many who believed that Wagner the artist stifled his creativity by trying to make his works conform to the preconceived ideology of Wagner the thinker. It was, however, precisely this artificiality that appealed to those who, like Oscar Wilde, believed that ‘to be natural … is such a very difficult pose to keep up’ and that personality, like an artwork, was actively constructed by each individual. In this essay I explore the discussions Wagnerism triggered in fin-de-siècle Britain and how these were reflected in two works by major artists of the period: Aubrey Beardsley (1872-98) and George Bernard Shaw (1856–1950).

When Beardsley published his drawing *The Wagnerites* in 1894, he had already become a leading figure of the British Aesthetic (or ‘Decadent’) movement, whose members reacted to the perceived ‘philistine hypocrisy’ of the Victorian era by works that valued the artificial instead of the naïve, emphasising poses and mannerisms and drawing attention to issues outside the mainstream, such as gender and (deviant) sexuality. Simultaneously, the term ‘decadent’ was used in morally charged discourses to denote degeneration, homosexuality, and ‘effete’ aesthetic sensitivity. Many British Decadents were Wagnerites, such as Wilde, Beardsley and the poet John Gray, who was considered by contemporaries to have been the inspiration for Wilde’s character Dorian Gray (himself a Wagnerite). Their enthusiasm for Wagner’s music and writings contributed to Wagnerism being identified with and suspected of causing ‘degeneration’ by scientists such as Max Nordau, who in his

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2 Magee, p. 100.
magnum opus *Entartung* (*Degeneration*, 1892), accused Wagner of ‘megalomania and mysticism; … anarchism, a craving for revolt and contradiction’.  

It was in this socio-cultural climate that Aubrey Beardsley, in 1894, co-founded the quarterly periodical *The Yellow Book*, featuring contemporary literature (e.g. stories by Henry James) and art (e.g. Beardsley’s own works). The title left no doubt about the magazine’s intended audience and programme as ‘yellow was … the decor … of the allegedly wicked and decadent French novel’.  

*The Wagnerites* (fig. 1) was part of a group of four works by Beardsley (*Portrait of Himself, Lady Gold’s Escort, The Wagnerites, and La Dame aux Camélias*) which appeared in *The Yellow Book*’s third volume in October 1894.

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**Figure 1:** Aubrey Beardsley, *The Wagnerites*, 1894 (Indian ink touched with white, 20.7 x 17.8 cm). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

The drawing presents the audience during a performance of *Tristan und Isolde*. We only see the stalls and two boxes in the background; as these are among the most expensive seats in a theatre, we are looking at a wealthy audience. Surprisingly, it consists almost exclusively of women, most of whom are wearing very décolleté dresses. A few women have grotesque facial features. Only one figure in the stalls and two in the boxes can be identified as male, so most of the women are un-chaperoned. The drawing’s style shows the influence of Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec’s portrayals of the Parisian *demi-monde*, which Beardsley absorbed during his 1892 stay in the French capital. This fact, together with the theme of theatricality or self-presentation that also dominates the other three drawings in the series and the allusion to high-class prostitution which is made by the topic of *La Dame aux Camélias*, suggests that some of the Wagnerites may actually be prostitutes, a jibe at the transcendent, eternal love

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9 ‘Drawing | V&A Search the Collections’ <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O746771/drawing/> [accessed 04 January 2013].
idealized by Wagner in *Tristan und Isolde*. In this reading, the alleged ‘purity’ of high art (Wagnerian opera) clashes with the demimondaine aspects of popular culture (prostitution as a common feature of, for example, music halls), fulfilling Beardsley’s intention of blurring the distinction between those two types of art in *The Yellow Book.*

Furthermore, a drawing of a female Wagnerian audience attending a performance of this particular opera necessarily invites comment on gendered aspects of Wagnerism. On one hand, Wagner’s female admirers and protagonists figured prominently in the debate about New Women and female independence in *fin-de-siècle* Britain. On the other hand, women were supposed to be particularly susceptible to what musicologist Elliott Zuckerman calls ‘Tristanism’: an implicitly inferior form of Wagnerism which is ‘the result of a personal infatuation rather than an ideological commitment. … The Wagnerite must learn theories and cultivate habits. The Tristanite only has to be overwhelmed.’ The strong appeal of Wagner’s works to women was considered to be due to both female sentimentality and lack of rational analytical ability in musical theory. In this context Beardsley’s portrayal of independent, wealthy female Wagnerites may show the solidarity of an aesthete whose own response to *Tristan* was intensely emotional rather than rational.

Brigid Brophy suggests that the women in *The Wagnerites* ‘are collectively Isolde; and they are an Isolde who is *gulping* the love potion’. Thus the drawing also comments on female sensuality: these women do not blush watching Tristan and Isolde give in to their passionate love but may even be savouring the erotic tension. In this context the grotesque facial expressions could be Beardsley’s ironic comment on his contemporaries’ belief that Wagner’s music, appealing to women because of the ‘erotic romanticism’ it offered, caused them to lose their self-control and ‘degenerate’ into ‘hysterics’. It is significant that the only man in the audience has been identified as a ‘Jew’ by his facial features, which conform to common racial stereotypes. This might be an allusion to the contemporary anti-Semitic perception of Jewish men, especially those involved in musical and theatrical life, as effeminate and thus ‘degenerate’.

To sum up, Beardsley’s view of Wagnerism confronts us with an audience of wealthy females independent of male control, watching an explicitly erotic opera that, when first performed in London, caused critics to ‘protest against the worship of animal passion’. The artist comments on the various public discourses of which Wagnerism was a part. These range from gendered perception of art, to female sexuality, to racial theory. Whether he is sympathetic or antipathetic to the women portrayed remains ambiguous; Beardsley makes no open statement as to who or what is the ‘perfect Wagnerite’ and leaves the observer to form their own ideas of the image.

Conversely, George Bernard Shaw was characteristically outspoken in this respect. His reading of Wagner’s *Ring of the Nibelung* tetralogy in his essay *The Perfect Wagnerite* (1898) was informed by his musical expertise as well as by his socialist ideals. The son of a singer, Shaw had taken voice lessons from his mother and later earned some money as an accompanist in London. He also wrote musical critiques for several newspapers. In 1882 a lecture by the American economist Henry George induced Shaw to read the works of Karl

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11 Snodgrass, p. 96.
12 Sutton, pp. 94–7.
17 Sutton, pp. 111–2; her close reading of *The Wagnerites* explores this and other aspects of the drawing in detail.
Marx, which were to influence the author profoundly. Among the many socialist groups in London, the Fabian Society (founded in 1884), which advocated a gradual transformation of society instead of socialist revolution, became Shaw’s ideological home.20

Fabian reserve, however, is not a feature of The Perfect Wagnerite. In the preface to the first edition Shaw throws down the gauntlet, declaring his intention to write on ‘the ideas of the revolutionary Wagner of 1848’. These ‘are taught neither by the education nor the experience of English and American gentleman-amateurs, who are almost always political mugwumps, and hardly ever associate with revolutionists’.21 Shaw argues that a combination of musical expertise and political insight is what the average gentleman Wagnerite lacks, but that the Ring can only be understood as a political allegory. He considers himself one of the few to have realised the Ring’s significance, both politically and musically, writing for ‘those who wish to be introduced to the work on equal terms with that inner circle of adepts.’ (168) Wagnerism is thus presented as akin to a secret society, a circle of ‘initiated’ people who have deciphered signs in the music and libretti of ‘the Meister’,22 that others, due to their ignorance, have been unable to read:

[A]ny person who… attempts to persuade you that my interpretation of The Rhine Gold is only ‘my socialism’ read into the works of a dilettantist who borrowed an idle tale from an old saga to make an opera book with, may safely be dismissed from your consideration as an ignoramus. (188)

Shaw’s reading of the Ring cycle focuses mainly on three characters. First, there is Alberich,23 the dwarf who renounces love, steals the Rhine Gold and forges a ring that gives its possessor the power to rule the world; he embodies the ‘Plutonic power’ (171) of capitalism, which makes human beings strive for wealth above everything else. Second, there is Wotan, the head god who steals the ring from Alberich to pay for the building of Valhalla, the castle that projects his divinity; he represents religious and secular power. This power is restricted by contracts and laws – Alberich’s capitalism, however, is unbridled as long as he owns the ring. Only Man can destroy the capitalist stranglehold as well as the compromised alliance of religion and statecraft. This third character is the liberator Siegfried, born out of the illicit union of the siblings Siegmund and Sieglinde, Wotan’s illegitimate children:

… a totally unmoral person, a born anarchist, the ideal of Bakoonin [sic], an anticipation of the ‘overman’ of Nietzsche. He is enormously strong, full of life and fun, dangerous and destructive to what he dislikes, and affectionate to what he likes; so that it is fortunate that his likes and dislikes are sane and healthy. (200)

Shaw’s emphasis on Siegfried’s strength and health suggests that he is trying to defend Wagner’s creation against any accusation of ‘degeneration’ or ‘decadence’, linking Siegfried with Nietzsche (who had, at this time, become highly critical of Wagner, having at first been an ardent admirer)24 and his dreams of human superiority rather than with the aesthetes’

22 This phrase, still used by some modern-day Wagnerites, was also the title of the London Wagner Society’s quarterly journal from 1888 to 1895.
23 This is Wagner’s original spelling of the name; Shaw’s spelling differs, probably to reflect English pronunciation.
24 cf. Nietzsche’s change of attitude towards Wagner from The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music (1872) to The Case of Wagner (1888).
sensitivity and ‘effete’ reactions to Wagner’s work. The passage almost seems like a direct response to the feminine, pensive, inert Siegfried that Aubrey Beardsley portrayed in an earlier drawing (fig. 2):

Figure 2: Aubrey Beardsley, *Siegfried, Act II*, ca. 1892-93 (pen, ink and wash on paper). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Siegfried, having slain the dragon Fafner, owner of the treasure once hoarded by Alberich, and having shown no interest whatsoever in wealth, confronts Wotan and breaks his spear, the symbol of his divine power. Before this overthrow of the old order in favour of anarchy can take place in reality, however, a rejection of fin-de-siècle decadence and morbidity is essential, as Shaw implies in another Nietzschean fantasy:

>The majority of men at present in Europe have no business to be alive; and no serious progress will be made until we … breed a race of men *in whom the life-giving impulses predominate*… (215, author’s emphasis)

The last part of the tetralogy, *Götterdämmerung*, is condemned by Shaw as Wagner’s return to operatic conventions and ‘the holding up of Love as the remedy for all evils and the solvent of all social difficulties’ (219). Wagner’s focus on the redeeming force of love in *Götterdämmerung* is apolitical and thus does not fit the Shavian interpretation of the *Ring* cycle. It also hovers close to the romanticism of *Tristan* or *Tannhäuser* and to the ‘female’, emotional approach to Wagner which an initiated ‘perfect Wagnerite’ such as Shaw has to reject.  

Although Shaw does mention the fact that the *leitmotif* which accompanies Brünnhilde’s renunciation of the ring and her glorification of Siegfried’s love during the apocalyptic ending of the opera is the same as that which we hear when Siegfried’s birth is

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predicted in *Die Walküre*, he sees no particular sense in this. It was no coincidence, however, that Wagner, a composer renowned for his masterful use of the *leitmotif* technique, linked Shaw’s anarchic liberator and the revelatory power of love (which leads to the renunciation of worldly power and capitalism, symbolised by the ring) in this way. The strength that was able to break Wotan’s spear and reject Alberich’s riches is incomplete without the wisdom of love.

At this point Shaw’s essay turns towards Wagner’s musical merits and again tries to draw the line between the ‘perfect Wagnerites’ and ‘the ignorant’ by defending Wagner against those who complain about his ‘abandonment of melody’; for this ‘is to confess oneself an ignoramus conversant only with dance tunes and ballads’ (261). Pre-Wagnerian opera, Shaw states, is mainly based on the invention of one nice melody and ‘[a]ll the rest follows more or less mechanically to fill up the pattern, an air being very like a wall-paper design in this respect’, denoting the composer’s inferior musicianship (260). The derogatory reference to wallpaper design was probably aimed at William Morris, a leading figure of the British Arts and Crafts movement (among the characteristic products of which were wallpaper designs) and a vocal critic of Wagner’s dramatisation of Norse mythology in the framework of an art form as ‘degraded’ as opera. Moreover, the *Fabian Essays in Socialism* (1889), which Shaw had contributed to, had met with an unfavourable review from Morris, who criticised them for ‘pushing a theory of tactics, which could not be carried out in practice’. The focal point for perfect and ‘imperfect’ Wagnerites alike is Bayreuth, whose Wagner festival had firmly established itself among British aesthetes as the site of Wagnerian ‘pilgrimage’ at the end of the 19th century. According to Shaw, Wagner’s intention of seeing Bayreuth performances attended mainly by his ‘earnest disciples’ has been thwarted. In their place are sitting ‘just the sort of idle globe-trotting tourists against whom the temple was to have been strictly closed’ (271). The religious terminology – which Shaw may have used ironically here – is characteristic of much Wagnerian writing and reinforces the dogmatic aspect also apparent in Shaw’s own Wagnerism. Shaw calls for a new festival playhouse in England which will stage Wagner for ‘the people’ and ‘raise [the workers of England] from pious respectability to a happy consciousness of and interest in fine art’ (279). By contributing to popular education, art can become a means of the struggle towards a classless society in which education is no longer the privilege of the upper classes.

If Beardsley’s Wagnerism may be characterised as taking the female point of view, Shaw’s perspective is male. Beardsley’s heroes are Tristan and Isolde, longing for unity in death; Shaw’s Wagnerian paragon is Siegfried, very much alive and guided only by his own free will. Whilst Beardsley comments on the contemporary debates surrounding ‘decadent’ Wagnerism, the feminine and the sensual, Shaw focuses on socialist ideas and their potential for anarchistic upheaval. Far from being the romantically morbid ‘silk-dressing-gowned version of Wagner generally offered by the popular press’ Shaw’s Wagner is the man who took an active part in the 1849 May Uprising in Dresden. In *The Perfect Wagnerite* the rejection of ‘decadent’ or ‘effete’ sensitivity and a rational analysis of Wagner’s political message predominate, and the clarity of Shaw’s language leaves the reader in no doubt as to the author’s intentions. Beardsley, on the other hand, relies on the various interpretations, allusions and associations which the ambiguity of an image offers. Neither of these

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29 Sutton, p. 21.
31 Martin, p. 82.
Wagnerites would probably have considered the other ‘perfect’, but together they show the multifaceted phenomenon that was British *fin-de-siècle* Wagnerism.

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Nostalgic Teleology: Arnoldian Culture & Yeats’ Byzantium

Peter Tuite

Abstract: Following publication of Matthew Arnold’s On the Study of Celtic Literature (1866), W.B. Yeats responded to Arnold’s ideas in his essay Celtic Element in Literature (1897). Yeats’ central contention was that the Irish imagination was not in any way incomplete, as Arnold attested, but could instead provide a gateway to a fuller, richer form of human imagination that was lost as a consequence of modernisation and the Industrial Revolution. His late poem ‘Sailing to Byzantium’ further developed this concept of an ideal culture by subtly linking his aspirations for Irish culture to a mythic Byzantium. The poem provides a work rich in contrasts with Arnold’s polemic whilst retaining similarities to its idealism. Using these two works as windows into their contrasting weltanschauungen this paper will consider the strengths and weaknesses of their respective ideas on culture. It will also reflect on their contrasting attitudes to Ireland and Irish identity.

“To know the Celtic case thoroughly, one must know the Celtic people; and to know them, one must know that by which a people best express themselves – their literature.” From the outset of On the Study of Celtic Literature, Arnold propounds literary knowledge as the key to understanding a nation. ‘The forms of its language are the only key to a people,’ he writes. ‘What it says in its language, its literature, is the great key, and we must get back to literature.’

Though one may doubt the perspicacity of Arnold’s assertion, it nonetheless evinces a set of assumptions held by its author, assumptions, in turn, rooted in a world-view where culture takes precedence.

What can be said of this central role of culture in Arnoldian thought? And how is one to understand what Arnold means by culture? ‘The snake that cannot shed its skin,’ wrote Nietzsche, ‘perishes. [And] likewise spirits which are prevented from changing their opinions; they cease to be spirits.’ Writing some years after the publication of Matthew Arnold’s Culture and Anarchy (1869), Nietzsche’s comment captures something central to Arnold’s concept of culture: namely, the search for a kind of human perfection through an unceasing striving. It is an idea that forms perhaps the very essence of Arnoldian culture – a process of unfolding transformation ‘where the individual may be perfected, that his activity may be worthy, [where] he must learn to quit old habits, to adopt new, to go out for himself, [and] to transform himself.’ In Arnold’s view, this goal of perfection can only be reached through the transforming power of culture. As he put it, ‘to reach this ideal, culture is an indispensable aid, and that is the true value of culture. Not a having and a resting, but a growing and a becoming, is the character of perfection as culture conceives it.’

Foreshadowing both Arnold’s and Nietzsche’s idea of self-transformation lays the German concept of Bildung. As with thinkers like Schiller and Heine, Arnold’s idea of Bildung has far-reaching consequences; for the idea of linking criticism, education, culture and politics together places cultural concerns right at the very heart of debates on freedom, governance and the nature of society – and this is also a very continental idea. In Schiller’s

2 Ibid, p. 85.
4 Nietzsche published Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality in 1881; Arnold published Culture and Anarchy in 1869.
7 These ideas of Bildung tie in to a whole tradition of German thought going back to at least the eighteenth century.
Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man (1794) for instance, there is a preoccupation with establishing a preeminent aesthetic education in order to create what he calls a rational political state. Surrounded by the turmoil of late eighteenth century Europe, Schiller concerned himself with ‘that most perfect of all the works to be achieved by the art of man: the construction of true political freedom.’

The rational state is thus, for Schiller, an expression of an inner unified whole and this inner whole is in turn only properly achieved through Bildung. Though undoubtedly different in literary form, tenor and context, Schiller’s concepts bear distinct resemblances to those found in Arnoldian culture: where Schiller speaks of beauty, Arnold speaks of Sweetness; where Schiller speaks of fragmentation, Arnold speaks of self-interest; what Schiller calls the aesthetic ideal, Arnold calls perfection. If literature is reflective of the inner life, which, in turn is reflective of the political state, Arnold’s focus on Irish literature as the key to understanding Ireland is therefore not without foundation.

However, Arnold’s linkages to German thought do not stop there. As Stone writes, ‘in Heine [too], Arnold found an intellectual and literary model … connecting past and present with the future.’ Arnold’s distinction between the Hellenistic and the Hebraic was undoubtedly inspired by Heine. For Heine, most of the history of western civilisation was characterised by an oscillation between these two tendencies and it is these very ideas which Arnold seizes upon to build into one of the cornerstones of his thinking on culture. As with Schiller, Heine too connects what is an outlook on life with firm political consequences and central to the thinking of all three – Heine, Schiller and Arnold – is the idea of Bildung. It is therefore only through a transformation of the self by means of art and education, a continual expansion of one’s outlook, that the forces of philistinism can be overcome. Only then can politics and society be changed for the better. Arnoldian culture is therefore at once personal and political, ancient and modern. It contains what Behler elsewhere terms a kind of ‘nostalgic teleology’; that is, where an idealised image of Ancient Greece supports a critique of a problematic present – a present which might nonetheless be overcome through some final, future chimerical stage of history – and Behler’s term thus illustrates something of the Janus-like character of such enterprises. Arnold’s consideration of literature from Ireland’s past is for him a key step in grappling with its futurity.

Though the word ‘culture’ is rich with meaning, for Arnold its manifold resonances are actually not his principal concern; rather it is through culture’s actions and effects – in short, its content as he defines it – which most interests him. In Arnold’s view, culture is therefore something which (though acquired in different ways) has as a destination, our inner selves. It is from our inner self that our outward actions originate. As such, culture’s province is both the public and the private sphere of human experience – spheres which hold great consequences for the individual and the society which he inhabits. Outwardly, ‘culture may with advantage continue to uphold steadily its ideal of human perfection; [but] that this is [nonetheless] an inward spiritual activity, having for its characters increased sweetness, increased light, increased life, increased sympathy.’

As Arnold’s cultural and educational agenda is inextricably tied in with the political and societal health of the nation as a whole, what can one ascertain of his particular political views? Moreover, how do those views sit with his ideas on culture and perfection, and the problems of both in relation to Ireland? Arnold’s engagement with the problem of Irish independence within the British Empire, presents an interesting answer to this problem which

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13 Ibid, p. 120.
was really both cultural and political. Between the unprecedented actions of the Fenians and the anxious conservatism of the Establishment, attempts were made to find a middle ground of reform to the problem of Irish Autonomy. For Irish Nationalists however, this was unacceptable. As William Harcourt puts it, ‘the via media of conciliation [was] impossible [as] there was no alternative between separation and coercion.’

Arnold, an opponent of Irish Home Rule, sought, however, precisely such a via media and this is especially apparent in his book, On the Study of Celtic Literature. Here, Arnold’s solution for the governance of Ireland is, as David Lloyd stipulates, ‘an eschewal of specifically political solutions and an appeal instead to the harmonisation and mediating power of culture.’ In short, Arnold attempts to transcend politics by using culture to produce political effects. His argument is a curious concoction of on the one hand admirable idealism and on the other lamentable prejudicial stereotyping. Nonetheless, it illustrates much in terms of his vision for the Empire and indeed the world generally in how culture might be used to deal with conflicting values and solve complicated political problems.

For Arnold, the idea of difference is a great problem as it is tied in directly to the Schiller-like fragmentation of society as a whole. Depending heavily on ethnic oppositions, Arnold’s first step is to identify certain essential characteristics allegedly inherent in the Celts and the English. Whereas the latter are characterised as practical, if somewhat dull and lacking in imagination, the former are ‘half barbarous’ and ‘ineffectual in politics’ though impressively ‘sentimental.’ Arnold’s agenda is ultimately one of growth and expansion and he argues, therefore, that despite their fundamental differences in character, the Celts and the English have ‘beyond perhaps any other nation, a thousand latent springs of possible sympathy with them.’

He thus proposes that the Celts assimilate more into the Empire becoming more English-like in character, and similarly, that the English become more Celt-like. In sum, he advocates a kind of melting pot, in which each essence benefits from its opposing other. Arnold’s key assumption throughout is that the Empire will continue on unabated, with Westminster remaining the seat of centralised political power. The resulting people of this mixed cultural heritage would only then be capable of producing a culture of imaginative reason, a term which he uses in Culture and Anarchy to describe the essence of the cultivated disposition. As Lloyd puts it, ‘an æsthetic notion of the telos of historical evolution thus governs Arnold’s ethnography insofar as it is directed from the start towards the production of such a state of culture.’

Yet, how pragmatic was such a proposal and more pertinent, how effective? Although many aspects of Arnold’s study of Celtic Literature were later discredited especially following Irish Independence, it illustrates something important in Arnold’s thinking of the relationship between culture, values and politics. Nonetheless, despite its obvious shortcomings, it is also clear, that Arnold’s key enemy is not one race or another, but rather provincialism and fragmentation. In his view, these are simply emblematic of a narrowness of mind, an anti-cosmopolitanism which stifles growth and prevents the proper flourishing of culture and perfection. The Irish problem is thus, for Arnold, a primarily cultural and educational one. It is about a myopic nationalism which prevents a proper world embrace of knowledge and experience.

19 Ibid. p. 395.
20 Arnold, Culture and Anarchy, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), Chapters II-III.
Interestingly, what Arnold does not address is the issue of power and control. Rather, he assumes that when a people are long on the path to perfection, when they carry culture in their hearts, the issue of political power will naturally and peacefully take care of itself. It is a huge assumption to make and yet not without some foundation in that it assumes a high degree of rationality on behalf of the populace, echoing Schiller’s rational state. On the other hand, that the Irish would rationally choose Westminster for the centre of political control seems to Arnold almost obvious, perhaps reflecting his own provincialism in this regard. However, Arnold’s ideas on the problem of Irish Independence do highlight the idealism of his cultural agenda and it is in this very idealism that both its strengths and weaknesses lie.

Yeats clearly differs from Arnold in his estimation of Ireland’s cultural character, yet shares aspects of his idealism. He too believes that ancient literature is the key to understanding a nation, but he also believes in its revivifying capabilities. ‘Literature dwindles to a mere chronicle of circumstance [...] unless it is constantly flooded with the passions and beliefs of ancient times,’ he writes, ‘and of all the passions and beliefs of ancient times [...] the Celtic alone has been for centuries close to the main river of European Literature. It has again and again brought the vivifying spirit of excess into the arts of Europe.’

Responding directly to Arnold in his essay *Celtic Element in Literature*, Yeats likens literature to religion, as it possesses the same kind of power and ability to both reflect and change a culture. ‘The arts [...] have become religious, and are seeking [...] to create a sacred book. They must, as religious thought has always done, utter themselves through legend.’

As with Arnold, Yeats’ aspirations for the future are fuelled by a vision of the past, another instance of nostalgic teleology. But whereas Arnold situates his utopic vision in a balance between the ancient Hellenic and Hebraic cultures, Yeats looks to the city of Byzantium before its ignominious fall in 1453. Yeats’ linking of an ancient literature to a whole way of life strongly emerges through his engagement with Byzantine culture. For Yeats, Byzantium and its culture served as a model not only for artistic expression, but for society itself; a society unified through its religious, artistic and political life.

In this respect, Yeats was heavily indebted to Morris, who saw Byzantinism as having the capacity to absorb other traditions – something Classicism was incapable of achieving as it sought to be distinct and dominant over its environment. Morris built a kind of East meets West theory of Art where the East stood for colour, intricate design and mystery, and the West for discipline, structure and what he called natural fact. Byzantine Art was, in Morris’ view, a combination of the two: it was the unification between two visions of the world. Morris was convinced that the fragmentation and separation of Art and religion from daily life really began in fourteenth century Europe and culminated in the modern problems of alienation and soullessness. Byzantium was therefore a kind of utopia where there was a unity between the spiritual, cultural and daily life of the city and its art, simply a natural, spontaneous expression of this state of affairs. For Yeats, therefore, Byzantium was much more than simply a place to escape to; it was bound up with his vision for an ideal, future world.

In addition to this, Yeats longed for a land where a popular art (similar to the one he imagined Byzantine artists once enjoyed) evolved and flourished. As he observed in 1930 (the same year he wrote the poem ‘Byzantium’), ‘I wished through the drama, through a commingling of verse and dance, through singing that was also speech, through what I called…'

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23 Ibid. Section IV

24 This is not to suggest or prove that Josef Strzygowski (who propounded a similar idea and was also an influence on Yeats) was himself directly influenced by William Morris’ writings; though it is, of course, eminently possible this may have been the case.

25 There are of course interesting implications here when considering Morris’ views in light of Edward Said’s *Orientalism* – where the East, for example, is often portrayed as passive, colourful, mysterious and absorbing, as opposed to the West which is forthright, assertive and dominant.
the applied arts of literature, to plunge it back into social life.'  


of culture was the perfection of the human being and therefore, of human society. Though one could charge Arnold with elitism and intellectual snobbery, it is important to bear in mind that the whole project of Arnoldian Culture was ultimately meant as a project for everyone. In this way, and others, Arnold differs radically from a thinker like Nietzsche (who saw high culture as something only for the few). Arnoldian culture is actually closer to Yeats and his ideas on ‘Popular Art’ and on Irish Culture as a place where everyone can therefore meaningfully participate in the highest of artistic endeavours. As Arnold wrote, ‘one’s business in life was, first, to perfect oneself by all the means in one’s power, and, secondly, to try and create in the world around one an aristocracy, the most numerous that one possibly could, of talents and characters.’31 Arnold’s goal is thus the achievement of an ideal state, where a synthesis between his many, often seemingly incongruous elements can take place: a place not too dissimilar in fact to Yeats’ Byzantium; a kind of democracy of aristocrats, or rather, an aristocracy of democrats.

In conclusion, what is most concinnous between Yeats’ Byzantium and Arnold’s place of culture is the impossibility of their realisation. Where Arnold hopes for a kind Empire made up of Indo-European people dedicated to a culture of Bildung, Yeats hopes for a myth-like semi-historical place which can serve as both an answer to the post-industrialised world as well as to Ireland’s future. It seems clear from these two texts that neither is terribly concerned with the practical problems of day-to-day politics nor of proffering any kind of realistic solutions for Ireland, Irish Culture or Irish nation-hood within the British Empire. In this way, both Arnold and Yeats are really cultural idealists. Though their ideas on Irishness differ, their central belief in the power of culture to solve all political problems are strikingly similar, echoing Schiller’s sentiment that ‘if man is ever to solve that problem of politics in practice, he will have to approach it through the problem of the aesthetic, because it is only through beauty that man makes his way to freedom.’32

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Labour Theories and Paper Currencies: The Economic Concerns of William Cobbett’s ‘Address to the Journeymen and Labourers,’ and Percy Bysshe Shelley’s ‘Men of England &c- A song’

Paul Stephens

Abstract: Cobbett’s reformist pamphlet ‘Address to the Journeymen and Labourers’ (1816) attempts to demystify the political and economic causes of the miseries of its intended readership, tracing with populist verve the links between labour exploitation, paper currency, and the national debt. Shelley’s furious poem of 1819, produced in the aftermath of the Peterloo Massacre, indicated how little had changed during the interim period. The following essay aims to provide a brief introduction to each text, considering aspects of their respective treatment of value creation through the labour process. While Shelley’s poem is illuminated by Cobbett’s populist economic journalism, so issues of fiction and fabrication foregrounded by Shelley’s poetics draw out the presence in Cobbett’s article of labour theories of value developed by the classical political economists.

Shelley was just one of over two hundred thousand readers who by the winter of 1817 had enjoyed Cobbett’s notorious ‘Address to the Journeymen and Labourers.’ The article first appeared on 2nd November 1816 as the lead piece in Cobbett’s Weekly Political Register (a sixteen-page newspaper priced at 1s.½d which Cobbett had produced regularly since 1802), and later that week as an octavo pamphlet priced at 2d. The pamphlet’s cheap form remained exempt from newspaper stamp duty taxes to become affordable to the labourers to whom it was addressed. This inaugural edition of what became known as the Two-penny Trash encapsulated Cobbett’s characteristic tone of ‘plain, broad, downright English.’1 The text’s italics and robust punctuation evoked the patterns of speech, facilitating the frequent public readings of the article for the benefit of the illiterate poor. Following the radical agitation against the strictures of the Importation Act 1815, Cobbett’s bold act of textual oratory energised his audience and horrified the administration of Lord Liverpool. However, the tyrannical Seditious Meetings Act 1817 halted Cobbett’s own production of pamphlets, and hastened his temporary exile to America on the 27th March.2

Nevertheless, the pamphlet’s argument was clear. Cobbett printed his threefold purpose on the cover: to diagnose the Cause, to expose false Remedies, and to explain the effectual Relief to the present miseries of the labouring class (Figure 1). The central cause of their misery is summarised as ‘the enormous amount of the taxes, which the government compels us to pay for [...] its army, [...] its pensioners, &c. and for the payment of the interest of its debt.’3 However, the government is directly accused of downplaying the structural causes of this increasing tax burden in favour of demonising the labouring class. Identifying the mode of the political right, Cobbett argues that:

3 Cobbett, ‘Address to the Journeymen and Labourers of England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland’ (Manchester: J. Molineux & Co, 1816), p.3. Further references to this work are followed after quotation. All italics and punctuation is Cobbett’s own.
emissaries of corruption are now continually crying out against the weight of the poor-rates [...] Their project is, to deny relief to all who are able to work. But what is the use of your being able to work, if no one will, or can, give you work? (p.8)

The process is abetted by ‘the hired press [who] call you the Scum of society’ (p.10). Cobbett summarises the false remedies offered to his assumed reader by such commentators as comprised of suggestions ‘to narrow the limit of parish relief, to prevent you from marrying in [...] youth, or to thrust you out to seek your bread in foreign lands’ (p.3). However, the article concludes by insisting that the effectual relief to present corruption should reject violent agitation in favour of petitioning for ‘reform in the Commons [...] to [give] every payer of direct taxes a vote’ (p.11). Cobbett’s overarching claim that ‘We want great alteration, but we want nothing new’ emphasises his untarnished reverence for existing ‘constitutional laws’ such as the 1689 Bill of Rights (p.12), while simultaneously signifying the tensions of his own ‘reactionary Radicalism’.4

Cobbett’s argument is rooted in contemporary formulations of the labour theory of value. Leading with the thesis that ‘all the resources of a country [...] spring, from the labour of its people’ (p.3), he argues for reform on the grounds that ‘labourers and their families have a right [...] to relief from the purses of the rich’ because ‘no riches [exist] [...] which they, by their labour, have not assisted to create’ (p.9). This insistence on the centrality of labour in the creation of both wealth and commodity value echoes the foundational political economy of Adam Smith. Smith had argued that ‘The word VALUE’ encompasses both ‘the utility of some particular object’ and ‘the power of purchasing other goods which the possession of that object conveys,’ termed respectively ‘“value in use” and “value in exchange.”’5 The use value of any commodity (to its possessor) embodies all avoided ‘toil,’ and consequently (and despite the fluctuations of market bargaining) ‘Labour [...] is the real measure of the exchangeable value of all commodities.’6 However, he draws a clear distinction between exchange value and monetary price:

Labour alone [...] never varying in its own value, is [...] [the] real standard by which the value of all commodities can at all times and places be estimated and compared. It is their real price; money is their nominal price only.7

Smith’s theory was developed by David Ricardo, whose broader exploration of scarcity highlighted the conditions under which the ‘real’ value of labour becomes (in practice) variable, emphasising both ‘the varying price of [...] necessaries, on which the wages of labour are expended,’ but also how the labour process is itself ‘modified by the employment of machinery and other fixed and durable capital.’8 Terence Hoagwood observes how Ricardo’s focus on the intensification of the labour process reveals the inexorable ‘reification of capital’ over use value in early capitalism, embedded in the creation and extraction of profit. Capital value constitutes a ‘fabricated’ form of abstracted value whose ‘spurious autonomy’ Hoagwood likens in kind to the nominal money-form itself.9

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6 Ibid., p.36, 37.
7 Ibid., p.39.
Figure 1: Title page of William Cobbett’s ‘Address to the Journeymen and Labourers of England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland,’ Manchester: J. Molineux & Co, 1816. (14cm x 21.5cm). Image reproduced by permission of the library of Nuffield College, University of Oxford.
While avoiding the perceived complexities of Ricardian vice, Cobbett’s pamphlet articulates these theoretical formulations implicitly to explain the measures he sees as causing his readers’ misery. Rejecting the claim that tax rates had in recent years been reduced, Cobbett explains in simple terms the reality of inflationary stealth tax upon material necessities:

[If] four years ago, I had 100 pounds to pay in taxes, then 120 bushels of wheat would pay my share. If I have now 75 pounds to pay in taxes, it will require 190 bushels [...] Consequently, though my taxes are nominally reduced, they are in reality, greatly augmented. This has been done by the legerdemain of paper-money (p.4)

Cobbett’s example draws together a number of his own explicit economic concerns. For Cobbett, the present depreciation of currency is rooted in the 1797 Bank Restrictions Act. The Act forced the Bank of England to suspend the conversion of banknotes for gold coinage, and, in effect, to abandon their initial de facto gold standard. Although attempting to prevent a bank run (in response to the public’s own fears of French invasion), the Act signified that the nominal value of circulating paper currency far exceeded the country’s gold reserves. However, prior governments themselves had inexorably increased the volume of paper-money as a measure to service the interest on the national debt; itself originally contracted from the (then) newly established Bank of England in 1694 to finance the government’s war machine. Yet until the 1816 Coinage Act established the gold standard in an attempt to curb the issue, the Liverpool government had continued to print paper-money to finance its recent Napoleonic wars, engendering an inflationary cut to the purchase power of the labour wage, while simultaneously extracting further taxes to service its debt interest.  

Cobbett was enraged. His principle critique of the relationship between fiat currency and the national debt had formed a series of Register articles between 1810-11, later compiled in Paper Against Gold (1815). However, his inaugural pamphlet formed his first serious attempt to address directly in print those labourers most heavily afflicted by the government’s monetary and fiscal policies. Cobbett asserts that, between the American Revolutionary conflicts (1775-83) and Napoleon’s defeat (1815), ‘wars have ADDED 36 millions a year to the interest of the Debt, and 55 millions a year to [...] the taxes!’ (p.5). Brining these statistics closer to home, he follows his description of inflationary stealth tax with a list of commodities such as ‘shoes, salt, beer’ subject to indirect taxation of ‘one half of what you pay for the article itself’ (p.9-10). Yet it is the very issue of surreptitious taxation which Cobbett cites to dissuade his reader from violent revolt against small-scale producers; the ‘Bakers, Brewers, Butchers’ (p.13). He reasons that, despite the ‘lowering wages [reduced purchase power] [...] your employers cannot give to you, that which they have not,’ because ‘the weight of the taxes [...] [press] us all to the earth, except those who receive their incomes out of those taxes’ (p.13). Nonetheless, his attempt to downplay entrepreneurial profit extraction by the disingenuous claim that ‘They all sell as cheap as they can’ (p.13) suggests a rhetorical attempt to encourage the more affluent readership of his pricier newspaper to join the labourers in petitioning for reform. The corresponding attempt to sell his article as a cheap pamphlet put his critique of inflation into material practice.

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11 Cobbett echoes Smith’s famous assertion that ‘It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker, that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own self-interest.’ See Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, p.22.
Shelley trumpeted his debt to Cobbett’s populist economics. In *A Philosophical View of Reform* (View)- suppressed for a century until published in 1920- he reproduces Cobbett’s explicit arguments concerning paper currency, national debt, and labour exploitation, and urges his intended audience to ‘read Cobbett’s *Paper Against Gold*’.  

Shelley also echoes Ricardo in recognising the subspecies of aristocratic ‘drones’ comprised of ‘government pensioners’ and ‘bankers’ that are distinct from ‘hereditary land-owners’ in having replaced force with financial fraud in order to ‘enjoy the profit of the labour of others.’ Yet instead of echoing Cobbett’s often straightforward ‘demonology’ of drones, Shelley emphasises their broader personification of class-relations in the early capitalist mode of production, arguing that the ‘hereditary aristocracy […] took the measures which created this other.’ Nonetheless, with a subtle stab of the poet’s nib he dams the drones by compounding their economic opportunism with the accusation that they ‘poison the literature of the age.’ For Shelley, almost nothing could be worse.

The subtle relationship between literature and labour exploitation suggested in View forms a central theme of Shelley’s ‘Men of England &c- A song’ (‘Song’). In contrast to the immediate notoriety of Cobbett’s pamphlet, Shelley’s ‘Song’ languished unread in his Larger Silsbee Notebook until published posthumously by Mary Shelley in 1839. Shelley’s fair-copy manuscript of the poem shows the original title written in Mary’s hand (Figures 2), a title she altered upon publication to ‘Song: To the Men of England’. The added preposition suggests a didactic address to an implied (labouring) reader à la Cobbett’s pamphlet, compounded by Mary’s accompanying claim that '[Shelley] believed that a clash between the two classes of society was inevitable, and he eagerly ranged himself on the people’s side.' However, the impact is muted by the prior omission of the poem from her first edited collection of Shelley’s poetry (1824), later reasoning that ‘in those days of prosecution for libel they could not be printed.’ Such caution was far from Shelley’s impulse, who wrote to Leigh Hunt in 1820 to seek help publishing ‘a little volume of popular songs wholly political, & destined to awaken & direct the imagination of the reformer.’ Yet Mary’s reticence reveals her conviction in Shelley’s ability to translate his eagerness into verse:-


16 Shelley, *View*, p.652.


Men of England, stand
Are the lands where your hero lay?
When you crease with toil I saw
The sable when your trumpet blew.

Where you feed I clothed I saw
From the cradle to the grave
You ungrateful! Those who would
Draw your breath, may drink your blood.

Now, now, Men of English Hope
Hear a waster career's song
That these fragment, do not mean frail
The proud Provider of your toil.

Save, ye, lifetime, comfort, calm
Let's those good, hand gentle be
To what is if quite long
With you pain & with
Men of England, wherefore plough
For the lords who lay ye low?
Wherefore weave with toil and care
The rich robes your tyrants wear?

Wherefore feed, and clothe, and save,
From the cradle to the grave,
Those ungrateful drones who would
Drain your sweat -nay, drink your blood?22

The poem re-produces the themes, techniques and tone of political articles such as Cobbett’s pamphlet. The characteristic devices of Cobbett’s prose include anaphora, parallel structuring, rhetorical questioning, and subject-verb-object sentence construction.23 Shelley’s opening quatrains feature each device, and like Cobbett keep the drones offstage to permit the poet-narrator’s uninterrupted address to the labourers. Yet while Cobbett employs first-person pronouns to rhetorically position himself alongside his reader, Shelley’s poet-narrator reveals a spatial detachment through second-person pronouns (‘ye’/’your’). Nonetheless, his empathetic attachment to the labourer’s cause is instead conveyed through poetic device; with liquid alliteration and iambic pulse conveying an ironic awareness of the supposed organic order of aristocratic rule (l.2), and steady trochaic feet and repeated conjunctions (ll.3, 5) conveying the corresponding ‘repetitions of labour-history and its dehumanizing mechanizations.’24 The dialectic between these two processes is embodied in ‘rich robes,’ where alliteration and spondee entwine the tight-weaved toil of the subordinated labourer with the tyrant rich in cultured robe and natural role, each cloaking ‘the reality of the exploiter’s complete dependence on the [labour] of the producers.’25 This enactment of ‘ideological inversion’26 is emphasised through the aural pun on the tyrant’s ‘wear’ and the poet-narrator’s anaphoric ‘Wherefore.’ Deflecting attention from the formal couplet rhyme (‘care’/’wear’), the pun enacts how any conscientious ‘care’ invested by the labourer into robe-weaving is a symptom of inversion, with the labourer distracted from the reality of oppressive social relations within the existing mode of production.27

Having suggested a linguistic dimension to political discourse in the poem’s world, the poet-narrator continues to identify issues critiqued by both Cobbett and the classical political economists:

Wherefore, Bees of England, forge
Many a weapon, chain, and scourge,
That these stingless drones may spoil
The forced produce of your toil?

22 Shelley, ‘Song: To the Men of England’ (1819), pp.186-7 (p.186), ll.1-8. Further references to this work are given after quotation in the text by line number.
26 Hoagwood, Skepticism & Ideology, p.192.
27 Although analysing the poem’s specifically proto-Marxian imagery is beyond the scope of this essay, it is worth noting that Shelley’s metaphor of lethal blood-drinking to embody issues of labour exploitation mirror Marx’s own crucial assertion that ‘Capital is dead labour which, vampire-like, lives only by sucking living labour.’ See Marx, Capital, p.342.
Have ye leisure, comfort, calm,  
Shelter, food, love’s gentle balm? 
Or what is it ye buy so dear  
With your pain and with your fear? (ll.9-16)

While exchanging ‘Men’ for ‘Bees’ levels labourer and sinecure-drone to challenge the conventional, hierarchical image of the social hive, the contrasting stinglessness of individual drones stresses instead their broader systemic function. The labourer-Bees’ forging of weaponry figuratively condenses the process by which tax is extracted from the labourer’s wage to service interest on the national debt (itself signifying warfare). Simultaneously, ‘forge’ conveys both Cobbett and Shelley’s view that the government’s paper-money is nothing more than forged, ‘fabricated pieces of paper.’ The pun embodies the inextricable relationship between these two issues, while foreshadowing the fricative of ‘forced’ to emphasise the related, oppressive social relations. The dual signification of ‘forge’ is mirrored in ‘spoil;’ the latter word embodying both the drones’ plunder of labour-produced commodities and the destruction of (Smithian) ‘real’ labour value through the reification of capital.

The opening couplet of stanza four lists human anthropological satisfactions in reverse order of necessity to evoke how tyranny chips them away (ll.13–4). The couplet-concluding ‘love’s gentle balm’ relates to Malthusian arguments for population control, whose warnings against the procreations of youthful marriage Cobbett’s pamphlet flags as one of the proffered false remedies for labour misery. However, the implied negative answer to the rhetorical question locates both poet-narrator and subject in a world in which Malthusan population controls are already enforced, shocking the reader into recognising other manifestations of labour oppression. The exploitation of essential ambiguities in monetary vocabulary (‘save’/’buy so dear’) to evoke the broader dialectics of political economy forms one of the poem’s central linguistic strategies.

While Shelley’s ‘Song’ forges poetry to convey the abstractions of political economy, he elsewhere describes the tensions which exist between the two disciplines. While broadly opposing the poet’s ‘all-penetrating spirit’ to the ‘political economist’ (mechanical ‘promoters of utility’), he nonetheless perceives the foundational ‘poetry in these [latter] systems of thought’ due to their status as linguistic ‘authors of revolutions in opinion.’ Applying this argument to ‘Song,’ the transition from stanza five to six enacts the poet-narrator’s attempt to reinvigorate the ‘elements of verse’ within the theories of political economy, and in doing so, revolutionise within the poem’s linguistic world the tyrannical mode of production:

28 In contrast, the core moral claim of Fable of the Bees insists that an individualised ‘Fraud, Luxury, and Pride must live / Whilst we the Benefits receive.’ See Bernard Mandeville, The Fable of The Bees: or, Private Vices, Public Benefits (1728), ed. Phillip Harth (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), p.76.
29 Shelley, View, p.651.
33 Shelley, Defence, p.679.
The seed ye sow, another reaps;
The wealth ye find, another keeps;
The robes ye weave, another wears;
The arms ye forge, another bears.

Sow seed, -but let no tyrant reap;
Find wealth, -let no imposter heap;
Weave robes, -let not the idle wear;
Forge arms, -in your defence to bear. (ll.17-24)

Stanza five re-emphasises the repetitive labour processes of ll.3-5, with unvaried iambic tetrameter and parallel structuring conveying the shared graft of different labours. However, the emphatic spondees of stanza six herald the repositioned operative verb at the start of each line, symbolically wrenching the means of production away from each embodiment of exploitation. These imperatives reunite the verb (the labour) with the noun (the commodity), reversing on a linguistic level the reification of capital value from the labour process. 34 Yet having enacted the revolution formally, the poem concludes with an ambiguous tonal turn at stanza seven:

Shrink to your cellars, holes, and cells;
In halls ye deck another dwells.
Why shake the chains ye wrought? Ye see
The steel ye tempered glance on ye.

With plough and spade, and hoe and loom,
Trace your grave, and build your tomb,
And weave your winding-sheet, till fair
England be your sepulchre! (ll.25-32)

One reading suggests a subtle act of free-indirect discourse, through which the tyrant wrenches the poet-narrator’s linguistic medium to reaffirm his authority over the labour force, whose dwellings’ soft sibilants (l.25) jar with the harsh plosive consonance of the newly-demanded verb-acts (‘Shrink’/’deck’/’shake’). A more probable interpretation sees the poet-narrator itself goading the labourers within the poem’s world to enact the decrees of the preceding stanzas, and by extension, goad the reader to follow suit. However, while l.29 echoes ‘The Digger’s Song’ to evoke the direct action of the True Levellers, 35 the closing context of these labour-verbs renders them lethal rather than liberating to the commodity producer, a recourse to social history echoing Cobbett’s own evocation of neglected political struggle.

Bringing some of these observations together, the poem-world of Shelley’s ‘Song’ envisions a dialectical relationship between poetics and political struggle, where linguistic capacity to forge radical outcomes is enacted by the struggle between the labouring ‘unwitting anti-poets,’ 36 and the tyrannical mechanizations of homo economicus. While Shelley’s ‘Song’ is clearly illuminated by the themes of Cobbett’s pamphlet, the poem’s own linguistic

34 Smith recognised the labour-verb homology that entwines commodity production with the production of discourse, arguing that ‘Verbs must necessarily have been coeval with […] the formation of language.’ See Smith, ‘Considerations Concerning the First Formation of Languages’ (1767), in Adam Smith: Selected Philosophical Writings, ed. James R. Otteson (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2004), pp.194-209 (p.202); and Foucault, The Order of Things, p.103.
resources foreground language as constitutive in the production of these themes themselves. Yet while some critics have argued boldly that ‘The economist is [...] a poet, a maker of fictions’\(^{37}\) Cobbett’s own journalistic critique of paper-money seems to engender a degree of scepticism within his own textual productions towards fictional representation. Nearing the end of his article, he insists that the cause of reform is thwarted by the very small-scale producers defended against violent agitation, whose ‘supineness and want of public spirit’ (p.14) engenders an insensibility to literature’s capacity to effect social change:

[Their] humanity [...] is all fiction. They weep over the tale of woe in a novel; but round their “decent fireside,” never was compassion felt for a real sufferer, or indignation at the acts of a powerful tyrant (p.15)

However, Cobbett consistently appeals to his own reader’s aesthetic and religious response to the metaphorical profundity of Exodus, quoting directly from Book 5:6-14 to align the plight of the Israelites with contemporary labour oppression (p.8). Like Shelley’s ‘Song’, Cobbett positions the labouring class itself as the principle receptive audience of the poetic, who unlike Shelley’s poisoning drones and Cobbett’s weeping small-scale producers, are empowered to appropriate the poetic to effect political and economic transformation; to force an exchange of the decent fireside for ‘the electric life which burns within [the poet’s] words.’\(^{38}\)


\(^{38}\) Shelley, *Defence*, p.701.
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The English electoral hustings as depicted by William Hogarth and Anthony Trollope

David Potter

Abstract: This essay discusses aspects of ‘Old Corruption’ in the English electoral process of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, through a comparison of works by the artist William Hogarth and the novelist Anthony Trollope, set against the historical background of political reform.

The term ‘hustings’,1 is used here to describe the riotous outdoor meetings at which parliamentary candidates once addressed potential voters. It is still in occasional use today by political commentators to describe the run-up to an election.2 I shall examine the role of the hustings from 1750 to 1899 by comparing and contrasting the Humours of an Election series painted by William Hogarth (1697-1764), with vignettes from the novels Phineas Finn and Ralph the Heir by Anthony Trollope (1815-1883).

The political system during the latter half of the eighteenth century was heavily biased towards the requirements of the English landowning elite and designed to perpetuate their hold on the levers of power. This was facilitated by a small, all-male franchise, based on outmoded property qualifications and the existence of many ‘rotten’ boroughs with malleable or non-existent voters, where MPs could easily be returned through a mixture of influence, bribery or corruption. When coupled with increasing pressure from the working and middle classes in newly industrialising but inadequately represented areas, the combination was a potentially volatile one. The response from successive Whig and Tory governments was slow, but nevertheless managed to avoid the bloodshed which occurred in continental Europe in response to similar pressures, as Angus Hawkins amongst others has shown.3 Trollope wrote his politically-orientated novels against the backdrop of the earlier Whig Reform Act of 1832. This had begun to dismantle some of the ‘rotten boroughs’, create new constituencies to reflect industrialisation, and broaden the franchise to include all male householders paying an annual rent of £10. Trollope lived to see subsequent legislation in 1867 and 1872 establish a wider, more uniform franchise with secret ballots but remaining a male preserve.4

Hogarth caught on canvas a sense of the corruption which typified the hustings. He had the ability to shine a critical light on topical political themes which were as newsworthy in the 1750s as they would be a hundred years later in the age of Trollope. Hogarth earned his living largely through the sale of an extensive back-catalogue of engraved prints made from his original paintings. His subscribers included royalty, politicians and high society.5 Trollope, like Hogarth a century before, struggled to overcome the relative poverty of his upbringing. His mother wrote novels to support her family and her son later built a significant career in the Post Office, whilst simultaneously pursuing his literary activities. Unlike Trollope, fame came early to Hogarth through the successful reception of his paintings and

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1 Derived from the old Norse for ‘household assembly’, (Oxford English Dictionary; on-line version); it can also apply to the whole election campaign or just the temporary wooden platform on which the candidates were nominated and addressed voters
2 Jon Lawrence, Electing Our Masters: The Hustings in British Politics from Hogarth to Blair, Ch8 Broadcasting Politics (Oxford Scholarship Online 2011); see also Chris Bowley (BBC History Magazine Jan 2010) ‘Changing Times; have we lost the spirit of the Hustings?’ (on-line)
3 Angus Hawkins, Habits of Heart and Mind (pre-publication manuscript, kindly made available to MLA 2011-13)
5 Jenny Uglow, Hogarth; a Life and a World (London: Faber and Faber, 1997), p. 549
prints. Marriage to the daughter of the court painter Sir James Thornhill allowed Hogarth to move in political circles, although he never pursued an active political career.

Trollope on the other hand nursed a long-held ambition to become an MP. Earnings from his writing enabled him to attempt this at the age of 53. As he put it in his autobiography: ‘to serve one’s country without pay [as an MP] is the grandest work a man can do’. Trollope stood as candidate for Beverley in Yorkshire, a year after completing Phineas Finn (1867). His Election Agent told him:

you won’t get in. I don’t suppose you really expect it. ... You will spend £1000 and lose the election. Then you will petition, and spend another £1000. You will throw out the elected members. There will be a commission, and the ['rotten'] borough will be disenfranchised. For a beginner such as you are, that will be a great success.7

As predicted, Trollope did not win the seat but his experiences in the campaign were turned to good use in his novels.

In Hogarth’s era debate was virulent over issues such as immigration, Jewish citizenship, marriage laws and the Julian calendar. The artist saw politics as a fruitful subject and in 1753 devised a single painting, the Election Entertainment (1753-5), to show the ‘feasting, dealing and chicanery’ associated with an English election.8 This eventually expanded into the Humours, four canvasses, each three feet by five, which viewed together are an invaluable historical record of eighteenth-century politics.9 In contrast to Hogarth’s compact pictorial narrative, Trollope’s references to corruption at the hustings were scattered throughout several of his 47 novels.

Hogarth used the fictional setting of Guzzledown, but it was well-known at the time that the Humours, and subsequent engravings and prints, represented a corrupt campaign in Oxfordshire during the 1754 General Election. The Oxfordshire seats had been retained uncontested by the Tories since 1710 but by 1752 the Duke of Marlborough had decided to fight them for the Whigs, who already had a large parliamentary majority. This triggered a two-year pre-election campaign notorious for its unprecedented levels of bribery. Jenny Uglow notes that:

Oxford itself had always had strong Tory and Jacobite loyalties and in February 1753, when the Whigs summoned a mob to endorse their candidates they were assailed with loud cat-calls as they assembled outside Christ Church, one of the only two Whig colleges in the city... The whole campaign was a raucous, drunken, violent procession.10

Hogarth had already suffered financially from pirating of his work and he subsequently laid some of the foundations for modern copyright laws;11 his Election series can be accessed via the hyperlinks given below for each picture. The Election Entertainment shows a public house ‘treat’, organised by the Whigs to gain voter support. Some critics have seen echoes of Leonardo’s ‘Last Supper’ in the arrangement of the figures.12 Epitomising the ignominious depths which a sensitive and unsuspecting candidate might have to plumb,
Hogarth depicts young ‘Sir Commodity Taxem’ listening to the ramblings of an elderly crone, whilst the second candidate is forced to listen to an incoherent pair of drunks. Neither King nor Church was safe from Hogarth; George III’s portrait has been slashed, while elsewhere a fat clereman is shown surrounded by food and drink. The Mayor has collapsed, through over-eating oysters provided by the Whigs, whilst the Election Agent, attempting to keep precise tally with his book of ‘sure’ and ‘doubtful’ votes, has been struck by a brick tossed in by a baying Tory mob. In the centre foreground, a Whig bruiser (reputedly based on a Oxford boxer, Teague Carter) is trampling a Tory banner, ‘Give us back our eleven days,’ a reference to the recent calendar change. To the left, Hogarth shows a Quaker examining an IOU, indicating that bribery recognised no religious boundaries.

In Hogarth’s second picture, Canvassing for Votes (1757), he moves the action outdoors. Both political groups have made their headquarters in pubs. The landlady of the Royal Oak is counting her ‘treat’ money from one of the parties. Two men eating free meals watch from a window as the Tory agent leerily attempts to bribe women on the balcony above with trinkets from a Jewish pedlar; the implication being that the Agent might not support current pro-Jewish legislation but clearly has no qualms about doing business with a Jew. The well-detailed pub sign has a shower of gold cascading from the Treasury into the wheelbarrow of the ‘Candidate for Guzzledown’ (Mr Punch); separately Punch is shown tossing coins to the voters, implying that the Whig government has been using taxpayers’ money to bribe and coerce. In the background Whig supporters are shown being beaten by an angry Tory mob while, centre foreground, another innkeeper is keeping his options open by taking bribes from both sides. Hogarth regularly up-dated successive editions of all his engravings to reflect new political developments, for example the sixth edition of Canvassing for Votes had the teeth removed from the British Lion figurehead to reflect the loss of Minorca to the French.13

Hogarth’s vision of the hustings drew on his own observations and newspaper reports,14 while Trollope, in Ralph the Heir (1869), undoubtedly used his personal experiences as a candidate at Beverley:

> a great proportion of the working men... were freemen of the borough ... and quite accustomed to the old ways of manipulation ... they had always been accustomed to three half-crowns a head in consideration for the day’s work. ‘They’ll fight for Moggs at the hustings’ [said the Agent] ‘but they’ll take their beer and their money, and they’ll vote for us.’15

With the third picture in the Hogarth series we reach the Polling (1758). Now the hustings are brightly decorated with the flags of both parties; blue for the Tories and orange for the Whigs. But they are under siege from a motley crew; here a vote is being solicited from a lunatic and there from an ashen-faced invalid.16 On a background stone bridge a mob surrounds a coach, probably based on a recent incident at Magdalen Bridge, Oxford when a Tory mob attacked a Whig post-chaise and a Tory chimney-sweep was shot dead. Elsewhere Hogarth shows Britannia’s coach toppling as her coachmen gamble and cheat at cards, the implication being that negligence and poor government are laying the nation low.

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14 Oxford Journal 1754 cited by Uglow, Hogarth, p. 551: ‘A receipt to make a vote by the cook of Sir JD (James Dashwood) – take a cottager of 30 shillings a year, tax him at 40; swear at him; bully him, take your business from him; give him your business again; make him drunk; shake him by the hand; kiss his wife; and HE IS AN HONEST FELLOW’.
15 Anthony Trollope, Ralph the Heir, Ch XXIX (Kindle edition).
16 Scull, Soane Hogarths, p.60 cites in comparison, Horace Walpole’s description of a government division crisis of 1741; ‘It was a most shocking sight to see the sick and the dead brought in on both sides’.
The fourth scene shows the ritual of Chairing the Member (1758) where, after their surprise win, the two successful Tories are paraded in triumph through the street, symbolically led by a blind fiddler. The biblical Gadarene Swine, in the shape of a family of Oxford pigs, rush to their destruction. The chimney sweeps take their revenge after the incident in The Polling. Hogarth always added an extra twist to his story and here the chaired member is about to tumble from his precarious perch, as his bearer is struck accidentally by a supporter. The artist comments on harsh reality in a sundial inscribed *pulvis et umbra sumus*, (‘we are but dust and shadows’). In fact there was no triumphal procession after the 1754 Oxford contest because the Tory victory was immediately challenged by the Whigs on grounds of improper voter qualifications. Indecisively the Sheriff of Oxford returned all four candidates, leaving Parliament to favour the Whigs.  

According to Jonathan Jones (Guardian art critic) Hogarth’s hustings captured:

> the squalid political world of the 18th century, many decades before the Great Reform Act started to lay the foundations of modern British politics. Reformers would call the system Hogarth portrays, ‘Old Corruption’. His pictures with slumped burghers ... take delight in just how corrupt.  

Jones praises Hogarth’s skill in catching both the goal of winning at any cost, and the bribery, mayhem, profligacy and venality associated with this goal. Elsewhere Jon Lawrence notes that the hustings were dominated by the rituals which Hogarth, and later Trollope depicted. They were intensively ‘public’ affairs where, as part of the ‘open voting’ process, the rival candidates were expected to address their prospective constituents from the hustings platform. This, and the subsequent public show of hands in favour of a candidate, were supposed to symbolise the ‘inclusion’ of those citizens without a vote. The eventual widening of the franchise obviated much of the need for this. Together with the ‘Secret Ballot’ Act of 1872, this would have a telling effect on the viability of the old hustings.

Although Hogarth chose not to represent the ‘nomination’ stage pictorially, Trollope alluded to it vividly in Ralph the Heir:

> the hustings ... stood in the market-square ... straight in front of the wooden erection, standing at right angles to it, was a stout rail dividing the space for the distance of fifty or sixty yards, so that the supporters of one set of candidates might congregate on one side, and the supporters of the other candidates on the other side. In this way would the weaker part ... be protected from the violence of the stronger ... there were a great many speeches made that day from the hustings, - thirteen in all... first the Mayor, and then the four proposers and the four seconders of the candidates. During these performances, though there was so much noise from the crowd below that not a word could be heard, there was no violence.

Later in Ralph we see Trollope’s own experience at the hustings reflected in his writing, together with his personal views on bribery. The rock which hits Sir Thomas Underwood, the candidate, is reminiscent of the brick which laid the Agent low in Hogarth’s Election Entertainment, showing little had changed in the intervening hundred years.

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17 Scull, Soane Hogarths , p. 62  
18 Jonathan Jones, ‘Why Hogarth’s hustings gets my vote’ (www.guardian.co.uk/art, posted 15.4.2011)  
20 Trollope, Ralph the Heir, Ch XXIX The Election
Sir Thomas Underwood was received with yells, apparently from the whole crowd. What he said was of no matter, as not a word was audible, but he did continue to inveigh against bribery. Before he had ceased, a huge stone was thrown at him and hit him heavily on the arm. At last came the show of hands...the mayor complimented the people on their good behaviour [and begged] them to go away. Of course they would go away but not till they had driven their enemies from the field. In half a minute the...rail that had divided the blue from the yellow—was down, and all those who had dared show themselves as supporters of Griffenbottom...were driven ignominiously from the marketplace.  

As Jon Lawrence points out, some contemporary observers were convinced that greater enfranchisement simply gave more opportunity for corruption and public disorder. Certainly until anti-corruption legislation at the end of the nineteenth century, elections could be affected by the venality of a particular candidate. John Miles (Conservative) hired 1,200 ‘roughs’ and ensured a free flow of beer during the Bristol elections of 1868, which were extremely disorderly with armed thugs outside the polling booths and a widespread destruction of property, reminiscent of the scenes painted by Hogarth a century earlier. Miles was eventually unseated for ‘corrupt and illegal practices’. 

For most of the period under examination, voting was a public act which allowed those who provided the ‘treats’ to see whether they were getting value for money. While Hogarth’s brush could deftly convey specific examples of venality and, with his images of cascading coins or a toppling coach, hint generally at the ‘Old Corruption’, he was inevitably harder-pressed to picture some of the less-specific franchise iniquities. Trollope could weave these into a novel more easily; for example in *Phineas Finn* Lord Brentford owes Finn a favour and to discharge it offers him a Parliamentary seat for the ‘rotten borough’ of Loughton. Finn discusses it with Brentford’s politically-astute daughter, Lady Laura: ‘Papa wants you to come and try your luck there...it isn’t quite a certainty, you know, but I suppose it’s as near a certainty as anything left...my father feels he has to do the best he can with his influence in the borough and therefore he comes to you’. Phineas mused pragmatically that:

Trollope goes on to describe what happens when Finn meets some of the burghers of Loughton; he now gives Phineas a slightly different view of reform:

of course we must support the Earl’ one tradesman said; ‘never mind what you hear about a Tory candidate, Mr Finn,’ whispered a second; ‘the Earl can do what he pleases here’ [Phineas ponders that]...the great political question...up in London was the enfranchisement of Englishmen...and yet when he found himself in contact with

21 ibid
22 Lawrence, Electing Our Masters, ch 2
23 Lawrence Electing Our Masters ch 2
24 Anthony Trollope, Phineas Finn, Ch XXXI
25 Ibid
individual Englishmen ... they rather liked being bound hand and foot, and being kept as tools in the political pocket of a rich man.26

In contrast to Trollope, Hogarth incurred criticism that his work contained ‘disgusting, if not depraved exhibitions of human nature’.27 Later art historians have judged him more kindly and, writing on caricature, Diana Donald endorses Charles Lamb’s assessment that just because Hogarth painted ‘common or vulgar life,’ he should not be excluded from the highest canons of history painting.28 His undoubted talent as a landscape artist is clearly visible for example in the outdoor scenes of his Guzzledown election paintings.

Hogarth’s *Humours* and the political novels of Trollope, such as *Phineas Finn*, have remained continuously on view and in print due to popular demand and artistic respect. The above extracts from Trollope, when cross-referenced with the fine detail of the *Humours*, present complementary examples of that ‘Old Corruption,’ which persisted across two centuries despite the efforts of successive governments. By the close of the nineteenth century, the political landscape depicted by Hogarth and Trollope had finally become more democratic, more representative and less open to corruption. An inevitable by-product of this change was the partial silencing of the noise and hubbub of the hustings as the most practical means of allowing candidates to present themselves to voters and non-voters alike. Arguably however the spirit of the old hustings survives in modern constituency public meetings and when party leaders engage in open debate on live television.

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‘It is the past alone that can explain the present’¹: a comparison between a passage in Disraeli’s *Sybil* and a membership card of the National Chartist Association.

Darren Ormandy

**Abstract:** Benjamin Disraeli’s novel *Sybil, or, The Two Nations* was published in 1845. It is both a story of romantic adventure and a manifesto for the author’s unconventional political perspective, set to the backdrop of the Chartist risings. The membership card of the National Chartist Association is decorated with imagery and symbols that represented the concerns of that radical movement. One was the creative output of an educated, literate member of the privileged classes, the other intended for the ill-educated, probably illiterate masses. This article will compare a short passage from *Sybil* with this membership card. It will examine how both artefacts share areas of common concern, despite their originators’ differences in political and social status, and in particular it will argue how they used interpretations of English history to give authority to their demands for change.

This article will compare two artefacts from the mid-nineteenth century; both are concerned with the need for constitutional reform, and both address the enormous problems caused by social change and the rise of industrialisation. The first is an excerpt from Benjamin Disraeli’s novel about the Chartists, *Sybil, or, The Two Nations*, published in 1845. The second is a facsimile of the membership card of the National Chartist Association from 1839. Although originating from different ends of the political spectrum and offering fundamentally different solutions, there are nevertheless areas of commonality between the two.

Chartism was a political movement of the working classes that rose to prominence in 1838 and was the most significant radical force for the next decade. It sought to address the economic hardships and sometimes atrocious working conditions of ordinary people though a programme of parliamentary reform codified into six demands, the six points of the People’s Charter: universal male suffrage, secret ballot, no property qualification for MPs, the payment of these MPs, equal constituencies and annual parliaments.² Chartism flourished in many areas of the country as a highly social as well as political movement,³ and found its most noticeable expression in huge public processions and demonstrations that the organisers claimed numbered up to a quarter of a million people. To bring home their demands for constitutional change the Chartists organised national petitions that were presented to Downing Street and the House of Commons.

Chartist material artefacts are rare; little has survived and membership cards are no exception. The card examined is no longer in existence, but was reproduced in facsimile in *Landmarks of Local Liberalism*, published in 1913.⁴ It was issued to one James Cheetham; in the year of publication it was in the possession of his grandson, but other details such as the dimensions or card quality are not recorded.

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² Francis Place, *The People’s Charter and National Petition* (Kilmarnock: Kilmarnock Working Men’s Association, 1839).
⁴ A. Marcroft, *Landmarks of Local Liberalism* (Oldham: E. J. Wildgoose, 1913) p. 94.
The membership card displays a set of possibly unconnected symbols that are on first inspection arranged in imitation (critics could say parody) of the Royal coat of arms. There is a central image surrounded by a garter, and a banner underneath. To the left and the right of the garter image there are bearers, with an emblem above it. In the Royal coat of arms the central image is the emblems of England, Scotland and Ireland quartered; on the card this is replaced with a lion rampant. The garter on the Royal arms bears the legend ‘Honi Soit Qui Mal Y Pense’; on the card it reads ‘This Is Our Charter’. The banners on both the Royal coat of arms and the membership card are decorated with roses, shamrocks, and thistles; but on the Royal arms this banner reads ‘Dieu Et Mon Droit’ (‘God and My Right’), whereas the card banner reads ‘God Is Our Guide’, accompanied by the fasces, a bundle of thin sticks bound together representing strength through unity.

The Royal arms are borne by the lion and the unicorn, replaced on the membership card by a man and woman bearing respectively a spade and a rake. The emblem atop of the chartist ‘garter’ is not the crown but a globe. Either side of this globe is a cap of liberty and an English tricolour, and above them an all-seeing eye between a beehive and a sheaf of wheat.

For the Chartists, each of these symbols had important associative meanings. It was a national movement, at a time when a sense of national identity was still at a formative stage.

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5 Marcroft, p. 94.
6 Reproduction of the Royal Coat of Arms. Author: Sodokan. Under the GNU Free Documentation License, this image adapted from full colour to greyscale.
The centres of Chartism were culturally and geographically diverse, ranging from the industrial cities of Manchester, Birmingham, Glasgow, and South Wales, to the merchants in London and agricultural regions such as Wiltshire. In the age before mass-communication local dialects and local customs varied greatly; travel by road was slow and the emerging railways were yet to form a national network. Potent symbolism was its own form of mass-communication; an image could convey a rich ideological theme that would be removed from the constraints of language and understood by all, helping create a sense of shared identity and common purpose that overcame regional variation.

As its subtitle indicates, *Sybil* is a novel about the divided society in Britain in the 1840s. Disraeli portrayed the physical and moral degradations suffered by working people in unflinching detail, relying heavily on accounts from government inspectors who reported their findings in the parliamentary blue books. Disraeli looked for a solution, and the newly-elected Tory backbencher found common ground with a small group of young MPs known as the Young England group. Centred around Lord John Manners, Young England argued for a return to the medievalism of a restored Church and Monarchy. Disraeli’s trilogy of novels, *Coningsby* (1844), *Sybil* (1845) and *Tancred* (1847) can be best understood as emotive manifestos for this ideology, which the author summarised in a General Preface to a reissue of this trilogy in 1870. Appropriately there are six points to his argument. Firstly, power should be returned to the aristocracy and the crown, who in turn must assume their historic role as the protectors of the people. Secondly, the Church must return to its medieval role as the moral centre of English life and provider of essential relief for the poor and destitute. Thirdly, a new commercial code should be established rejecting the ‘Venetian finance’ of the Whig oligarchy. Fourthly, Ireland should be governed ‘according to the policies of Charles I and not Oliver Cromwell.’ Fifthly, the reformed constitution of 1832 should be freed from its Whiggish ‘sectarian bondage’, and lastly the duty of those in government should be to ‘elevate the physical as well as the moral condition of the people.’

The excerpt taken from *Sybil* describes a Chartist delegation visiting one Lord Valentine to ask for his support for the national petition. It is an unusual passage. The delegates await the arrival of the lord in his salon, allowing the author an opportunity to describe the lavish interior. The walls are hung with blue satin and mirrors, the ceiling richly painted. The furniture matching this opulence, and there are bookshelves covered in richly bound volumes. An open book is full of costume illustrations. When Lord Valentine arrives he is attractively described: ‘slender, broad-shouldered, small-waisted, of a graceful presence’, dressed in a small Greek cap and a robe of Indian shawls.

Valentine’s refined tastes could be seen as bordering on dandyism, and that such an aesthete would have little sympathy with the bitter realities of Industrial Britain. But such expectations do not reflect the author’s very particular worldview. For Disraeli, this lord is an exemplar of the aristocratic ideal; his refined tastes show him to be a man close to the author’s heart. In his youth Disraeli shared such dandyish inclinations. There are accounts of him dressed in ‘green velvet trousers, a canary-coloured waistcoat, low shoes, silver buckles, lace at his wrists and his hair in ringlets’ or ‘a black velvet suit with ruffles’. Indeed, the Young England ideology was described as a form of ‘mental dandyism’. But for Young

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9 In Disraeli’s view, ‘Venetian Finance’ is an economic system where government is effected in the interests of business, and the powers of the nominal head of state are severely restricted. Originating in Venice, this system was adopted by the mercantile society in Holland. It was then imported into Britain with the Glorious Revolution of 1688: *Sybil*, pp.18-21.
10 Quoted in Faber, pp. 185-6.
14 Faber, p. 208.
England and Disraeli, the aristocracy are the natural leaders of the people and Lord Valentine’s handsomeness and aesthetic sensibilities prove to the reader, from the author’s perspective at least, that Lord Valentine is a striking example of the aristocratic ideal.

His worthiness is proved as the passage continues. In his ‘clear and cheerful voice, and with an unaffected tone of frankness which put his guests at their ease’ Lord Valentine listens politely to the Chartists’ request for a ‘respectful discussion’ of their claims before stating his position, that he comes from a long line of distinguished noblemen that have quite literally built the country: ‘The finest trees in England were planted by my family; they raised several of your most beautiful churches; they have built bridges, made roads, dug mines, and constructed canals.’ Yet despite the favourable and personal terms with which Disraeli describes Lord Valentine, he allows his Chartist delegates a response that is both reasoned and persuasive; they argue that these achievements were due as much to the working people as to the nobility who led them: ‘What share in these great works had that faculty of Labour whose sacred claims we now urge.’ This is an argument often repeated in Chartist media. Banners proclaiming ‘Labour, The Source Of All Wealth’ and ‘The People – The Foundation – The Source Of All Power’ were displayed in processions in Manchester. The symbolism on the membership card confirms this. Both the man and the woman hold implements of their industriousness. The wheat sheaf, representing bounty, sits above the woman. The beehive, representing since classical times industry and organised productivity, is above the man. The claim that the workers are the root of the nation’s prosperity was more than a general statement of worthiness. Thomas Malthus’s An Essay on the Principle of Population claimed that social prosperity was dependent on population levels held in check, by implication justifying the necessity for disease and high mortality. This assertion was vigorously rejected by the Chartists. They claimed that the world was created with ample sufficiency for all: ‘The verdant earth on which we tread / Was by [God’s] hand, all carpeted; / Enough for all her freely gave’. It was man, in the form of the ruling elite, that starved the population: ‘priests and lords and kings …/ Heedless of our sufferings, / Devour what we produce!’ Overturning this unfair political order would be a revolution in the true sense of the word, returning society back to its natural state. In this context the beehive too has a more revolutionary implication; tradition also states that bees thrive because the ‘idle drones’ are driven from the hive.

In Sybil, as the Chartist delegates survey Lord Valentine’s salon, they notice in the corner of the room ‘a figure in complete armour, black and gold, richly inlaid, and grasping in its gauntlet the ancient standard of England…. “That suit of armour has combated for the people before this,” claims Lord Valentine, “for it stood by Simon de Montfort on the field of Evesham.”’ Disraeli’s choice of historical reference is illuminating. To a modern reader the most notable example of the medieval nobility resisting tyranny would be Magna Carta. But in the 1840s the revolt by King John’s barons had been claimed by the Chartists; their very name, and their ‘People’s Charter’ was consciously reminiscent of the thirteenth-century rebellion. As Disraeli made clear, his Young England manifesto looked to restore medieval prerogatives to the nineteenth-century throne. That de Montfort fought to limit this power, and indeed imprisoned his monarch Henry III, was an inconvenient truth the author seems to have ignored.

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15 Faber, p. 7.
16 Sybil, p. 225.
20 Hymn Seventh, The National Chartist Hymn Book.
21 Sybil, p. 226.
The Chartists, too, looked to history as a justification of their claims but unlike Disraeli they recalled a tradition of popular constitutionalism that was for them both radical and patriotic. That the Chartists should perceive themselves as patriots may seem contradictory. Linda Colley in Britons is dismissive of such an argument; for her this patriotism was a cynically pragmatic strategy, ‘It showed in the marcher’s eyes, at least, what they were doing was legitimate and positively public-spirited.’ This depends on the definition of ‘patriotism’. In the years following the French Revolution Tory politicians in particular sought to define it as a loyalty to the establishment structures of Church and State. For the radical movements its meaning was very different: ‘England’ was a collective term for The People, ‘patriotism’ a loyalty to those people and a striving for their wellbeing. That patriotic symbols can have widely differing interpretations can be seen in the figure of Britannia. Before the French Revolution she was seen as a British Marianne: ‘a national, often libertarian symbol; it was only in the first half of the nineteenth century that she was claimed as a representative of royal and state authority.’

The Chartists were very aware of their national history and saw themselves as inheritors of a radical tradition, a struggle for the rights of The People that was more truly patriotic than support of the ruling establishment. Patriotic and national symbolism features strongly on the NCA membership card. Garlanding the lower banner, in the same fashion as the Royal coat of arms, are shamrocks, roses and thistles. That patriotism would overcome despotism is shown in the central figure of the lion rampant; it stands on top of a cannon, a sword, and other symbols of the military force which the Chartists reasonably expected would be turned against them, while an antique helm – a common feature in the heraldry of the aristocratic families – is overturned and dangled on a chain.

At the base of the membership card a banner bears the legend ‘God Is Our Guide’, a sentiment echoed in a Chartist hymn; ‘God is our guide / Our cause is just.’ In the twentieth century Chartist historians were often dismissive of this religiosity. Friedrich Engels described Chartism as among the first mass movements of the British proletariat, and from this Marxist perspective many aspects of Chartist culture, such as the tea parties, the hymn singing and the Christian Chartist Churches, were seen as a middle-class Victorian respectability attempting to undermine the movement’s true radicalism. Yet this Christian perspective is a further example of how the Chartists looked to history as a justification of their cause, in this case the message of the early church. One of the founders of the Scottish Chartist Church, Patrick Brewster, was clear: ‘Our politics are the politics of the Bible,’ Such churches, often decorated with portraits of the movement’s leaders together with leading radical of the past, were ‘overtly combining political solidarity with a radical social gospel.’ The founder of the Birmingham Chartist Church, Arthur O’Neill, emphasised how their struggle would mirror the experiences of the first Christians: the first day spent at the altar, the second mingling with the masses, the third at the bar of judgment and the fourth possibly in a dungeon.

This recours to the perceived ideals of the early Christians had inspired radical movements before the Chartists. Joseph Rayner Stephens declared that Jesus Christ was ‘the
prince of Jack Cades’ recalling the leader of a popular revolt in the fifteenth century.\textsuperscript{31} Medieval and seventeenth-century radical movements specifically opposed the hegemony of the nobility and the established church, citing the ‘communism’ of the early Christians as their authority.\textsuperscript{32} The jailed Chartist ‘Radical Jack’ stated ‘Jesus Christ was the first Chartist … He taught the doctrines of humility and equality, and even instructed men to sell their garments and buy a sword.’\textsuperscript{33} The monk John Ball, one of the leaders of the fourteenth-century Peasants’ Revolt, reportedly declared ‘Whan Adam dalf, and Eve span, Wo was thane a gentilman?’\textsuperscript{34} The imagery on the NCA membership card recalls this argument. The man and woman either side of the garter both hold implements of agriculture. In particular the man, the Adam, holds a spade for delving. Noticeably, he is not dressed as a labourer. He wears a fashionable coat and waistcoat rather than the practical fustian of the working man; he wears white stockings and shoes rather than boots or clogs. He is a figure of prosperity and even gentility, but by holding his spade he is identified as one of the producers of wealth, a delving Adam who is truly a gentleman.

The meeting with Lord Valentine concludes in an atmosphere of mutual respect. He tells the delegates that he has brought this ancient armour from his family castle because ‘I am to represent Richard Coeur de Lion at the Queen’s ball … and before my sovereign I will not don a Drury Lane cuirass.’\textsuperscript{35} This noble impulse for authenticity is undoubtedly well meant, but it does not stand up to investigation. The armour of the De Montfort period was largely chainmail, plate armour like that described evolving some hundred years later. As a costume for Richard I it is even less appropriate. Lord Valentine’s harness belongs at best to the jousting tournaments at the very end of the medieval period, if not the faux-medievalism of the Eglinton Tournament only five years previously. His description of the armour betrays Disraeli’s romanticised view of the medieval past; it is what he would like the facts to be, rather than the facts themselves.

Arguably the same criticism can be levelled at the Young England philosophy as a whole. Critics were often harsh, describing it as ‘childish bathos’,\textsuperscript{36} only suitable for hopeless romantics,\textsuperscript{37} ‘their remedy for social distress was to erect maypoles in every village’,\textsuperscript{38} Contemporary authors such as Dickens, Kingsley and Trollope shared the general perception that the idea of reviving medieval systems of government was nothing short of ludicrous. Yet in Yeast Kingsley had one of his characters concede that Young England’s ‘little finger is thicker than my whole body, for it is trying to do something.’\textsuperscript{39} In writing his trilogy of novels Disraeli presented his readers with a powerful argument for his unconventional philosophy. When Disraeli first stood for election he did so as a radical; his adoption of the conservative party, and his association with the Young England group, can be seen as a continuation of this radical sentiment rather than a repudiation of it. He took the shocking evidence of working conditions found in the parliamentary Blue Books and, by incorporating it into a work of fiction, brought it to the attention of an audience far wider than the politicians in Westminster. Disraeli’s parliamentary career flourished. He became party leader

\textsuperscript{31} Chase, p. 31.
\textsuperscript{33} Northern Liberator, 7 Sept. 1839, accessed online through the British Library website URL: http://www.bl.uk/reshelp/findhelprestype/news/newspdigproj/ndplist
\textsuperscript{35} Sybil, p. 226.
\textsuperscript{36} Faber, p. 204.
\textsuperscript{38} Faber, p. 205.
\textsuperscript{39} Charles Kingsley, Yeast (London: Parker & Son, 1859), p. 98, quoted in Faber p. 211; with appropriate medievalism the speaker’s name is Lancelot.
of the Conservatives and on two occasions Prime Minister, while his Young England ideology gained greater resonance, as themes of neo-medievalism found popular expression in the art and literature of the latter half of the century. His call for a responsible aristocracy was taken up by his party, and Tory Paternalism was still a vocal ideology in Conservative politics into the 1980s and the years of the Thatcher government. The Chartists were also vilified, but likewise five of the demands of the six-point charter have become established principles of modern political life; only the call for annual parliaments remains unheeded. Both Young England and the Chartists were condemned by their contemporaries for their idealism, and even naivety. But as one old Chartist recalled towards the end of his life ‘It might now be said we were fools, but I answer young people now have no idea of what we had to endure.’

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Ludicrous or lucid? Medieval costumes and royal politics in mid-nineteenth century Britain

Ian Hunter

Abstract: This paper explores the motivation and impact of the use of medieval imagery on the notion of nineteenth century queenship by examination of Sir Edward Landseer’s painting, the 1842 Bal Costumé portrait, and a 1867 group statue ‘The Parting,’ by William Theed. The painting presents Victoria and Albert in formal thirteenth-century costume, the memorial statue portrays the couple dressed in ninth-century Anglo-Saxon clothing. This paper explains how what may initially appear to be ludicrous anachronistic representations of the royal couple can be explained as a lucid attempt to manipulation the symbolic image of Victoria as a wife, mother and head of state. This paper also explores how the use of chivalric medieval iconography, particularly of a Germanic nature, bolstered the position of Prince Albert as consort and husband.

The two artefacts discussed here are Sir Edward Landseer’s (1802-73) Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, 1842, oil on canvas, known as the Bal Costumé portrait, which presents the royal couple in formal thirteen-century court dress and, The Parting, 1867, in marble by William Theed (1804-91), which shows Victoria and Albert in ninth-century Anglo-Saxon clothing.

This paper explores the use of what, at first glance, might appear to be anachronistic and ludicrous medieval imagery on the Victorian concept of queenship. It highlights how Victoria and her advisors used medieval motifs to address contemporary concerns in a manner that helped mould public perceptions of the monarchy, and in particular reframe Albert’s role and relationship to his wife, and confirm Victoria’s triple role as head of state, wife and mother.

The medieval revival of the early to mid-nineteenth century led by Romantic Medievalists such as Scott and Pugin and then Ruskin and Morris, heavily influenced public taste in Britain for the greater part of the century. Much of its art and literature reflected a sense of loss for a pre-industrial society with a coherent system of beliefs and became a retrospective and reactionary search for solace, inspiration and ideals.1 Taking the two artefacts as case studies, it will be argued that the traditional interpretations of the attractions of medievalism can be recast in a different, though complementary light, whereby the medieval past was used not to present a critique of contemporary society or to challenge existing structures of power, but contrarily to bolster, enhance and justify existing structures as part of the long historical tradition of the British Isles. It is this desire to revive the remembrance of the splendour of the past and the wish not to let die some of the nobler traditions of past centuries that the two case studies will examine in more detail.

The painting *Queen Victoria and Prince Albert* (Figure 1) presents a famous image of the fancy-dress costume ball held at Buckingham Palace on May 12, 1842.\(^2\) The painting is a relatively modest 143cm tall and 111.6 cm wide and was commissioned by Victoria for a fee of £420.\(^3\) It is currently located at the Royal Collection at Windsor, though was originally displayed in the ball-room at Buckingham Palace where the ball was held. It is, therefore, an example of public art of sorts, albeit for a rarefied strata of society who were able to view it from one of the public rooms inside the Royal Palace. Landseer was one of Victoria and Albert’s favoured court artists and they offered him substantial patronage.\(^4\)

The painting depicts the 1842 ball which combined lavish entertainment with sumptuous historical costume, themed around a staged meeting between the courts of Anne of Brittany and Edward III. The ball was held ostensibly in aid of the ailing Spitalfields silk industry. Landseer has painted Queen Victoria and Prince Albert in the Throne Room standing beneath a specially designed Gothic canopy decorated with purple velvet hangings. Two chairs of state are visible behind the figures and above their heads on the cloth of honour is emblazoned the coat-of-arms of Edward III, combining French and English quarterings. It was from this alcove that Queen Victoria and Prince Albert greeted over 2,000 guests. Members of the Royal Household were expected to appear in costumes dating in style from the reign of Edward III, although guests, whilst encouraged to wear complementary costumes could dress as they would for any formal ball.

\(^2\) In addition to the 1842 ball two further fancy-dress celebrations were held at Buckingham Palace by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, each in a different style. The second ball, on 6 June 1845, was in early Georgian dress and the third, on 13 June 1851, in the style of the Restoration.

\(^3\) Approximately £34,000 in 2012 purchasing power equivalence.

The Queen’s costume was designed under the supervision of a leading expert on historical dress, dramatist and herald in the College of Arms, James Planche’s influential *History of British Costume*, (1834), and was inspired by medieval examples recorded in sculptures and manuscript illuminations.\(^5\) The design of Prince Albert’s costume owed much to the funeral effigy of Edward III in Westminster Abbey. The Queen is depicted wearing a skirt of velvet, a surcoat of blue and gold brocade, with flowers of woven silver and brilliants over a gold background that was woven at Spitalfields. Her hair is shown folded forward in a style described as *a la Clovis* and surmounted by a gold crown. The Prince wears a velvet cloak over his surcoat both studded with precious stones and royal insignia. He also wears a crown and jewelled state sword. The distinctive pointed shoes and high crowns worn by the royal couple were similarly characteristic of the fourteenth century. Victoria and Albert stand in front of two elaborate Gothic chairs beneath a canopy which bears the Plantagenet arms emblazoned in silver. Two page boys attend the queen and are shown smoothing out her robes. The ball was part of a long royal tradition of masques as noted by *The Illustrated London News* who commented that ‘Masques have been in all ages the recreation of Courts. The name brings with it reminiscences of romance, history, and poetry’.\(^6\) The historical period chosen as the motif of the ball is significant in that it identifies Victoria and Albert with the great age of English chivalry. Remarkably, although Landseer took great care to represent the occasion as accurately as possible this painting is not itself an allegory but an accurate depiction of a real event staged for allegorical purposes.\(^7\)

Like the earlier Eglinton Tournament,\(^8\) the ball was one of the more ostentatious expressions of the medieval revival and whilst the royal couple loved dressing up and playacting they were also inspired by the patriotism and paternalism of medieval monarchy.\(^9\) The painting was completed in August 1846 when it went on public display in the ballroom at Buckingham Palace.\(^10\) The painting’s commissioning represents a remarkable about-turn by Victoria who had noted in her diary in September 1839, about the ‘folly’ of the Eglinton pageant.\(^11\) Yet less than three years later the Queen gave a medieval themed ball at Buckingham Palace. This change was probably due to the arrival in her life of Albert whom she married in February 1840.

The Prince had been bought up in an atmosphere of German Romanticism and took the concept of chivalry very seriously and firmly believed in the application of the code of

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\(^5\) A particularly significant source was the costumes worn on tomb effigies of Philippa of Hainault and Blanche de la Tour in Westminster Abbey.


\(^7\) Despite Landseer’s efforts to ensure historical accuracy an acidic comment from the Royal Collection’s online catalogue notes that ‘Queen Victoria’s silhouette, created through tightly laced stays and multiple petticoats, betrays the fashions of her own era. Equally anachronistically, Prince Albert is shown wearing the jewelled Sword of Offering made by Rundells for George IV’s coronation in 1821.’ http://www.royalcollection.org.uk/collection/404540/queen-victoria-and-prince-albert-at-the-bal-costume-of-12-may-1842.

\(^8\) A pageant staged at Eglinton Park, Ayrshire, in August 1839 which included a lavish re-enactment of medieval games and ceremonies. Attended by over 100,000 spectators over a three day programme it involved 150 knights and their retinues engaging in jousting, tilting, banqueting and finishing with a medieval costume ball.

\(^9\) Queen Victoria mentions the picture in her journal in June 1842 where she notes that she sat for Landseer ‘for the picture of us in our costumes, which is becoming quite beautiful’.

\(^10\) It is interesting to note that the cost and extravagance of the ball was subject to some subtle criticism in the parts of the press who saw it as inappropriately lavish at a time of widespread economic hardship. The comments of the *Illustrated London News* reported read as more of an indictment than a recommendation, when he writes: ‘[...] never did sovereign and Prime Minister coincide in their measures more happily [...] the latter taxes us to relieve the commonality; our gracious and lovely sovereign [...] amerces her nobles through their pleasures, and the gay magnates spend over £100,000 to revive languishing trade! This is the healthful ingredient which lies at the bottom of the overflowing cup of pleasure. This is one of the wholesome conditions by which affluence and rank should preserve their distinction amongst us’. Source, *Illustrated London News*, 14. May, 1842, p.8.

It was Albert’s influence that led to so much time and effort being spent not only on the ball itself but also in capturing the moment in the formal portrait. While the notion of chivalry in the Victorian age was a far cry from the concept as had existed in the Middle Ages, of a noble lady being honoured and served above all others by the ideal knight, but it admirably served Victoria’s propaganda purposes. Victoria’s awareness of the political effect of this link to chivalry is demonstrated by her meticulous preparations for the Bal Costumé event itself and also by her very hands-on involvement in the design and development of the portrait. By role playing the monarch (Edward III) and consort (Queen Philippa) - in whose reign the sun of English chivalry reached its meridian - Victoria was suggesting that her reign would be another golden age reminiscent of her forbear Elizabeth I. Edward was the epitome of chivalry, founder of the Order of the Garter, Philippa represented queenly strength and justice, famously begging her husband for mercy for the burghers of Calais, as payment for safeguarding the kingdom against the Scots in his absence. This representation of Albert as the epitome of an English chivalric knight was to continue throughout his life and to be emphasised even more so after his death.

It is enlightening to study not only the historical accuracy of the representation but the composition of the portrait and the associated image that this has been designed to project. The queen takes centre stage with three people in attendance to her – the white ermine of her cloak drawing the eye to her importance and dominance. Albert is positioned deferentially lower with his foot a step below hers, his knee bent, his hand chivalrously supporting hers, and his figure turning toward her. He is shown taller by almost a head, and peculiarly his face is much larger than hers, too much to be accounted for by perspective alone, since their feet are nearly side by side. By such subtle placing the portrait reverses the relationship of consort and queen and the prince no longer seems subservient to Victoria. One commentator has even gone so far as to claim that ‘Albert holds his lady’s hand, honouring yet ruling her’. This in part reflects the cultural paradox that Victoria faced as representative of both queen and also as a mother and wife. Margaret Homans neatly summarises this dilemma when she states that Victoria resembled England’s other paradigm of queenly greatness, Elizabeth 1, ‘in finding a solution to the anomaly of female rule in being understood as the nation’s wife’. The use of medieval imagery and the composition of the portrait both linked Victoria and Albert to a grand historical narrative and tradition but also found a way to assert that her monarchy would allay fears of female rule. It also served to present Albert in a highly positive and traditional manner which balanced his subservient royal status with the traditional expectations that the husband would dominate.

Victoria was, therefore, a highly visible public symbol of national identity and values as well as representing the ideal role of wife and mother. This caused some tension in presenting the couple, because as queen, Victoria was ranked higher than her husband and

12 Ibid, p. 115.
13 Richard Ormond notes that the ‘royal couple certainly took more than proprietorial interest in Landseer’s pictures of themselves, especially works such as the Bal Costumé, and he often felt hemmed in by their demands.’ See, R. Ormond, Sir Edwin Landseer, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1981), p. 149
14 The chivalric imagery and underlying associations were not lost on contemporary commentators and The Times went as far as to describe the fancy dress ball as ‘a scene of such brilliancy and magnificence that since the days of Charles II […] there has been nothing at all comparable to it in all the entertainments given at the British Court. […] it is a day long past since the chivalry of England have appeared in what might not inaptly be termed the costume of their race’. Source, The Times, 14 May 1842, col 3, p. 6.3.
15 Most famously in a miniature for Victoria’s birthday in 1844 and in his armoured cenotaph effigy in the Prince Albert Memorial Chapel, Windsor commissioned by the Queen in 1864.
17 Ibid p. 4.
there was a need to rebalance the public image so that Albert’s status as husband, rather than consort, could be better compared to the middle class expectations of what a functioning marriage epitomized. Indeed, the marble sculpture (Figure 2) to be explored uses the images and dress of the early medieval period in order to portray Victoria in the role of subservient and adoring wife.

Figure 2: *The Parting* plaster copy of marble original by William Theed (image by the author).

On 20th May 1867 at Windsor Castle Victoria unveiled William Theed’s memorial statue of herself and Albert in Anglo-Saxon costume: a statue that portrays the Queen’s devotion and reverence toward the departed Prince. The sculpture was apparently prompted by the desire of Victoria, the Crown Princess of Prussia, and the Queen’s eldest daughter, to symbolise the historic ties between the German and English people from Anglo-Saxon times to the marriage of the Royal couple.

The commissioning of the statue18 was part of the royal family’s transformation of private grief into a public national project to commemorate the Queen’s lost husband.19 Memorials to Albert were erected in over forty five towns along with the construction not

18 Like Landseer, institutional patronage played an important part in the sculptor’s livelihood. Theed benefited from the patronage not only of the Royal Family but of the Commissioners, under the chairmanship of Prince Albert, responsible for the rebuilding of the Houses of Parliament during the 1850s. See, Benedict Read *Victorian Sculpture*, (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1982), p. 120.
19 It was not unusual for statues of the Royal family to be shown in historical costume. For example Emil Wolff produced a sculpture of Prince Albert in 1844 for Osborne House where he was dressed in Roman attire. John Gibson showed Victoria (also at Osborne) in 1849 in a toga as a Roman in classical costume. Representations of Victoria and Albert in early medieval dress are limited to the creation by Theed.
only of the Royal Albert Hall but the nearby Albert Memorial as the centre pieces in the commemoration. 20

Known officially as *The Parting* the life size sculpture (Figure 2) was unveiled for public display at Windsor but soon moved to its current position inside the main entrance to the Frogmore Mausoleum where both Albert, and 41 years later, Victoria were entombed. Frogmore is rarely open to visitors and so the piece, in contrast to the *Bal Costumé portrait*, can be regarded as a private celebration of the couple’s relationship 21. Interestingly, the statue sits very incongruously within the Italianate Romanesque setting of the Frogmore Mausoleum. The building is in the form of a Greek cross with the walls lined with granite and Portland stone and the roof covered with Australian copper. The interior decoration is in the style of Albert’s favourite painter, the Renaissance painter Raphael, and is an example of Victoriana at its most opulent. 22 All-in-all a very peculiar setting in which to find a pair of Anglo-Saxon lovers. 23

![Image of The Parting sculpture](image)

Figure 3. Detail of *The Parting* (image by the author)

20 So great was the drive to memorialize the Prince that Charles Dickens told a friend that he sought an ‘inaccessible cave’ to escape from the plethora of commemorations. Source, Charles Dickens to John Leech, quoted in Darby & Smith, 1983, p.102.

21 There is no doubt about the importance that Victoria placed on the composition and contents of the mausoleum. In her journals Victoria often referred to the numerous trips she made to Frogmore and she frequently took picnics there. Her Journal entry for 18th December, 1862, states ‘Everyone entered [the Mausoleum], each carrying a wreath…. We were all overcome when we knelt round the beloved tomb…. We gazed on the great beauty and peace of the beautiful statue. What a comfort it will be to have that near me’. Quoted in St-John Neville, *Life at the court of Queen Victoria, 1861-1901*, (Exeter: Webb & Bower, 1984), p. 55.


23 Note the photographs shown here (Figures 2 and 3) are of the plaster copy taken from the marble original which is on display at the National Portrait Gallery, London.
The statue shows the couple as high-status Anglo-Saxons on a beach where presumably Albert is about to board a ship to travel overseas (Figure 3). His sword has been dropped on the beach next to a starfish and scallop shell and he gestures away from the couple in the direction of his journey. The couple hold hands and have each other’s initials woven into the edges of their tunics and each have the other’s name engraved on an arm-band. Victoria, wearing a crown to show her regal status, looks adoringly and longingly into his eyes with her right arm draped informally around his left shoulder. Around the plinth of the original in The Royal Mausoleum at Frogmore is inscribed the words ‘Allured to brighter worlds, and led the way’ taken from Oliver Goldsmith’s poem The Deserted Village (1770). This verse is not present on the copy at The National Portrait Gallery.  

The art historian, Sir Roy Strong has observed that because the Anglo-Saxons were after all German it is perhaps no wonder that Theed should have chosen in 1867 to depict Albert and Victoria in “an astounding tableau that could as easily be relabelled ‘Alfred the Great and his Queen’ so interchangeable had they become”.

This representation of Victoria was both fuelled and fed from a popular impulse in the mid-nineteenth century to locate the very essence of Englishness in Anglo-Saxon roots. Theed has reconceived the royal couple as Anglo-Saxons with Victoria as consort and Albert the king. Theed shows Victoria as the clinging wife rather than stalwart monarch, an image that resonates with other iconic depictions of the royal family as ‘embodying the bourgeois ideals of family life’. This depiction of the couple contrasts with the far more formal and regal representation shown in the Bal Costumé portrait and reflects the fact that the statue was conceived and executed after Albert’s death and with the more private setting of the mausoleum in mind. As such perhaps it reflects Victoria’s more personal view of the nature of the relationship between herself and her husband than formal protocol would otherwise allow.

This sculpture directly links Victoria and Albert into the main stream popular historiography of England and reflects contemporary beliefs as to why Britain had not been swept up by the wave of mid-century European liberal revolutions. The monarch was seen as a critical bastion against revolution and excessive liberal reform. Theed’s statue reflects Victoria’s wish to reach back beyond her most obvious royal predecessor, Elizabeth, to establish her claim to be in the great tradition of English monarchy and to create a connection

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24 Interestingly the scallop shell was a well-known medieval symbol for a pilgrim so this perhaps indicates that the journey on which Albert is about to depart had quasi-religious significance for Victoria as it marked his journey from life to death. The starfish was a symbol of Christ or Christianity as its five legs were said to echo the five points of the pentangle and protect against evil.

25 The quote in context from ‘The Deserted Village’, lines 163 – 176, is: ‘To tempt its new-fledg’d offspring to the skies, | He tried each art, reprov’d each dull delay, | Allured to brighter worlds, a led the way.’


27 Alfred’s reign was often seen by nineteenth century historians (for example, Tory historian Sharon Turner’s, *The History of the Anglo-Saxons from the Earliest period to the Norman conquest*, 1828) as an ideal ruler who used his power to impose order on the turbulence of society. Whig historians such as Macaulay also idealised the early Medieval period as a time of great progress with the Saxon Freeman as the inspiring force of English history that led via Magna Charta to the ‘Glorious Revolution’ of 1688. See, Alice Chandler, *A dream of order – the medieval ideal in nineteenth-century English literature*, (London: Routledge and Paul, 1971), p.88.

28 Roy Strong, *Painting the past: British History and the Victorian Painter*, (London: Thames & Hudson, 1978), p. 44. Interestingly an alternative interpretation of the Saxon portrayal might see Victoria the ‘victim queen’ in need of chivalric defence in the same way as Mary Queen of Scots or Lady Jane Grey were viewed by the Victorians. Artists cast these independent and politically active women as ideal Victorian gentlewomen to suit contemporary perceptions of positive femininity. ‘The gender constructions of chivalry, as presented in the revival of medievalism and the gender spheres of dominant ideology, inform nineteenth-century ideas of queenship’. Source, Clare Saunders, *Women writers and nineteenth century medievalism*, (London: Palgrave, 2009). P. 104. However this arrangement was reciprocal, and Victoria was using images of medievalism to support and develop her own position, just as Caroline of Brunswick had incited chivalric support earlier in the century in her struggle for recognition as queen.
between a heroic past and the present. At some deep psychological level the Queen in a number of her art commissions, in addition to the two which are discussed here, was attempting to help society understand the Victorian present through the lens of the past, and thereby better understand the concept of Englishness as rooted firmly in the Royal family and in the continuities and traditions of English history.²⁹

A further reason why Victoria and her advisors used medieval motifs to bolster the monarchy was the position of Prince Albert. Lytton Strachey in his 1921 biography of Queen Victoria identified concerns about the corruption of Englishness presented by the Queen’s choice of husband: ‘What was immediately and distressingly striking about Albert’s face and figure and whole demeanour was his un-English look’.³⁰ Elizabeth Langland claims that contemporaneous anxieties about the royal family’s national allegiance find expression in journals like Punch, who adopted a xenophobic stance of ‘anti-Albertism’.³¹ For Victoria and her advisors this meant that that Albert’s image required careful manipulation to make him more acceptable to English society. Victoria was determined to link Albert with English interests and sought to use historical settings to ‘reconfigure the Queen and her Consort as Anglo-Saxons and as guarantors of ancient British liberties in the manner of Alfred the Great linking to the joint heritage of the English and German nations’.³²

Margaret Homans and Adrienne Munich have argued that whilst Victoria had little political power in decisions about matters of state (though she had influence) her power was largely ideological. Victoria was central to the ideological and cultural signifying systems of her age and Victoria reflected back to her subjects their own values to reassure them about the comprehensibility of their lived reality.³³ The representations of the monarchy with its attendant medieval iconography provided by Victoria was an effective strategy both for handling the public relations problem posed by female rule in a male dominated society and, perhaps, more importantly, for bolstering England’s transition to parliamentary democracy, post the 1832 Reform Act, and the embedding of an constitutional monarchy as a key institution.

Accepting the limitations of the evidence, an argument can be sketched, from these two works of art, that, just as the early modern cult of Gloriana manipulated medieval chivalric ideals to augment support for Elizabeth 1, and inspired a surge of Elizabethan medievalist works of art and literature, so Victoria similarly developed her image as central to the whole cultural movement of Victorian Medievalism. By this manipulation of image Victoria strengthened the concept of the monarch as symbolic parent for the nation and used the concept of queenship to project her role as both iconic mother of the nation and head of state of what was then the greatest power on the planet.

By employing medieval images Victoria and her advisors aligned the institutions of the monarch with that of the middle class family. Her family role was that of the perfect wife to her beloved husband, Prince Albert. As queen she might be sovereign, but as wife she was happily subjugated and an exemplary ‘everywoman’ to and for her subjects and her presentation in images of the ninth and fourteenth century served to lucidly rather than ludicrously reinforce this representation. Romantic Medievalists had employed Medieval

²⁹ Regretfully enquiries at the Royal Archives in Windsor indicate that there are no surviving documents relating to the commissioning of Theed’s work so the exact nature of the discussions between the sculpture and his surviving subject are lost to us.
³² ibid, p. 15.
models as a critique of contemporary society to challenge existing structures of power. Victoria deployed the same iconography and historical linkages contrarily to bolster and justify existing power and authority structures at a time of huge political, economic and social change. It is fascinating that two such different groups used the same historical idiom to refer to the past and to justify very different interests, agendas, aspirations and perspectives on society. Though the desired outcomes were different there was a shared motive for medieval historicism; the disquiet shared by both Romantics and conformists at the dislocation of the social fabric caused by changed economic relationship through industrialisation.

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Josephine Butler (1828 – 1906) as depicted by Alexander Munro in sculpture (1855) and obituary (1907).

Philippa Toogood

Abstract: The purpose of this essay is to explore the extent to which Alexander Munro’s 1855 sculpture of Josephine Butler and her obituary, published in 1907 are helpful when attempting to explore her life and achievements. The two artefacts will be examined in order to assess how much synthesis can be found between them and the impression of Josephine Butler which they present. George and Josephine Butler met Alexander Munro when he was commissioned to produce statues for the Natural History Museum in Oxford. The friendship between Munro and the Butlers continued after they left Oxford. Munro sculpted Josephine Butler three times and also produced several medallion sculptures of the couple’s only daughter, Evangeline, who died aged 5. Josephine was the leader of the Ladies’ National Association for the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts. She actively campaigned against the imprisonment of women accused of prostitution in Lock hospitals.

Josephine Butler (1858 – 1906), the notable Victorian reformer and social activist, is a much written about and discussed character. Her pioneering work with prostitutes and her (eventually) successful campaign to repeal the Contagious Diseases Acts mark her out as an extraordinary individual. A wealth of letters and her own personal writings contribute to an impressive archive of information on her life. This is further enhanced by a number of significant biographical works including George and Lucy Johnson’s autobiographical memoir Josephine E Butler which is composed almost entirely of Josephine Butler’s own writing and first appeared in 1909 less than three years after her death.

Given Josephine Butler’s extensive writing and her very public life a comparison between her obituary, published in the Times on Wednesday 2nd January 1907, and Alexander Munro’s 1855 bust of Josephine Butler, offer an interesting insight into how she was represented by her contemporaries. These two artefacts, one predating the other by more than fifty years, each present a portrait of Josephine Butler and potentially give, when seen together, a fuller picture of her life and character than either the written work or material object can do independently. Beyond this they also give an indication of what is deemed notable or of importance at a particular time in history. Both of the artefacts contribute to our impression of her personality and interests.

The original 1855 sculpture is now in the possession of Girton College Cambridge. Interestingly, Josephine Butler argued with the approach that Girton took towards women’s

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1 Josephine Butler firstly invited various women who had been mistreated into her home. Later she set up her own ‘House of Rest’ for disadvantaged women. She had no clear plan, other than to help: “my sole wish,” she explained, “was to plunge into the heart of some human misery, and to say (as I now knew I could) to afflicted people, “I understand. I, too, have suffered.” As a result of rescuing many young girls from the workhouse, and either finding them homes or taking them into her own household, Josephine worked to set up her own refuge, believing it to be a divine calling.


2 See page 9

3 George W Johnson and Lucy A Johnson, ed. Josephine Butler E Butler An Autobiographical Memoir (Bristol; J W Arrowsmith, 1909)

4 The bust was given to the College by Agnata Butler in 1918. This is recorded in the College’s Council Minutes, volume 21, p286, 30 April 1918 (Archive reference: GCGB 2/1/21).
university education\(^4\), finding herself favouring the educational pedagogy of her friend Anne Clough\(^5\) (the first principle of Newnham College).

Alexander Munro’s 1855 bust of Josephine Butler is carved in white marble and stands at 67 cm high. It is 46 cm wide and has a depth of 27 cm making it almost life sized. The bust is in the round and free standing. As Tim Barringer, Art Historian, comments, ‘her drapery – it is hardly conventional Victorian dress – reveals one bare shoulder’\(^7\). Her hair is adorned with seven stars, perhaps a reference to Rossetti’s poem about the damsel looking down from heaven.\(^8\) There is a similarity between the bust and other sculpture of the time, for example Sir Francis Leggatt Chantrey’s marble bust of Queen Victoria 1841 (figure 5). The difference is that Victoria retains her regal pose in the position of the drapery and the addition of the tiara, as opposed to Josephine Butler who is portrayed with her drapery more unconventionally positioned and her hair loose. Munro himself was at pains to emphasise that the 1855 bust was not really a portrait at all. He ‘considered the treatment so unusual that the work would not be recognised as a portrait at all and that there would be ‘a likely enough supposition that it is only an “ideal” subject’’.\(^9\) This description offers the viewer an insight to his work. He was perhaps not aiming to present a portrait of Josephine Butler but instead a bust of a beautiful woman, inspired more by poetry and his own idea of beauty than by Josephine Butler herself. The term ideal should be applied to the bust indicating not a representation of the object, in this case Josephine Butler, but of the thought of the object.

Josephine Butler was regarded as a great beauty. The portrait by the artist George Richmond, for whom Josephine Butler had sat in 1851 before her marriage, was much admired and can still be seen at the National Portrait Gallery (see figure 6). The main image (figure 1) is a photograph by W Tams, dated c.1924 showing the sculpture from the front. Further, more recent images from a Sotheby’s sale of a plaster copy of the bust by Munro show the front, side and rear views of the sculpture.

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\(^5\) Anne Clough argued that her female students should attend lectures alongside their male colleagues and both she and Josephine Butler were of the opinion that all educational resources should be available both men and women.

\(^6\) Barringer; Rosenfeld and Smith *Pre-Raphaelites Victorian Avant-Garde* (London: Tate Publishing, 2012) p. 158.

\(^7\) The blessed Damosel lean’d out
From the gold bar of Heaven:
Her blue grave eyes were deeper much
Than a deep water, even.
She had three lilies in her hand,
And the stars in her hair were seven.

Figure 1: Black and white photograph (circa 1928) of a marble bust of Josephine Butler
Photographer: W. Tams. Reference ZBU/E/3/A/11/16, Northumberland Archives. The
information that follows relates to the bust, not the photograph.
Munro; Alexander, *Josephine Butler*, 1855, marble, 67 cm x 46 cm x 27 cm, Girton College
Cambridge

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10 http://www.experiencewoodhorn.com/archive.ZBU~E~3~A~11~16
Figure 2: Photograph of a plaster copy of the bust, signed ALEX MUNRO Sc. It is in plaster and stands at 68cm. (26 3/4 in.) tall. It was sold in 2010 by Sotheby’s for 4,500GBP. Plaster copy of the Josephine Butler Bust.


ibid

ibid
Figure 5: Queen Victoria

Replica by Sir Francis Leggatt Chantrey, marble bust, 1841 (1839); 27 3/4 in. (705 mm) high. Purchased with help from George Harland Peck, 1913, Primary Collection, National Portrait Gallery 1716.

Figure 6: Josephine Elizabeth Butler (née Grey)\textsuperscript{14}

George Richmond, pastel, 1851; 22 7/8 in. x 17 1/2 in. (581 mm x 445 mm).Purchased, 1999, Primary Collection, National Portrait Gallery 6482.

The bust offers the viewer one view of Josephine Butler, captured at a particular time and idealised by Munro. At the time when the sculpture was made Josephine had not established a particular reputation for herself outside of her role as wife to George and being a woman of beauty and intelligence. The obituary offers a very different image of Josephine Butler. Josephine Butler’s obituary was published in the \textit{Times} on 2\textsuperscript{nd} January 1907, appearing on page 8 in the Court Circular and News section just three days after her death on

\textsuperscript{14} George Richmond, pastel, 1851; 22 7/8 in. x 17 1/2 in. (581 mm x 445 mm).Purchased, 1999,Primary Collection, NPG 6482. http://www.npg.org.uk/
30th December 1906. The obituary is not credited to a particular author. The readers would have been literate and therefore a certain level of education can be assumed. The editor at the time was George Earle Buckle. The Times was a broadsheet newspaper with a close and small typeface (Times New Roman was introduced in 1908). The obituary of Josephine Butler is extensive, reflecting her importance as a national figure. The role of an obituary is to offer an overview of an individual’s life and achievements. There is the advantage for the writer of being able to draw on the whole of a life. For this reason the interest for the historian lies both in the accuracy of the account and the choice made by the author as regards what is significant when examining the life and achievements of a particular individual. The style of writing is formal giving a factual emphasis to the obituary. The author’s choice of important dates and events create a framework onto which a more subjective and personalised account is woven.

Butler’s obituary begins with this framework. ‘Josephine Grey was a Northumbrian, the daughter of John Grey, of Dilston, where she was born on April 13, 1828.’ This simple statement places Butler in context, her place and date of birth and reference to her father which perhaps indicates that he was also a person of note.

The obituary continues by chronologically detailing the life of Josephine Butler in terms of both her personal life and her geographical location. Following her marriage to George Butler in 1852, Josephine Butler and her husband arrived in Oxford, setting up a modest home on The High as George Butler took up his position as an examiner at the university schools. The Butlers moved from Oxford to Cheltenham then Liverpool, Winchester and finally, following George Butler’s death in 1890, returned home to Woolner in Northumberland.

For a woman of such independence of thought and notable political activity, it is curious to the twenty-first-century reader that each different period in her life should be described not through her own activity but her husband’s. George Butler, a tutor at Durham University came from a distinguished clerical and academic family although it would be reasonable to argue that his own potential was never fully realised due in part to the lack of society’s acceptance of his wife’s political and humanitarian activities. Josephine Butler’s domestic location was dictated by George’s professional life but this life was curtailed by her passionate adoption of the cause for the plight of fallen and failed women. Despite this they are described as being a very close and mutually supportive couple, each assisting with the work and interests of the other:

The first five years of her married life were spent at Oxford, where she proved a most capable and sympathetic helpmate to her husband, drawing maps for his lectures, or puzzling out old Chaucers in the Bodleian.

The description here firmly places Josephine Butler as wife and supporter. In later life it was George Butler who would enthusiastically embrace his wife’s work in social reform.

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15 The Times (London, England), Wednesday, Jan 02, 1907; p.8; Issue 38219
16 He had, with important political connections to the reformers of the time due to his relationship with the second Earl Grey who, ‘employed John’s services and depended upon his judgement as a regional Whig leader in the tumultuous years prior to the 1832 Reform Bill.’ (see Nolland p. 23)
17 Josephine Butler is remembered as a feminist and reformer. Nolland makes the following observation: ‘According to Judith Walkowitz, she involved herself with a dozen different moral, social and political reform movements which ranged from anti-slavery, republicanism and female suffrage to medical reform, temperance and social purity. She published her first work, The Education and Employment of Women in which she argued that the millions of self-supporting women in Britain needed a broader range of work options than the existent ones of sewing, domestic service and teaching.’ Nolland p. 215
18 ‘Fallen’ here refers to those who had adopted prostitution as a means of income. ‘Failed’ refers to those let down by society, through the legal constraints of different Acts, such as that for Contagious diseases.
19 The Times (London, England), Wednesday, Jan 02, 1907; pg.8; Issue 38219
The description of their Oxford life is brief but other more detailed biographical accounts of Josephine Butler give greater colour and depth to the time which the couple spent in the city. Oxford in the 1850s was a place of contradictions. In her 2001 biography Jane Jordan writes that:

It took some time before Josephine Butler could admit to herself that the wisdom of Oxford was undermined by many areas of deplorable ignorance which resulted in dangerous prejudices and bigoted judgements.20

The perception of Josephine Butler by those in Oxford society at the time seemed to be more focussed on her beauty than it was on her lively mind and passionate moral and religious convictions. She is described by Sir William Hamilton who sees her out riding as having ‘firmness [...] a general sense of harmony! And a light figure!’21

It was during these early years of married life in Oxford that Josephine Butler met Alexander Munro. Munro skirted the pre-Raphaelite movement, not one of the original seven but closely enough involved to have been asked by Dante Gabriel Rossetti to contribute the carved tymanum over the entrance to the Oxford Union building. In 1855 George Butler was given the task of looking after Munro, offering him lodgings in the Butler’s home. Munro had been commissioned to produce some of the statues for the interior decoration of the Oxford University Museum of Natural History (he produced six, including Newton and Galileo).

One possible question which arises in comparing this bust to the more regimented and formulaic content of her obituary is why a woman of such high moral and religious ideals would choose to be presented in such a fashion? Josephine Butler was familiar with the work of Dante Gabriel Rossetti and George Butler had assisted Rossetti with some work on a translation of Dante Alighieri. The Butler’s had visited Rossetti’s studio and there is clear reference to the Rossetti poem *The Blessed Damozel* in the sculpture. The portrayal of Josephine Butler by Munro is according to Jane Jordan:

> a most incongruous one [...] for Josephine. The gaze is resolute, and recognizable, but the long hair is unbound, flowing loosely down her back and she is wearing nothing but the simplest drapery, a plain chemise which reveals one naked shoulder.22

Josephine Butler was influenced by her husband’s interest in renaissance art which perhaps explains her willingness to be portrayed in such a manner. This might imply that she did not see a contradiction between a sculpture which showed femininity and beauty and campaigning for the rights of women in society.

Munro became a highly respected sculptor, his other sitters included Gladstone and his work was exhibited frequently including at the 84th exhibition of the Royal Academy of Arts in 1852. As a guest in the Butlers home he would have had a more intimate relationship with the family than would be usual for a portrait sculptor and yet the drapery and the loose hair seem at odds with the picture of Josephine Butler which can be drawn from the other writings about her. Munro sculpted Josephine Butler more than once; the second bust shows a more demure and formal figure, shoulders covered and hair in a long plait down her back. Josephine Butler herself is said to have favoured this particular image, ‘Butler chose to represent herself by a photograph made after 1872 of the second Munro bust which she

21 Ibid page 36 (note that this is Sir William Hamilton, metaphysician 1788 – 1865)
22 Ibid p. 41
circulated as a carte-de-visite.23 The second bust was finished in 1865, the year in which he referred to the sculpture in a letter to George Butler as his ‘Beatrice Marble’. This second bust is described by Jordan in the following way: ‘Josephine wears a plain chemise drawn up to the neck, over which hangs a simple antique yoked dress. The eyes are lowered, the gaze introspective and solemn, even grave.’24

There is the possibility that the effect on Josephine Butler of the tragic death in a domestic accident of Evangeline, her only daughter, in 1864, is shown in this second bust. The change in position and focus reflects the change in Josephine Butler’s outlook. It was after Eva’s death that her work with disadvantaged women which had begun in Oxford really escalated. The author of the obituary is keen to identity Josephine Butler’s motivation for her work with poor and desolate women with her own personal tragedy, ‘At Cheltenham [...] a still greater trial was in store – the death of her only daughter by falling over a banister.’25 Butler herself is quoted as saying that she was ‘possessed with an irresistible desire to go forth and find some pain keener than my own.’26 Munro made a medallion portrait Eva Butler, having taken the image of her death mask showing Munro’s continued contact with the family after their move from Oxford to Cheltenham.

Figure 7:28 Eva Butler with a Dove, 21 x 18 7/8 in, Marble, serpentine (mineral – sometimes used for headstones, an appropriate choice given the posthumous nature of the work). Munro, Alexander, Circa 1864, Private Collection. Photograph Type: A-negative Negative number: A92/41

23 Ibid p.158
24 Ibid p.42
25 The Times (London, England), Wednesday, Jan 02, 1907; pg.8; Issue 38219
26 Ibid
27 See figure 7
28 Eva Butler with a Dove, 21 x 18 7/8 in, Marble, serpentine (mineral – sometimes used for headstones, an appropriate choice given the posthumous nature of the work). Munro, Alexander, Circa 1864, Private Collection. Photograph Type: A-negative Negative number: A92/41

The obituary associates some of the movement of the Butlers around the country with Josephine Butler’s ill health, ‘in Cheltenham her health greatly improved’,29. It is also at pains to emphasise George’s support of Josephine Butler’s work with poor and displaced women despite a keen ‘happiness (like hers) centring in domestic life’30. This should be seen in conjunction with the overall tone of the obituary which is portraying Josephine Butler as wife first and reformer second. The author of the obituary points out that when the Butlers moved in 1866 for George Butler to take up the position of Principle of Liverpool College into the Butlers’ house was ‘crowded as many as possible of the most friendless girls who were anxious to make a fresh start’31.

It was in Liverpool that the substantive part of Josephine Butler’s work with prostitutes began. She visited the workhouses and the quay, the hospitals and ‘oakum picking sheds’32. Throughout their account of Josephine Butler in the obituary, the author is at pains to recognise George Butler’s support of his wife’s campaign, emphasizing again their close relationship and solid marriage. George Butler encouraged her, recognising the ‘call of God to conflict’33 and whilst she initially ‘shrank back’,34 Josephine Butler eventually responded fully and wholeheartedly to the call to help lead a movement that would be successful in its aim of repealing the Contagious Diseases Acts.

The Contagious Diseases Act was first passed in 1864 with further alterations and amendments added in 1866 and 1869 by which time it covered 18 districts, mainly those with working docks. The act allowed the police to arrest prostitutes and examine them for venereal disease. If found to be infected a woman could be imprisoned until cured. The objection to the acts focussed on the abysmal treatment of women in the arrest and examination process and the lack of equality, men were not subject to the same treatment despite also being capable of carrying the disease.

It is in Josephine Butler’s initial reaction to the request for her help that the obituary offers its fullest description of her:

A woman of extreme delicacy and refinement of mind, with a horror not only of contact with vice, but of publicity and agitation, she was only driven to action by passionate love of purity and justice, and boundless love of her unhappy sister-women.35

This statement about Josephine Butler does not seem to fit well with the woman portrayed by Munro. Her ‘delicacy’ could be a reference to the poor health which she suffered but her forthright approach to the rights of women is certainly not delicate. Speaking at a public meeting she described the medical examinations used to assess whether or not prostitutes were carrying venereal disease as ‘surgical rape’, surely not the words of an extremely delicate woman.

The obituary offers a reasonably detailed account of the progress of the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Act through parliament in the 1870s and 1880s, the first attempt in 1873 having failed with two thirds of the house voting against the repeal. When the movement was finally successful in 1886, Josephine Butler did not cease her work but continued to campaign for the rights of prostitutes, shifting her focus onto the colonies, notably India where the system of arresting and forcibly hospitalising prostitutes suspected of carrying disease

29 The Times (London, England), Wednesday, Jan 02, 1907; pg.8; Issue 38219
30 ibid
31 ibid
32 ibid (common term for prisons)
33 ibid
34 ibid
35 ibid
continued. The obituary does not mention Josephine Butler’s work in promoting the higher education or women or her connection to Newnham College, Cambridge. This is an interesting omission and one which would possibly lead the reader to the conclusion that her only work was with the disadvantaged women that she encountered in Oxford, Cheltenham and Liverpool and the political campaign surrounding the repeal of the Act. The obituary therefore does not fully illustrate the life of Josephine Butler but selects those aspects of her work which are deemed, by the author, appropriate to commemorate her and her legacy. Ending with a powerful and highly complementary description of Josephine Butler, the obituary draws together a number but not all of her commendable characteristics and actions.

Mrs Butler is described by one of her fellow-workers as ‘an almost ideal woman; a devoted wife, exquisitely human and feminine, with no touch in her of the “woman of the platform,” though with a great gift of pleading speech; with a powerful mind, and a soul purged through fire.”

It is this description which perhaps synthesises most successfully with the Munro portrait bust of 1855. The two sculptures and the smaller but exquisite medallion sculpture of Eva Butler cradling a bird (figure 2) are all typical of Munro’s sentimental and idealised style which evokes a level of reflection and pathos in the viewer.

As an artefact the 1855 bust tells us little of Josephine Butler’s socially and politically reforming works. It represents a beautiful young woman, focussed straight ahead and dressed in a style that would require a level of bravery and disregard for the social expectations of the period. As the bust perhaps presents an ‘ideal’ so does the obituary. The more radical and unacceptable aspects of Josephine Butler’s reforming work are not directly referenced and her life is seen in conjunction with that of her husband. Munro offers us no image of George Butler, only of Josephine Butler and later Eva. The obituary offers a formal and assumedly objective portrait of Josephine Butler, the bust a more personal and intimate image. Both artefacts present an ideal, the bust of a young and prosperous woman and the obituary of a slightly fragile but religiously committed member of society. In combination, as artefacts which show the image and life of one woman each adds a depth that both highlights the achievements of the other and exposes their deficiencies. The artefacts show more about the standards of the time, of beauty, social activity and the perception of women than they show us about Josephine Butler herself.

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36 The Ladies National Association is recorded as having 811 members and 57 branches in 1871.
37 *The Times* (London, England), Wednesday, Jan 02, 1907; pg.8; Issue 38219
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When costume became fashion in Victorian dress: An exploration of historicity, exoticism and convention in E.W. Godwin’s ‘A Lecture on Dress’ and Lady Clementina Hawarden’s ‘Study from Life’

Kenya Hunt

Abstract: Many modern day ideas about women’s dress in fact have their origins in concepts that began in the Victorian era: beauty and utility, historicity and conventionality. As a result, it is important to look at the two poles of adornment and how they framed a battle over woman’s dress that would impact the way future generations viewed the subject. This essay will explore the many ways in which they converged in Victorian design through the examination of two works by two notable Victorian artists: ‘A Lecture on Dress’ by Edward William Godwin and a selected image from Lady Clementina Hawarden’s black and white photographic series, ‘Study from Life’. This essay will also argue that the blurring of the lines between historic costume and contemporary dress led to a permanent transition in personal display and adornment.

‘You look at paintings from whatever century, but you can only date them by the clothes. That means fashion is important’, the couturier Karl Lagerfeld told Women’s Wear Daily recently. ¹ His statement is true for perhaps every period of art history but the nineteenth – specifically its latter half, when public dissatisfaction with the fashions of the day gave birth to a revolutionary movement. As the historian Gilles Lipovetsky put it, ‘Fashion as we understand it today emerged during the latter half of the nineteenth century’.² But it was a general frustration with the contemporary dress of Victorian England that led to a transformation that would allow fashion to become what Lagerfeld calls ‘important’. Ironically, this displeasure was birthed within artistic circles as the arbiters of taste increasingly found Victorian fashions unsuitable for their work.

Painters, designers and literary figures such as Edward William Godwin (Figure 1), William Morris, the members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and Oscar Wilde criticised the popular, perennially rotating trends that, according to Godwin were ‘under the despotic sway of the French milliners and west-end tailors’.³ Morris noted that the fashion of the period sat at ‘the lowest depth’ of ‘the degradation of costume’.⁴ ‘The lesser art of dress’ was routinely debated in public forums, private forums and journals.⁵ In particular, controversial trends such as the imposing crinoline skirt, which the couturier Charles Frederick Worth and his patron the Empress Eugénie of France popularised, and the tight-laced corset, which Victorians widely accepted as the cornerstone of any respectable woman’s ensemble, were condemned and mocked by cultural critics, contemporary artists and dress reformers alike. However, closer study demonstrates that the subject of dress was also more seriously discussed.

⁵ Morris, ‘The Lesser Arts of Life’.
As the author Margaret Beetham put it, ‘Dress and fashion were, of course, central to the construction of the Society Lady…’\textsuperscript{6} This made dress a subject of great interest for visual and literary arbiters of taste, appearing with loaded meaning throughout the work of Victorian artists and sparking a national dialogue.

As ideas about the way women should dress began to change, the spirited debates and reform crusades that followed generally reflected two schools of thought, that of beauty and that of utility. Together these polar ideas laid the framework for fashion’s evolution from being driven simply by style to taking in more social and artistic considerations. That change yielded the Victorian revolution in women’s fashion – specifically, the style of dress that emerged in the Arts and Crafts and PRB circles and converged to become artistic and aesthetic dress. This essay will explore that process through two artefacts, Godwin’s ‘A Lecture on Dress’, given in an unknown public setting in 1868, and a selected image from Lady Clementina Hawarden’s black and white photographic series ‘Study from Life’ (Figure 1), which is believed to have been created in 1863 or 1864. Through the examination of these works, this article will explore how they reflected an important blurring of boundaries between historical costume and contemporary dress that would lead to a permanent transition in personal display and adornment.

Figure 1: Lady Clementina Hawarden, ‘Study from Life’, 1863-1864, albumen print from a wet collodion negative, 236 mm x 20.4 cm, Victoria & Albert Museum, London
But first, we must consider the cultural backdrop against which these works were created, most notably the beginnings of aestheticism. In many ways Godwin was a pioneer of aesthetic dress. Arthur Lasenby Liberty, the most influential purveyor of artistic dress of his day, appointed him director of his eponymous department store, Liberty of London, which served as the unofficial outfitter of the aesthetic circle. There, Godwin established a philosophy about personal adornment and the manufacture of clothing that would influence a progressive subculture of artistic and literary men and women, including Oscar Wilde. While little is known about Lady Hawarden’s life outside of the expansive oeuvre she left behind, it can be inferred that she identified with the creative groups of the day. A mother of ten, she photographed her adolescent daughters for personal pleasure. Though she displayed her works in two public exhibitions with the Photographic Society of London, winning a silver medal at both in 1863 and 1864, she was largely considered an amateur. The majority of her oeuvre, which encompassed more than 800 images, ended up pasted to family photo album pages, until they were later ripped out and donated to the Victoria & Albert Museum in 1939. Her work never achieved the same popularity enjoyed by her contemporary Julia Margaret Cameron, though was greatly admired by a small number of creatives of the day including Lewis Carroll and Oscar Gustave Rejlander.

Whether or not Godwin and Hawarden’s paths ever crossed among Victorian England’s artistic circles remains unclear, but their work is steeped in the same dogma, which emerged in the mid-nineteenth century and was advanced by the Arts and Crafts and Pre-Raphaelite Movements.

As Victorian England grappled with the turmoil of an increasingly industrialised society, the certainties in life became a figurative anchor to hold on to. And so a heightened sense of nostalgia pervaded the air, its perfume permeating the stench of overall discontentment with the state of things. Godwin’s lecture reflects this mood and how it was most plainly mirrored in dress, which was ingrained in the fabric and identity of nineteenth-century culture. Whether it was the cut of a sleeve or the gold trimming on a robe, Godwin’s lecture freely referred to ‘the days of old’ as the standard to which contemporary dressmakers should have aspired. He repeatedly looked to the past as the golden age of dress. He wrote: ‘One thing however worth noticing is that both in classic and mediaeval fashions the shape of the arm was almost always maintained either by being left bare or, as in the middle ages, by tightly fitting sleeves at least from the wrist to the elbow’. He went on to catalogue with great detail the various articles of thirteenth-century dress before later noting that ‘the almost Greek simplicity, purity and grace of the 13th century gradually disappeared in the 14th until it was ultimately lost in the full tide of the restless luxuriousness of the 15th century and it was not until then that tight lacing in the sense we unfortunately know it became a general fashion’.

The Victorian revolution in women’s fashion – specifically, the style of dress that emerged in the Arts and Crafts and PRB circles and converged to become artistic and aesthetic dress – not only provided the historical and cultural context for Godwin’s lecture and Hawarden’s image, but the impetus for the work as well.

In a way, the artefacts explored in this article began out of a desire to return to the uncomplicated beauty, ease and grace of bygone eras. Godwin’s lecture explicitly called for this,
while Hawarden’s image implied it. Note how Hawarden chose the relatively new medium of photography, which at the time was not capable of capturing colour, to make her artistic statement. The choice of black and white photography, specifically, the popular method of albumen print from wet collodion negatives, coupled with the simple title, ‘Study from Life’, gives the artwork a sense of minimalism that underscores the historic, unfussy beauty on display in the image.

Morris stated that Victorians should ‘have nothing in your houses which you do not know to be useful or believe to be beautiful’ and that ‘all art starts from this simplicity’. As the more progressive members of Victorian artistic circles turned their attention to the decorative arts in their homes, dress became a natural extension of this philosophy. It has been well-documented that the Pre-Raphaelites were consumed with achieving historical accuracy with the costumes they created for their works, because as one historian put it, ‘What would infuriate an artist more than that his picture might seem out of date merely because the sitter’s clothes had dated?’ The PRB solved this dilemma by paradoxically seeking out even older costumes. But this preoccupation with historic dress was present in other corners of the Victorian artistic world as well.

Lady Hawarden’s image features medieval, Grecian and Orientalised costumes that were loose and uncorseted in characteristic aesthetic manner. The clothes aptly underlined the goal of artistic and aesthetic dress summarised by Godwin in his lecture: to be beautiful in its simplicity, transcend all trends and seasons, and highlight the natural lines of the female form, in a way not unlike the sculptural drapery of classical Greek dress. Though as pointed out by The Costume Institute’s Harold Koda, ‘Drapery of the classical and Hellenistic periods of Greek art sometimes appears purely as a foil for nudity, clinging and spiralling around the body’. In the selected image from her ‘Study from Life’ series, Lady Hawarden’s daughters are fully covered in reams of drapery. Rather than rely on the restrictive tight lacing and capacious crinolines that bound Victorian women and defined contemporary fashion at the time, Hawarden dressed her adolescent daughters, Clementina and Isabella Grace, in historical costume that lent the work a certain timelessness and heightened sense of the erotic. From the drapes that hang from the walls, creating a ‘tent-like’ harem-esque atmosphere, to the voluminous folds that hang from their shoulders, Hawarden’s daughters are literally engulfed in material, which paradoxically draws the eye to the stark nakedness of their necks and Isabella’s arm (pictured left). To quote the departmental notes at the V&A where the image is on display, ‘… Orientalist genre made it possible to depict sensuality on the premise of presenting quasi-ethnographic information about the customs of the East’. Note how Clementina could almost be mistaken for a Greek boy in her cropped wig, its short length drawing the eye to her bare neck, which becomes an erogenous focal point. In the same vein, the two sisters could be mistaken for lovers. When covered in exotic drapery, the familial act of holding hands becomes Sapphic.

In fact, the costumes, worn within the safe, private confines of Hawarden’s emptied out, drawing room-turned-studio, perform a function that Victorian contemporary dress could not. The exotic dresses provided enough of a disorienting sense as to allow Hawarden to make artistic

12 Stern, p. 7.
16 ‘Study from Life’, V&A museum departmental notes
17 Ibid.
statements that fashionable Victorian dress could not. Would the subtle manner in which Clementina, at the forefront of the image, grazes her sister’s hand read as a seductive gesture if the two were robed in stiff satin corsets? Would the image seemingly invite the viewer to imagine one sister caressing the other’s neck if both were covered in demure, high collars?

And so we see the general dissatisfaction with Victorian dress reflected in Hawarden’s work. She used exotic and historical costume, not contemporary dress, to fashion identity in the imagined, sexually charged world of her photographs. In an article for The New Yorker comparing the use of costume in Hawarden’s work to that of contemporary artist Cindy Sherman, editor Ingrid Sischy asks, ‘Is it the dressing up that makes the pictures of both these women so powerful? Is that what’s so haunting about what they do? And in the idea of dressing up, is there something especially meaningful to women?18

In fact, ‘the dressing up’ in Hawarden’s images foreshadowed a blurring of the line that divided costume and contemporary dress during the aesthetic and artistic dress movement. Godwin advocated this change in the introductory thoughts to his lecture:

Now in art, if we omit altogether the barbarism of academic blankets, there are only two systems of dress. The one historical, the other conventional. The one by clothing a person represented in a habit as he lived when he belongs to a past age involves the study of archaeology; the other by clothing him in the fashion of the artist’s own time (which last may also become historical when the person represented is contemporary with the artist) involves the study of the fashion of the day. This last system was almost invariably adopted in past times under all conditions. It is manifest that the more perfect course, (that indeed which we should take) is to adopt both systems, the first for the representations of the past, the second for the portrayal of the present. From the science of archaeology diligently followed we may certainly learn one system.19

And with these words, the initial seeds of a revolution were planted, introducing the idea that costume – long the stuff of historical fancy dress or personal indulgences within safe, private places – could be conventional. Godwin not only spread his message through his lectures, illustrations and writings, but through his work overseeing the production of historically-inspired dress for women and children at Liberty of London. In his lecture, Godwin declared that artistic dress was meant to uphold ‘simple graceful forms’, and ‘subtle harmonies’.20 It was unfussy. In her article, ‘The Artistic Aspect of Modern Dress’, the Victorian dress designer and reformer Alice Comyns Carr wrote, ‘the most successful dresses are generally the simplest’21

As a result, the loose, freeing drapery found in Hawarden’s ‘Study from Life’ began to boldly inch its way out of the parlour and onto the street through the period’s leading women artists including Jane Morris, Ellen Terry, Effie Ruskin and Elizabeth Siddal.22 Even though venturing out in public without the proper undergarments and stays to uphold one’s dress, would,

18 ‘Lady Clementina Hawarden: Related photographers’, V&A museum, http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/l/lady-clementina-hawarden-related-photographers/
19 Stern, p. 84.
20 Ibid.
to quote, Patricia Cunningham, ‘suggest wantonness, or worse yet, that the woman was a prostitute.’ Artistic dress became an act of shocking rebellion. In his lecture on dress, Godwin noted that it was the public’s perception of artistic and aesthetic dress that prevented dress reform from spreading at a faster rate:

If the English nation were not so rude, if our men and boys could allow people whose dress was slightly different from others to pass unmolested…the obtruding ugliness of crinoline would long since have quite disappeared but the low observations of street boys and the rude stares of many both in the lower and in the middle classes which the absence of popular ugliness evokes require to be met with more courage than is perhaps consistent with that tenderness which is such a special attribute to the gentle life.

An article in the magazine Bow Bells, meanwhile, featured an anecdote in which a married woman wore a silk artistic dress only to be met with dismay by her husband. ‘“Why’, said he, ‘I wouldn’t walk down the street with you in that dress for a month’s income. We would be the laughingstock of the town’”, the article reads.

Oscar Wilde, arguably the most famous proponent of aesthetic dress, echoed Godwin’s beliefs that the woman’s natural line must be revealed rather than masked. He extolled ‘the laws of Greek dress’ and ‘the exquisite play of light and line that one gets from rich and rippling folds’. In short, his vision for dress reform included the historical references of Godwin’s lecture and the unfussy, freeing silhouettes exemplified in Hawarden’s image: ‘…So from a continuation of the Greek principles of beauty with the German principles of health will come, I feel certain, the costume of the future’. Wilde later echoed Morris, Godwin and Carr in the article, ‘More Radical Ideas upon Dress Reform’, writing, ‘There is a divine economy about beauty; it gives us just what is needful and no more…’. Wilde’s references to Godwin did not stop there. Godwin’s lecture made an early case for dress ‘being raised to the dignity of art’ stating that if one was to develop an understanding of architecture, one must first seek to understand her garments. Wilde shared Godwin’s belief that dress must ultimately be an extension of art and advanced the costume historian’s philosophies decades later: ‘There is not, for instance, a single delicate line, or delightful proportion, in the dress of the Greeks, which is not echoed exquisitely in their architecture’. His lectures highlighted the value of ‘beautiful and rational designs’ in ‘all work’ and advocated a shift away from modistes and towards trained artists for the craft of dressmaking. But he also advanced Godwin’s notion that fashion could be more than a fleeting fad, stating that ‘one should either be a work of art, or wear a work of art’.

In her ‘Study from Life’, Hawarden positioned her daughters to do both. And it is this idea, more than any other talking point that emerged from the dress reform movement that was

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24 Stern, p. 84.
26 Oscar Wilde, ‘Woman’s Dress’, Pall Mall Gazette, 40, no 6114 (October 14, 1884).
27 Wilde, ‘Woman’s Dress’.
28 Oscar Wilde, ‘More Radical Ideas Upon Dress Reform’, Pall Mall Gazette, 40, no. 6224 (November 11, 1884).
29 Oscar Wilde, ‘The Relation of Dress to Art: A Note in Black and White on Mr. Whistler’s Lecture’, Pall Mall Gazette, February 28, 1885.
perhaps the most radical of all – that clothing could be a work of art. One could say that dress reform began in the artist’s studio with the PRBs’ historical costumes. But it wasn’t until Aestheticism took hold of Victorian England’s creative circles that historical costume became a conventional form of dress and elevated to a higher art form – or as Lagerfeld noted centuries later, ‘important’.32

Aesthetic dress, with its loose, flowing references to classical costume, began to become gradually less associated with shocking ideas of loose morals and more so aligned with artistic circles of rarefied taste. In short, dress was elevated to a higher form of art, equally as important to one’s personal aesthetic as the paintings collected to hang on the walls and the handcrafted furniture purchased to decorate the rooms. A woman’s artistic dress became an essential part of the decorative accoutrements in the Aesthete’s home. The sinuous Grecian drapery that lightly grazed her waistline said as much about her taste level as, say, the exotic Japonaise textile that hung in her drawing room as evidenced by Hawarden’s costume tableaux, which frequently featured ‘pretty objects’ that she collected over the years such as an Indian travelling cabinet or a concertina.33 This was also reflected in the writings of the day, most notably the Art at Home series of guidebooks which tellingly included the manual, Dress, alongside other guidebooks titled A Plea for Art in the House, Sketching from Nature, and House Decoration. Under the influence of Wilde, Haweis, Oliphant and Pember-Devereux, women such as Hawarden began to use dress as not only a conduit to beauty, but a source of personal agency.

In the words of Oliphant, ‘just as there used to be a class of précieuses who went into ecstasies over the verses of the popular poet, there is now a class who dress after pictures, and ask, when they buy a new gown, not, like Mrs. Siddons, ‘Will it wash?’, or ‘Will it wear?’ with Mrs. Primrose; but ‘Will it paint?’ Perhaps this is more worthy inspiration than the senseless pursuit of mere fashion…’34 Aesthetic dress, with its more refined, classical leanings and freer, liberating structure, became a powerful source of self-expression for women looking to assert their personal taste in ways other than the upholstery on an arm chair. This is particularly apparent in Hawarden’s ‘Study From Life’.

Victorian dress reform has influenced the way modern-day society views fashion more than any other movement in dress and costume. The notion of wearable art that serves as a foundation for many contemporary fashion houses from Alexander McQueen to Christian Dior stems directly from the debates of the Victorian era and the period’s merging of what Godwin called ‘the historical and conventional’ forms of dress.35 Ultimately, Victorian dress reform was an unwieldy movement with various permutations that would have a long-lasting impact on future generations. In their unique views of historical costume, Godwin and Lady Hawarden may not have accurately predicted the way that we dress today, but they undoubtedly helped shape the way we think about it.36

32 Stern, p. 84.
35 Stern, p. 87.
36 Wilde, ‘Woman’s Dress’.
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Manly men and angelic women: Gender and nostalgia in George Elgar Hicks’s watercolour *The Sinews of Old England* (1857) and in an advertisement for Cadbury’s Cocoa (1886).

Karen Walker

**Abstract:** *The Sinews of Old England* depicts an idealised labourer and his family at the door of their cottage. Cadbury’s Cocoa used a similar image for an advertisement some thirty years later. This essay argues that both images carry messages about gender, class and work; invoking an idealised British past and promoting romanticised gender roles which were used to lend strength and credibility to the growing Cadbury brand. The work of John Ruskin and Samuel Smiles taught men and women how to inhabit their proper station in life, and these two images reinforce this prevailing conservative mind-set which kept women behind closed doors while their men dealt with public life, in whatever form was suitable for them.

Throughout the nineteenth century, as industry and modern politics took shape in Great Britain, there was much discussion about the state of the nation and the roles of the people who inhabited it. In this essay I will argue that by reading contemporary artefacts in the context of these debates, some light can be thrown upon the attitudes of their originators. Specifically, by contrasting a watercolour, *The Sinews of Old England* by George Elgar Hicks (1824-1914), with an advertisement for Cadbury's Cocoa it is possible to examine the creators’ ideals surrounding gender and work, and to locate these ideas within the wider setting of the era.

Completed in 1857, *The Sinews of Old England* (*The Sinews* hereafter; watercolour heightened with bodycolour and gum Arabic on paper, 76 x 53.5cm, Yale Center for British Art) presents a manual labourer with his wife and child, at the doorway of their home. The watercolour depicts an extremely idealised view of working class life, showing a muscled – but not unduly so – navvy heading to work, in clean clothes that look no more than a little worn, pick-axe resting on his shoulder as he gazes outwards with shining eyes. He is healthily tanned, clean-shaven apart from a neat chin-strap beard, and confident. His wife, described by Tim Barringer as having the face ‘of a Raphael Madonna’, gazes in adoration at her husband, her smooth forehead bearing no trace of worry. At the man's feet, a well-fed, clean and cherubic child – probably male, although still in skirts – holds a wooden trowel. A spade with the same shape handle as the trowel is just visible over the man's shoulder, being carried on the shaft of his pick-axe; the child will clearly follow in his father's shiny-booted footsteps. The doorway of the cottage is surrounded by well-tended and largely ornamental plants. Inside, a table with a clean white cloth holds a cup of tea in willow pattern china, while shelves on the back wall display more china in a similar design. The woman's sleeves are rolled up, and her fresh yellow over-skirt is tucked up, suggesting she is ready for a day of domestic labour and child-care in a cottage which already looks clean and well-kept. It is worth noticing that her hands show no trace of work; as Leonore Davidoff notes, ‘Throughout the nineteenth and well into the twentieth century, the mark of genteel womanhood was white.

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3 Barringer, p. 30.
unblemished hands." She has a pleasantly curvy figure, and with her shiny hair and bright eyes, she looks as well-fed and healthy as her husband and child. In short, it is an impressively optimistic depiction of the dignity of labour, of the ‘deserving poor’. There is no hint of poverty or want; in fact, it almost seems as though this healthy young couple have made a conscious decision to live a life of respectable simplicity and virtuous labour.

The couple in the painting stand on the threshold of their cottage, at the boundary between domestic and public realms. This is a visual representation of the ‘separate spheres’ ideology whereby men were figured as competitors in the amoral, economic realm while women were positioned as either decorative trophies or spiritual guardians of men's immortal souls. These idealised gender roles were not just theoretical positions; although they were strengthened by the arguments of such writers as Ruskin, they were also the subject of much discussion and concerned investigation, even by Parliament. There was perceived to be an issue with mothers who worked for remuneration, and who were therefore unable to take proper care of their children, homes and husbands. Many working-class women went out to work, or took in homework, in order to help ends meet. Their children were looked after by relatives or neighbours, although:

Parliamentary commissioners were shocked by the chemists' and medical officers' reports of widespread use of opiates to quiet hungry and fretful infants so that their mothers could do the work necessary for the family's subsistence. As shocking as this may have been, ‘the members of Parliament and social reformers who were concerned with infant mortality and the “working mother problem” did not acknowledge that most working-class women had to bring cash into their households at some time during their married lives. Applying middle- and upper-class standards to working-class communities, the reformers could not imagine that a woman's duties could or should encompass anything more than staying at home to be the ‘Angel in the House’. The feminine, always regarded within a familial context, became an idealized carrier of morality. The combined concepts of the Angel in the House, motherhood and home became charged with meaning, as women were supposed to stay in and provide an example of moral and religious perfection for the restful homecoming of their husbands. As Ruskin puts it, women were ‘made to be the helpmate of man’; however this meant, above all, creating a home.

And wherever a true wife comes, this home is always round her. The stars only may be over her head; the glowworm in the night cold grass may be the only fire at her foot: but home is yet wherever she is; and for a noble woman it stretches far round her, better than ceiled with cedar, or painted with vermilion, shedding its quiet light far, for those who else were homeless.

The woman in The Sinews seems to be the embodiment of these virtues. Devoted, beautiful, serene, she keeps a clean house, makes her husband his morning cup of tea, and

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7 Rose, p. 76.
9 Davidoff, p. 174.
11 Ruskin, p. 149.
sends him on his way into the wide world with the knowledge that she – his home – will be waiting for him at the end of a hard day. The viewer is allowed only a glimpse through the doorway; after all, it would be most inappropriate to pry into a woman's personal domain.

It was not just women, however, that had to attempt to reach unrealistic or idealistic standards of perfection. Men, too, were expected to live in a certain way. Ideals of ‘manliness’ were prevalent throughout the nineteenth century:

The Victorian era is almost synonymous with the ideology of ‘great men’ [...] Throughout the era, ‘masculine’ values of courage and endeavour supported military campaigns and commercial expansion.\(^2\)

As Ruskin put it at the time, ‘The man’s power is active, progressive, defensive. He is eminently the doer, the creator, the discoverer, the defender.’\(^13\) For a working-class male like the man in _The Sinews_, however, the virtues of adventure and discovery are unlikely to have been attainable. Instead, he could aspire to the sort of manliness espoused by Samuel Smiles:

Riches and rank have no necessary connection with genuine gentlemanly qualities. The poor man may be a true gentleman, in spirit and in daily life. He may be honest, truthful, upright, polite, temperate, courageous, self-respecting and self-helping; that is, be a true gentleman. The poor man with a rich spirit is in all ways superior to the rich man with a poor spirit.\(^14\)

As the century progressed, there was a sustained emphasis on the physicality of men. In pre-industrial times, strength had been necessarily linked with the ability to provide for a family. As the machine age progressed and factory work made it possible for men – and indeed women – of all statures to earn a similar wage, the idea of a manly physique started to manifest itself instead through the ideas of bodily health, sporting prowess and physical fitness. Figures such as Emile Sandow, a body builder whose publications on physical fitness were popular in the last years of the century, equated ‘the muscular physical form with individual strength and success, national resurgence and Imperial well-being.’\(^15\) Ideals of the male body as heroic and under control were crucial. While these ideas appear rather later in the century than _The Sinews_, it is undeniable that the painting displays a distinct form of manliness as an ultimately desirable attribute. The man in the painting is muscled, but in a fine, controlled way. He is lean and healthy, and has gained this through honest hard work; and he is on his way to undertake another day of labour. He is able to provide fully for his wife and child, protecting them from the harsh realities of the world. He is an admirable specimen of manliness.

These ideas continue to build throughout the nineteenth century, and it is fascinating to see them come through in a variety of media. One controversial new medium was the advertisement, which had gained prominence as periodicals flourished in the 1850s. While some firms were reluctant to take part in this vulgar new practice, others such as Cadbury saw the potential;\(^16\) and from the 1860s they had been advertising their ‘Cocoa Essence’ as ‘Absolutely Pure. Therefore Best.’ This referred to the innovative production technique which allowed them to do away with additives and to remove much of the excess cocoa butter. They

\(^{12}\) Marsh. (paragraph 11 of 21)

\(^{13}\) Ruskin, p. 146.


\(^{15}\) John Beynon, _Masculinities and Culture_ (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2002), p. 44.

\(^{16}\) The refusal to advertise of Quaker chocolate manufacturers Rowntree is discussed here: Gillian Wagner, _The Chocolate Conscience_ (London: Chatto & Windus Ltd., 1987), p. 29.
concentrated on the health benefits of this product, helped by studies in such august journals as *The Lancet* and the *British Medical Journal*. By the 1880s, they were regularly producing advertisements such as the second artefact, the 'Blacksmith' advert, which appeared in the *Illustrated London News* on 11th December 1886.¹⁷ This engraving, by an artist only identifiable as ‘J.B.B.’ or ‘L.B.B.’ sits above some fairly small print extolling the health-giving benefits of the drink:

Muscular strength, physical endurance and staying power – Cadbury's Pure Cocoa is recommended by the Medical Profession as an agreeable article of healthy diet for all classes. It sustains against hunger and fatigue, and contains in a concentrated form all the elements indispensable to the development of the body. It is a pure, refined beverage; nutritious, stimulating, digestible, comforting, suitable for all seasons, all climes and all occasions. A Sixpenny Packet provides fourteen large breakfast cups of strong delicious Cocoa. Beware of Imitations.¹⁸

The image is of a small girl entering a blacksmith's forge with a cup of steaming Cadbury's Cocoa. The smith, presumably the girl's father, looks up from the horseshoe he is hammering, and seems pleased to see her. He wears a shirt, unbuttoned and revealing part of his chest, showing what hot, hard, manly work he is doing. He has his sleeves rolled up, displaying some impressive muscles. Behind him, an atmospherically lit younger man – perhaps his apprentice – is at the furnace, sparks flying out. Through the open doorway it is possible to see a quiet rural scene outside, with a woman standing at the door of a cottage. This appears to be the mother, hands on hips, watching her little girl deliver much needed refreshment to the hard-working man.

Using similar imagery as *The Sinews*, this image clearly shows that the ideals of honest labour and separate spheres were firmly in the general consciousness, enough to be brought into a magazine advert. The viewer is shown the world of the hot, smoky, sweaty male sphere of work, contrasted with the bright lane visible outside the door, and the cottage home just across the way. The men are where they should be, and the woman is firmly placed at her low doorway, not venturing outside or leaving her realm unattended. The little girl has been allowed to cross into a world that is not hers, but only because she is performing the very female duty of bringing sustenance to the working man, while being monitored by her mother to ensure she does not cross any other boundaries. She is learning her role in life at a young age.

Cadbury's late-nineteenth century advertisements show a variety of upstanding men (a postman, a fireman, a group of explorers) all enjoying their cocoa; as well as instances where the health benefits are given even more emphasis (a doctor recommending cocoa to a middle-class female patient; a trio of images showing that cocoa is suitable for young children, sporty young men and the elderly). In many cases it is possible to see that gender roles are fixed, and manliness is highly prized. For the company repeatedly to use such imagery suggests that these ideals matched those of the firm. By the late 1800s, the company was being run by George and Richard Cadbury. Of strict Quaker upbringing, the men were keen to promote a healthy alternative to drinking alcohol. As children they were made to run a mile before breakfast, and access to 'frivolous' luxuries such as art and music was severely restricted. The inherent contradiction in 'plain folk' making huge fortunes from luxury foodstuffs is not hard

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¹⁸ The image is available at: ‘Drink Cadbury’s Cocoa’, *The Advertising Archives* <http://www.advertisingarchives.co.uk/en/asset/show_zoom_window_popup.html?asset=24209&location=grid&asset_list=24209&basket_item_id=> [accessed 17 February 2013]. Exact details of the original are unavailable; further information was not forthcoming from Cadbury's archives.
to see; however the Cadbury brothers did their best to ensure that their money did not just benefit themselves.

Initially, this took the form of building a new factory several miles outside Birmingham city centre, on a specially acquired site that they named ‘Bournville’. This ‘factory in a garden’ was created specifically to move production away from the cramped, unhealthy, insanitary conditions of central Birmingham, and to provide workers with a pleasant environment in which to do their work. The firm created recreation grounds, gardens and sports facilities for their workers and, by the 1890s, were commencing work on Bournville village. This community was planned as an affordable alternative to the badly built back-to-back housing that was springing up in industrial towns and cities across the country, with Birmingham no exception. One of the main concepts behind the Bournville plan was the restriction of the number of houses per acre, not only allowing light and air to circulate between buildings, but also to give each house a big enough garden to supply the industrious inhabitant with all the fruit and vegetables he and his family would need.

Cadbury also employed female workers, and in their white factory uniforms they were known locally as ‘Cadbury's Angels’; another designation of perfected femininity. Upon getting married, however, women's contracts were politely terminated, as the company did not want to ‘take mothers away from their homes and children.’¹⁹ For Cadbury workers who lived in Bournville, there was therefore a strict gender code in practice. Men went out to work, leaving their wives and children at home in the cottages that had been so thoughtfully designed as to allow the housewife a ‘restful glimpse of green’²⁰ from the kitchen window where she would be spending the majority of her time. Upon arriving home, the man would need to tend his garden in order to fulfil his dual role as provider not only of the modern necessity of money, but also of actual food. The restorative power of physical labour was much vaunted by George Cadbury, who felt that when men had been working indoors all day they should be encouraged to spend their leisure hours outside. While he was happy to use their labour, indoors and at machines producing luxury goods, he was genuinely concerned with their well-being – as long as that well-being involved a suitably healthy, manly use of their time.

In this respect it follows on, then, that the advertisements that Cadbury's chose for their products reflected the values that suffused their factory and their village. These values of fixed gender roles, healthy hard work and self-sufficiency bring us back immediately to the values demonstrated so well in The Sinews of Old England. As Sonya Rose puts it:

> to be manly was to be honourable and respectable, which meant being brave, strong and independent. For a woman, by contrast, to be honourable and respectable meant to have the virtues of sexual purity, domesticity and motherhood.²¹

Bournville was to be populated with angelic women, manly men and chubby children, the living embodiments of the family in Hicks's painting; and the advertisements encouraged the general public to bring those qualities straight into their homes by purchasing Cadbury's Cocoa.

The idea of separate spheres and gender roles was not new to the nineteenth century, but the discussion had reached a new level of urgency, as women started to demand equal rights in the workplace and the polling booth, and men's roles were called into question not only by women but also by the rise of the machine and the radically different landscape of

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²¹ Rose, p. 15.
labour in which they found themselves. By reasserting traditional gender roles, an artist like Hicks could appeal to the side of the public which did not want to be reminded of the changing world:

> There was a long tradition of providing charmingly idyllic views of rural life, and it was well understood that it was acceptable to give a largely urban public an idealised picture of what might be, rather than what was, since this agreeable fiction strengthened belief in the simplicity and innocence of the countryside.²²

Indeed, Thompson goes on to describe Hicks as an ‘illusionist, because he made everyday life seem to be what they wanted it to be.’²³ Later in the century, when the debates are still more prevalent, Cadbury turns to such traditional images of what people 'wanted life to be' in order to place their product within a reassuring, familiar context of a rural England; where men knew how to be men and women knew their place. Both of the images discussed here are, among many other things, examples of a Victorian nostalgia for an historic Britain – and an historic, heroic British race – that never really existed. However, the imaginary nature of the ideal did not stop people yearning for it, or indeed trying to create it in such ventures as Bournville village.

²³ Thompson, p. 42.
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Sexual Politics, Pomegranates and Production: William Morris’s *The Defence of Guenevere and La Belle Iseult* in Dialogue

Anna Marie Attwell

**Abstract:** Examining patterns in William Morris’s poetry and book art, Isolde Karen Herbert observes that ‘Morris’s perception is aesthetically and politically dialectical’. Patterns in Morris’s texts, she argues, have ‘narrative potential’. This essay explores the dialectic quality and narrative potential of Morris’s early poetry and arts from an intertextual perspective, beginning with his first volume of poetry, *The Defence of Guenevere, and Other Poems* (1858) and his only surviving oil painting, *La Belle Iseult* (1857-58). Through recurrent visual motifs, intertextual allusions and the figurative re-working and re-presentation of Jane Burden (later Jane Morris) in paint and poetry, glass and embroidery, Morris generates a protean figure – both problematic *femme fatale* and martyr to love, whose silent presence points to the uncomfortable disjunction between idealism and commerce in Morris’s life and work.

In *The Defence of Guenevere, and Other Poems* (1858) and *La Belle Iseult* (1857-8) (figure 3), William Morris (1834-1896) uses Arthurian myths and Chaucerian dream-visions as a prism through which translate ‘[t]he straining game’ of life[2] into the ‘greatest pleasure […]of […] making’.3 Morris’s *Defence* and *La Belle Iseult* – which in many ways acts as its companion piece, are not objects of Romantic escapism but creative expressions of, in Anthony Buxton’s words, ‘Morris’s fascination with the conflicts and difficulties of human relationships’,4 in particular the *ménage a trois* in which he found himself with Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882) and Jane Burden (1839-1914). Jane, ‘with her deep mystic eyes, shapely neck, and plenitude of dark hair’5 provides Morris with both a wife and problematic creative catalyst, whose illicit desires, projected into medieval Romance, ironically accord with Morris’s own principles of Socialist equality and liberty.

Morris’s rejection of Victorian sexual politics was as radical as his critique of capitalism. Although deeply influenced by the ideas of John Ruskin (1819-1900), Morris’s attitude to women differs profoundly from Ruskin’s hegemonic views on the ‘separate characters’ of men and women expressed in ‘Of Queen’s Gardens’ in *Sesame and Lilies* (1865). Ruskin consigns women to ‘sweet ordering, arrangement, and decision’ in the home6 where wives roam quasi-heavenly gardens with ‘steps of virgin liberty’ (p.165). Morris, by contrast, suggests that marriage under Socialism, ‘would become a matter of simple inclination’ in which both men and women would be free to come and go as they pleased.7 In his utopian vision *News from Nowhere; or An Epoch of Rest* (1890), Morris goes further still, setting out his unorthodox idea that the concept of female sin is the product of male financial power and greed: ‘the ruin of women for following their natural desires in an illegal way […] was a convention caused by the laws of private property’.8

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4 Lecture: *William Morris*, given by Dr. Antony Buxton, (University of Oxford: Rewley House 16/10/12).
7 Thompson, p.740.
It is against this background of Ruskinian middle-class morality that the young William Morris launches his literary career with the publication of *The Defence of Guenevere*, with its evocation of the legendary King Arthur’s adulterous queen as, in James Carley’s words, ‘a sensuous, highly sexual character’; prompting at least one contemporary critic to accuse Morris of ‘coarseness and immorality’. What is perhaps most striking about Morris’s titular poem is the eloquent voice it gives to Arthur’s condemned wife who remains silent in Malory’s *Morte d’Arthur* as she stands ‘despoyle into her smok’ awaiting death, her ‘feelings […] unexplored’. The focus of Morris’s narrative as it dilates from third to first person is surprisingly modern in its psychological intensity, yet it derives in part from the medieval complaint or confessional which Geoffrey Chaucer (c.1343-1400) employs in his dream-vision *The Legend of Good Women* (c.1380-86). Chaucer’s *Legend* was one of Morris’s favourite texts which he published at the end of his life in *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer* (1896). Like Morris’s ‘Defence’, Chaucer gives centre stage to powerful adulteress-queens such as Cleopatra and Dido, who are recast as ‘martiris’ and redeemed by the God of Love by virtue of their being ‘trewe in loving al hire lyve’.

Guenevere’s plea is made according to the laws of Chaucer’s God of Love for whom passion is condoned even in adultery (‘ne shal no trewe lover come in helle’). This medieval humanist and chivalric tradition of the abstract virtues of love finds an interesting parallel in Morris’s own abhorrence of the Victorian marriage market. In a letter to his friend Charles Faulkner for example, Morris attacks what he terms the ‘venal prostitution’ of ‘the bourgeois property marriage’ and calls instead for ‘genuine unions of passion and affection’. In ‘The Defence’, Guenevere claims the reader’s sympathy on the same terms: ‘I was bought’ she asserts simply, ‘By Arthu […]’ a statement that finds uncomfortable parallels in Morris’s own marriage.

It was whilst working on a series of murals depicting scenes from Malory’s *Morte d’Arthur* (1485) for a new neo-medieval debating chamber at the Oxford Union Society that Rossetti discovered Jane Burden, whom he persuaded to model for him at his lodgings in October 1857, taking her over ‘as if she were his personal possession’. By the spring of 1858 however, the impoverished Jane had become engaged to the wealthy Morris. As J. B. Bullen succinctly puts it, ‘Rossetti may have had charm, but Morris had money’. Morris may well have proposed marriage to Jane ‘in a heady mixture of infatuation, sexual attraction and mutual misunderstanding’; however a series of intertextual allusions, circulating through embroidered hangings, paintings and studies created in 1857-8, suggest that Morris was acutely aware of the Faustian pact that, like Guenevere, Jane was making for a life of financial security, status and ease.

In Kelmscott Manor, the Oxfordshire home which Morris and Rossetti leased in 1871 (in part as a rural retreat where Jane and Rossetti could live freely as lovers), hangs an unassuming and unfinished hanging, one of a series of embroidered panels designed by Morris depicting heroines from Chaucer’s *Legend of Good Women*. The three surviving

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10 Unsigned notice of *The Defence of Guenevere; and Other Poems*, in *Spectator*, (London: February1858) xxx, p.238.
16 Carley, ed., p.53
18 Ibid, p.117.
figures are of St Catherine, Penelope and most interesting of all, Guenevere — Morris’s idiosyncratic addition to Chaucer’s martyrs to love. ‘The design’, notes John Cherry, ‘derives from an early sketch of Jane as Guenevere or La Belle Iseult made before their marriage in 1859’ (figure 1) and as such provides a material link between La Belle Iseult, executed by Morris in 1857-8 under the watchful eye of Rossetti, and Arthur’s queen.

Figure 1. William Morris, Queen Guenevere, c.1860
Unfinished embroidered hanging on linen.
Gloucestershire: Kelmscott Manor
(Photo © Society of Antiquaries of London 2013)

Figure 2. William Morris, Guinevere, c.1858
Extant study, watercolour and graphite on paper
126.4 x 55.2 cm
London: Tate Britain (Photo © Tate, London 2000)

The extant study for the same embroidered hanging, entitled Guinevere (figure 2) is held at Tate Britain, and dated circa 1858 although the similarities in the pose, positioning and drapery of the three figures suggest that this too was derived from the early sketch for La Belle Iseult to which Cherry refers.

20 Ibid, p.17, pl.13 and note.
The contemporaneous translation of Guenevere/Iseult into different media and guises suggests the way in which the love triangle between King Arthur, Queen Guenevere and Sir Lancelot du Lac was interchangeable in Morris’s mind and art with the love triangle between Iseult of Ireland, King Mark and Tristram of Lyoness, whose story had been famously treated by Matthew Arnold (1822-1888) in his verse-Romance ‘Tristram and Iseult’ (1852). Perhaps in some ways the ongoing critical debate concerning the identity of the figure in La Belle Iseult is endemic to Morris’s ‘portrait in medieval dress’ since Romance, as Nicholas Perkins and Alison Wiggins observe, is a ‘radically creative, open, dynamic and unstable’ genre, one that delights in the subversion of fixed identities and patriarchal norms. By aligning Jane with medieval heroines such as Malory’s Guenevere, Chaucer’s Cleopatra, and moral shape-shifters such as Lady Bertilak in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight who revel in ‘sovereynté’ and seduction Morris opens a radical dialectic between the predatory heroines of Romance and high Victorian medievalism; a conflict vocalised in the prosopopoeia of Guenevere’s defence as she pitches the aesthetic values of love and beauty against the hypocrisy of Victorian concepts of sin: “With all this wickedness; say no rash word / Against me, being so beautiful”.

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21 Frances Fowle, La Belle Iseult ‘Summary’ © Tate, London 2000.
24 Carley, ed., p.57.
It is not the individual characters of Guenevere or Iseult which fascinate Morris, but rather the emotional tension of their love-triangles: a focus suggested by the development between Morris’s extant study of Guenevere, and his reworking of the image as La Belle Iseult. The subtle reference to Guenevere’s girdle in the study, marked by the figure’s thumb tucked quietly inside a dropped waist-band, is given dramatic emphasis in the painting where Iseult’s angular arms and wrists express some tortuous reluctance to assume its weight: a reluctance emphasised by the contrapuntal sway of her body as she draws the girdle around her.

The statuesque stillness of Guenevere’s pose in the study, with eyes cast modestly down and hair largely covered has been replaced in La Belle Iseult with Jane’s rippling mass of hair loose beneath a garland of rosemary and pomegranates, her face drawn with tension as she is captured in medias res, dressing to the song of a troubadour. Although the mood of the portrait is introspective, costume, props and caste imply dialogue: as W. D. Shaw notes of Guenevere in ‘The Defence’, there is ‘scene-stealing theatricality’ in this performance; whilst book, girdle, and bard form an oblique diagonal plane suggestive of other meta-textual perspectives and narratives.

La Belle Iseult is rich in symbolism and intertextual references both contemporary and medieval. In Mathew Arnold’s (1822-1888) famous poem Dover Beach (1867) for example, the girdle signifies a lost medieval world of spiritual and cultural riches: ‘The Sea of Faith […] Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled’, and embodies the redemptive powers of love. As a symbol of classical mythology however, the girdle links Guenevere/Iseult with Venus, the Roman goddess of love and her Greek counterpart Aphrodite, the goddess of Spring.

The Gods and Goddesses of Classical Mythology, A Short Classical Dictionary (1882), provides an example of the kinds of ideas concerning the girdle’s classical symbolism in general circulation at that time. Venus, we are informed ‘was famous for her mysterious oestrus, a girdle which, worn by whatever female, had the property of rendering her charms irresistible to the person whose affections she desired to command’. Morris’s capture of the moment as Jane/Iseult assumes this potent symbol of sexual power is charged with significance. Paradoxically however, Iseult’s twisted body, drawn brows and the dark lines beneath her eyes suggest inner conflict and even despair at capturing the observing eye.

Morris’s deployment of colour in La Belle Iseult also engages the viewer in intertextual discourse with the tortured heroine of ‘The Defence’, since the brilliant red of Iseult’s sleeves, echoed in her lips and the valance of the rumpled bed, parallels Guenevere’s ‘bright sleeves’, her ‘crimson’ cheeks and her bed-sheets stained with Launcelot’s blood that witness her betrayal. Was Morris’s persistent association of his future wife with Romance heroines notorious for their unfaithfulness entirely coincidental? I would argue not. In another contemporaneous poem ‘In Praise of my Lady’, the narrator addresses Jane directly, yet nevertheless acknowledges her capacity for infidelity: “So passionate and swift to move, / To pluck at any flying love”. Jane’s features, ‘Curl’d up and pensive’, mirror the careless masquerade Guenevere assumes in ‘The Defence’ to hide her unhappiness in King Arthur’s

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26 Matthew Arnold, ‘Dover Beach’, in New Poems (1867), ll.21-3.
29 Thompson, p.67.
court: ‘And let my lips curl up at false or true’; and echo the close observation of illicit love in another poem from The Defence, ‘Concerning Geffray Teste Noire’:

‘I saw you kissing once

[...] did your lips lie,
Curled gently, slowly, long time could afford
For caught-up breathings’.

As Walter Pater (1839-1894) recognised in his retrospective review of Morris’s Defence in 1868, it is in the narrator’s oxymoronic mixture of cool impartiality and acute sensitivity, distinctive of the subject position of both ‘The Defence’ and La Belle Iseult, that the dramatic intensity of Morris’s art lies. ‘The jealousy of that other lover’ Pater writes, ‘is the secret here of a triumphant colour and heat’; ‘that other lover’ in both poem and painting, being the shadowy figure of Arthur and beyond him, Morris himself.

Morris gives symbolic expression to his conflicted view of Jane Burden as both a woman true to love, yet possessed of illicit passion through his use of pomegranates as a decorative device. Pomegranates are associated with the Virgin Mary and Christ in Christian iconography, as employed for example by Sandro Botticelli (c.1445-1510) in his Madonna of the Pomegranates (1487); and by Morris & Co. in the decorative border to the tapestry Angeli Ministrantes (1894). In the dark, windowless context of La Belle Iseult’s bed chamber however, the pomegranates in her floral crown, embroidered on her bedside tablecloth and woven into the tapestry behind her, are suggestive of the myth of Persephone who was tricked by Hades into eating the pomegranate seeds that would bind her to spend six months of every year in the darkness of the underworld. William Holwell’s A mythological, etymological, and historical dictionary (1793) identifies Persephone or Proserpine not as a virginal victim, but as the consort of Pluto and ‘reputed queen of hell […] condemned to the shades below as an infernal inquisitor’; a mythology employed in Rossetti’s painting of Jane Morris as Proserpine (1874) where she is portrayed as a dark seductress, holding a bitten pomegranate.

It is often pointed out that Pater’s review of Morris’s Defence, in which he first articulates his Aesthetic concept of the ‘gem-like flame’ of a pure, sublimated and amoral passion, is the source of Pater’s seminal final chapter to Studies in the History of the Renaissance (1873). The spark behind the flame on the other hand is seldom mentioned: yet bodied forth as Iseult, Guenevere and Persepho...
[1890]), their products often carried a price-tag well beyond the reach of the working man or woman. At the lower end of the scale, Lady Lanerton, chatelaine at Castle Howard, paid £1.18s.6p for seven pieces of wallpaper in 1878, which equated to over three weeks wages for an unskilled labourer: whilst at the upper end of the scale, Morris’s estimate for the pomegranate-embroidered valances for two State Rooms at St. James’s Palace, came in at £555: a price even the palace authorities baulked at.

Yet perhaps the greatest disjunction between Morris’s Socialism and commercial practice was evident in the architectural designs of his patrons, where Morris’s desire to create an egalitarian society where labour would be exalted and craftsmanship bring a democracy of beauty to the poor, came into direct conflict with a class-ridden age. Writing in 1880 the Victorian architect J.J. Stevenson rued

our more complicated ways of living […] Instead of the hall and single chamber of the middle ages, with which even kings were content, every ordinary house must have […] a complicated arrangement of servants’ offices.

Despite the reform bills of 1832 and 1867 enfranchisement of the lower classes did not translate into spatial democracy in middle or upper middle-class homes: quite the opposite. ‘[W]hether in a small house or a large one,’ Stevenson advised, ‘let the family have free passage-way without encountering the servants’ (p.214). Wightwick Hall for example, built near Wolverhampton by Theodore Mander ‘a cultivated and progressive manufacturer’, contains over 400 items of furnishings by Morris & Co. which meld seamlessly into a medievalist architectural Romance. Yet Wightwick’s Great Parlour, with its minstrel’s gallery, was designed as a private living space served by ‘concealed servant’s ways’. Devised in the spirit of utopian Socialism, Wightwick functioned on a practical level in ideological opposition to Morris’s neo-medieval halls in News from Nowhere. At home in his castle, Theodore Mander’s interest in public service extended to installing central heating in the servants’ garrets: not communal living.

The painter Hetherington Emmerson (1831-1895) provides another glimpse of how the medieval great hall had so altered in function as to become the setting for private repose in his portrait of another of William Morris’s patrons, the 1st Lord Armstrong of Cragside (figure 4). Lord Armstrong was also a self-made man of the newly rich upper-class, an engineering genius who commissioned the architect Richard Norman Shaw to build Cragside – a neo-medieval retreat supported by the very latest technological innovations such as hydro-electricity. In Emmerson’s portrait Lord Armstrong sits cocooned in a monumental inglenook. Above his head, and distinctly placed in the viewer’s focal point, are Spring and Summer, a pair of striking stained-glass panels from a set depicting the four seasons, commissioned by Shaw from Morris in 1873.

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40 Zaczek, p.70.
Seated by the fire in his slippers, Lord Armstrong appears to align himself with Morris’s ethics by proclaiming indifference to the heroic conventions of Royal Academy portraiture championed by Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792) and the autocratic values of the British establishment it had come to represent. Above him Spring appears to offer him two daffodils, as if in tribute to her patron. Yet the prominence Emmerson gives to Morris’s allegorical figures suggests some subversive Chaucerian commentary is at play. Morris’s supremely beautiful glass panels are designed and produced for an exclusive audience of one – a man who finds more of interest in his newspaper. The goddess of Spring, moreover, in Greek mythology is Aphrodite the unfaithful wife of Hephaestus – god of fire. Perhaps Emmerson’s tribute to this Victorian industrialist, aglow with firelight in his neo-baronial hall, is not entirely without censure.

In his notes to the Manifesto of the Socialist League (1885), Morris extends his vision of liberty from what he terms ‘the monster […] Commercial Profit’ to freedom from ‘economical compulsion’ in marriage. Yet as a protean symbol both of fruitfulness and

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44 See, for example, the hegemonic precepts reflected in the alignment of style with class in the Art Journal’s review of the Royal Academy exhibition, 1871, which denigrates the ‘vulgar naturalism, the common realism’ of Pre-Raphaelitism, ‘which is applauded by the uneducated multitudes’. Extract in: Allen Staley, The New Painting of the 1860s: Between the Pre-Raphaelites and the Aesthetic Movement (London: Yale University Press, 2011), p.2.

45 The Hutchinson Encyclopedia, pp.111 & 49

46 Thompson, p.648
faithlessness, Spring gestures to the conflicted commercial, political and private interests of both Morris and his patrons, and bares silent witness to the uncomfortable correlation between the market for luxury goods and the marriage market. She leads us back to Morris’s own fireside, to his restless and unfaithful wife portrayed in *La Belle Iseult* and to the circumstances of his marriage to a penniless groom’s daughter.

As Guenevere and her sister queen and adulteress Iseult, Jane Burden embodies Morris’s Socialist ideology whilst presenting a dialectic challenge not only to the sexual mores of the Victorian age, but to the stability of Morris’s own home. Transfigured through glaze and fabric, paint and poetry, through the symbol of the pomegranate and the shifting guises of Aphrodite and Venus, Proserpine and Spring, Morris’s muse provides a satiric reminder of his Socialist hopes for a life freed from commercial bondage far removed from Morris & Co.’s market place. In a lecture entitled ‘Some Hints on Pattern Designing’ Morris notes wryly that ‘clever designers [...] Have a great tendency to go mad’. Yet the sheer complexity of Morris’s interdisciplinary discourse, already evident in these early works, speaks of strength not weakness. Seeing the proofs of his illustrations to the *Kelmancott Chaucer* for the first time, Edward Burne-Jones declared of Morris’s decorative frames that he ‘loved to be snugly cased in boarders and buttressed up by the vast initials [...] if you drag me out of my encasings, it will be like tearing a statue out of its niche’. Burne-Jones’s light-hearted testament to Morris’s robust medievalism is illuminating. Ultimately, Morris employs intertextual motifs, Arthurian Romance and medieval dream-visions not merely to analyse and embody but to contain, order and control the world around him: translating loss and betrayal, like Shakespeare’s Prospero, into regenerative artistic power.

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48 Zaczek, p.34
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**Illustrations**


Morris, William, *La Belle Iseult*, 1858. Oil on canvas, 71.8 x 50.2 cm, London: Tate Britain, photo: © Tate, London 2013 [Accessed 5/02/2013]

----- *Figure of Guinevere*, c.1858. Extant study, watercolour and graphite on paper, 126.4 x 55.2 cm, London: Tate Britain, photo: © Tate, London 2013 [Accessed 5/02/2013]

Seeking Authenticity: Late Victorian Aesthetic Researches in John Ruskin’s approach of the St. Mark’s Campanile in Venice and William Lethaby’s Design for the Eagle Building in Birmingham (1851-1901)

David Lamoureux

Abstract: The two artefacts described and contrasted here are John Ruskin’s 1851 description of the St. Mark’s Campanile in Venice and the facade of William Lethaby’s 1901 Eagle Building in Birmingham. Both Ruskin’s description and Lethaby’s facade are part of a common search for authenticity realized in the light of criticisms of industrialization in the late nineteenth century. Lethaby’s attempt to define architectural authenticity as compatible with industrial processes, however, seems to prefigure a greater interdisciplinary switch from a moral and Romantic view to a scientific and material understanding of society.

As the great British architectural historian Nikolaus Pevsner argues, the late nineteenth century saw the fragmentation of Britain’s architectural and artistic landscapes as the dominant Neo-Classical forms were challenged by a series of artistic revivals often inspired by Britain’s medieval past.¹ This Medievalism, far from being regressive however, was part of a broader reaction, occurring in varied fields of knowledge, to social, technological and scientific changes ushered in by the Industrial Revolution. Among the major voices of this period, John Ruskin (1819-1900) and William Lethaby (1857-1931) appear at opposite ends of a broader Victorian movement seeking authenticity in the light of pre-industrial history and against rapid social changes associated with industrialization.² If it is true that architecture throughout the late Victorian period, from the high-Victorian Gothic Revival in the mid-nineteenth century to the later Arts-and-Craft movement in the late Victorian age (to which Lethaby belonged), are often interpreted as being Ruskinian in content, then Lethaby’s adherence to Socialist and social-scientific doctrines leads us to wonder to what extent it can be said that reactions to industrialization converged in the late Victorian age?³ It is the aim of this article to understand in what ways and to what extent conceptions of truth and authenticity changed in the light of scientific innovations in other disciplines. In order to achieve this task, a comparison of Ruskin’s 1851 literary description of the St. Mark’s Campanile in Venice with Lethaby’s iconic 1901 Eagle Building facade in Birmingham will be conducted.

What made St. Mark’s Campanile remarkable, Ruskin argued in his literary account of Venetian social and artistic history The Stones of Venice, was that although it appeared as the least ornamented public building in Venice, it still left a strong impression. Paradoxically, Ruskin observed, it is built in the simplest possible way: in plain red bricks with a heavy base and a lighter top. There are no buttresses and the only external features are a simple marble-built loggia topped by a brick-cube with alternate faces showing the Lion of St. Mark and the female representation of Venice la Giustizia.

The tower’s pyramidal spire is mounted by a golden archangel Gabriel. Built in 1514, rising up 350 feet, it is only:

one bold square mass of brickwork; double walls, with an ascending inclined plane between them, with apertures as small as possible and these only in necessary places, giving just the light required for ascending the stair or slope, not a ray more; and the weight of the whole relieved only by the double pilaster on the sides sustaining small arches at the top of the mass.\(^4\)

It appears ‘severe and simple’.\(^5\) But it was in comparison with contemporary bell-towers, Ruskin argued, that its architectural value became apparent. The later built neo-Gothic bell-tower of the United Free Church College of Scotland (UFCCS) constructed by modern methods in Edinburgh in 1858-9, is comparatively smaller, rising at 121 feet, built in stone and yet appears incapable of standing without two huge buttresses on each angle. Unlike St. Mark’s Campanile, it has no visible roof but still has four ornamental pinnacles and its base appears lighter than its top.

What the tower was built for, Ruskin concluded ironically, remained:

a mystery to every beholder; for surely no studious inhabitants of its upper chambers will be conceived to be pursuing his employments by the light of the single chink on each side; and had it been intended for a belfry, the sound of its bells would have been as effectually prevented from getting out, as the light from getting in.\(^6\)

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\(^5\)idem.,
\(^6\)ibid., p.208
Ruskin’s interest in architecture and Venetian Gothic specifically must be placed in a broader context. Born in 1819, Ruskin witnessed anxiously Britain’s industrialization. Growing and often chaotic urbanization, the spread of railways and factories and intensifying commercialism transformed Britain at an unequal pace breaking simultaneously with the quiet Georgian Picturesque ideals of the early nineteenth century. The steam-machine seemed to have had an impact on all aspects of life. Inspired by the traditionalist critique of Carlyle before him and the Romantic medieval epics of Sir Walter Scott in his youth, Ruskin believed that Britain had stepped on a perilous moral path. Growing consumerism and scientism were separating individuals from their communities, men from their faith, challenging the traditional organization of society. Like Venice before its fall, Britain was putting more faith in men and commerce than in faith and humility. Central to Ruskin is therefore the Romantic idea that ‘it takes noble people to yield a noble culture’. Aesthetic value relied not on style per se but on the moral organization of architectural elements.

As the art historian D.E. Cosgrove observes, the determining influence of Ruskin’s mother, ‘a fanatical Scottish Protestant of Evangelical faith’, during his upbringing would impact his entire life. Central to Evangelism is the idea that the Bible does not contain only literal truth but also hidden meanings. Similarly, the arts for Ruskin contained symbolic meanings and attentive aesthetical readings could therefore reveal greater truths about society’s morality. The Renaissance, for instance, he argued, engendered moral decadence in Venice as it brought luxurious opulence into churches. Similarly, Neoclassicism engendered political radicalism in Europe as it brought the obsessive rationalism, agnosticism and individualism of the Enlightenment’s philosophical programme alongside Graeco-Roman taste. Victorian rapid industrialization, Ruskin feared, prefigured nothing else but an imminent moral and thus societal decay. His contemporaries’ ill-informed attempts to revive medieval architecture, exemplified by the UFCCS’s Belfry with its useless buttresses and pinnacles, demonstrated nothing else but vain and commercial artificiality that characterized this new age obsessed by speed, profit and the cult of science.

The St. Mark’s Campanile, despite its simplicity, represented Venice at its moral peak. It revealed the honest attempt of hard-working men to build, with simple means, an incomparable piece of architecture to glorify God. It certainly had gold and marble but, unlike Renaissance buildings, only in small quantities and only to enhance the buildings most sacred elements: the loggia where the liturgical bells are located and the statue of the Angel Gabriel. It was perhaps not as geometrically perfect as a Neoclassical building, it did not try to hide construction traits from the building’s apparent design, but it remained much more revealing about humanity’s true imperfect nature. This was the mark of civilization’s honesty and grandeur. It was only when buildings conformed to their ‘vernacular’ environment, using local materials and inscribing themselves in local narratives recalling hard work, humility and sacrifice that they would appear organically embedded in their local community and morally authentic.

It was not until a building:

has been entrusted with the fame, and hallowed by the deeds of men, till its walls have been witnesses of suffering, and its pillars rise out of the shadows of death, that its

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8 ibid., pp.401-406
10 idem.,
existence, more lasting as it is than that of the natural objects of the world around it, can be gifted with even so much as these possess, of language and of life.\footnote{Ruskin, J., The Seven Lamps of Architecture (Orpington: G. Allen, 1880) p.187}

By the late Victorian era, this industrialization of minds that Ruskin so feared seemed nevertheless to have gained new grounds. As the leading nineteenth-century Socialist Beatrice Webb claimed: Victorian scientists

were the leading British intellectuals […] it was they who stood out as men of genius […] who were routing the theologians, confounding the mystics, imposing their theories on the philosophers, their inventions on capitalists, and their discoveries on medical men; whilst they were at the same time snubbing the artists, ignoring the poets, and even casting doubts on the capacity of politicians.\footnote{Webb, B., My Apprenticeship (London: Green, 1926) pp.126-127}

Britain had entered the second phase of its industrial revolution and scientific knowledge now extended into all domains of life. Darwin’s \textit{On the Origin of Species} (1852) highlighted the common evolutionary roots of mankind. Frazer’s \textit{The Golden Bough} (1890) discussed religion as a universal and scientific anthropological phenomenon rather than a theological one. In linguistics, Saussure analysed the common scientific structures of human languages. In politics, the Socialist writings of Marx and Engels sought to offer a universal scientific model to achieve social progress.\footnote{Houghton, W. E., The Victorian Frame of Mind: 1830-1870 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957) pp.33-36} Never before, had abstract science so widely been applied to the whole life of man.

In the arts, nevertheless, Ruskin had had a particularly strong impact on young artists who similarly sought to revive medieval aesthetics in opposition to what they perceived as the great formalism and growing scientific historicism of classical painting. They would ultimately organize as the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (PRB). His combination of an aesthetic yearning for the past with an intensely modern, mid-nineteenth century political critique of industrialization’s moral effects on society enabled them to connect their medieval aesthetics with the radical Socialist movement growing among continental artists\footnote{Barringer, T., The Pre-Raphaelites (London: Orion, 1998) pp. 13-14}. In fact, as the art historian Tim Barringer observes, the idea of a necessary relationship between the modern artist and political radicalism started to be promoted in France in the late 1840s by the Realist painter Gustave Courbet (1819-77), a contemporary of the Pre-Raphaelites and leader of Paris’s revolutionary Socialist Commune in 1871.\footnote{ibid., p.16}

It was the young British designer William Morris who, though not a direct member of the PRB, would have the most marked influence in this attempt to link medievalism with a Socialist critique of industrialization. Influenced by the PRB in his youth, Morris’s ambition was to revive the medieval mindset, not its spiritual legacy, but rather the economic organization of medieval artisan guilds and craftsmen transmitting their skills and knowledge with pride to worthy apprentices. He agreed with Ruskin that bad practices resulted from the industrialization of minds. Nevertheless, equally inspired by Socialist discourses, Morris saw the source of society’s problem not in industrialization itself but in the politico-economic organization of production. His medieval aesthetic was Socialist, practical and intended to restore beauty and pride to workers’ lives by changing the material conditions of industrial work. The steam-machine \textit{per se} was not responsible for the development of inhumane working conditions. On the contrary, it offered new possibilities to help alleviate hardship in manual labour. Nevertheless, machines were to assist workers in their creative tasks and not
imprison them in mechanical tasks. Creative freedom was the key to social happiness.\textsuperscript{16} Morris’s theories quickly became the core intellectual base of a broader aesthetic movement better known as the Arts-and-Craft. Among those who shared his theories, William Lethaby would perhaps become one of its most influential representatives in architecture.

Lethaby, whom Pevsner would later describe as a precursor of British architectural Modernism\textsuperscript{17} was certainly influenced by Ruskin too. He agreed that aesthetic authenticity could only be defined through an understanding of the implicit ethical principles behind the process of making. His ethical considerations, however, were those of an Arts-and-Craft member. Architectural authenticity, Lethaby argued recalling Morris’s practical Socialism, was revealed in the symbolic artistic work of free craftsmen. Industries had taken over their economic role as producers of basic consumer goods. But they had not taken over their traditional social role. On the contrary, now that the physical act of production could be achieved by machines, craftsmen could become again what they had been in pre-modern times: practical artists. The role of architects, for instance, could not be anymore that of individuals whose skills could merely solve technical difficulties linked to building. New materials had already solved many technical issues. Chemistry and engineering would most probably offer new practical solutions in the near future. The architect’s role, Lethaby argued, was to bring art and creativity back to individual’s daily life, to enable social catharsis.

From the earliest times, Lethaby observed, architects had employed known facts – the trees, the mountains, the sea – to express society’s interrogations through their art. It was in this primitive and yet universal cosmological language that rested the authentic anthropological roots of architecture and the source of all architectural marvels, from the Egyptian Pyramids to Greek temples and Gothic Cathedrals. It is perhaps the facade of Lethaby’s Eagle Insurance’s Building on 112-114 Colmore Row in Birmingham that represents best his attempt to create a modern universal architectural cosmology. The Eagle Insurance Offices, built in 1901 in collaboration with the Birmingham architect Joseph Lancaster-Ball, in fact gave Lethaby relative freedom to design the facade on his own and according to his own architectural principles. The top section presents a panel of esoteric-looking symbols which might be seen as a kind of heavenly ceiling. Waves of stone form a sky roof to this heaven and seem to touch the real sky. The carved eagle at the centre seems to represent a symbol universally associated with protection. Below the upper area is a cornice of alternating circular and triangular window heads, a reference to techniques popularly associated with religious architecture symbolizing the sky, heading three relatively unornamented floors. It is noteworthy that window glass, window bars and beaten metal doors are industrially processed. With no ornamentation or obvious reference to history, Colmore Row’s lower central section appears as a different building, a revolutionary one, eliminating wall in favour of window, enshrined in the ‘temporal’ present and expressing new possibilities offered by industrial progress. This tripartite division thus appears as a symbolically primitive and yet technically modern architectural cosmology leading us from the technical possibilities of the present to the utopian dreams of our spiritual imagination.\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{16} Morris, W., Art and Its Producers (1884) © Courtesy of Marxist.org, accessed: 09 Jan, 2013
http://www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1888/producer.htm

\textsuperscript{17} Pevsner, N., An Enquiry into Industrial Art in England (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1937) p.200

Lethaby’s Eagle Building can be seen as an attempt to recover a form of universal architectural symbolism in the light of contemporary socio-anthropological analysis of symbols, religious myths and culture.\textsuperscript{19} The building, Lethaby declared, ‘has three stories – the earth, the air and the heavens’.\textsuperscript{20} The Egyptians already ‘compared the sky to the ceiling of an edifice, as did the old poet Job who described the cosmos as a vast box whose lid is the sky’.\textsuperscript{21} Lethaby’s idea of the known and the unknown parallels Ruskin’s physical and moral. As Van der Plaat argues, Lethaby’s architectural objective is to represent man’s creative reworking of his physical environment in an attempt to explain what cannot be seen or experienced. Architecture is a transformation that has its origins in the inner resources of man be they rational or spiritual.\textsuperscript{22} Lethaby's use of ‘classical’ circular and triangular window heads, for instance, exemplifies his attempt to uncover motifs associated in most cultures with symbolic representations of the sky and spiritual architecture. Rather than conforming to one vernacular style, he tries to create architectural authenticity through an eclectic form of architectural universalism informed by recent socio-scientific and historical discoveries. Authenticity was not confined to specific times. The use of industrially-processed metals and window glass for his Eagle House highlighted not a lack of creativity, but instead demonstrated man’s ability to appropriate the means and material of his time to express universal and timeless themes. Morris’s mark appears perhaps distinctively in this aspect of Lethaby’s work as an architect seeking his inspiration through socio-scientific investigations, primarily interested by methodological and ethical outcomes rather than Romantic nostalgia.

\textsuperscript{20} Lethaby, W., \textit{Architecture, Mysticism and Myth} (London: Architectural Press, 1974) p.16
\textsuperscript{21} ibid., pp.367-368
Ruskin and Lethaby seem therefore to be presenting a contrasting, but not forcibly contradictory, understanding of authenticity. For Ruskin, authenticity is primarily the Romantic exemplification of an ideal relationship between the moral and the material: the spiritual and the historical body of a given society. Moral and aesthetic readings of history intertwined. Central to Ruskin is a conception of authenticity in diversity. That is, architectural truth is enshrined in specific histories, local and vernacular realities and narratives. Lethaby agreed that architecture encompassed a strong moral message claiming that ‘the main thesis that the development of building practice and ideas of the world structure acted and reacted on one another I still believe to be sound’. However, respect for historical narrative did not make a building more authentic. Eagle House’s facade integrated well into Birmingham’s landscape not because it respected the vernacular style of the city but because it tried to reproduce with modern means a type symbolism appealing to every audience.

Whilst Ruskin celebrated the vernacular authenticity of Venetian Gothic with the eyes of a mid-nineteenth century Romantic, Lethaby defended scientific truth and artistic freedom with the eyes of a Socialist and Arts-and-Craft member. His desire to adapt Ruskin’s Romantic and moral aesthetic to a modern and scientific world parallels his ambition to reconcile science with art, industry with creative freedom, authenticity with universalism. It was the creative minds of free craftsmen seeking to answer greater questions through their arts that could help improve a society that was not dehumanized by moral impiety, but intellectually and physically degraded by unfair socioeconomic relationships. While the St. Mark’s Campanile exemplified for Ruskin a societal form of moral honesty enshrined in local narratives, Lethaby’s Colmore Row seems to have been an attempt to uncover an authentic universal and modern symbolism. Paralleling the development of criticism of industrialization Ruskin’s ‘vernacular’ and Lethaby’s ‘universal’ seem perhaps to illustrate a broader progressive interdisciplinary switch from a Romantic, culturally-subjective and moral to a scientific, universal and material conception of society and authenticity rather than a fundamental break.

In conclusion, both Ruskin and Lethaby define authenticity against what they perceive are the excesses of industrialization, moral in the first case, socio-economical in the second. However, by arguing that architectural authenticity must be evenly enclosed in the scientific present as it is in the past, Lethaby seems to moderate Ruskin’s moral orthodoxy. Ruskin’s mid-nineteenth century defence of vernacular aesthetic was embedded in a profound moralist critique of a Victorian society that he saw as being corrupted by intellectual scientism. In contrast, for Lethaby, an early-twentieth century architect, the moral aspect was always secondary to the practical, material one. Architectural authenticity was the product of both man’s natural creative abilities and contemporary scientific discoveries and methods. In this, Lethaby departs from the dominating Ruskinian tradition to which he is also indebted. The Arts-and-Craft movement appears therefore as a transitional moment in British arts as both profoundly enshrined in the search for authenticity and open to scientific changes. In adapting Ruskin’s medieval aesthetic to the late-nineteenth century Socialist discourse, Morris essentially elevated the craftsman to the status of an artist inserted in his epoch. In doing so, he enabled Lethaby to envisage architecture as a practical art integrated in technical innovations and in a modern scientific search for authentic forms of human expression. Rather than a fundamental break, understanding of authenticity in the arts for Ruskin and in architecture for Lethaby seems to have essentially prefigured a greater switch from a moral and Romantic to a scientific and material understanding of society and history.

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An Arts and Crafts vision: A Pot and a Lecture

Penelope Fraser

Abstract: This garden pot was made around 1898 at the Compton Potters’ Arts Guild (PAG) in Surrey, established by Mary Seton Watts (1849–1938). The lecture ‘The Decorative Arts’ was given by William Morris (1834–1896) on December 4th, 1877. Although this, his first public speech, took place shortly before he became a committed socialist, Morris’s political opinions are clear: he argues for the status of craftsmen and women and their products to be valued more highly. He deplores the degenerative effects of mechanization, the profit motive and fashion. This essay will seek to compare his vision of the future of handcrafting with what the pot, the finished product of a handcrafting process, represented twenty-five years later. The comparative anonymity of Mary Watts, whose surviving pots are now costly antiques, reflects her position as the wife of one of the most fêted fine artists of the Victorian era, a role she could exploit commercially to market her products whilst diverting attention away from herself.

Figure 1: Scroll pot, 35cm x 35cm. (Photo: P Fraser)
Mary Fraser-Tytler married George Frederick Watts RA (1817-1904) in 1886 and four years later they built a country home near Guildford as a winter escape from the polluted air of London, where they lived in the artists’ colony of Holland Park. Near their property ‘Limnerslease’ at Compton, where Mary Watts established the pottery, there was a usable source of gault clay. Her design for the pot is plain, the simple, lipped bowl shape with integral handles reminiscent of classical pots from the Mediterranean from earliest times. The technique for making this pot is ancient: clay was dug up, placed in a settling tank and water added to remove impurities. After a few days it was transferred to a horse-driven pug mill, a pit in which a central shaft of blades mixed it to obtain a homogeneous consistency. After kneading to eliminate air bubbles it was ready for modelling. Large pots were either formed in a mould or thrown. A wood fired bottle kiln, built with the help of family friend and commercial potter William De Morgan, was used for firing the pots once they had been stamped with the logo of the Guild, a 5 cm wide wheel mark with the inscription from the Book of Ezekiel chapter 1, verse 16: “This work was as it were a wheel within a wheel”. This is a reference to the wheel of labour and its eternal round, reflecting Mary Watts’s personal Christian belief. There is no comparable explicit linking of faith to craft in Morris’s work.

Morris wrote the script for his first public lecture ‘in a beautiful hand with only an occasional abbreviation or correction’ between November 24th and December 2nd 1877. In order to gauge the acoustics of the Co-operative Hall in Castle Street near Oxford Street he visited it with his colleague George Wardle and read out extracts from Robinson Crusoe. The audience was a gathering of members of the Trades Guild of Learning. His business Morris and Company was well established in London and 1877 was also the year he took the lease on a retail premises at 264, Oxford Street selling fabric, wallpaper, carpets, furniture and ceramics for the domestic interior. Earlier in the year Morris had been elected to the Council of the Guild, founded to broaden the education of skilled tradesmen and apprentices. He therefore spoke with authority in the field as a practicing craftsman and member of the Guild. The title of this lecture was originally ‘The Decorative Arts’, published on December 8th in The Architect. The following year it was published as one of a series of five he gave on domestic decoration and its title changed to ‘The Lesser Arts’, ironically reflecting the conventional academic superiority of fine arts, a relationship he identified early in this lecture as undesirable.

Morris wanted to raise the status of decorative art. From the outset he struck a positive note and spoke with optimism of the future. He also saw far-reaching implications in his theme, since present circumstances – ‘change and stir about us’ – will lead to ‘the bettering of all mankind’. He defined the lesser arts as ‘the crafts of house-building, painting, joinery and carpentry, smiths’ work, pottery and glass-making, weaving and many others’. For Morris these crafts were fundamental to humanity and studying their history was essential:

> those wonders of intricate patterns interwoven, those strange forms invented, which men have so long delighted in… and ‘...no man... can sit down today and draw...the form of an ordinary vessel...that will be other than a development or a degradation of forms used hundreds of years ago.\(^5\)

Both Morris and Mary Watts had become experts in their crafts through practice and study. Mary trained formally in clay-modelling under Aimé Jules Dalou (1838-1902) at the

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3. Ibid., p. 57.
4. Ibid., p. 58.
5. Ibid., p. 61.
Slade School (1872) and at the South Kensington Schools (1870-72). She originally wanted to be a painter but gave that up after marriage in deference to her husband, the most famous portraitist in England. Morris (whose portrait was painted by Watts in 1871) was largely self-taught in a wide range of crafts including tapestry, book-binding, printing and stained glass. He, and later Mary, visited the London museums to study the history of design. Mary travelled throughout the Mediterranean on her extended honeymoon (1886-87), visiting Athens, Messina, Constantinople and Egypt. She sketched designs constantly during her ‘Grand Tour’. In the previous century large quantities of sculptured ornament had been brought back by English tourists as fashionable souvenirs. The ‘antique’ urns and vases could be genuine or reproductions even then. Italian manufacturers of expensive terracotta were exporting garden wares to England until the early 1900s when potteries such as Compton provided competition in quantity and quality – our native clay was more likely to withstand British winters.

Morris emphasised that the artisan must find satisfaction in his work. ‘To give people pleasure in the things they must perforce use, that is one great office of decoration; to give people pleasure in the things they must perforce make, that is the other use of it.’ Personal involvement with the arts is fundamental to human happiness: ‘they (the arts) are the sweeteners of human labour, both to the handicraftsman, whose life is spent in working in them, and to people in general...they make our toil happy, our rest fruitful.’ Mary Watts and her husband were supporters of the Home Arts and Industries Association, which aimed to give practical, free instruction in a wide range of crafts to the working classes in order to encourage a love of the work for its own sake and an appreciation of art. It was dependent on the involvement of educated, leisured women like Mary to run the classes. Launched in 1885 its aim was to do exactly what Morris wanted – to revive the dying art of handicrafts. Where possible this should draw out natural talent and lead to professional standards of work and gainful employment. In establishing her pottery, Mary had brought together a small workforce of around twelve young local men and set up a guild to train them in clay modeling. Four trained potters worked under her with the trainees. She was as concerned for the workers’ ‘fruitful’ rest as for their working lives, building a hostel for them in the grounds with a housekeeper and a recreation room.

Profit and fashion are features of the modern commercial environment which Morris castigated repeatedly during this lecture. Intelligent popular art could not be born of the desire to satisfy fashion and have commercial success, a subject close to the reality of life for Morris, whose businesses did both. Yet he distanced himself from such motives: ‘People say to me often enough: If you want to make your art succeed and flourish, you must make it the fashion: a phrase which I confess annoys me’ and later refers disparagingly to the motives of those engaged in making such goods: ‘who spend their time in pushing fashion this way and that for their own advantage.’ Mary had her reservations with regard to profit but not where the latest marketing opportunities were to be found. She was not motivated by profit because she did not need to be – her husband had sold portraits to fund the setting up of her business when she had started terracotta classes in Compton. She sold pots directly from the pottery, by mail order and through Liberty’s department store on Regent’s Street. Writing to James Nichol, a Scottish potter she hoped would come and work for her, she stated: ‘I believe that if rightly worked, terra cota (sic), used as we use it, will have a good market’.

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6 Morris, The Lesser Arts, p 58.
7 Ibid p 63.
9 Morris, The Lesser Arts, p 69.
10 From 1895 Mary Watts was training locals to make terracotta panels to decorate the local cemetery chapel.
11 Letter to Nichol, Dec 11th 1900.
Later that month she wrote again to Nichol:

Mr Watts wishes to encourage the industry and is prepared to spend all that is necessary for its true development – not that I wish it to be a charitable gift from him, but money laid out, not hoping at first for any return, or ever for anything but a small percentage – desiring to see and to have the pleasure of knowing that a beautiful work is being created about him.\textsuperscript{12}

Her motives were both commercially pragmatic yet virtuous in Morris’s terms with regard to profits. Marketing was vital to the success of her undertaking. She chose to make a wide range of garden ornaments because gardening was popular, especially with women, and the locally available terracotta was perfectly suited to this, ‘there is a big opening for our work. In the present fashion for gardening and garden decoration I believe we have a good assurance that we can keep the work from being given chiefly to Italians’.\textsuperscript{13}

Morris protests somewhat ingenuously about marketing, since his firm was effective in promoting their goods at many international exhibitions in London and in the USA as well as taking advertising space in the press. At Compton, Mary’s classical designs were produced alongside others inspired by natural, native forms decorated with the Tudor rose, apples, poppies and Celtic knots and symbols to broaden their appeal. The foremost garden designer of the period, Gertrude Jekyll, gave Compton many commissions. She also designed a pot for general production, ‘the Jekyll pot’. This was a marketing coup. At Jekyll’s suggestion, miniature versions of Compton pots were produced to decorate the garden of the dolls house Lutyens was making for Queen Mary in 1921. The PAG products also won prizes at the Chelsea Flower Show and from the Royal Botanical Society. Ironically Clough Ellis commissioned pieces for his Italianate village at Portmeirion. The pot therefore also corresponds to Morris’s requirement that any object claiming to be a work of art must also be useful. Morris puts utility on a par with artistic merit in the course of this lecture: ‘nothing can be a work of art which is not useful.’\textsuperscript{14}

The pot is a utilitarian object yet could be used as pure ornament, as a feature in its own right in formal gardens, as a focal point in a vista or filled with plants.

Morris linked the lesser arts to the importance of the artisan throughout this lecture. The degenerative effects of mechanization on quality could only be countered by people in the field. First must come the acceptance of responsibility to act. ‘it is not by accident that an idea comes into the heads of a few; rather they are pushed on, and forced to speak or act by something stirring in the heart of the world’.\textsuperscript{15} This is exactly what Morris is doing by speaking out and by attempting, in his own manufacturing practices, to be true to a moral framework he was beginning to formulate for the welfare of the workers in a craft enterprise. Mary Watts did not publish her thoughts on such matters but welcomed press attention and journalists were quick to foreground the philanthropic aspects of her pottery.\textsuperscript{16} Compton Pottery catalogues printed around the turn of the century contain brief explanations of the aims and standards of their work which are as close as Mary Watts ever came to theorizing about her undertaking.

\textsuperscript{12} Letter to Nichol, Dec 17\textsuperscript{th} 1900.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{14} Morris, The Lesser Arts, p 82.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid, p 68.
\textsuperscript{16} See Erskine for a typical example : ‘A great deal has been written lately concerning the depopulation of the country and the migration of the labouring classes to London, where, often from mere superfluity of numbers, they drift into the ranks of the unemployed…..It was from a perception of this need that the present industry arose – an industry which, to give an interest and employment tho’ the neighbourhood, has developed step by step into its present healthy proportions and bids fair to become one of the most successful and artistic enterprises of the sort in this country.’
The introductory page states:

the guild... having for its object the development of ARTIST CRAFTSMEN under exceptionally favourable circumstances who would in the end be capable of using to the best purpose the very noble material provided by British Clays.

The catalogues also drew the attention of the prospective customer to the hand crafting of the pots and the fact that art is being created here based on true principles of beauty:

In the Potters’ Arts Guild the WORKERS desire to keep before them the knowledge that a great NATIONAL ART flourishes upon the root of a fine NATIONAL CRAFTSMANSHIP, and greatly desire that while they are endeavouring to supply such things as are commonly required by the public, their work should be marked by a distinction of manner, and should make evident the knowledge of true principles of beauty.

Another booklet mentions the appeal of these products ‘as the figures are hand modeled (sic) they have a distinction which cannot be obtained by mass-production methods’. One may imagine Morris approving of this. He regrets the historical anonymity of the worker who has helped powerful men realize their plans. In a phrase that directly placed him on a par with the men in his audience that night in London he described: ‘men like you and me, handicraftsmen, who have left no names behind them, nothing but their work’. This was also disingenuous since he had named his firm after himself whilst Mary Watts was reluctant to claim personal credit for her business. She was quick to credit her husband, despite the fact that his involvement was financial rather than artistic. The Watts’s contribution to the revival of handcrafting on the proceeds of fine art is probably not what Morris envisaged. Mary renamed her pottery to foreground the importance of its guild structure. Originally known as Compton Terra Cotta Home Arts it became the Compton Potters’ Arts Guild, a co-operative scheme overseen by a committee with worker representation, though she remained at the head, directing design, as Morris did at Morris & Co. The new name Potters’ Arts Guild foregrounded the three aspects of the enterprise that really mattered to her. She insisted her goods be marketed by Liberty’s under that name, not their own, as was usually their practice.

As the lecture ends Morris admits that this has all been a dream. He has said nothing about the practicalities of change, this is no plan of action and he does not go into the skills needed for any one of the decorative arts. His criticisms are moral – he uses the revolutionary language of liberty, equality and fraternity - and his vision of the future is idealized but hopeful: ‘men will then assuredly be happy in their work, and that happiness will assuredly bring forth decorative, noble, popular art.’

The utopia he so often described in his prose works of fiction is also here as a rural idyll. Everyone is happy in contrast to the city where filth and poverty overwhelm: ‘these hideous streets’, ‘hideous hovels’ with their ‘everyday squalors’. Rather ‘the kitchen in a country farmhouse is most commonly a pleasant and homelike place’. Morris wanted to create a new world where ‘the contrast is less disgraceful between the fields where beasts live and the streets where men live’. Making pots in their own village was less disruptive than

17 PAG catalogue, undated, capitals or original, William Morris Gallery.
19 Ibid, p 86.
20 See: The Earthly Paradise (1865), A Dream of John Ball (1886).
21 Morris, The Lesser Arts, p 72.
22 Ibid, p 85.
leaving to seek work in the town for those young men engaged by the PAG. Both William Morris (at Kelmscott Manor and the Red House) and George and Mary Watts (at Limnerslease and Freshwater on the Isle of Wight) had built their own rural utopias, sanctuaries to enjoy away from their London lives and the sight of all that squalor. The garden theme, fundamental to the success of the Compton products, was the enduring, dominant design story behind Morris & Co’s house style.

After the lecture Morris commented ‘it went off very well and I was not at all nervous but made myself well heard’.23 The reaction of the audience to the lecture is not otherwise recorded, though Philip Webb, Morris’s colleague and friend, was moved to tears.24 The pot is an example of what Morris wanted artisans to make. It was handcrafted, useful, made by a rural workforce living as a community and subordinating profit to the production of high quality decorative art. Mary Watts’s largely anonymous role in inspiring the Compton pottery contrasts with the enduring familiarity of Morris’s name and what he achieved on a much larger scale. Whilst the rarity of surviving examples of PAG pots makes them costly antiques in the modern age, Morris’s designs are still widely available for traditional home furnishings as well as in applications such as mouse mats. His talent for presenting an idealized view of society as a utopian dream resulted in his writings having a political legacy which he could not have foreseen – in the twentieth century they were adapted as fairy tales for inclusion in educative children’s literature in Communist countries, Morris was called one of the first Communists and the origins of Socialism traced to Victorian industrialisation.25

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23 http://www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1884/useful.htm
25 Ein Buch vom Kommunismus für junge Leute by Hans Bentzien (Berlin DDR, 1976) is a typical example.


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Strange Bed-fellows: A Bishop’s Crozier and a Stained Glass Window

Elan Preston-Whyte

Abstract: The crozier of William of Wykeham, Bishop of Winchester, provides a fine example of the Gothic art and craft of the fourteenth century displaying images of musician angels. The same typographical theme is to be found in a stained glass window installed in St. Margaret’s Church at Lewknor in Oxfordshire, designed by William Morris in the nineteenth century. This essay examines the crozier and window images in detail and discusses the sources which may have inspired the goldsmith and the skills he needed for their creation; it explores the influences which may have guided Morris in the recreation of similar images but in a different medium.

The fourteenth-century crozier of William of Wykeham (1320-1404) was presented to him at his consecration as Bishop of Winchester in 1367, and it was subsequently bequeathed by him to New College (originally The College of St Mary of Winchester in Oxford), which was the college he founded in Oxford in 1379.1 It is now enclosed in a glass case in the college Chapel but was described in detail in 1906 on behalf of the Oxford Historical Society.2 Made of silver gilt, its overall length is 6ft 9in. (205.74cm) and consists of two parts, the shaft and the crook. The shaft is cylindrical, 1\(\frac{3}{8}\) in. (3.5cm) in diameter and expands to end in the octagonal knop (capital) 11in. high (27.94cm).3 It is covered in panels, each with five silver lilies in low relief on a background enamelled alternately blue and green with gilt beaded mouldings between each panel.

Figure 1 (http://www.bridgemanart.com/asset/215342/) is a portrait of Wykeham in his episcopal robes with a full-length crozier (not the one in question) whilst Figure 2 (http://www.bridgemanart.com/asset/205101/) shows the details of the knop, part of the shaft and the crook of the actual crozier. The architectural detail of the knop includes statuettes of Christ and the accompanying saints of St Peter and St Paul, placed in full relief in elaborate sculptured niches on each side. There are also two images of the Virgin Mary in these niches which, together with the lilies in the panels on the shaft, may have been included because the Virgin was Wykeham’s particular patroness.4

The crook proper ascends to a height of about 11ins (27.94cm) above the knop and is hexagonal in shape and enamelled with broad flat sides with ridged edges, 1\(\frac{5}{8}\) in (3.7cm) broad and 7\(\frac{1}{8}\) in. (2.2cm) thick. It is sparsely crocketed and ornamented by ten panels on either side, height 1\(\frac{1}{2}\) in. (3.8cm) and width 5\(\frac{1}{8}\) in. (1.6cm). These panels are filled with translucent, champlevé enamels of various colours portraying angels playing musical instruments.5 They can be identified as being either on the ‘Peter’ side or the ‘Paul’ side depending on which saint is in a niche of the knop directly below.

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5 In champlevé enamelling, the design was ‘gouged out of the surface of the metal to be treated, leaving thin ridges of metal standing above the resulting troughs and channels’. In the latter, more than one colour was applied as powder in a single compartment before firing to fix the colours. Glossary in Age of Chivalry, p. 541.
6 Montagu, p. 548.
Figure 4 (http://www.bridgemanart.com/asset/205111), shows an angel, in a loose brown robe with turquoise wings and a halo, seated on clouds against a blue background and playing a woodwind instrument identifiable by its straight cylindrical body. Although the image is small and not very distinct, it has been suggested this may be the first known representation of a recorder. In Figure 5 (http://www.bridgemanart.com/asset/205110), a haloed angel is playing a portative organ and wearing a brown and yellow robe over a pink undergarment; its wings are pink and green, and it is seated on clouds again with a bluish background. The row of five pipes of the portative organ can just be made out but no keyboard or bellows are visible. The third angel’s image, Figure 6 (http://www.bridgemanart.com/asset/205107), is partially obscured but its robes and wings are clearly outlined and even the expression on its face is visible. It holds horizontally a pair of cymbals which have high conical domes.

These three musician angels have been selected for detailed description because they ‘play’ similar instruments to those held by the angels in the stained-glass window designed by William Morris (1834-96) and installed in 1876 at St. Margaret’s Church, Lewknor, situated in South East Oxfordshire. The information on the memorial tablet beneath it suggests it was commissioned by the Reverend Slade, who was vicar at the time, in memory of his dead child. The church was originally dedicated to the Virgin Mary but the adoption of St. Margaret as a patronal saint probably derives from the holding of the village wake upon St. Margaret’s day. The chancel rebuilt in the fourteenth century is an example of Gothic architecture, with a five-light east window and three-light windows on either side. A few fragments of medieval stained glass have been worked into the tops of the chancel windows. Figure 6 illustrates the window to be examined: it is 170 cm wide and approximately 396 cm high, displaying three winged angels who are barefooted, without halos but wearing gold-coloured circlets in their hair. The figures are set against a background of clear quarry tiles, patterned with daisies and tulips in silver-stain, and the angels’ feet tread on flowered grass.

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6 Montagu, p. 548.  
7 Montagu, p. 545.  
8 Montagu, p. 545.  
The left angel wears a simple, girdled, long-sleeved robe in blue with gold wings; she plays a wind instrument which may be a recorder. The dark-haired angel in the centre is playing a portative organ (no bellows is shown); she wears a blue girdled, long-sleeved robe and a loose shoulder-cape, with turquoise and blue wings. The remaining angel, with the vertically-held cymbals, has golden hair, a blue robe and gold wings.

So why were minstrel angels depicted in both crozier and window? In the fourteenth century the origin of angels could be traced back to early Christian art where they appeared as wingless men. They had originated from images of the Graeco-Roman goddess of Victory who ‘carried away the illustrious dead on tireless wings’13. They subsequently became associated either as messengers or as God’s servants singing praises to Him.14 They are represented in medieval paintings as idealised young men dressed in the artists’ interpretation of liturgical dress, with haloes and wings (but sometimes without either) to indicate their divine status.15

The one reference to a choir of angels ‘singing’, in the Bible in the New Testament is related to the annunciation to the shepherds of the birth of Christ.16 The addition of a musical instrument to an angel in a painting or to a statue, therefore, was intended to depict the ‘music’ of this heavenly choir. Such images were included in paintings particularly of the Nativity and in other scenes representing the Assumption and Coronation of the Virgin Mary where they play a peripheral rather than a central role in these paintings. Musical instruments would also be included when depicting saints as their accompanying attributes so people were able to quickly identify saints in statuary and stained glass, for example, the portative organ.

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12 Photograph, 30 January, 2013, by Peter MacKinnon, Lewknor. Permission has been given for reproduction.
15 Langmuir, p 29
was traditionally associated with St. Cecilia who was associated with music and song.\textsuperscript{17} Stringed instruments, such as the cittern, were deemed particularly appropriate for heavenly music.\textsuperscript{18}

The provenance of the crozier is not known, but it could be of French (Paris), Italian or possibly English origin; in 1317, Edward II gave the Pope a gold-enameled ewer bought from a London goldsmith, Roger Frowyck.\textsuperscript{19} However, if the goldsmith was based in England, he could have found the angel images he needed for his heavenly orchestra from a variety of sources, such as illuminated manuscripts or \textit{Books of Hours}. The stained glass of the period often portrayed saintly women in the ‘full-length S-swayed posture’ with loosely-draped robes, detailed facial features and wavy hair.\textsuperscript{20} The crozier images however, are tiny and their fine detail is not easily made out. The exception is the angel with the cymbals where every detail of its face and hair has been carefully delineated. Their appearance is not gendered and their robes are a delicate mix of browns, pinks and yellows as they sit on clouds in a heavenly-blue sky.

It is not known if Morris had seen the crozier whilst he was an undergraduate in Oxford but he and Edward Burne Jones had visited the cloisters at New College, which they rated with Merton College chapel as ‘their chief local shrine’.\textsuperscript{21} They studied the medieval glass in the Chapel at Merton, which Morris said represented for him the true period for stained glass, describing the windows installed in the late fourteenth century as ‘the highest point reached in art’.\textsuperscript{22} The Lewknor angels when compared with those of the crozier are many times their size which enables detail to be shown which is not possible with the crozier images. However, there are similarities to be noted in that their robes are loosely-draped, their hair is loose and flowing and the clear quarry-tiles allows light to travel through the glass to reveal the blue (heavenly) sky beyond. His angel faces are more recognisably female (he has used his wife, Jane, as the model for the central angel) but their dress, nevertheless, echoes the simple robes of the crozier’s angels as shown in the illustration below.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{lewknor_window.jpg}
\caption{The angel and portative organ in the Lewknor window.\textsuperscript{23}}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{18} ‘An Angel with cittern’. Image 562 in \textit{Age of Chivalry: Catalogue}, p.446
\textsuperscript{19} M. Campbell, ‘Metalwork in England c. 1200-1400’ in \textit{Age of Chivalry}, p.164-5
\textsuperscript{20} ‘The Virgin Annunciate’. Image 740 in \textit{Age of Chivalry: Catalogue}, p.534.
\textsuperscript{22} MacCarthy, p. 177.
\textsuperscript{23} Photograph, 30 January, 2013 by Peter MacKinnon, Lewknor. Permission has been given for reproduction.
Morris has used varying shades of blue for the angels’ dress. It is interesting that none of the robes of the crozier angels are blue but this is probably because their background is blue and a contrast was therefore needed. Blue as a colour was not invariably associated with the Virgin in medieval times, for example, in *The Wilton Diptych* (c.1395–1399) both the Virgin and angels are all portrayed in brilliant blue as they tread on a flowery ground symbolizing the gardens of Paradise as do the Lewknor angels.

What is known about the angels in the Lewknor window is that they are not unique. Morris had designed them all well before 1876 as part of a set of twelve women with musical instruments which he drew intending that, with or without their wings, they could be employed in a number of commissions in either religious or secular settings, in stained-glass, tiles or tapestries. Figure 8 below is the design for a minstrel tile by Morris for an organ screen at Beddington, Surrey, and this is clearly the same image as the angel with the portative organ in the stained glass. The information accompanying the cartoons held in the Huntington Library, in California, confirms that the Lewknor angels were all designed for different churches when Morris was a founding partner in the firm of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. (1861-75), that is, before it became Morris and Company in 1875.

Figure 8: Design for a minstrel’s tile. Blue water-colour and pencil on paper, squared for transfer. Not dated. Source: Bryson bequest to the Ashmolean Museum. Print room, Acquisition no. 1834.96

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24 [http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/english-or-french-the-wilton-diptych](http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/english-or-french-the-wilton-diptych)
26 The angel with organ was the first to be designed in 1867 for Foreneaux Pelham Church, the angel with cymbals for Llandaff Cathedral in 1869 and the minstrel angel with short pipes for Overstowey Church in 1873 Ref: Cartoons: 2000.5.1524C, 2000.5.1523C, 2000.5.1525D. Sanford & Helen Berger collections, Huntington Library, Location, Scott Print room
27 Author’s photograph taken with the curator’s permission on 11 December, 2013.
On his travels abroad, Morris had seen paintings by the Flemish artist, Jan van Eyck (c.1390-1441) who had portrayed angels playing a variety of musical instruments in The Ghent Altarpiece (c.1430-32). Morris was also very strongly influenced by the paintings of Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-82 and the others of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, whose ‘abiding concern with the past grew out of the medievalism of the Romantic movement’, which seemed to them more individualistic than the classical orientation of the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century.

The representation of the crozier’s musical instruments is thought to be more artistic than realistic despite the contemporary instruments being available which a goldsmith could have used as models. Morris, on the other hand, would have had to rely on illustrations of the portative organ as this had become obsolete by the sixteenth century and his cymbals are a more modern version than those of the crozier. However, both the medieval craftsman and Morris would probably have been less concerned about the realism of their portrayal than the symbolism they conveyed. For the goldsmith, the crozier embodied the sanctity of one of God’s representatives on earth, but Morris was more concerned that his windows should enhance the appearance of a church and he sincerely believed they should be in keeping with their architectural setting. Nevertheless, he was well aware that the ecclesiastical objects his firm made were a major and successful part of his commercial enterprise.

The goldsmith, who created the crozier, may have been responsible for all the different elements in its construction, such as the original design, the sculpting and casting of the many figures, the soldering and the enameling, with or without the help of assistants. However, in Morris’s Firm, no one craftsman in the production of stained glass would be concerned with overseeing the whole process of manufacture (in its original meaning of ‘made by hand’), from design to completion of the finished article. The designer would often be Edward Burne Jones who, having handed over his design for the window would play no further part in the process. Nevertheless, Morris was meticulous in adhering to the techniques of medieval craftsmanship, using only pot-metal glass, deciding on the lead framing of the glass elements and rejecting the ‘hotly polychromic colouring of High Victorian stained glass’ by using a more muted palette. He sums up the process as follows:

The only method capable of producing stained glass which shall be beautiful and interesting and which at the same time can plead for some reason for its existence, is that which has been called mosaic glass…

The Lewknor window was commissioned about the time that Morris began to have doubts about putting new windows into ancient Gothic churches and he subsequently refused to supply his windows in these circumstances, severely criticising architects who did, and in 1877 he helped to found the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings.

In conclusion, the crozier and tracery window are linked by the symbolism of the images they embody. The minstrel angels portrayed share a common religious heritage which stretches back to the mythology of Greco-Roman times. The crozier created at the zenith of

31 MacCarthy, p. 45.
35 MacCarthy, p.375.
the Catholic Church in the fourteenth century as the pastoral staff of William of Wykeham signifies his symbolic role as the shepherd of his flock. It is a beautifully crafted, unique and costly object which became his personal property. William Morris’s stained glass window in Lewknor’s fourteenth-century chancel was part of a commercial enterprise based on the religious and secular opportunities which the Victorian era afforded. His design for the window, probably commissioned as a memorial for a dead child, is a composite of the designs for previous windows. It became the property of St. Margaret’s Church and it is an example of Morris’s sincere attempt to represent medieval art using similar religious images but reinterpreting their presentation by using contemporary aesthetic and artistic ideas so that they are neither simple copies nor pastiches of the past.

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Designs for the Altar of St. Paul’s Cathedral: The Comparative Visions of Sir Christopher Wren and Thomas Garner

Shanna M. Patton

Abstract: Thomas Garner’s 1888 design for the altar and reredos at London’s St. Paul’s Cathedral is typically remembered as controversial and inconsistent with the vision of church’s original architect, Sir Christopher Wren. However, this essay will provide a new context for appreciating Garner’s work by juxtaposing evidence of Wren’s unexecuted design with Garner’s executed design. By comparing their situational contexts and recognizing the congruencies in their styles, this research will demonstrate how Garner’s design reflected more of Wren’s classic style than has previously been acknowledged.

‘The sumptuous reredos, from the designs of Messrs. Bodley and Garner, was finished in January 1888, at a cost of £37,000. It was affirmed that it is in accordance with the intentions of Wren, as expressed in the ‘Parentalia,’ but it is not likely that Wren would have wished forty feet at the beautiful east end of his church to be permanently cut off by a barricade 60 feet high: neither is this mass of marbles, angels, Latin inscriptions, doors leading nowhere, &c., in accordance either with his pure Roman or Palladian designs, or with his intentions as to where the altar should be placed.’

Augustus John Cuthbert Hare’s critical reaction to Thomas Garner’s 1888 altar and reredos at St. Paul’s Cathedral (Figure 1) partially explains why, approximately 50 years later, the relatively new design was sacrificed to the Nazi war machine. Although throughout the course of World War II the survival of Sir Christopher Wren’s London cathedral had symbolized the enduring spirit of the English nation, the damage sustained to the high altar during the German Luftwaffe’s October 9, 1940 nighttime air raid on London created an opportunity to ‘right’ a perceived architectural ‘wrong’ from St. Paul’s Victorian past. By 1958, the Dean and Chapter of the cathedral had replaced Garner’s Baroque altar with a Gothic ciborium considered more consistent with Wren’s original vision, but an objective comparison of Wren and Garner’s designs reveals that Garner’s work reflected more of Wren’s style than critics have been willing to concede.

In order to provide a new perspective from which to appreciate Garner’s work, this research will juxtapose Wren and Garner’s designs for the high altar at St. Paul’s Cathedral to compare their situational contexts and recognize the congruency of their styles. First, I will clarify Wren’s original vision by examining existing evidence and disassociating his design from the style of the existing ciborium, which is misleadingly described as ‘based on’ Wren’s design. Second, I will describe Garner’s vision and analyze how the common ground shared by Wren and Garner’s designs reveals how the 1888 altar and reredos reflected aspects of Wren’s classic style that have previously been ignored.

Although Wren was notorious for altering his plans for St. Paul’s during the course of its construction, a surviving model, description, and sketch of his design, as well as examples of his work in other London cathedrals, provides a reliable picture of what his original, yet unexecuted vision for the high altar actually was.

On October 2, 1693, Wren presented to the cathedral’s Building Committee a plan for a recessed altar in the semicircular apse at the far end of the East nave (Figure 2). Beginning flush with the end of the choir stalls, the design featured a two-rise platform with a semi-circular projection connecting the ambulatories on the North and South sides. Another platform with three rises and a more pronounced circular projection was positioned in line with the columns flanking the apse and was adorned with a decorative altar rail stretching the entire length of the platform. Just beyond the rail, the high altar table stood independently at

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4. Compare the differences between the approved Warrant Design with Wren’s final product.
the centre of the apse, several feet in front of a spiral-columned reredos-canopy that was pushed against the easternmost wall.

A physical model of Wren’s design for the reredos-canopy (Figure 3) was constructed by joiner Charles Hopson in 1693, and we know from the description provided by Wren’s son in Parentalia that the design prescribed ‘four Pillars wreathed, of the richest Greek Marbles, supporting a Canopy hemispherical, with proper Decorations of Architecture and Sculpture.’ The anterior surface of the reredos-canopy, which was inspired by the twisted columns of Giovanni Battista Flora’s ciborium in St. Peter’s Basilica (Figure 4), featured a ‘shallow segmental canopy above an arched opening’ framed on each side by two pairs of spiral columns, each capped with ornate Corinthian capitals and sharing a rectangular plinth. A similar scheme was mirrored on the posterior side of the design, although square fluted columns were substituted in place of the spiral ones.

Figure 2: Wren’s plan for the choir and altar enclosures (Diagram: S. Patton).

Figure 3: Wren’s wooden model (Illustration: S. Patton).

Figure 4: Giovanni Battista Flora’s ciborium in St. Peter’s Basilica, Rome (Engraving: Artstor).


7 Although the terms ‘baldacchino’ and ‘ciborium’ are often used interchangeably, ‘[s]trictly speaking, a baldacchino would be a non-permanent structure, presumably fabric, whereas a ciborium refers to a permanent structure of wood, metal, or stone.’ Steve Semes, ‘Introibo Ad Altare Dei: The Baldacchino as an Element of Catholic Liturgical Architecture,’ The Institute for Sacred Architecture, Vol. 2, retrieved from http://www.sacredarchitecture.org/articles/introibo_ad_altare_dei/.

8 St. Paul’s Cathedral Architectural Archive. See also Robert Trevitt’s view of the choir on 31 Dec. 1706, Wren Society 14, pl. 18; and the description of sketch WRE/4/1/5 in the St. Paul’s Cathedral Architectural Archive.
The Building Committee’s October 1693 meeting minutes indicated ‘nothing was resolved upon’ regarding Wren’s plan, but the altar was ultimately excluded from the Commission’s May 1, 1694 authorization to begin construction on the nearby organ and choir.\(^9\) Wren’s son justified the delay, explaining ‘Information, & particular Descriptions of certain Blocks of Marble were once sent to the Right Reverend Dr. Compton, Bishop of London, from a Levantine Merchant in Holland, and communicated to the Surveyor, but unluckily the Colours and Scantlings did not answer his Purpose; so it rested in Expectance of a fitter Opportunity, else probably this curious and stately Design had been finished at the same Time with the main Fabrick.’\(^10\)

Even so, rampant speculation that the clergy rejected the reredos-canopy as ‘too catholic’ for their post-reformation Anglican cathedral fueled assumptions that Wren intended to construct a full, free-standing ciborium like the one in St. Peter’s.\(^11\) However, this conclusion is unsubstantiated by the surviving model, description, and sketch of Wren’s design, as well as his overwhelmingly consistent use of a reredos screen in each of the altars he designed for other London Cathedrals.\(^12\) The only similarity between Wren’s design and Flora’s Roman ciborium was the spiral marble columns. In other key respects, Wren’s design was appreciably different: it featured pairs of spiral and square columns instead of four symmetrical corner columns; its canopy was a two-dimensional hemispherical arch, not a three-dimensional conical dome; its foundational layout was rectangular, not square; and its placement was against the wall several feet behind the altar table, not centered in the aisle directly over the altar.

From a stylistic standpoint, Wren was concerned with balancing the proportions of the cathedral’s classical architecture with the details of its interior fittings,\(^13\) and the ornate embellishments of Flora’s ciborium would have created a distraction from the clean Palladian details of the cathedral’s larger fabric. Furthermore, from a political standpoint it is unlikely Wren desired to challenge church politics by proposing overtly catholic design in the aftermath of the English Reformation,\(^14\) especially when his salary was subject to the control of the Church Commissioners.\(^15\)

Unfortunately, the 1958 replacement of Garner’s altar and reredos with a Modern Gothic ciborium designed by Stephen Dykes Bower (Figure 5) shows the extent to which history has accepted an erroneous interpretation of Wren’s original vision for the altar. Claiming Bower’s Gothic design is ‘based on’\(^16\) Wren’s Classical design, people incorrectly view the ciborium as a fulfillment of Wren’s vision. Although both designs took inspiration from the spiral columns of Flora’s work in St. Peter’s, Wren’s design did not, in fact, propose a full-fledged ciborium. The surviving model, description, and sketch of his design, as well as examples of his work in other London cathedrals, all prove Wren’s original vision for the altar involved a Classically-styled marble reredos canopy positioned against the wall of the

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\(^9\) St. Paul’s Cathedral Architectural Archive.


\(^12\) Compare to the altars in St. Benet Paul’s Wharf, St. Clement Eastcheap, St James Garlickhythe, St. Margaret Lothbury, St. Margaret Pattens, St. Stephen Walbrook, St. Andrew by the Wardrobe, St. Andrew, Holborn, St. Anne and St. Agnes, St. Bride’s Church, St. Lawrence Jewry, St. Mary-le-Bow, St. Michael Paternoster Royal, St. Nicholas Cole Abbey, St. Vedast Foster Lane, etc.


\(^14\) Ibid.


\(^16\) Arends.
apse behind an open altar table, not a freestanding Gothic-styled ciborium hovering over a restricted altar table.

Upon Wren’s death there were no revised plans to construct a permanent altar, and concern about the design of the altar lay dormant until 1870’s when, in hopes of accommodating St. Paul’s swelling congregation, a controversial decision was made to remove the choir screen, reposition the organ, and shift the choir stalls 30 feet westward. The open vista that now spanned the length of the cathedral emphasized the striking absence of an altar suitable to the grand proportions of the larger structure. A variety of designs were considered, including plans for a ciborium similar to Bower’s, but it was only after the 1882 installation of the ‘Great Paul’ bell in the southwest tower that the partnership of George Bodley and Thomas Garner were invited to design a permanent altar reredos.

Thomas Garner was ultimately responsible for the design of the altar and reredos revealed to the public on January 25, 1888 (Figure 1). Instead of positioning the altar in the apse, he brought it forward with a semi-circular reredos backdrop, connecting the great eastern piers of the nave and isolating the apse into a separate chapel that became known as the Jesus Chapel. The altar table was elevated on a six-rise platform of white marble centered toward the rear of an expansive two-rise pavement of Rosso Antico, Brescia, and Verdi di Prato. The wall-high foundation or ‘basement’ of the reredos framed the altar with marble relief panels and two pierced-brass doors on each side providing access to the apse. A second level of vertically compact panels contained additional marble reliefs, the largest of which depicted from left to right the nativity, entombment, and resurrection, and it was upon this level the reredos was finally capped with a tall, open colonnade framing pairs of ornate spiral columns supporting a pedimented entablature. The focal arch of the central structure depicted Christ crucified with sculptures of St. John, the Virgin Mary, and a Roman soldier below, and a gilt bronze inscription of *Sic Deus Dilexit Mundum*, Latin for ‘God so loved the world’ (John 3:16), adorning the frieze above. The niche topping the pediment was then crowned with statues of

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18 Clinch, p. 151-155.
St. Paul and St. Peter on either side of Mary holding the infant Jesus, and occupying the summit above her stood the crowning figure of the risen Savior.  

Contemporary responses to Garner’s design were divided. Supporters claimed it ‘added incalculably to the dignity and impressiveness of the general architectural effect of the church,’ while detractors argued the scale and ‘Popery’ of the embellishments ruined Wren’s original vision for the cathedral. In reality, Garner’s design reflected aspects of Wren’s vision that have gone unnoticed. Specifically, the circumstances influencing the design, as well as Garner’s stylistic choices, demonstrate their common ground.  

Both Wren and Garner were influenced by contemporary church politics. Wren worked for post-reformation evangelists eager to symbolize a new theology in the architecture of the church. Disenchanted with, but still accustomed to, the Gothic style of Catholic cathedrals, the Anglican Church began to infuse Classically-inspired architecture into a tradition of Gothic design. To emphasize the priesthood of all believers, the ‘high altar’ became known as the ‘communion table,’ and ‘Popish’ idols of the Virgin Mother and the Crucifixion were replaced with more modest symbols of faith.  

In a similar way, Garner worked for an Anglican church that recognized how church architecture symbolized High-Church and Low-Church theology. Specifically, the Oxford Movement had embraced the ritualism of the old church, and with it saw Gothic architecture as a representation of an idealized past. Victorian England re-embraced Gothic style as a symbol of national pride, and the Anglican Church fought to find an architectural balance between past and present ideologies.  

Seeking to reconcile Classical principles with the picturesque quality of traditional Gothic architecture, both Wren and Garner’s designs represent what Parentalia described as ‘Gothic rectified to a better manner of architecture.’ Arguments that Garner’s design violated Wren’s ‘pure’ Roman or Palladian design are deceptive, because Wren’s design was not itself ‘pure’. Wren’s work was dictated by the King and Commissioner’s desire for a design that would (1) glorify God and promote worship, (2) exceed the splendor of the previous church, and (3) create a principle ornament for the city that symbolized the honor of the government and realm. Subject to conflicting opinions about style, his ‘purer’ first and second designs were rejected because they were so dissimilar to the Gothic cathedral style, and his third design was only approved because it conformed to a so-called ‘cathedral form’ and attempted to reconcile a Classic style with traditional Gothic elements.  

In a similar way, Garner’s work was dictated by the Chapter and Dean’s desire for a design that would (1) enhance the splendor of the cathedral without disrupting the solemnity and simplicity of the edifice, (2) integrate colorful marble durable enough to withstand London weather, and (3) employ rich gilding and decoration harmonious to ‘our simpler form of worship.’ The Decorative Committee rejected Garner’s initial design for a less elaborate canopy altar as impractical and requested from him a large, semi-circular marble reredos to connect the existing architecture of the church. Concerned with creating a design visible from the far end of the West nave whilst preserving the overall scale of the cathedral, Garner

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23 Ibid.  
24 Clinch, p. 154. See also Deems.  
25 Eastwood, p. 6; Dimock, p. 52; and Hare, pp. 115-116.  
26 Wren, p. 139; See also Garner, p. 167.  
27 Hare.  
29 Ibid, p. 139.  
30 Ibid.  
31 Dean Milman, Letter to the Bishop of London, quoted by Hare, p. 167.  
32 Garner, p. 168.  
33 Ibid.
conformed to the contemporary demand for an elaborate altar and created the grandeur desired by applying an ornate vision to a Classical form.

Garner’s attempt to preserve Wren’s stylistic vision and sense of proportion despite the demands of church leaders was initially praised, with one magazine writing,

‘The architectural detail has been very carefully studied so as to assimilate, as far as possible, the general style of the Cathedral, and the leading lines of the composition continue those of the choir wall; so that the various cornices, architraves, plinths, etc., all range with similar features of the main fabric of the church, by which means the reredos is made to assume the character of a structural part of the building rather than that of a mere piece of furniture, and thus the marked classical treatment which Sir Christopher Wren had imparted to his design for the Cathedral is in no way impaired or broken through.’

But this praise was soon forgotten when a drawn-out legal battle over the purportedly Catholic symbolism of several of the reredos sculptures inspired viewers to distance Garner’s design from Wren’s vision. The aesthetic similarities between Garner and Wren’s designs were substantially ignored while differences in their scale, placement, use of colour and use of text were used to suggest that Garner’s design was overtly High-Church and completely antithetical to the Low-Church character of Wren’s design.

However, a comparison of the circumstances influencing Wren and Garner’s stylistic choices prove otherwise. According to Edward Rimbault, Wren had always ‘wished the organ to be placed on one side of the Choir, as it was in the old Cathedral, that the whole extent and beauty of the building might be seen at one view; the Dean, on the contrary, wished to have it at the west-end of the choir; and Sir Christopher, after using every effort and argument to gain his point, was at last obliged to yield.’ The minimized scale of Wren’s design for the reredos canopy was tailored to the confined vista created by the organ and choir screen, just as the maximized scale of Garner’s reredos was tailored to the expansive vista created by the removal of the organ and choir screen. Both Wren and Garner were concerned with balancing the scale of the altar with the proportions of the surrounding architecture, and the difference in the size of their designs demonstrates less about how their styles clashed than how their styles coordinated.

Wren positioned his altar and reredos canopy within the apse to accommodate the restrained dimensions of the choir and emphasize the beauty of the stained glass windows. In like manner, Garner positioned his reredos canopy away from the apse to accommodate the new dimensions of the relocated choir stalls, and on the top of his reredos he created an open colonnade of Corinthian columns to allow spectators a full view of the windows beyond. Although Wren and Garner’s designs for St. Paul’s altar were influenced by different circumstances, both sought to blend their creative visions with the existing architecture of the cathedral and maintain a balance of proportions that enhanced the beauty of the larger structure.

Moreover, Wren and Garner’s design choices were stylistically consistent. Like Wren’s unexecuted design, Garner’s executed plan included pairs of spiral marble columns; a compressed reredos-canopy with a central arch; a solid, semi-circular backdrop to frame a

34 Deems, pp. 308-309.
36 See Hare, 168.
free-standing altar; ornamentation with angels, fruit, and floral festoons similar to that used on the choir stalls and wall reliefs; and Corinthian capitals mimicking those that adorned the columns throughout the interior and exterior of the cathedral.

In conclusion, although Thomas Garner’s 1888 design for St. Paul’s altar and reredos may have been controversial and differed from Wren’s original vision in its scale, placement, use of colour, and use of text, an objective comparison of Wren and Garner’s designs reveals they had more in common than critics have previously acknowledged. Both the historic situations influencing the designs, as well as the stylistic choices that resulted, represent a common ground that will forever link Wren and Garner’s designs and provide a better context for appreciating the value of Garner’s historic contribution to the architecture of St. Paul’s Cathedral.

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From ‘the Word’ to ‘the Eucharist’ in fifty years - reflected in sketch and photograph. Oxford Movement inspired liturgical change in the church of St. Margaret, Dunham Massey, Cheshire.

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Abstract: In this essay, by comparing an 1856 London Illustrated News sketch of the interior of St. Margaret’s Church, Dunham Massey, Cheshire with a photograph of works completed on the chancel in 1905, I will provide an answer to the question: ‘Why, within fifty years of the church being built were alterations made which effectively obscured one of the most impressive and prominent features of the original interior – the large east-end stained glass window?’ In doing so, I will chart the change in churchmanship at St. Margaret’s from pre-Oxford Movement worship of the Word to Eucharistic centrality.

The Church of St. Margaret, Dunham Massey is situated in the North West of England, just off the main highway between the medieval town of Chester and the more modern industrial City of Manchester. Situated some twelve miles from Manchester’s City Centre in the ancient township of Altrincham, St. Margaret’s is an imposing building designed by William Hayley, a Manchester Architect. The Perpendicular/neo-Gothic style design adopted by Hayley was much in demand in the mid nineteenth-century as a result of the influence of the Roman Catholic Augustus Welby Northmoor Pugin (1812-1852), for whom the only appropriate style of church architecture was the medieval Gothic and who considered churches built in the ‘modern’ style as mere ‘preaching boxes’.\(^1\) Commissioned, in 1849, by the seventh Earl of Stamford, St. Margaret’s is said to have been built for the ‘quite astonishing’ reason that the Earl’s second wife, a former bare-back rider in a circus, was ‘not well received by the local gentry around Altrincham nor by the church at Bowdon’.\(^2\) Owing to this ostracism St. Margaret’s was built just over half a mile from the existing parish Church, even though it had only a ‘handful of houses’ within a third of a mile of the new building and had no existing parish.\(^3\) Having commissioned the church, the Earl did not attend its consecration and removed himself and his bride to his Enville estate in Staffordshire.\(^4\)

The church’s consecration in 1855 was reported, somewhat belatedly, in The Illustrated London News of September 20th 1856 and the recently discovered sketched image of the Church’s interior which accompanied that report has brought into sharp relief a question which has been puzzling parishioners and visitors for many years. Why, within fifty years of the church being built, were alterations made which effectively obscured one of the most impressive and prominent features of the original interior – the large east-end stained glass window? In this paper, I will refer to The Illustrated London News sketch of the interior of the church as ‘Artefact 1’ (Figure 1) and I will endeavour to answer the question posed above by reference to the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century alterations to the church, evidenced in a photograph, which I shall call ‘Artefact 2’, (Figure 2) of the current chancel and sanctuary.

\(^1\) Michael W Brooks, John Ruskin and Victorian Architecture (London: Thames and Hudson, 1989), p.37
\(^3\) Ibid.
\(^4\) Ibid.
Figure 1: Artefact 1 - Sketch of the interior of St. Margaret’s Church, Dunham Massey, accompanying the report of its consecration in *The Illustrated London News*, dated 20th September, 1856.\(^5\)

It will be seen from Artefact 1 that St. Margaret’s splendid Gothic interior does undoubtedly fulfil Pugin’s ‘dream of lofty arches and majestic lines of pillars’.\(^6\) It does not, though, include the remainder of that vision’s ‘high altars blazing with gold and jewels’.\(^7\) Nor can it be said to be of the style of the Cambridge Ecclesiologists, a group of Anglicans who shared Pugin’s love of the Gothic, but adapted what they saw as his explicit Roman Catholic

\(^5\) Report of the consecration of St. Margaret’s Church, Dunham Massey in *The Illustrated London News*, dated 20th September, 1856, examined and copied in the Cheshire Record office on 11th December 2012, Ref: St. Margaret’s Church, Dunham Massey, P248/2/3 reproduced with the permission of Cheshire Archives and Local Studies, Duke St, Chester.


\(^7\) Ibid.
ideas to make them more palatable to the Church of England. The Ecclesiologists were vehemently against pews in churches (which they insisted on spelling ‘pues’) ‘because they wasted space and made churches less attractive to the labouring classes’, whereas Hayley’s design for St. Margaret’s included pewed seating for 700 people. Ecclesiologist ideals would have rejected too ‘the flat east end’ with its low communion table. So St. Margaret’s is built in the ‘fashionable’ neo-Gothic (high-church) style, but with a chancel which accords with low-church Protestantism. The east-end is dominated by its stained glass window.

Artefact 1 shows the original east window, measuring some thirty feet by fourteen feet. The upper division contains standing figures representing Christ the Saviour in the centre of a group of which St. John the Baptist, St. Matthew, St. Mark, St. Luke, St. John the Evangelist and St. Peter are the chief figures. In the lower division St. Paul is represented in the centre, surrounded by Old Testament figures, Moses, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, David and Malachi. After the erection, in 1905, of the alabaster and wood reredos, all these lower-division figures were obscured, as can be seen in Artefact 2:

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8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
Figure 2: Artefact 2 - Photograph of St. Margaret’s Church, Dunham Massey taken on 10th January, 2013 by Claire Harrison. Email: claire@claireharrison.com
Why has this obscuration taken place? The quality of workmanship of the original window has never been in question. A thorough search in the diocesan archives has failed to reveal any record of dissatisfaction with the window itself, or of its subject matter. Indeed it was deemed by contemporary visitors and historians to be of superior quality. The historian and writer Alfred Ingham, writing in 1878, is clearly impressed with it:

St. Margaret’s Church is certainly the most beautiful, both as regards exterior and interior, to be found in the district...at the east end there is a large seven-light window which...contains beautifully executed representations.\(^{11}\)

I argue instead that the ‘problem’ with the layout of the church for its late nineteenth/early twentieth-century Vicar and parishioners, as shown in Artefact 1, was that it did not satisfy the needs of the Oxford Movement-inspired Ritualist churchmanship of the parish at that time. It reflected low-church worship in the Church of England. There was no high altar for the celebration of the Eucharist – only a low communion table on the same floor level as the congregation; no choir stalls for a robed choir and, crucially, a prominent pulpit and reading desk which partially obscured the chancel. The ‘Word’ not the Eucharist had pre-eminence.

What then were the principles of the Oxford Movement which prompted, in St. Margaret’s, a shift from the hearing and preaching of the ‘Word’ to a greater prominence being given to the celebration of the Eucharist? The founders of the Movement were known as Tractarians because they issued a series of ninety Tracts (Tracts for the Times) between 1833 and 1845 setting out their view of what the theology and practices of the Anglican Church should be. One of the key tenets of this was the wish to resume the style of worship followed by the early Church Fathers and the Caroline Divines, in particular the Eucharistic practices of the early Church ‘for whom the heart of worship was the gathering of the faithful, Sunday by Sunday, around the altar for the celebration of the sacrament of the Eucharist’.\(^{12}\) By contrast, in the first half of the nineteenth century, the Eucharist was observed only infrequently on certain Holy Days such as Easter Sunday – and then only by the few who remained in the service after the point of ante-communion when most other worshippers departed. One of the founding Tractarians, Richard Hurrell Froude (1803-1836) bemoaned this:

The Holy Mystery of our religion, that solemn rite at which is distributed the blessed Bread which came down from Heaven, this, at least, should be a signal for the general assemblage of Christ’s flock, not, as it now unhappily is, for their dispersion.\(^{13}\)

St. Margaret’s Church, as depicted in Artefact 1 reflects a church designed around the ‘Word’, not the Eucharist: looking down from the west end to the east window, the view of the chancel is partly obscured by an elaborately carved wooden pulpit to the left and a substantial reading desk to the right. Between the two is a lectern, upon which would be placed the Bible. All the furnishings of the chancel and transept are designed to concentrate the mind of the parishioner upon the ministry of the Word of God. As Nigel Yates puts it, ‘if we imagine ourselves back into an Anglican church anywhere in England Wales or Ireland before the 1840s, the scene that would have greeted us would have been much the same everywhere’.\(^{14}\) Yates goes on to describe a typical Sunday morning in such a church:

\(^{11}\) Ibid, pp.166-167.
\(^{13}\) Richard Hurrell Froude, Essay on Rationalism, (1834), in Herring, p.108.
The Sunday morning service would have consisted of Morning Prayer, Litany and Ante-Communion. Apart from the sermon everything would have been done from the reading desk...After the Nicene Creed the minister would have left the reading desk to change his [white] surplice for a black Geneva gown, in which he would have preached the sermon from the pulpit. On Sacrament Sundays, after the Prayer for the Church, the minister would have led those intending to communicate, most of the congregation having now left, into the chancel or space in front of the altar and have taken a position on the north side of the communion table, from which he would have celebrated the Holy Communion.  

The Tractarians believed that this was the wrong way about. Communion, the celebration of the Eucharist, should be for all, not just the mainly wealthy few, and not just reserved for special Holy Days. It was a sacred mystery which should be at the heart of worship, not peripheral to it. For the Tractarians, the Eucharist pierced the veil between God and Man, and through this sacrament the Anglican Church was not only ‘theoretically the embodiment of the early Church, but the embodiment in practice. She should look like the early Church’.  

With this revived understanding of the meaning of the Eucharist grew a resurgence of early Church practices; Candles were lit on the altar during celebration of the sacrament; The raised altar, usually upon a ‘pavement’ led up to by three steps to represent the Trinity, replaced the communion table for the celebration of the sacrament. Altar coverings of differing colours representing the Church’s liturgical year were re-introduced and officiating Priests wore chasubles and vestments to add dignity and colour to the observances. As Professor Owen Chadwick puts it, ‘The Oxford Movement demanded reverence in parochial worship...the Romantic mind of the day wanted to express feelings of awe and mystery through external symbol and art’. These practices were not without challenge – being believed by some to be ‘Romish’ as reflected in the cartoons of the satirical magazine Punch:

15 Ibid.
16 Herring, p.37.
Punch’s representation of the English Church being diverted down the track to ‘the Roman Branch’ is amusing but these were serious times. There was a clash between those who had a contempt for ritual and who wanted a ‘prominent pulpit, an instructive sermon, a plain adherence to the Prayer Book’ and the Ritualists – a term which had become one of abuse.\(^1\) The Public Worship Regulation Act was passed in 1874 to try to curb what many saw as the ‘excesses’ of ritualism and ‘various bishops prosecuted various incumbents, some of whom went to jail’.\(^2\) In this atmosphere of distrust, Incumbents and Parochial Church Councils who wished to introduce Tractarian practices into their churches had to tread warily. The Vicar of East Dereham, Norfolk, The Rev. Benjamin Armstrong, for example, spent twenty years of his Ministry painstakingly and incrementally defying his anti-Ritualist Bishop, Dr. Hinds, by increasing the trappings of Ritualism in his parish. Armstrong’s diary entry of October 9\(^{th}\) 1870 cannot conceal his sense of triumph at his achievement:

Today I have completed twenty years in this parish. Preached on retrospection, drawing a comparison between the state of things now and twenty years ago. Nothing could be worse than the state of the Church in 1850. Then, the altar was a miserable

\(^{20}\) Ibid, p.9.
mahogany table with a covering fifty years old; there was a vile yellow carpet; a Grecian reredos with daubs of Moses and Aaron; no painted glass...Look at it now – an altar and super-altar of full dimensions...candlesticks and candles; three altar-cloths changed at the seasons; the windows painted; a stone reredos highly painted and with a central Cross; rich carpet; credence table; Bishop’s chair, etc., etc.,

Nowhere in this entry does Armstrong refer to the Oxford Movement for he has had the wisdom to pursue his Tractarian aims quietly and steadily. He has achieved his ends, as he acknowledges, ‘by not unnecessarily irritating our people. Many who think as we do have foolishly, nay wickedly, set their parishes in a blaze.

I argue that similar incremental changes, for the same reasons, took place over a slightly longer period of time at St. Margaret’s Church, Dunham Massey. Between the date of Consecration of the building in 1855 and October 1870 choir stalls were built into the chancel. This is evidenced in a report of a ‘visitor’ to the church in The Free Lance dated 29th October 1870. The east window, it should be noted has not by this time been obscured by an alabaster reredos:

The chancel...is set all aglow by an east window of much chasteness, not uncombined with richness of detail. There are stalls for the choristers, a reading desk and pulpit of terra cotta and a lectern...

The ‘visitor’ was not averse to a robed choir: ‘It is not often that so even and well-balanced a choir can be heard as in St. Margaret’s Church’ he writes. He does object, though, to ‘a small piece of snobbery – a parson worship which should at once be put an end to’. This was because the congregation remained standing whilst the vicar ascended to his pulpit. ‘This is objectionable...may lead to misunderstanding,... and may easily be foregone.’ Always there were those who were searching for ‘signs of Rome’ in Anglican services and the elevation of the vicar from ordinary man to robed priest was one of them.

St. Margaret’s, in introducing choir stalls and a robed choir had started on its Tractarian or Ritualist road – and the shift from the ‘Word’ to the ‘Eucharist’. The Registers of Services reveal a gradual increase in emphasis on the Eucharist in worship. From the Church’s consecration in 1855 up to 1868 the sacrament only took place on the first Sunday of each month – known as ‘Sacrament Sunday’. From 1869 to 1880 the Eucharist was celebrated on the first and third Sundays and from 1881 on the first, third and fourth Sundays. By 1895, the Vicar of St. Margaret’s, Charles Maxwell Woosnam, had introduced Communion services twice on each Sunday morning – at 8am and 10.30am. On Easter Day in 1896 the sacrament was celebrated at 7am (52 communicants), 8am (121 communicants) and 10.45am (75 communicants). By now, the Church’s suitability for worship of ‘the Word’ was proving to be inadequate for the Tractarian emphasis on the sacramental mystery of the Eucharist.

On March 17th 1898 the Vicar and members of the Parochial Church Council resolved to do something about the position of the pulpit in the chancel:

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22 Professor Owen Armstrong, Ed, Armstrong’s Norfolk Diary, entry dated July 30th, 1860, p.85.
23 Report in The Free Lance, dated October 29th, 1870, p.847, examined at Cheshire Archives and Local Studies, 11th December 2012, ref. St. Margaret’s Church, Dunham Massey, P248/2/6
24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid.
27 Records perused in a Register of Services at St. Margaret’s Church Dunham Massey, on 9th January 2013, the period covered being from June 15th 1855 to July 14th 1895.
28 Register of Services examined in Cheshire Archives and Local Studies, 9th January, 2013, Ref: P248/1/2.
Several opinions having been expressed that the pulpit being in an inconvenient position and out of proportion with the size of the Church, it would be well to have it replaced with a pulpit so constructed and placed as to open up the view from the Nave to the Chancel.\footnote{Minutes of the Meeting of the Parochial Church Council of St. Margaret’s Church, Dunham Massey, Thursday, March 17th, 1898, accessed in Cheshire Archives and Local Studies, 11th December 2012, ref. P248 6/2.}

On 16th July 1903, a Faculty\footnote{A document without which other than de minimis alterations to the fabric of a church is not lawful.} was granted by the then Bishop of Chester John Francis Jayne, who was himself a convert to high church practices, for alterations to take place.\footnote{Bishop Jayne had started his ministry as an Evangelical at St. Clement’s Anglican Church in Oxford, but had been attracted to high-churchmanship during his incumbency at St. Saviour’s Church, Leeds.} The document makes plain the views of the parishioners:

> the present pulpit obstructs the view of the east end of the Church and of the Minister officiating at the Holy Communion.’\footnote{My italics. Faculty dated 16th July, 1903 relating to works on the pulpit at St. Margaret’s Church, Dunham Massey. Examined on 9th January 2013: in Cheshire Archives and Local Studies Centre, Ref: EDP 112/2.}

The pulpit was accordingly moved to the West of its original position where it remains today—as can be seen in Artefact 2. The Sounding Board above the pulpit was not installed until 1912.

Artefact 2 also reveals the culminating feature of St. Margaret’s journey from the ‘Word’ to the Eucharist – the installation of the east-end alabaster reredos. At the request of Vicar Woosnam and his churchwardens, a Faculty was granted on 11th May 1905:

> to fix a sedilia on the South Side of the Chancel...to bring forward the communion rails and lay marble pavement and steps, to erect a new carved alabaster reredos and to replace the Holy Table.\footnote{Faculty dated 11th May 1905, examined in Cheshire Archives and Local Studies on 9th January, 2013. Ref: EDP/112/3.}

The document again makes plain the reasoning behind the proposed alterations. The parishioners would raise the money by voluntary contributions because they ‘desired to supply a more dignified reredos and pavement to the Chancel’.\footnote{Ibid.} A closer look at the 1905 works (Figure 4) reveals several Tractarian/Ritualist features:
There are candlesticks and candles – representing Christ as the Light of the World. The alabaster reredos serves as a majestic backdrop to what the Tractarians believed was of central importance in worship – the high altar. The altar itself is physically and metaphorically raised by three marble steps, signifying the Trinity and in the centre of the reredos is a large cross – lifted high. The altar-cloths are more modern but are representative of those which would have been used in 1905. If we look at Figure 5, we can see further indications of Tractarianism:
To the right of the altar, set into the south wall is the sedilia – a double seat for the officiating priest and his acolyte. On the same wall, slightly behind the altar, is a stone credence table for the sacramental elements of wafers, wine and water, the wafers representing the body of Christ and the mixed wine and water indicative of the mingled blood and ‘water’ which flowed from Christ’s pierced body on the cross.

It has been demonstrated, therefore, by comparing Artefacts 1 and 2, that there were gradual but comprehensive changes to the fabric of St. Margaret’s Church over the fifty years from 1855 to 1905. Nigel Yates says that by the end of the nineteenth century ‘it would be perfectly clear, from the interiors of church buildings and the forms of service that took place in them, which brand of Anglican Churchmanship was favoured by the clergy and their congregations. This author believes that Artefacts 1 and 2 are clear evidence that the churchmanship at St. Margaret’s, Dunham Massey has moved, within fifty years of the Church’s consecration, from pre-Oxford Movement worship of the Word to Tractarian Eucharistic centrality.

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Secondary Sources


The Continence of Scipio and Katherine Manners

A. M. Trotter

Abstract: This work considers and connects the Jacobean-Caroline Era painting *The Continence of Scipio*, c.1620/1, Christ Church Gallery, Oxford, and the play ‘Hannibal and Scipio’ (1635) by Thomas Nabbes (1605-41). Recent art-historical study of the painting has questioned the identities of both artist and subject, and the dramatic source of the play remains unidentified. Here, the disciplines of art-history and literary studies are combined to suggest arts-patron Katherine Manners (c.1604-49) as the originator of both artefacts.

Figure 1 *The Continence of Scipio*. Oil on canvas, 182.9 x 232.4cm, Christ Church Picture Gallery, Oxford. By permission of the Governing Body, Christ Church, Oxford
This work examines the viewpoint that paintings and plays are guided by the patron or person who conceives an artefact rather than the hand that produces them, through Katherine Manners (c.1604-49), the painting *The Continence of Scipio*, c.1620/1, oil on canvas, 182.9 x 232.4cm, Christ Church Picture Gallery (Fig.1) and the play ‘Hannibal and Scipio’ (1635) by Thomas Nabbes (1605-41). Previous studies of the painting have questioned the identities of both artist and subject, and the dramatic source of the play is unknown. A combined examination of these two artefacts and their wider historical context reveals Katherine Manners, Arts Patron, as the person most likely to have conceived both. Accordingly it is shown that whilst artworks require some form of artistic imagination, the imagination is not necessarily always that of a painter or playwright.

Bequeathed as an Antony Van Dyck (1599-1641),¹ portraitist of St Luke’s Guild and the English School of large-scale canvas painting, the provenance of *The Continence of Scipio*, was thought to be that listed in the York House Inventory, Rawlinson Manuscript, Duke of Buckingham Collection, London, 11 May 1635.² Van Dyck was first brought to England in October 1620 by John Villiers,³ elder brother of the ‘lewd’ and ‘crude’ George Villiers,⁴ First Duke of Buckingham, Knight of the Garter and Lord High Admiral of England, Ireland and Wales (1592-1628).⁵ Van Dyck entered into the service of James I (1566-1625),⁶ and left during October 1621 for seven years in Italy by arrangement of the Earl of Arundel.⁷ From 1632 until his death, Van Dyck was ‘Principall Paynter’ at the court of Charles I (1600-49). Recently it has been suggested that the painting - ‘Vandyck-One great Piece being Scipio’ - listed in the inventory is not the picture in Christ Church Picture Gallery but another held in a private collection in Florence.⁸

There have been alterations to the painting. A new face of delicate glazes modelled over impasto has been added to the central figure. The fingers of his left-hand have been enlarged and his footwear removed (pentimento). A column has been erased (pentimento, mid-centre left) and a large marble added (lower left). The painting has been re-sized (reduced to its previous size) and

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¹ The picture was presented to Christ Church by Lord Frederick Campbell in 1809. Source, J. Byam-Shaw, C. White, p. 445, and ‘The Christ Church Picture Gallery, p. 235.


cleaned. The colour is ‘cold and clear’ and the tones have none of the ‘glowing warmth’ of Flemish contemporaries. The brush-work is long, loose and quick and there is ‘some confusion in the spatial relationships’ typical of the period when Van Dyck was exercising his independence as a Master. Nevertheless, recent appreciation suggests this painting as ‘Alexander with the Family of Darius’ by Rubens and it is possible that the painting is not that listed in the York House inventory of 1635. This alone, however, does not prove conclusively that the painting is not by Van Dyck or that the subject matter is not Scipio.

Conventional interpretations of the painting identify the figure left as Roman General Scipio Africanus 236–183 BC (as representing James I), who in 209 BC nobly returned Lucretia (Katherine Manners) inviolato to Prince Allecis Llucias of Celtiberi (George Villiers). The other characters are Lucretia’s parents, two soldiers (one brandishing a sword) and three attendants. One attendant looks out at the viewer and points towards Lucretia’s lifted skirts. The quality of Allecis’ face is ‘high in every portion’, demonstrating the hand of a master. Lucretia, however, does not appear similar to contemporary representations of Katherine Manners. Standing before the painting, the architectural framing of drapery (left) and columns (right), costumes, and marble prop gives the impression of a stage. The characters are life sized, as they would be if the viewer were watching a play.

From 1580 onwards, variations of Scipio Africanus were staged at court but few productions capture more critical interest than Thomas Nabbes’ ‘Hannibal and Scipio - an Hystorical Tragedy’. Nabbes entered ‘the employ of a nobleman’ in 1623, possibly Sir Endymion Porter, patron of the poets and masques. Nabbes was a favoured member of the Tribe of Ben (Jonson), comprising: Robert Herrick, Thomas Carew, Edmund Waller, Sir John Suckling, and brothers’ William and Thomas Killigrew, amongst others. Nabbes wrote elegies, epithalamia and masques set in London, but not usually history plays. Written in English and

10Ibid, p. 125. By comparison see ‘The Masters from Christ Church: The Paintings’, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, 1964, who adopt Gluck’s suggestion in Zeitschrift für Bildende Kunst, 1927 that the picture may be a work from Van Dyck’s Italian Period.
11L. V. Puyvelde observes Van Dyck’s early handling is ‘rapid and vigorous […]’ characteristics which have all the value of a signature: long strokes of the brush are of frequent occurrence, especially in the execution of an arm or of the muscles of a leg’, p. 185.
12 These characteristics are detectable in his Saint Sebastian, oil on canvas, 226 x 160cm, ca.1620-21, National Gallery Scotland; Study of a Soldier, oil on canvas, 91 x 55cm, ca.1617-18, Christ Church Picture Gallery, and, The Betrayal of Christ, oil on canvas, 141.9 x 113 cm, ca.1620-21, Minneapolis Institute of Art, amongst others.
13Alexander con la familia di Dario, the re-attribution of A. Tempestini, in VanDyckRubensVanDyck (Todi, Italy: Marco Vigevani Agenzia Letteraria, 2009). A Statement regarding Anthony van Dyck’s Continence of Scipio at Christ Church Picture Gallery, Oxford, December 2012, reads thus: ‘We remain firmly of the view that the traditional identification of artist and subject is correct, and that Dr. Tempestini’s alternative proposals are not persuasive.’ Jacqueline Thalmann, Curator of the Picture Gallery.
14Jacqueline Thalmann has pointed out that ‘It is of course possible that the Christ Church painting is not the one mentioned in the inventory, but we [Christ Church Picture Gallery] do not feel Dr. Tempestini’s arguments proves it either way’ (10 December 2012), adapted above.
16Katherine Manners, Van Dyck, 1628, oil on canvas, 218.5 x 131cm, National Trust, Katherine Manners, copy of Van Dyck, c.1633, oil on canvas, 92.2 x 78.5cm, National Library of Wales, The Duchess of Buckingham in Mourning, c.1628-32, attributed to Henri Beaubreun, oil on canvas, 59.7x 48.9 cm, private collection, for example.
19 Examples of plays with London setting by Nabbes include ‘The Bride, a Comedy’, dedicated to ‘the Generality of his Noble friends’ and ‘Sir John Suckling, Knight’ (acted 1633, printed 1640), ‘Covent Garden, a Comedy’ (acted 1632), and ‘Tottenham-
Latin, a series of five acts in tight blank verse with little enjambment, and musical interludes between acts, the play was performed by Queen Henrietta’s Men in 1635 at their private residence, Drury Lane in ‘Honoure of [unspecified] Memories’. 

Henrietta was an enthusiastic supporter of Caroline-Era paintings and masques. Coquetish, she assumed leading roles in intermedios, bare-foot with lifted skirts and near-topless, often appearing unannounced at the point of performance. Lord de Bueil’s Seigneur de Racan’s Artenice (1626), Montagu’s ‘The Shepherds’ Paradise’ (1635), ‘The Temple of Love’ (1635), and ‘Luminalia’ (1638), produced in the style of the ballet de cour, are key examples. Henrietta usually performed in productions accompanied by French vocal music, not texts declaimed in verse. This raises the question why she would host a history play such as ‘Hannibal and Scipio’.

The unknown sources for ‘Hannibal and Scipio’ are directly related, like the painting, to its theme. The prologue refers to ‘borrowing from a former play’. Conversely, it is emphasised that the play is an original work. Analysts have made several attempts to resolve this aporia. The assertion that it was modelled on Marston’s ‘Sophonisba’ (1598), or Dekker, Drayton, and Wilson’s ‘Hannibal and Hermes’ (1598), or a fragment of a sixteenth-century play in Latin, proved untrue. The idea that it refers to a play of the same name by Hathway & Rabkins (1601) was overturned. Comparative sources offer the works of Livy or North’s translation of Plutarch (1579) - but these are not ‘plays’.

Earlier English history plays typically concern themselves with Scipio’s triumphant

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21A Jonsonian trait often implemented in the verse and scripts of his ‘Tribe’.
22The Drexel Manuscript 4041 in its present state consists of 144 folios including the two prefatory leaves. It confirms that Nabbes’ ‘Hannibal and Scipio’ was set to song in keeping with the following: Ben Jonson’s ‘Epicoene’ (1609); Thomas Killigrew’s ‘The Princess’ (1636); Sir John Suckling’s ‘The Goblins’ (1638); and, William Killigrew’s ‘Selindra’ (1662), amongst others. See, J. P. Cutts’ ‘Drexel Manuscript 4041’, Musica Disciplina, Vol. 18 (1964), note 2, p. 151.
23The play was published 1637 after the performance in keeping with the tradition of Caroline Era plays and masques.
24I am grateful to Lynne Farrington, Curator of Printed Books, and Elton-John Torres, Administrative and Reprographic Services Coordinator, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Pennsylvania, for providing a facsimile copy of Nabbes’ Quarto 1637.
25E. Hamilton, Henrietta, (London and New York: Coward, McGann & Geoghegan, 1976), introduction. Not only was her appearance kept secret until her entry on stage her name was often kept off published editions due to a fear of Puritan objections.
27ibid, p.116.
29In full, ‘Our spheres| Have better musick to delight your eares,| And not a strain that’s old, though some would taskel| His [Nabbes] borrowing from a former play.’ Q (Prologue) II. 26-29.
31Decker, Draytons and Wilson’s ‘Hannibal and Hermes’ was non-extant after the only three known copies were lost to fire at the Fortune Theatre (not rebuilt until 1624). See C. Moore, p.33 and R. W. Vince p. 328.
33This ‘identification’ by A. H. Bullen’s Old English Plays (1887) and F. G. Fleay’s Chronicle History of the Stage, (1890), was disputed in G. E. Bentley’s The Jacobean and Caroline Stage, (1941-68) on the grounds that there was a vast difference between the ‘publiclic’ actors of 1601 and the Queen’s private Servants of 1635, p. 936, reproduced in R. W. Vince, p. 328.
victory over Hannibal at Zama 202 BC, as in ‘Quintas Fabios’ (1574) and ‘The Four Sons of Fabyous’ (1580). Nabbes’ play, however, spans thirty-five years and is set in five different geographical locations, telescoping time and space. Unusually, Nabbes’ play is equally concerned with Scipio’s virtue or continence: ‘One I [Scipio] must confess, I glory to be master of.’ The touch of language is generally light, smooth, and sentimental, but at times Scipio is surprisingly cavalier, bawdy and lewd. Upon meeting the future Queen, he remarks ‘Perhaps my selfe would take you to my bed’. Despite being ‘o’recome’ he returns her to her fiancé inviolate, ‘see’ Passion’s the noble souls worst enemy’. He is ‘all for action’ and goes off to war instead.

The quarto lists twenty-nine characters and their players from the performance of 1635, excluding ‘mutes’ (‘souldiers’, ‘attendants’, and ‘senators’). There are two Scipios: one deceased (a ‘Ghost’) and one present (‘a Memorie’). The name of the person playing Lucretia is left blank. The stage keepers are ‘blue cloaked’ in the uniform of the Knights of the Garter, unlike the ‘Parliament of Souldiers’ who call Scipio to court. Oddly, some of the soldiers are portrayed as ‘treacherous’. Overall, Scipio’s fate is that of good men who attain recognition and glory due to their exceptional virtue but then fall victim to envy, recalling Petrarch: est enim livor antiquus virtutum hostis et glorie. Scipio is aware that his after-life, at least, will be free from the ‘feare of their leane envie.’ ‘The Author warrents us the story’s cleare| Unlesse to fit the stage he doth transfere| Some actions that were ones to other men.’ The stage is transformed into ‘a rich subject drawne’, albeit of ‘imperfect colours’, suggestive of a painting.

English Renaissance oil paintings commemorating Scipio’s victories and virtues are virtually unknown. Representations of Scipio’s accomplishments do, however, appear frequently in quattrocento and cinquecento painting. In terms of Scipio’s victories, these images tend to focus on two key episodes in Scipio’s life. First, when he pleaded with Senate for more troops as in il percorso di Scipione (‘The Trail of Scipio’), panel, previously attributed to Bernardo Parentino of Padua (c.1450-1500). Second, when he was brought to judgement by Senate on a

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36 ibid, pp. 331-332
37 ibid pp. 331-332
38 Thomas Nabbes, Hannibal and Scipio, Quarto, (London: Richard Oulton, 1637), Q.IV, 1560-1563. (Q hereafter).
39 Q.C.253-256
40 The English play Los Amantos de Cartago, performed in England 1603 and 1608, enacts the continence, but Scipio is neither bawdy nor lewd. Nabbes was less than three years of age at the date of its second performance in England. Nabbes neither spoke nor wrote Spanish.
41 Q.C.255-256
42 Q.C.253-255
43 Q.A.20-33
45 Q.C.H.1957
46 Q.Act 5, scene 2
47 Petrarch’s Vita di Scipione l’Africano, (Milan and Naples, 1952), Book 38.52.1
48 Q.B.37-39
49 Q. (Prologue) 27
50 Q.B.32-33
51 Q.B.35
series of accounts, including the misappropriation of funds as represented in il processo di Scipione (‘The Trial of Scipio’).\textsuperscript{53} In both scenes Scipio is represented as semi-naked, as in Crespi Chronicle, fol.13r, Leonardo da Besozzo, (fl.1421–81), Crespi Morbio Collection, Milan and MSS. Varia.102, fols.76v–7r, Bibliotheca Reale, Turin, artist unknown. Scipio's left hand is positioned across his chest to emphasise wounds sustained in service, as in the modified figure of Allucius (Fig.1). Scipio is not regally seated, as Caesar or as a king would be. Scipio stands centre-stage before his ruler.

Scipio’s virtue or continence features in the Renaissance literature of Boccaccio’s ‘Famous Men’, Petrarch’s I Trionfi and De Viris Illustrious, Dante’s ‘Divine Comedy’, Machiavelli’s ‘Prince’, and the wedding orations of Ludovico Carbone. It also appears in the domestic imagery of wedding chests (forzieri-cassoni) and screens (deschi da parto), as in Apollonio di Giovanni, panel, 1460, St Luke’s Guild 1443-1489, V&A Museum, London, and Marco del Buono, panel, St Luke's Guild 1443-89, where Van Dyck sojourned prior to 1620.\textsuperscript{55} The play appears, therefore, to combine both the continental literary and painted histories of Scipio’s victory and virtue. There is no record of Nabbes having any direct experience of Italian manuscripts, panels or painting. Nabbes was, however, familiar with Van Dyck.

Van Dyck was a close associate of The Tribe of Ben and its leading figures. He painted the poets Sir John Suckling, oil on canvas, 216.5 x 130.2cm, 1632, Frick Collection, Sir William Killigrew, 1638, oil on canvas, support 105.2 x 84.1cm and Thomas Killigrew, oil on canvas, 105.2 x 84.1cm, 1638, both Tate London. Scholars agree that the portrait of Suckling, at least, was envisioned by the patron and not the painter.\textsuperscript{56} A double portrait, Endymion Porter and Anton van Dyck, oil on canvas, 119 x 144cm, c.1635, Prado, Madrid, attests to the depth of relationship between patron and his charge. Van Dyck’s portrait of Thomas Carew has not survived, but is known to have been executed c.1632.\textsuperscript{57} The Tribe of Ben celebrated Van Dyck’s English work.\textsuperscript{58} Waller considered him higher than Prometheus, no less, in his Epistle ‘To Vandyck’:

\begin{quote}
Rare artisan! [...] 
O let me know 
Where these immortal colours grow 
That could this deathless piece complete! 
[…] thou hast clim’d higher 
Than did Prometheus for his fire.\textsuperscript{59}
\end{quote}

Carew, poetic arbiter and lover of the Petrarchan lyric, praised the accuracy of Van Dyck’s portraiture in his ‘Dedicated Prelude’ to the Complete Poems and Masques: ‘Fairest face that Vandyck drew [...] Since to grace his Queen he toil’d’.\textsuperscript{60} Herrick combined both accolades in his

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\textsuperscript{53}Ibid, p. 224
\textsuperscript{54}I am grateful to Dr. Giovanni de Grandis, Department of Continuing Education, University of Oxford, for his help with these translations. Any typographical errors are the authors own.
\textsuperscript{55}Formerly Cook Collection, Richmond, England.
\textsuperscript{57}Formerly, Majesty’s Collection, Windsor.
\textsuperscript{58}Goodman details Van Dyck’s relationship with literature, Jonson, and the leading poets of the day and is the main source for the connections detailed here, pp.129-43.
\textsuperscript{60}Poems By, Thomas Carew Esquire (London: printed by I. Dawson for Thomas Walkley, 1640) p. 219.
tribute ‘To the Painter’: ‘[he] makes his cheeks with breath to swell] for to speak, if possible’.  

The poets, all intimately connected with Nabbes, evidence Van Dyck’s preference for portraiture over literary motifs and his ‘perfect’ use of literary ‘colour’.  

Analysts have observed that Van Dyck’s ‘English pictures are analogues to the themes and conventions of Caroline poetry and masques.’ Others note that ‘Van Dyck was not the first painter to reintroduce allegorical motifs […] but he was responsible for handling them with a grace and wit long lacking in English portraiture.’ Some critics consider his iconography ‘entirely derivative’ of contemporary literature. Returning to the painting, the ‘blackened Moor’ emphasises the female’s unnatural masque-like whiteness: a Petrarcan conceit and a motif of Elizabethan and Jacobean literature. It is possible that the ‘Moor’ is intended as an allusion to an unidentified literary reference. Jonson, court dramatist between 1620-37, during Van Dyck’s residencies, made this contrast the subject of his ‘Masque of Blackness’ (1605) and ‘Masque of Beauty’ (1608). It has been suggested that Van Dyck ‘absorbed’ the notion of the ‘sun-burned character’ as a ‘foil’ to the masque-like ‘white radiance of women’ from literature, introducing an interesting notion of the artist representing dramatic works directly in his painting.  

Conventionally it is thought that James I gave his permission for George Villiers to marry Katherine Manners in 1620. Documents show, however, that he first refused permission for the union. Cavalier Villiers married the seventeen year old regardless. Significantly, between 1618 and 1619, Villiers had acted as ‘broker’ in the relationship of James’ son Prince Charles and Henrietta, who married in 1624 before ascending the throne in 1625. It was a familiar anecdote at court that upon meeting Henrietta, Villiers had ‘lost his head’ at her ‘fitness’ – ‘I’d have thee!’, he exclaimed in front of her mother, the austere Regent Queen of France, Marie de Médicis. This diplomatic gaffe became a continuing source of amusement to Charles, Henrietta, court poets and playwrights, and even Villiers’ later wife Katherine. His lewd approach directly recalls Scipio’s similar lines in Nabbes’ play, and it would appear that, on this occasion, Villiers too conserved his continence.  

Similarities between George Villiers and the Scipio of Nabbes’ play continued beyond his encounter with Henrietta. In October 1625, George Villiers led the English and Dutch expedition to Spain, comprising 100 ships and 15,000 soldiers. During this trip, Buckingham ‘stabb’d Spayne’, gathering antiquities, some possibly sourced from Itálica, founded by Scipio 206 BC during the Second Punic War and dedicated to the Roman god Mercury. Otherwise, this expedition was not a success: Villiers lost two major ships and, like Scipio at Senate before him, was forced to appear before Parliament to request more troops for his military ‘trail’. In 1626, Katherine commissioned a masque for the royal couple at York House: a theatrical drama of Villiers’ real-life military activity, the optimistic planning and outfitting to relieve the French  

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62Goodman acknowledges the relationship between Waller, Carew, Herrick and the painter but does not provide these examples of their literary works, p. 137.  
66E. Goodman, p. 137.  
68G. Martin, p. 613.  
69Ashmolean MS, Vol.39, art.24.20  
70Votive remains at the *Museo Arqueológico de Seville* re-located from Itálica after 1781 show that Roman divinities coexisted with those from the East. See, Room XIV for a colossal marble statue of Mercury and delicate marbles of the Gorgon.
Protestants at La Rochelle. At the climax of the masque, the Duke set forth, accompanied by figures of Fame and Truth and pursued by Envy.

In September 1627, the expedition ended in a fiasco with the Seige of Saint-Martin-de-Ré, starting the Anglo-French War (1627-29). Villiers would have been impeached for the misappropriation of military funds, again as was Scipio, but Charles dissolved Parliament before that ‘trial’ could occur.

By spring 1628, a Latin distich was in wide distribution signalling impending tragedy for Villiers: ‘Thy numerous name with this year doth agree| But twenty-nine God grant thou never see.’ On the 23 August 1628, Villiers was assassinated by John Felton (c.1595-1628), a ‘treacherous soldier’ (recalling those of Nabbes’ play) who administered a sword to his naked chest - Villiers had been sleeping when his dormitory was stormed. Charles ordered his burial in Henry VII's apsidal chapel, Westminster Abbey. The ceremony was a secretive affair, due to a genuine fear of parliamentarian dissent and public uproar. The Duchess in mourning commissioned Van Dyck to paint a large group portrait of her, two images of Villiers, and their children. In this painting Villiers appears as a ghost through a telescopic looking-glass and in a memorial pendant – paralleling the distinct representations of Scipio in the play written several years later. In 1629, Katherine commissioned a massive monument of bronze and black and white marble in the chapel at Westminster. Translation of the Latin memorial reads: ‘His life was terminated by the most frightful and terrifying murder; to ravenous Envy - which is always the partner of Virtue.’

The similarities between the real-life character of George Villiers, his life and death, and Scipio as represented in Nabbes’ play, may be taken further by considering links with the painting The Continence of Scipio attributed to Van Dyck until recent association with a different artist and subject. Regarding the latter reattribution, Villiers met Rubens in Paris in 1625 to discuss the project for the Whitehall ceiling allegorising him as Mercury; a matter first broached during Villiers’ Embassy to collect Charles' future bride, Henrietta, in 1621. Numerous artworks by Rubens represent Villiers and Envy: The Duke of Buckingham Triumphing over Envy and Anger, oil on canvas, 541x498cm, formerly collection of the Earl of Jersey, destroyed 1949; The Duke of Buckingham assisted by Minerva and Mercury triumphing over Envy and Anger, oil on canvas, 63.5x63.6cm, National Gallery, London; and, Mercury Conducting Psyche to Olympus, c.1625-28, collection Prince of Liechtenstein, for example. The Tribe of Ben commended Ruben’s allegory in a thousand poems, including Herrick’s ‘A Hymn to Graces’:

[… ] winning postures, and withal

71E. Hamilton, pp. 84-85.
72E. Hamilton, pp. 84-85.
73J. Held, p. 548.
75Katherine Manners, With Her Three Children, Lady Mary Villiers (1622-85), George Villiers, Second Duke of Buckingham (1628-87), and Lord Francis Villiers (1629-48), c.1633, oil on canvas, 138.5 x 110cm, Government Art Collection (UK).
76Translation sourced from http://www.westminster-abbey.org/our-history/people/villiers-family
77G. Martin, p.617. See, Rubens’ sketch George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, c.1625, black and white chalk, Vienna Academy.
79G. Martin, p. 613.
80Emphasis is given to the maritime deities (lower left); and the Armada (in the distance). The canvas was extended (left) to reposition the Duke near-right (rather than centred). See, G. Martin, pp.147-53, reproduced in J. Held, p. 551.
Manners, each way musical [...] You can make a Mercury'.

Rubens’ association of Villiers with Mercury became well-known to the extent that it was satirised by adversaries:

The ships, the men, the money cast away
Under his only all-confounding sway [...] 
Himself triumphant, neither trained in lore […]
To make him the restorer Mercuric
In an heroick painting, when before
Antwerpian Rubens’ best skill made him soare'.

Rubens represented Villiers as Mercury over a seven year period, but never as Scipio, placing him at odds with the strong literary connections described above and also with Katherine Manners’ apparent desire to associate the memory of her lost husband with an earthly hero, rather than a deity.

The timing, circumstances and apparent motivation for alterations made to The Continence of Scipio invite further consideration. Aside from the stylistic association outlined earlier, Van Dyck was in Katherine's patronage from c.1628 onwards. Portraits of Charles I, Villiers and Henrietta by Van Dyck display physical likeness to the faces in the painting. James I as Scipio is not a ‘fair’ portrait but, interestingly, subsequent alterations to the central figure do make Villiers so. The original painting may well have presented King James I as Scipio, but the alteration does not. Interpreting the characters in this light would yield Charles I as Allucius (seated), Villiers as Scipio (standing centre-stage, hand to chest emphasised, dressed in the pale-blue robes fitting of a Knight of the Garter), and Henrietta as Lucretia.

It is plausible that Katherine’s idea of Villiers as Scipio was transformed from the painted scene into a stage and text. Viewed in this way, the ‘former play’ to which the Prologue refers is the drama in the painting; as a text, therefore, it is an original work. This explains nicely why Katherine attended the panegyric performance of the play in 1635 in ‘Honoure of Memories’. It would be fitting also that Henrietta made her customary unannounced appearance in the lead-role, this time as ‘Lucretia’, albeit that she did not master English until five years later in 1640.

The marble, which depicts Envy, dominates the painting and provides a compelling connective between the two artworks and Katherine Manners. The marble features as a drawing of a frieze by the neoclassical architect and stage designer John Webb (1611-72), The

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81R. Herrick, Hesperides, Poem No.569 (pages not numbered).
84Examples are, Charles I, oil on canvas, 93 x 82cm, The Chequers Trust, George Villiers and Katherine Manners, 223 x 160cm, c.1620, private collection and, Henrietta, oil on canvas, 93 x 79cm, The Chequers Trust.
85E. Hamilton, p. 85 onwards.
86Professor Setti in his introduction to Tempestini’s VanDyckRubensVanDyck, points out that permission for the excavation dates for Smyrna was after 1621, p. 11. The Christ Church Picture Gallery statement notes: Prof Setti’s information regarding the official excavation permission date at Smyrna is the one point that we do not dispute. However, the fact of a dated excavation permission does not affect the decisive stylistic and iconographic arguments for this painting being the work of Van Dyck and its subject the Continence of Scipio. There are at least two possible explanations of the fragment appearing in the painting. It may have been a later addition, since Van Dyck might have added it after his return from Italy, but it is also conceivable that the fragment was already in England before official excavation rights were granted.’, December 2009.
**Scipio Marble**, 145x89cm (monumental size), Arundel Collection, Ashmolean, Oxford, 1639.\(^8\)

The antique marble has been identified as that in ‘The Larger Talman Album’, Ashmolean, in which Webb’s drawing is inscribed *Ex malmooro Antico Aundeliano*. Lost after the demolition of York House in 1660, the marble was recovered during the Arundel House excavation\(^8\) and connects the painting and play directly via an obscure record of Webb’s set-design for ‘Scipio and Hannibal’ (1635, destroyed) - a drawing of *The Scipio Marble* in the quarto of the play.\(^8\)

Drawing this information together, it is plausible that, as owner of both the Scipio painting and the marble, Katherine commissioned alterations to the painting to represent her husband as she conceived him to be, i.e. the Scipio of victory and virtue.

To conclude, the play, ‘Hannibal and Scipio - An Hystorical Tragedy’, incorporates the scene of virtue from the painting *The Continence of Scipio*. By association, the painting allegorises the scene of victory from the play. Katherine Manners is offered as the person to have originated the idea of victory and virtue in both. Van Dyck is suggested as the hand most likely to have transformed her idea into paint. The unknown dramatic source for Nabbes’ play is thus identified as the painting. Previous studies have failed to identify the creative source of either work. A complementary study of the disciplines of art-history and literature offers an answer to the identity of both.

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\(^8\)Sir John Summerson discovered the antique marble during the excavation and recalled the marginalia of Inigo Jones’ ‘Vitruvius’, which reads: ‘[…] mutoli instead of Triglifies as in the corronice y cam from Smyrna, as was of ye temble of pallas by the gorganes heades beettwene the mutoli.’ In another insert Jones writes that the Scipio frieze was the inspiration for Queen Henrietta’s palace adjacent to Arundel House: ‘[…] for my dessigne of the Antikey freeze wth gorgons heedes [sic]…’ Sir John found the answer in Isaac Ware's book, in which is engraved, the screen to the Royal closet in the Chapel’, ibid, p. 529.

\(^8\)Q.B.I.


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‘Poetry, Painting and Gardening, or the Science of Landscape, will forever by men of taste be deemed Three Sisters, or the Three Graces who dress and Adorn Nature’.

(Horace Walpole)¹

A comparative study of Lady Hertford’s grotto at Marlborough and William Kent’s illustration of Spring in James Thomson’s The Seasons.

Richard D A Lamont

Abstract: in a reading of William Kent’s illustration of Spring in James Thomson's The Seasons (1730), this essay offers an interpretation which connects the artefact with Lady Hertford’s grotto in Marlborough, Wiltshire, designed and constructed between 1725 and 1735. This essay examines both the shared landscapes, contexts and oppositions of the two artefacts and shall illustrate the interconnectivity and significant developments between poetry, painting and gardening in the 1720s - with Lady Hertford as patron, muse and innovator.

John Millan and Andrew Millar, two London-based booksellers and publishers, recommended to the poet James Thomson (1700-1748) that his 1728 edition of Spring should contain a ‘Proposal for printing by subscription The Four Seasons’, and should advertise that it would be ‘printed in one Volume in Quarto, on a Superfine Royal Paper, and with Copper-Plates adapted to the Subject’.² This one guinea subscription edition included four full page frontispieces, in baroque style, designed by William Kent (c.1685-1748) - which were also available for purchase – and was engraved by Nicolas-Henry Tardieu (1674-1749); it was published between 6th and 10th June, 1730.³

Kent’s frontispiece presents Spring, personified as a celestial being, forming a circle hand in hand with putti and other deities, and suspended on clouds above an unidentified landscape. One celestial figure escorts the ominous storm clouds of Winter out of the top right hand corner of the picture and, with hands raised, commands Winter’s temporary banishment from the springtime landscape. The clouds form a swirl of chiaroscuro, with the contrasts creating and identifying Spring as the central figure of the illustration. Benevolent Spring, wearing a wreath of flowers on her head and with her garment revealing the upper part of her right breast, drops fruits from her platter onto the landscape below. The sunshine emerges from behind the clouds with a rainbow running from the top right hand corner to the middle-scape of a river – its reflection in the river provides a natural continuation of this composition line. The rainbow connects the emblematic world of Spring with the pastoral landscape below. The image of a bull, an allusion to the second astrological sign of the zodiac, Taurus (April 20th to May 20th), is depicted above the celestial figures, wandering down one of the curves of the wider rainbow.

In the foreground, two lovers recline – he plays a pipe to his alert audience of sheep whilst his lover lays a suggestive left hand on his right thigh. Their presence in this pastoral idyll is echoed by a second pair of lovers kneeling (or standing) behind in the middle ground of the illustration and holding each other’s arms – the pair of slender tree trunks emerging from the same base provides symmetry to their union. This bucolic scene is enhanced by the presence of the lovers with their suggestion of procreation and fertility in springtime. A shepherd, positioned near the left hand corner and with staff in right hand, points with his left hand across the landscape to the villa ahead. He looks back towards the observer or reader and invites us to explore. The villa’s architectural clarity is slightly obscured by trees but one can discern the façade of a Palladian villa with columns, architrave, and entrance to what one assumes is an undercroft grotto. The shepherd’s lambs play within his vision, and unidentifiable birds glide towards the trees with one perched erect and vigilant on an upper branch. On top of a mound, another shepherd engages with some playful goats. On the far side of the river, two circular buildings with domes nestle into the landscape. In spite of the guidance of the shepherd towards the villa, the eye is led in many directions by the artist – around, upwards and then away into the distance. The wild trees frame the whole, and the joyous figures in this fête champêtre suggest the influence of Poussin (1594-1665) on Kent’s presentation of *Spring*.

The traditional emblems and expressive landscape work as metaphor for man’s relationship with Nature and capture the correlation between man’s journey through life with the annual progress of the seasons. Kent combines a visual narrative of an English landscape and its inhabitants responding to the arrival of springtime with a mythological tableau. The
upper and lower visual spaces of the illustration juxtapose the classical and Christian worlds, the celestial and the terrestrial, alongside an allegorical rendition and naturalistic representation of the arrival of springtime. Indeed the illustration plays on opposites – from the sun to the rain and rainbows of April, from rural simplicity to architectural sophistication.4

Horace Walpole (1717-1797), novelist, man of letters, parliamentarian and architectural enthusiast, wrote that Kent ‘was a painter, an architect, and the father of modern gardening. In the first character he was below mediocrity; in the second, he was a restorer of the science; in the last, an original, and the inventor of an art that realizes painting and improves nature’.5 Perhaps Walpole’s assessment of Kent as a mediocre painter and illustrator is a little unfair. Early in his career Kent provided illustrations for John Gay’s Poems on Several Occasions (1720) and his Fables (1727); Alexander Pope’s Odyssey in 1725; and James Thomson’s collected volumes of The Seasons in 1730.6 It is interesting to note the influences on Kent evident in this illustration of Spring. He certainly captures the locus amoenus of Thomson’s pastoral poetry as he presents an Elysium of comfort, play, allegory, love, and fruitful nature with a generous and watchful deity presiding over the scene. There are recognisable moments from Thomson’s verse as Kent seeks to interpret the poet’s verbal world into his own landscape: the ‘bright enchantment’ (238) of the rainbow, ‘The herds and flocks, commixing, play’d secure’ (287) and the ‘fruits and blossoms blush’d’ (367).7 Kent had also studied in Italy and settled for ten years in Rome. In this time, he developed a reputation as a specialist in painting ceilings, having executed the ceiling of the church, S. Giuliano dei Fiamminghi, in 1717 and, on return to London, he was commissioned to paint the ceilings at Burlington House in 1719/20. The frontispiece of Spring undoubtedly draws upon the tradition of baroque ceiling painting and Renaissance iconography.

James Thomson was invited by Lady Hertford (1699-1754) to stay at Marlborough in 1727 and is thought to have composed part of Spring whilst there in advance of his publication deadline.8 Samuel Johnson in Lives of the Poets (1781) reveals that Lady Hertford invited ‘every summer some poet into the country, to hear her verses and assist her studies’ and playfully relates that Thomson ‘took more delight in carousing with Lord Hertford and his friends than assisting her ladyship’s poetical operations, and therefore never received another summons’.9 However, the anecdote seems inaccurate given both the lasting correspondence between poet and patron following the residency and his dedication of Spring to her. In the opening of the poem, and on the page directly opposite Kent’s illustration of Spring in the 1730 edition of The Seasons, he compares Lady Hertford to Nature, ‘blooming and benevolent’ (10) and invites her to ‘listen to [his] song, / Which her own Season paints’ (9-10).

The identification of the building on the right-hand side of the illustration and the landscape itself has stimulated scholarly discussion.10 In Kent’s frontispiece of Autumn, he includes a domed villa with a Diocletian window, reminiscent of his friend and patron Lord Burlington’s Palladian Chiswick House. It has been said that the villa in the illustration of Spring is a grander version of Alexander Pope’s in Twickenham.11 Pope’s Neo-Palladian portico at Cross Deep was itself designed by Kent but two years after his production of the plates to accompany Thomson’s poems. However, Peter Tillemans’ The Thames at

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4 See John Dixon Hunt, The Figure in the Landscape (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1989), pp. 105-144.
7 All citations are from James Thomson, The Seasons (London: printed and sold by J. Millan and A. Millar, 1730).
10 See Margaret Willes, The Mound Lecture 2011, unpublished article.
11 See Batey 1999, p. 100.
Twickenham (c. 1730) provides us with a view of Pope’s villa from across the river with the entrance to the undercroft grotto open and dark beneath the external twin staircase which led up to the main reception room on the piano nobile – a recognisable entrance to a grotto as included in Kent’s illustration. This was not the first time that Kent had depicted a grotto in his pictures: he had already designed a frontispiece for Volume V of Pope’s Odyssey in which he depicts Calypso’s grotto and had sketched Pope writing in his grotto at Twickenham (1725). In a later drawing, A View in Pope’s Garden (c. 1730-48), he depicts the pagan deities, presented previously in the frontispiece to Spring, having descended to earth and the grotto entrance via the watery rainbow.

However, Jane Brown suggests the landscape of Kent’s Spring is in fact the local environs of Marlborough Castle, seat of the Earl of Hertford, with the hill a romanticised interpretation of the Mound and Lady Hertford’s grotto at the foot of the Mound transformed into a villa. The circular motion of the putti and Spring in the sky are echoes of the larger circular rhythms suggested by the double rainbow which are, in turn, vertical expressions of the horizontal rings of the path winding its way, in the form of a circuitous perambulatory, up the Mound. The Mound itself appears to have a larger sister in the background, which is possibly Silbury Hill: the two are linked by the waters of the River Kennet – from source to downstream (as indeed they are today) – and, again, the rainbow is reflected in the river. William Stukeley’s View of Lord Hartford’s House at Marlborough (1723), with its southward perspective, provides us with an insight into the dimensions and design features of Lady Hertford’s house and estate in this period. If Kent did indeed draw upon this landscape, the artist would have looked westward from the house, past Merlin’s Mound and up the Kennet valley.

Figure II: William Stukeley’s View of Lord Hartford’s House at Marlborough (1723). Reproduced by courtesy of Marlborough College Archives from first edition of William Stukeley, Itinerarium Curiosum, or An Account of the Antiquitys and Remarkable Curiosities in Nature or Art (London: For the author, 1724).

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13 See Batey 1999, pp. 58, 63, 64.
Not only is Spring dedicated to Lady Hertford but the painting evokes a distinctly familiar Marlborough landscape with another connection revealed seven years later. Mrs Rowe, in a letter to Lady Hertford from Frome in 1737, writes and speculates about the engraving: ‘I have been reading over Mr Thomson’s Seasons with a new truly rational delight. One would think you had sat for the picture of the Spring. The resemblance I found induced me to copy it, for drawing is the constant amusement of my leisure time.’

Fanciful or not, portraits of Lady Hertford do reveal a certain likeness.

In Spring, Thomson asks ‘For who can paint / Like nature’ (429-430) and questions whether imagination and language can succeed in reproducing its likeness. At one level, Kent’s illustration and Thomson’s poem seem to attempt to capture Nature’s wild essence but, by the selection of their media, can never fully succeed in reproducing her colour and unbounded beauty, ‘undisguised by mimic art’ (465). In fact, Thomson explores this sense of artifice in his poem when he guides the reader through an unidentified landscaped garden with ‘its vistas open’, ‘alley greens’ (477), ‘verdant maze’ (478), ‘bowery walk’ (479), ‘rising spire, Th’aethereal mountain’ (484-5) and compares it to the natural landscape close at hand.

Landscape gardeners of the period were beginning to explore the possibilities of reproducing the variety of nature in terms of light, shade and perspective and directing the visitor – as Kent’s shepherd guides us to the undercroft grotto – to imitative features and distractions. As with Kent’s illustration, Lady Hertford provides us with a grotto, with its pagan connotations, as Pope identifies in An Epistle to Richard Boyle, Earl of Burlington (1731), ‘In all [design], let nature never be forgot’ and he explains in a letter to Reverend Dr William Borlase (1695-1772) that his grotto is ‘an imitation of Nature’.

Indeed, Pope perceived, according to Joseph Spence (1699-1768), that ‘all gardening is landscape painting’ with the designer and artist guiding the observer through multiple scenes.

Lord and Lady Hertford are thought to have moved into the house at Marlborough in 1718 and work started on the grotto immediately after their arrival. The grotto is positioned at the foot of the Mound. The town of Marlborough’s motto, ‘Ubi nunc sapientis ossa Merlini? (‘Where now are the bones of wise Merlin?’) plays on Arthurian legend that the Mound is, in fact, Merlin’s burial barrow. The entrance to the grotto marks the beginning of the perambulatory which winds to the top of the mound and its roof is level with the first circuit of the walk. As one enters the main chamber, through the hinged and folding wrought iron gates, there is a central water receptacle at ground level and, directly ahead, a decorative wall niche with an urn with a large seashell basin beneath it. The only light available comes from the arched entrance. The underlying structure of the grotto is brick with encrusted shells and stones intricately decorating the surfaces; it was originally decorated with flint, shells and

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15 Percy Family Letters and Papers (1730-1736) (Alnwick MSS), No. 110, p. 228.
17 Horace, Epistles, I, xviii, 103: ‘A hid recess, where life’s revolving day,/ In sweet delusion gently steals away’.
probably glass and mirrors. The unknown grotto designer has used local building materials and recycled furnace slag – popular, due its resemblance to Italian volcanic lava.\textsuperscript{20} In the historical tradition of grottoes, they were built originally in natural caves with springs and, as nymphaeae, were dedicated in both Greek and Roman times to water nymphs. Lady Hertford’s grotto includes a water feature in the form of a wall fountain, with water drawn from the top of the Mound, which would have been included both as an allusion to the world of classical nymphs and to provide sound effects: the ‘perpetual rill’, of running water for the visitor.\textsuperscript{21}


Stephen Duck, another poet who benefited from Lady Hertford’s hospitality and patronage, alludes in his \textit{Description of a Journey to Marlborough} (1738) to Thomson’s composition of \textit{Spring}, Marlborough Castle, the Mound and the natural habitat it provided for the poetic muse:

\begin{quote}
FROM hence the Muse to silver \textit{Kennet} flies,
On whose green Margin \textit{Hertford’s} Turrets rise.
Here often round the verdant Plain I stray,
Where THOMSON sung his bold, unfetter'd Lay;
Or climb the winding, mazy Mountain's Brow;
\end{quote}

Duck continues in his poem to describe the grotto and, likening Lady Hertford to Calypso, admires her ‘skill’ as a designer of the interior of this ‘beauteous grot’ at ‘the basis of the verdant Hill’ with its ‘ev’ry polished Stone’, ‘rustic Moss’, ‘the shining Pearl’, and ‘purple Shell’.\textsuperscript{22} Lady Hertford finished her grotto in 1735; Pope completed his grotto in 1725 but continued to make improvements up until his death in 1744. Lady Hertford proudly wrote to Lady Pomfret from Marlborough in a letter dated June 1739 of: ‘The grotto that we have made under the mount – and which, without partiality, I think is in itself much prettier than

\begin{footnotes}
\item[20] See Jackson 2001, p. 31.
\end{footnotes}
that at Twickenham’. Renovated in the 1980s by Simon Verity and Diana Reynall and again structurally repointed in the autumn of 2012 by Donald Insall Architects, Lady Hertford’s grotto, alongside Pope’s, has submitted, to ‘the Stroke/Of time’ with the disappearance of relics to souvenir-hunters and other visitors, as Dodsley predicted in The Cave of Pope (1743).

The grotto has taken on numerous roles since Marlborough College was founded around the same site in 1842: from educational resource to bicycle shed, from heritage site to illicit smokers’ lair. In contrast, Kent’s illustration in the volume of The Seasons was soon superseded: Millan and Millar published a second edition, within six months, in octavo with a different set of illustrations – and followed it with a non-illustrated edition. The first edition of The Seasons, with its exquisite engraving, was undoubtedly a luxury item aimed at a certain clientele, with the subsequent editions attractive to different buyers and readers within a competitive marketplace.

What one can claim with some confidence is that Lady Hertford is the nexus between both Kent’s illustration and the grotto itself. Both artefacts show a correlation between art and nature and the dichotomy between the classical and contemporary pastoral worlds in a new, evolving landscape. Horace Walpole stated that ‘Poetry, Painting and Gardening, or the Science of Landscape, will forever by men of taste be deemed Three Sisters, or the Three Graces who dress and Adorn Nature’ – Thomson, Kent and Lady Hertford created their own triptych of interpretations of Marlborough’s natural landscape. In 1753, another aspiring poet William Shenstone inscribed Lady Hertford into his verses in Ode Upon Rural Elegance –

And tho’ by faithless friends alarmed,
Art have with nature waged presumptuous war;
By Seymour’s winning influence charmed,
In whom their gifts united shine,
No longer shall their counsels jar.

Nature exalt the mound where art shall build;
Art shape the gay alcove, while Nature paints the field.

Indeed Leonardo da Vinci wrote in his notebook in 1480: ‘..coming to the entrance of a great cavern, in front of which I stood for some time, stupefied and uncomprehending such a thing… Suddenly two things arose in me, fear and desire: fear of the menacing darkness of the cavern; desire to see if there was any marvellous thing within.’ Kent’s shepherd in Spring directs us to the undercroft grotto and we approach it with a combination of fear and desire – but, as we discover, this doorway opens into an enchanted grotto for those who dare explore.

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23 Correspondence between Frances, countess of Hartford, (afterwards duchess of Somerset,) and Henrietta Louisa, countess of Pomfret, between the years 1738 and 1741 (London: printed by I. Gold, 1805), Vol. 1, p. 103.
24 Serle 1745, p. 19.
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Laura Bouttell

**Abstract:** Transformation in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* is paradoxical, a process of change that fixes in time a specific narrative moment. This work considers two works which adapt Ovid’s tale of Venus and Adonis. When revisioned by Shakespeare and Turner, Venus and Adonis, just as in Ovid’s myth, become fixed in time, though in the different forms of word and image. This paper will posit that these two artefacts, in reimagining the story of Venus and Adonis, both reject Ovid’s notion of transformation as an ‘enduring memorial’ to a love torn apart by death and instead fix narrative attention on moments of apparent movement, which forever commemorate the carnal sexuality of the pairing.

Transformation in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* is paradoxical, a process of change that fixes in time a specific narrative moment: the fleeing Daphne is metamorphosed into a tree, the praying Niobe to stone. With the fluidity of transformation comes a permanence, a stasis, that adopts a thematic resonance, which is developed through future revisionings of the myth. The short-lived anemone, into which Ovid’s Adonis is transformed by Venus, ‘easily shaken and blown away by the winds’, becomes nevertheless ‘an enduring memorial’.¹ Ovid’s ‘Venus and Adonis’, is emblematic of a parting, a valediction, which fixes attention on a flimsy but everlasting monument to love. When revisioned by Shakespeare – for much of his narrative poem, ‘Venus and Adonis’ (1593) – and Turner, in his painting, ‘Adonis Departing for the Chase’ (1803-4), Venus and Adonis, just as in Ovid’s myth, become fixed in time, though in the different forms of word and image. Both writer and artist focus not on the moment of transformation leading to permanence in the myth, however, but on moments of apparent movement. This paper will posit that these two artefacts, in reimagining the story of Venus and Adonis, both reject Ovid’s notion of transformation as an ‘enduring memorial’ to a love torn apart by death and instead fix narrative attention on moments of apparent movement, which forever commemorate the carnal sexuality of the pairing.

Shakespeare’s development of the sixty-seven lines of Ovid’s verse, which form the ‘Venus and Adonis’ story, into an almost twelve-hundred-line poem clearly stretches the narrative, but Shakespeare does not extend the story in an even manner. Where Ovid spends an approximately equal number of lines on the love between Venus and Adonis and his death and transformation, Shakespeare dwells on the corporeality of their love at the expense both of introductory material and the fate of Adonis. By the end of the first stanza Shakespeare positions Venus as ‘a bold-fac’d suitor who ‘gins to woo’ and by the end of the fifth she has ‘pluck[ed] him from his horse’.²

From their first touch – ‘she seizeth on his sweating palm’ (l. 25) – Adonis apparently wishes to depart; however, it takes him a full eight hundred lines to do so. His ‘sweating palm’ – a physical sign of a sensuous disposition³ – suggests his ‘frosty desire’ (l. 36) is perhaps mere modesty or sexual immaturity. Although critics such as Katharine Eisaman

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² William Shakespeare, ‘Venus and Adonis’ in *The Poems*, ed. F. T. Prince (Methuen & Co.: London, 1969), ll. 6, 30. All subsequent references are to this edition incorporated in the text.

³ see Othello 3.4.36-9, cited by Edmond Malone, *Supplement to the Edition of Shakespeare’s Plays Published in 1778*. 
Maus favours an un consummated love between Shakespeare’s Venus and Adonis, I propose that the erotic language of the poem suggests otherwise, indicating a uniting of lovers in carnal sexuality, rather than the separation which is emphasised in Ovid:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{Forc’d to content, but never to obey,} \\
&\text{Panting he lies and breatheth in her face.} \\
&\text{She feedeth on the steam as on a prey,} \\
&\text{And calls it heavenly moisture, air of grace,} \\
&\text{Wishing her cheeks were gardens full of flowers,} \\
&\text{So they were dew’d with such distilling showers. (ll. 61-6)}
\end{align*}
\]

Critical opinion regarding the meaning of ‘content’ here is divided: whether it is a substantive meaning ‘acquiescence’ or a verb, and if so whether active (to content Venus, or that she has to settle for what she gets), or passive (to content himself). I suggest that the clear sexuality of the lexis in the stanza – ‘panting’, ‘steam’, ‘heavenly moisture’ and ‘dew’d’ – indicates that Shakespeare intended ‘content’ to be read as a ‘forc’d’ sexual consummation, a rape. This would account for Adonis’ ‘pure shame’ (l. 69) and ‘angry eyes’ (l. 70) of the next stanza and her ‘pretty entreat[ies]’ (l. 73) which seek to annul his distaste for what has just happened.

The use of ‘still’ in the same stanza, echoes the ‘distilling’ of the line quoted above. Here it occurs three times, twice at the beginning of the lines and on each occasion emphatically after a caesura;

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{Still she entreats, and prettily entreats,} \\
&\text{For to a pretty ear she tunes her tale.} \\
&\text{Still is he sullen, still he lours and frets,} \\
&\text{‘Twixt crimson shame and anger ashy pale. (ll. 73-6)}
\end{align*}
\]

The ambiguity of ‘still’ – as indicating the continuance of a previous action or condition; or as stationary, unmoving, which carries a greater resonance here – shows Adonis as the antithesis to that which is favoured by critics and ties in more with the iconographical tradition of Adonis, from Ovid, as the willing lover of Venus. Further evidence of this willingness comes in a later stanza:

\[
\begin{align*}
&Till breathless he disjoin’d, and backward drew \\
&\text{The heavenly moisture, that sweet coral mouth,} \\
&\text{Whose precious taste her thirsty lips well knew,} \\
&\text{Whereon they surfeit, yet complain on drouth.} \\
&\text{He with her plenty press’d, she faint with dearth,} \\
&\text{Their lips together glued, fall to the earth. (ll. 541-546)}
\end{align*}
\]

The indulgent sexuality of the language can be read with Adonis as willing or unwilling lover. ‘They’ may refer to Venus and Adonis, or her lips; both are feasible readings, though the former is supported by the continued use of the plural pronoun, ‘their’, in the final line. ‘He with her plenty press’d’ may refer to her ample body pressed close against him, or to his having experienced more than enough of her lips.

That there is a sexual consummation between the lovers is hinted at repeatedly throughout the poem, not just embedded in language such as the above. In the central section

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5 F. T. Prince (1969), p. 6 (n).
of the poem Adonis is ‘hot, faint and weary with her hard embracing,/ Like a wild bird being
tam’d with too much handling’ (ll. 559-60) and thus ‘he now obeys, and now no more
resisteth,/ While she takes all she can’ (ll. 563-4). This follows references which take their
meaning from the Elizabethan pun which links death with orgasm;⁶ ‘Struck dead before, what
needs a second striking?’ (l. 250) and ‘O thou didst kill me, kill me once again!’ (l. 499).

The above analysis demonstrates how a poem which is essentially about a parting of
lovers is, for the main, concerned with a non-parting, and perhaps with a conjoining. Although
the poem contains many images of movement, few of these come from Adonis and even
fewer concern movement away from Venus. Adonis attempts to leave Venus twice. The first,
‘Away he springs, and hasteth to his horse’ (ll. 255-8) and the second ‘With this he breaketh
from the sweet embrac[es]/ Of those fair arms which bound him to her breast,/ And homeward
through the dark laund runs apace’ (ll. 811-13). On both occasions the lexis is one of sudden
urgency. The final parting itself, coming eight hundred lines into the poem, is over within the
above-quoted three lines. Lauren Shohet appears to agree that:

the poem’s so-called “action”—Adonis’s sporadic bursts of motion away
from Venus and toward the hunt—moves briskly forward precisely whenever
Venus stops talking. Even Adonis’s most extended speech, the seven stanzas
that culminate in his narratively decisive departure...seems terse and active in
comparison to the preceding twenty-five stanzas of Venus’s attempts to dissuade him.⁷

Rather than ‘terse and active’, Adonis’ swift departure is the decisive and quick-willed action
of one who has been persuaded before and that once the impetus has developed must move
quickly in order to avoid the recurrent effects of those same persuasive techniques. While
Venus talks and soothes, Adonis appears happy to stay ‘still’, it is when he finds the will to
interrupt that he also finds the will to move and thus must act abruptly, ‘break[ing]’ the
narrative, and the embrace, of Venus and departing quickly before she has the chance to
change his mind again.

That Shakespeare chooses to dwell on the togetherness and sensuality of Venus and
Adonis may reflect contemporary fashions in poetry: the poem was extremely popular in
Shakespeare’s time, with nine editions being printed.⁸ Either Shakespeare was simply tapping
in to the popularity of the *Metamorphoses* in the Elizabethan period, with Arthur Golding’s
translation reprinted six times within Shakespeare’s lifetime, or perhaps it was the sensual
content of the *Metamorphoses* which rendered it so well liked at this time. Shakespeare, by
adapting the narrative to focus on the sexual dynamic of the pair was providing his audience
with just what they desired, similar perhaps to Christopher Marlowe, with his erotic epyllion,
‘Hero and Leander’. Shakespeare produces a revision of the myth that accords with a more
Petranchian lover, a familiar tradition by the late sixteenth century, with poets such as Thomas
Wyatt, Philip Sidney and Edmund Spenser producing sonnets where a desperate lover
petitions a ‘frosty’ beloved. While the sequence of beseeching sonnets played on the absence
of sexual gratification between mortals, ‘Venus and Adonis’ seeks engagement with this
dynamic through Adonis’ inability ever to quench the desires of the goddess of love,
‘Whereon they surfeit, yet complain on drouth’, ‘A thousand kisses buys my heart from
me...Is twenty hundred kisses such a trouble’ (ll. 517, 522). Adonis may have quenched her
once but it is continuous love she desires, and that which he cannot give her, ‘“I know not

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⁶ Definition 7d, *OED* online, accessed 12th January 2013.
love,” quoth he, “nor will not know it” (l. 409). Shakespeare’s reversal of the sexual dynamic of the Petrarchan sonnet sequence plays with expectations, freshly titillating an audience already familiar with the usual narrative. Extension of the sexual, rather than love, narrative of the myth, as Adonis yields and recoils while Venus pleads for more, allows Shakespeare to focus on the sensuousness of the myth, forming a narrative that was of enduring fascination with Elizabethan readers.

Writers and artists have often, used Ovid’s work as inspiration for their own work of art: it has provided ‘by far the most significant repository of subjects for artistic representation of any text in the Western tradition other than the Bible’.10 In Tristia, Ovid’s first book of poems after his exile to Tomis by Augustus, Ovid compares the Metamorphoses to a visual representation, claiming that it provides a ‘greater’ image of the poet than any sculptural depiction, carmina maior imago (Tr. 1.7.11).11 By reinterpreting his work as visual art, Turner takes Ovid’s statement literally. A review of a Royal Academy showing of the painting in ‘The Athenaeum’ reflects the interplay between visual and textual ‘art’; ‘having

Figure 1: ‘Adonis Departing for the Chase’, J.M.W. Turner (1803-4), © Tate. London 2012.

10 Ibid.
been painted by Titian and sung by Shakespeare, [the myth] has lost none of its beauty on Mr. Turner’s canvas...The little cupids (sic) loosening the sandal of Adonis is a suggestion as significant as pages of words could express’.\textsuperscript{12}

The origins of Turner’s painting can perhaps be traced back to Turner’s visit to the continent in the summer of 1802.\textsuperscript{13} Yet, Turner does not simply recreate either Titian’s work or Ovid’s myth. Turner reinterprets the visual presence of Venus and Adonis to reflect the paradox present in Shakespeare’s line, ‘Whereon they surfeit, yet complain on drouth’. Unfortunately it is not known if Turner read Shakespeare’s poem but what is known is that a period of separation between the plays and the poems, which were not included in the first folio, had come to an end by the end of the eighteenth century, and that the poems were at that time being assimilated back in to Shakespeare’s canon.\textsuperscript{14} In 1780 a supplement was published by Edmond Malone which ‘subjoined’ the poems to the plays.\textsuperscript{15} Turner does indeed express interest in poetry: throughout his career he painted representations of the works of Sir Walter Scott and Thomas Campbell.\textsuperscript{16} It is, therefore, likely, that Turner will at least have been aware of Shakespeare’s poem, if not before, then perhaps after, this important publication.

Just as Shakespeare symbolised the natural and unrestrained desire of his Venus with that of Adonis’ horse, so too does Turner reflect the emotional status of his pairing with Adonis’ dogs. While two of the dogs seem eager to depart – straining at their leashes while Adonis holds them back – the other two are content to sit or lie as they wait for their master finally to leave. The parting is thus presented as irresolute, a sense which is reflected in Adonis’ upright posture, unlike Titian’s painting, or Shakespeare’s poem where, when Adonis decides to leave, there is significant forward momentum.\textsuperscript{17} Turner’s choice of the subject of Venus and Adonis is both an homage to Titian’s painting and a departure from his interpretation. While Titian cleaves more closely to the original text, showing Venus physically restraining Adonis as he leaves for the hunt, Turner’s pair are far more relaxed. Venus’ visible right eye appears to suggest a smile on her face: she reclines, making no perceptible effort to prevent Adonis’ departure, elegantly draping her hands on his arms, rather than physically restraining him. Only one of the putti appears to attempt to rein Adonis in, loosening the sandal of his right foot. There is none of the urgency here which is present in Titian’s painting, or of the departing movement of Adonis in Shakespeare’s poem. Turner’s painting possesses none of the sense of the hunter hunted which is to come, or even the sexual chase which has occurred. The figures here seem to reflect a stasis that is casual and relaxed, despite the apparent storminess of the background.

Both writer and artist capture the tempestuousness of their narratives through their own form. In the poem, the quatrains moves the narrative briefly forward, only to be held back


\textsuperscript{13} Turner made several sketches on the subject of Venus and Adonis in his ‘Calais Pier’ sketchbook, and though there has been some disagreement about the date of this painting, Butlin & Joll are most convinced by a suggestion that Turner was influenced in his subject choice by a Titian acquired by William Angerstein in 1801 and thus date the picture to 1803-5. Martin Butlin and Evelyn Joll, The Paintings of J. M. W. Turner, Revised Edition, The Tate Gallery and Yale University (1984 [1977]), p. 114-5.

\textsuperscript{14} Ian Warrell states that ‘the most notable omission’ from Turner’s personal library was a copy of the Shakespeare’s complete works, and that ‘he would have been largely dependent on his recollections of an evening at the theatre for the basic information about any incident he chose to depict’. Turner and Venice (Tate Publishing, 2003), p. 69.

\textsuperscript{15} William Shakespeare, ed. Edmond Malone, Supplement to the edition of Shakspeare’s plays published in 1778 by Samuel Johnson and George Stevens: In two volumes. Containing additional observations by several of the former commentators: to which are subjoined the genuine poems of the same author, and seven plays that have been ascribed to him; with notes by the editor and others. (1780).


by a summarising or reflective couplet, a turbulence that echoes the stop-start motion of Adonis. A similar turmoil is captured in Turner’s painting, which, in hand made oils, swirls around a central focal point. Venus forms the lowest part of the curve that is completed by the billowing clouds and pale-skinned putti. The momentum is circular rather than progressive, with Adonis and his dogs contributing to the visual motion of the work. Despite the movement suggested by its title, this painting deliberately demonstrates the stasis of Adonis’ position: he wants to depart but is also persuaded, by the sensuousness of the scene, to remain.

Turner’s painting focuses on the sensuousness of the bower. The forest is lush, the trees heavy with verdure, flowers are prevalent and are strewn down towards the luxurious cloths on which Venus lies. The painting embodies a sense of plenty, which is further enhanced by the presence of so many putti; the trees are laden with these playful figures. Symbolically, they represent sexuality. They are there to help Cupid facilitate the onset of profane love,18 and their profusion in the painting is emblematic of Venus and Adonis’ ‘thirst’ for each other.

The positioning of both the poem and the painting in a forest reflects the theme of Book Ten of Ovid’s poem, in which the story of Venus and Adonis appears. The book begins and ends in gardens or nature and there is a noticeable involvement of movement. At the beginning Hymen ‘flew from Crete through the measureless sky’(10. 2) to join the nuptials of Orpheus and Eurydice. The garden here represents danger and the marriage is over before any consummation can take place. The transformation of Adonis ends the book, with the flimsy transience of Adonis as an anemone. Book Ten also contains the story of Pygmalion, in which a piece of art, a sculpture, is brought to life by the intervention of the gods, thus prioritising movement and narrative motion over stasis, as well as the story of Atalanta, in which suitors must compete against the heroine in a running race in order to win her hand in marriage. The framing and content of the book, thus, highlights the vigour of the book’s emphasis on motion and the resulting tension between this and the inaction of the revisionings of narrative movement.

Moments of stasis do occur in Ovid’s Metamorphoses with the literary trope of ecphrasis and Philip Hardie highlights the exploitation by the visual arts of this technique.19 Interestingly, however, while Ovid continually makes demands on the reader to stop and visualise the events of other stories within the Metamorphoses, he does not demand that the reader ‘see’ any part of his narration of the Venus and Adonis myth. This underlines the importance for Ovid of movement and transformation within this story, rather than for any moment of narrative pause, which an ecphrasis naturally embodies. Like Shakespeare, however, or even perhaps, as a result of Shakespeare, Turner’s painting ostensibly represents a moment of stasis, with Adonis neither staying nor departing.

Turner’s languid presentation focuses attention on the sexuality of the pair. This along with the lack of faces on the protagonists is in direct opposition to Titian’s work, but serves here to highlight the sensuous corporeality of the figures. At 59” x 47”, Adonis’ muscular back and shoulders are large, and at the forefront of the work, however, it is the naked torso of Venus which confronts the viewer most vividly. She is reclined with her left breast visible and her legs coquettishly entwined, making no attempt to cover her modesty, despite the supposed imminent departure of Adonis.

The middle to end of the eighteenth century saw an increased interest in sexual gratification as part of a healthy disposition\(^{20}\) and perhaps what we can see here is Turner’s representation of the salubrious nature of sexual love. James Graham, an eighteenth-century quack, lectured to fashionable crowds about the invigorating properties of happy sexuality, and gave instructions as to how it could be made more successful and enjoyable. He advocated the use of pornography, saying people should have ‘their passions aroused and excited, by the sight of rich warm or what are called lascivious prints, statues and paintings’.\(^{21}\) Turner’s departure from his ‘present style’ in this painting, in a genre with which he was neither familiar nor adept, suggests a desire to engage with a dialogue of which he was not a part.\(^{22}\)

The sensuousness of the setting, the presence of the putti, the naked facelessness of the figures are all suggestive of a highly sexualised scene that could be interpreted as a ‘lascivious’ painting, such as those advocated by Graham. An earlier, perhaps preparatory, sketch for the work, entitled the ‘Parting of Venus and Adonis’, shows Venus sitting upright, not reclining in a bower, and is based directly on Titian’s *Death of St Peter Martyr*, which Turner saw and admired in The Louvre in 1802.\(^{23}\) This move away from the apparent religiosity of the earlier sketch seems to suggest a deliberate decision to sexualise the painting of the departure of Adonis with its more sensuous setting and postures.

With a public who were more willing to engage in open appreciation of sexual images, perhaps Turner was responding to those who admired his landscapes but also enjoyed a rather more titillating experience. Pornographic journals began appearing from the 1770s, starting with ‘The Covent Garden Magazine or Amorous Repository’, which contained sexy stories and advertisements for prostitutes and brothels. Sexuality was very much more open than in the subsequent Victorian period, with the Georgian public not requiring sexual exuberance to be punished either in life or in art.\(^{24}\) Like Shakespeare’s poem, it seems Turner’s interpretation of the myth is also a reflection of the times in which he lived.

Both Shakespeare’s and Turner’s revisions of the Venus and Adonis myth make it relevant to their own time and space. The first line of Ovid’s poem says how ‘new forms’ and ‘changes of shape’ are what impels him to write (1). Arthur Golding’s translation has ‘of shapes transformed to bodies strange’.\(^{25}\) Shakespeare and Turner adapt Ovid’s ‘new form’ into their own ‘bodies strange’, and by doing so they make their own transformations. While both adopt the underlying narrative of Ovid’s story, they also fix their own *maior imago* of the poem, removing the sense of fluency of motion that accompanies Ovid’s tale and rendering their image of movement as fixed in time by their own new narrative. Thus endures the paradox of transformation as a new kind of permanence, creating a new form of ‘enduring memorial’ to the original work.


\(^{21}\) I am indebted for this paragraph to Boucé (1982), p. 7.


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*OED* online, accessed 12th January 2013.


Abstract: This essay attempts to portray two artefacts, the Wesley Memorial Methodist Church in Oxford, and the novel Adam Bede by George Eliot. These two very different objects will be considered in the light of one another and connections will be sought to bring the two together where possible. The connecting link may only be in Methodism itself, but other connections will be sought where possible.

The Wesley Memorial Methodist Church stands in New Inn Hall Street, Oxford. Looking Westward down St. Michael Street from Cornmarket its imposing spire, the largest in Oxford, is framed between the ends of this street, making the building stand out as one of some importance. The church was opened on Friday 11th October 1878 by Dr J. H. Rigg, President of Conference, almost a hundred years after the death of the charismatic preacher and founder of Methodism, John Wesley. It was designed by the architect Charles Bell, and the builder was Joshua Sym, the total cost of the building being £13,000. 8s.2d. Although the building followed the conventional Gothic style, there is originality in some of its features, for example the capitals of the arcade pillars, carved by Henry Frith of Gloucester, depict twelve different English plants and a window at the back of the gallery shows flowers of the English countryside. The two other stained glass windows in the gallery depict the risen Christ and Faith, Hope and Charity and the rose window at the west end shows roses and lilies.¹ There is a striking modern font, communion table, lectern and reading desk. Today the church is a bright and vibrant place, very much the thriving place it has always been throughout its several relocations. The old cramped pews have gone, to be replaced by a semi-circular array of comfortable chairs suitable for services, lectures and concerts. The old massive pulpit has gone and the organ, first built in 1878, was completely rebuilt in 1993 and is now a very fine one indeed. Worship there feels remote from Wesley’s open-air meetings to which he had to ride many, many miles on horseback to deliver his message which is still the one which is preached today, that salvation may be found by faith, and that faith is a gift of God which he freely gives and will bestow on every soul who truly seeks it.

George Eliot’s novel Adam Bede was first published in February 1859 in three volumes by John Blackwood. Initially sales were very slow, but the chorus of praise in the weekly reviews, followed by that of the monthly and quarterlies showed that the book was considered a work of genius. In its leader The Athenæum claimed that the novel had not a weak point in it and Bentley’s Quarterly Review welcomed it as the voice of its own experience like no other book. Both The Westminster Review and The Times pronounced it first rate, and Charles Dickens’ praise was equally generous. By June that year three impressions were exhausted and a second, cheaper edition was printed which sold 10,000 copies in 1859 alone, and the book was also reprinted in Europe and America.² Just as the Wesleyan Church underwent various changes in order to satisfy growing demand for what it had to offer so did Adam Bede, and both book and church are very much thriving and still alive today.

George Eliot was born Mary Ann Evans in 1819 and at roughly the same date as the first Wesleyan Church, the one preceding the present one, was established in Oxford. She was no stranger to Methodism and as a schoolgirl had attended Cow Lane Chapel, Coventry.

¹ Oxfordshire History Centre. Pamphlet, OXF O287 WESL.
where the preacher was Francis Franklin, whose theology interested the young Eliot. It was, however, her Methodist aunt, Mrs Samuel Evans on whom Dinah Morris, a principal character in *Adam Bede* was based. Eliot saw her aunt as a truly religious soul in whom the love of God and love of man were fused together. 3

*Adam Bede*4 is a novel which, above all, challenges assumptions, and Dinah Morris, the attractive young Methodist preacher reveals in her sermon on the Green at Hayslope that things are not quite as they might seem in this tranquil village. Eliot portrays a commonly accepted view of a rural community inhabited by stereotypical English country figures, the buxom farmer’s wife with her pretty dairymaid and spotless, cosy kitchen, a jolly publican, a handsome and wealthy young squire and an easy going vicar all living together in tolerable forelock-pulling harmony, each knowing his or her own place in the scheme of things and each accepting it as right and ordained by God. It is only when Dinah comes to Hayslope to preach that we begin to see beneath the surface of their seemingly idyllic world and realise that the many undercurrents she reveals could be the portent of something troubling, and the more the reader is shown beneath the surface the more possible other interpretations become. Dinah’s text for her sermon on the Green was taken from Luke 4:18:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he hath sent me… to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.

This was also the text for Wesley’s first sermon.5 Dinah speaks of what she knows, the conditions of poverty around her, and returns to the theme again and again. She speaks in concrete terms, and includes her story of seeing Wesley. This opening affirmation grows out of actuality, but then she sows the seeds of doubt into the minds of her listeners, asking how we know God cares for us any more than we care for the worms in our gardens, ‘for our life is full of trouble, and if God sends us good, he seems to send bad too.’6 Then she moves on to the penetrating question of what we should do if we lose his friendship, for there is no other to befriend the poor, and can we, poor mortals, depend on God’s friendship? She has so far created expectancy in her listeners, but withdraws from her own question, and exchanges actuality for narrative, exchanging the present for the past when she says Jesus *once* helped the poor and how we would love such a man should we see him. She then moves back to the present and the most dramatic moment of her sermon, when she addresses her listeners as lost sinners, in a state of wilful darkness and disobedience to God. This was designed to frighten them, as she spoke of the sufferings of the saviour and how he had opened the way to salvation for all of us if only we would listen. Dinah’s voice became rapid and agitated as she appealed to first one and then another to turn to God, but her only convert on this occasion was Chad’s Bess who had been intently studying the preacher throughout wondering what it would be like to live a life like Dinah’s, giving up earthly pleasures for the simplicity of a preacher’s life. Poor Bess suddenly felt that God was judging her and was very near, as Dinah said ‘See…’ fixing her eyes on a point above the heads of the people ‘see where our blessed Lord stands and weeps and stretches out his arms towards you… see the print of the nails on his dear hands and feet.’ She then turned to Bess and addressed her personally as a lost sinner who thought only of earrings and fine gowns and to whom God would eventually say ‘Depart from me into everlasting fire.’7, when poor terrified Bess threw down her earrings and burst

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5 Ibid. pp.610-11 (note 15)
6 Ibid. p. 30
7 Ibid. p. 34
into a fit of hysterical weeping. Dinah then finished her sermon with the personal appeal that she might share her own joy at conversion with others.

The early Methodists, especially the women, employed this rhetoric in their preaching as their usual pattern, mixing Biblical allusions, personal testimonies, direct appeal and a call to an active spiritual life, a message which ran in a circle from reality, through doubt to certainty, then through fear and hallucination and back to reality, a cycle in which the desires of the socially alienated were conflated with their fears. In this sermon Eliot was trying to show what an insignificant and ineffectual force Methodism was in areas of relative rural prosperity.

Dinah Morris, of all the major characters in *Adam Bede* is probably the only one who remains stable. She is just what she seems, reliable and dependable and with absolute faith in Wesley himself and his teaching. She recalls at the beginning of her sermon how she was taken by her aunt Samuel to hear Wesley preach out of doors. She remembers his face well:

he was a very old man, and had very long white hair; his voice was very soft and beautiful, not like any voice I had ever heard before [...] this old man seemed to me such a different sort of man from anybody I had ever seen before that I thought he had perhaps come down from the sky to preach to us...“8

The year of Dinah’s memory must have been about 1783, and she might have added that he wore a white stock, simple black clothes and no buckles at the knee. Dinah models her life on Welsey, and, like him has an absolute belief in the necessity of conversion. Of the two conversions in *Adam Bede*, that of Chad’s Bess was probably temporary. But that of Hetty Sorrel was, for both Dinah and Hetty, one of intense importance.

Wesley was expecting instant conversion in order to heighten his own spirituality and on the 24th May 1738 it was given to him:

> In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther’s Preface to the Epistles to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, Christ alone for salvation, and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the laws of sin and death.9

It is this concept of instant and recognisable conversion which is at the heart of Dinah’s ministry. Just as Dinah believed she had a duty to save souls and to change lives for the better both spiritually and physically where possible, so did the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes, sent in 1881 to be the Superintendent Minister of the Wesley Memorial Church. He found the country round Oxford was sunk in agricultural depression, and Non-conformity was unwelcome in both the University and the City as the Cowley Fathers and Anglo Catholicism predominated. But Hughes worked hard and with sixty young men and women anxious to serve the church, formed them into a Mission Band to carry out evangelical work, going out to villages to conduct prayer meetings, preach an open-air sermon, perhaps a tea meeting, much in the way Dinah did almost a hundred years before. His aim, of course, was conversion, the same as Dinah’s. These meetings of Hughes’ proved so popular that when Hughes preached at the Wesleyan Church it overflowed, and newcomers could not be admitted.10

The changes which were effected by Methodist sermons were evident. They could not be disputed and were dependent on a belief in doctrines which left no room for manoeuvre. This was in complete contrast to the changes which Eliot wrought in her characters, and which the reader might interpret in the light of what might have been.

When Eliot portrays the Vicar of Hayslope as a rosy and handsome man who prefers to play chess with his mother and ride out round his acres with only minimal inconvenience to himself from parish duties, she does not blame him, but tells the reader that this is how the world is. He is neither bad nor wealthy, but knows how to make the best of what he has, and is benign and well-liked by his parishioners. Eliot tells her readers that it is her duty to tell the truth, and that these mortals must be accepted as they are, accepted with love and tolerance. But the vicar, in his desire to be liked, has not the courage to confront his godson, Arthur Donnithorn. Arthur longs for guidance as he attempts to make what he knows is his despicable behaviour known to his godfather, who suspects something but has not the courage to speak out, fearing a rift in their comfortable relationship, and as a result Hetty’s life is ruined. What the reader at first perceives to be the most likeable of men is actually weak and cowardly, and the once handsome charming and benevolent young squire is a thoughtless, irresponsible, blaggard, prepared to use a pretty, vain country girl then desert her when he tires of her.

Eliot’s first use of shifting perspectives is in her three short stories which form Scenes of Clerical Life. This, her first work of fiction immediately precedes Adam Bede, each story telling of the small town gossips’ views of its central characters, three successive clergymen, then slowly revealing that what we believed at first to be the truth about them is in fact far otherwise. This she does also, but in a far less concentrated form in Adam Bede, revealing half hidden truths in a series of parallels which reflect the duality of her plot. Stonyshire is contrasted with the beauties of Hayslope, and Arthur’s crooked character with Adam’s upright one, Dinah with Hetty and the pastoral idyll which contains tragedy amongst the beauties of nature. This duality is nowhere better expressed than in the scene where Dinah’s singleness of purpose is compared with Hetty’s as they sit in their adjoining bedchambers, each pursuing her own particular form of worship, Hetty’s that of her beautiful body with its luxuriant hair, lustrous eyes and white arms and shoulders, and Dinah’s that of her saviour. Their lives run parallel, not really touching each other at any significant points in spite of Dinah’s best efforts, until the encounter in the prison cell. Unlike the Vicar, Dinah can always rely on the right guidance from her Lord, and knowing that Hetty is in some sort of trouble opens her Bible for guidance and immediately reads ‘And they all wept sore and fell upon Paul’s neck and kissed him.’

It is on these two pairs of encounters that the plot hangs, Arthur and the vicar, one with a confession and the other not willing to hear it, and Hetty and Dinah, one with a guilty secret and determined not to reveal it, and the other wanting to help to avoid the disastrous consequences of pursuing that secret.

Dinah’s sermon in the cell, delivered in the belief that God’s forgiveness depends on the willingness of the sinner to repent, hinges on Hetty’s willingness to confess her crime, and this confession Dinah manages to extract. But she knows also that she must not hurry God’s work, and it is only after she has won the confidence of the terrified and trembling Hetty that she begins her sermon, based on the words Jesus spoke from the cross and ending with the confession. ‘Father I have sinned’. This sermon is a direct intervention between herself and God and is delivered face to face with great intimacy and urgency whilst Dinah clasps Hetty to her in a loving embrace, telling her of Christ’s suffering and crucifixion to save sinners. Eliot uses this scene to illustrate Dinah’s true humanitarianism. She has based the scene on an

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account given to her by her Methodist aunt Samuel of one of her own experiences as a prison visitor.

Eliot’s knowledge of both Methodism and the Anglican church is drawn not only from her own extensive scholarship but also, on a more personal level, from her own childhood experiences of Methodism and that of her later Anglicanism, and it is from these sources that she makes her comparison between Methodist fervour and the rather more easy-going, indulgent Anglicanism she portrays in *Adam Bede*.

Until after Wesley’s death Methodists were an uneasy part of the Anglican Church. They had always ignored parish boundaries and believed their mission was to the whole country rather than the parish. They had not been afraid to risk unpopularity by their support of the working man, and their belief was that he had an equal right to the education which would lift him out of ignorance, and towards the salvation which was his by right. After his death it was decided to separate from the Anglicans and become a Dissenting Church. The Wesley Memorial Church in Oxford has therefore been a church in its own right for many years and is rather different from the one which Dinah Morris knew, yet still at the heart of both is the teaching of Wesley himself. Women preachers were forbidden during Dinah’s lifetime, but she would no doubt be delighted to know that Methodists now have women Ministers preaching in their pulpits.

These two artefacts, the church and the book, are brought together in pairs of contrasts: the solid permanence of stone with the flimsy impermanence of paper: the certainty of the doctrines and activities of the church and the shifting perspectives and possibilities of other interpretations of the novel: the spirituality of the religion and the imagination of the author, but within these opposites is the truth which is believed to be at the heart of both. At the opening of the Methodist Church, Dr Rigg spoke of the mysteries of nature which we have difficulty in believing but yet are true and that much in Christianity is also difficult to believe but true. ¹² Eliot also believes that as a novelist she should tell of how things really are, that she might refashion life and character but ‘my strongest effort is…to give a faithful account of men and things… as if I were in the witness box narrating my experiences on oath.’ ¹³

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The Banqueting House and The Masque of Augurs: Architecture and Metatheatricality in a Jacobean Masque

Jeremy Newton

Abstract: The Banqueting House in Whitehall was designed by Inigo Jones and built between 1619 and 1622. Its functions included the staging of masques, and Ben Jonson’s The Masque of Augurs was the first to be presented there. Both works draw heavily on classical precedent and learning. This essay argues that appreciation of The Masque of Augurs depends on understanding the space that was used for its performance, and that Jonson purposely draws attention to the artificiality of the masque, and to the surroundings of the Banqueting House, in a way that we now term metatheatrical.

The Banqueting House in Whitehall was designed by Inigo Jones and built between 1619 and 1622. It was designed to fulfil a number of functions, of which the staging of masques was one, and on Twelfth Night, 1622, The Masque of Augurs by Ben Jonson was the first to be presented there. The masque contains numerous references to architecture, building, and the arts involved in the staging of the entertainment itself: it draws attention to its own artificiality and to the venue for the performance in the way that we now term metatheatrical.¹

This essay considers both the Masque of Augurs and the Banqueting House. It begins with a brief account of the circumstances in which the Banqueting House was built, and describes how the building would originally have appeared. It then considers The Masque of Augurs, examining the use that was made of the new performance space and the metatheatrical effects of Jonson’s text. It concludes that a proper appreciation of each work – the building and the masque – can inform our understanding of the other.²

The Banqueting House is the third such building to have stood on the site. The first was a temporary structure of wood and canvas, erected in 1581 to receive French ambassadors in anticipation of a marriage treaty for Queen Elizabeth I. This was replaced in 1606 by a more substantial building in wood and stone, which burnt down in 1619. The decision to rebuild it – taken immediately despite an economic recession and the fact that the English crown was in financial difficulties – has been attributed to the expectations of a wedding between Prince Charles (the future King Charles I) and the Infanta of Spain. The proposed marriage, known as the Spanish Match, never came to fruition, but it dominated diplomatic activity during the last years of the reign of King James I. In the words of Per Palme, the rapid and costly rebuilding was ‘clearly prompted by the ostentatious diplomatic technique of the day and by the prospective celebrations of the marriage alliance’.³

Inigo Jones had become Surveyor of the King’s Works in 1615, but had been an influential Court architect for some years before that as Surveyor to the Prince of Wales. He had studied classical and modern Italian architectural theories, including Daniele Barbaro’s 1567 edition of De Architectura by Vitruvius (the 1st century Roman authority whose work was the only surviving Roman architectural treatise) and Andrea Palladio’s 1570 work I

¹ *OED* defines the term ‘metatheatre’ as ‘Theatre which draws attention to its unreality, esp. by the use of a play within a play; (also) those particular parts of a drama which exemplify this device’.

² All references to The Masque of Augurs are to the version in The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson, ed. by David Bevington, Martin Butler and Ian Donaldson, 7 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), V, pp.581-610. For the sake of brevity, the title is shortened in these notes to MA.

Quattro Libri dell’Architettura, which was also inspired ultimately by Vitruvius. He had also travelled in Italy, where he met the architect and writer Vincenzo Scamozzi, author of the 1615 work L’Idea dell’Architettura Universale, and visited many of the buildings illustrated in Palladio. For Jones, the rebuilding of the Banqueting House was an opportunity to demonstrate ‘his concept, totally new in England, of a monumental and ordered architecture based on antiquity and the Italian Renaissance, in the most sensitive context, and harness them to the expression of the grandeur of his monarch.’

A detailed discussion of Jones’ sources is beyond the scope of this essay, but Palladio’s influence is strong. John Summerson has observed, for example, that the Banqueting House interior owes much to Palladio’s interpretation of a Vitruvian basilica, which had classical associations with the administration of justice (one of the functions of the king) as well as obvious later associations with Christianity; whilst the exterior is partly based on a Palladio study for a town house. The design as a whole was a display of classical learning, as well as of the taste that Jones had acquired in Italy.

The building is broadly rectangular in plan. It is two storeys high, above a raised basement. The main elevations, facing east and west, consist of two ranges of seven windows, flanked by superimposed orders, Ionic below and Composite above (Figure 1): the side windows by pilasters, which are paired at the ends of each facade, and the central bays (which are slightly projected) by columns. The stonework is mostly rusticated, but the columns and pilasters are smooth and unfluted: the classical features stand out (Figure 2).

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Figure 1: West elevation
Photograph © Jeremy Newton 2012

Figure 2: Detail of west elevation, showing the advanced central bays, rusticated stonework and unfluted column
Photograph © Jeremy Newton 2012

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Originally, the facade had a subtle polychromy: the ground floor was built from honey-coloured Oxfordshire stone, the walls above that were pinkish Northamptonshire stone, and only the orders and entablature were in white Portland stone, so highlighting these classical features still further. (The application of Portland stone to the entire facade was only done in the 19th century.)

The main feature of the interior is a single great chamber, reached by a modest staircase at the north end of the building (Figures 3 and 4). The chamber was designed to be 110 feet long, 55 feet wide and 55 feet high: a double cube, which proportions are characteristic of a Palladian-Vitruvian basilica. It is divided vertically by a narrow gallery; horizontally, the long walls are divided into seven window bays, separated below the gallery by engaged Ionic columns and above by Corinthian pilasters. There are three stone doorways in the north wall, the central one being the main entrance to the room from the staircase. There are now three doorways in the south wall too, though in 1622 there was no central door: instead, behind where the throne now stands, there was a niche or apse – another feature of the basilica – semi-circular and half the height of the building. This niche was removed shortly after construction, around 1625.

It is difficult to imagine how extraordinary the new building must have seemed to Jones’ contemporaries. It dominated the approach to Whitehall Palace (Figure 5), and its scale and appearance set it apart from the Tudor buildings amongst which it stood: John

7 The most famous feature of the interior, the great Rubens ceiling glorifying James I, was only installed in 1635 – more than a decade after the inauguration of the building – for which reason it is not discussed further in this essay.  
8 The actual internal dimensions are 120 feet long by 53 feet wide, corresponding to the plan of the previous banqueting house, but Jones’ estimate and the building accounts indicate that Jones intended for it to be a strict double cube. See Newman, p.236.  
Chamberlain wrote in April 1622 that ‘is too faire and nothing sutable to the rest of the house.’\textsuperscript{10} Michael Leapman has observed that there are few other references to it in contemporary correspondence and journals, and suggests that people simply did not know what to make of it.\textsuperscript{11}

![Figure 5: Engraving of Whitehall circa 1650, from a copy of a print by Israel Silvestre, showing the Banqueting House on the left and the Holbein Gate on the right.](image)

Photograph © Jeremy Newton 2012 from copy in private collection

It was for this remarkable new space that \textit{The Masque of Augurs} was devised, and this essay will shortly turn to consider Jonson’s text. First, though, it is necessary to understand how the interior was arranged for masques generally, because the performance derived much of its significance from the way in which the space was used.\textsuperscript{12}

For a masque, the room would be fitted out with seating in the form of temporary scaffolding on three sides, and richly decorated with tapestries. The banks of seats blocked out the lower windows, so the hall was lit by torches. A stage was erected at the north end; at the south end, the king was seated on a dais under a canopy – presumably in the niche until this was removed – and the perspective stage scenery was drawn to be seen from that viewpoint. The stage and the royal dais formed the two main foci of the event, with a carpeted processional space between them running the length of the hall. This was where the masquers would dance, and it was along this carpet that characters from the entertainment would process to address the king. (Given the basilica form of the hall, with the apse at the end, the procession from stage to dais must have been endowed with a ritual, quasi-religious nature.)

Structurally, \textit{The Masque of Augurs} follows the same broad pattern as other Stuart masques. Typically there would be one or two antimasques – originally called ‘antic-


\textsuperscript{12} The description that follows of the typical arrangements for a masque is based on Andrew Gurr, \textit{The Shakespearean Stage 1574-1642}, 3\textsuperscript{rd} edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp.164-171.
masques’, which term better describes their grotesque nature; a main masque whose characters are primarily taken from allegory, myth or classical history; a series of dances performed by prominent members of the royal family and the court; and the event would culminate in the singing of a panegyric directly to the king.

There is not space in this essay for a close reading of the entire work, or for commenting on its political and ethical aspects. Instead, a brief summary of the main episodes in *The Masque of Augurs* will have to suffice to provide context for the specific passages under discussion. The antimasques (lines 1 to 225) begin with a number of ‘low’ characters who trespass into the court buttery with a view to presenting an entertainment. They include Notch, a brewer’s clerk, and Vangoose, a Dutchman described as a ‘rare artist’ and ‘projector of masques’. They present a display of dancing bears, which is accompanied by a – surprisingly scatological – ballad. For the second antimasque, Vangoose conjures up what is described as ‘a perplexed dance of straying and deformed pilgrims taking several paths.’ The main masque begins after the pilgrims’ dance: they flee as Apollo ‘breaks forth’ from the light above the stage. As Apollo descends, he summons his children, who form the Chorus for the masque, and they sing to the king (lines 226 to 274). The aristocratic masquers are led out by torchbearers, and a number of dances are presented, including a dance of augury (lines 275 to 325). Apollo then approaches the king and sings to him of the glorious future prognosticated for the Stuart dynasty (lines 326 to 341). The entertainment concludes with the discovery, in the ‘heaven’ above the stage, of Jove with the senate of the gods. Apollo re-ascends; Apollo, Jove and the Earth then sing verses that confirm the augury that has been made, and the Chorus again praises the king before the final dance of the masquers (lines 342 to 373).

Jonson’s stage directions, though brief, are informative about how the space within the Banqueting House was used, and the associated changes in distance – both physical distance and aesthetic distance – between performers and audience. The opening stage direction says ‘*The first antimasque had for the scene the court buttery hatch.*’ The scenery would have been moveable, and the antimasques would have been played entirely on the stage, with the players separated from the audience by a proscenium arch. However, this physical separation breaks down in the main masque, once Apollo has descended from the light:

> Apollo, descended, showed them where the king sat, and sung forward.

**APOLLO**

Behold the love and care of all the gods,  
King of the ocean and the Happy Isles  
That whilst the world about him is at odds,  
Sits crownèd lord here of himself, and smiles –

**CHORUS**

To see the erring mazes of mankind,  
Who seek for that doth punish them to find.

> Then he advanced with them to the King.

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13 *OED* defines the term ‘antimasque’ as ‘A grotesque interlude between the acts of a masque, to which it served as a foil, and of which it was at first often a burlesque. (Sometimes made *antic-masque.*)’.

14 *MA*, 223-4.

15 *MA*, 1.

16 *MA*, 248-55.
Physically, the performers were now using the floor of the hall: the effect of moving from behind the proscenium arch towards the throne was to bring together the mythological space of the stage with the real space of the hall and the royal dais. The boundaries between the world of the entertainment and the world of the court would be further blurred when the aristocratic masquers – Prince Charles, George Villiers and several lesser courtiers\textsuperscript{17} – were led out, costumed as augurs, to present their dances on the processional space; and again at the climax of the event, where the stage direction reads, ‘\textit{The Revels. After which, Apollo went up to the King and sung}.’\textsuperscript{18} The real world and the mythical world were now one.

The manipulation of aesthetic distance in this way is not at all unusual in the Stuart masque – as has already been noted, it was part of the conventional structure – but it takes on another dimension in \textit{The Masque of Augurs} specifically because of the frequency with which the text refers, directly or indirectly, to the arts involved in the masque and to the building in which it is being performed. This essay turns now to consider some of the key passages. In the first antimasque, Notch explains why his troupe has come to court:

\begin{quote}
I, Peter Notch, clerk, hearing that the Christmas invention was drawn dry at court, and that neither the king’s poet nor his architect had wherewithal left to entertain so much as a baboon of quality... out of my allegiance to wit, drew in some other friends that have, as it were, presumed out of their own naturals to fill up the vacuum with some pretty presentation.\textsuperscript{19}
\end{quote}

The irony is clear. In the spectacular surroundings of Jones’ new building, on the rare and extravagant occasion of a masque, Jonson has Notch suggest that both Jones and Jonson are creatively bankrupt. This idea is amplified by Vangoose, who comments that ‘de inventors be barren’ and promises instead ‘some dainty new ting’ that has never been seen before.\textsuperscript{20} From the start, then, Jonson metatheatrically highlights matters of authorship, creativity and novelty, and this continues throughout the antimasques. When Notch asks for the dancing bears to be admitted ‘if not for a masque, then for an antic-masque,’\textsuperscript{21} Jonson is likewise emphasising the theatricality of the event. He does so again when, after the dancing bears, Vangoose offers to conjure up a pageant involving ‘de groat Turkschen... de Tartar Cham, met de groat king of Mogul.’\textsuperscript{22} The Groom expresses concern, in terms that highlight – again, ironically – the huge space that they are in: ‘I do not like the Mogul, nor the great Turk, nor the Tartar; their names are somewhat too big for the room.’\textsuperscript{23} The main masque opens with another metatheatrical flourish. As Apollo descends, he sings:

\begin{quote}
It is no dream; you all do wake and see.  
Behold who comes! Far-shooting Phoebus, he  
That can both hurt and heal; and with his voice  
Rear towns, and make societies rejoice;  
That taught the Muses all their harmony,  
And men the tuneful art of augury.\textsuperscript{24}
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[17] MA, p.604 n.
\item[18] MA, 325.
\item[19] MA, 62-8.
\item[20] MA, 75-8. Vangoose’s cod-Dutch accent is emphasised in the printed text, where his speeches are set in a heavy Gothic typeface.
\item[21] MA, 113.
\item[22] MA, 188-91.
\item[23] MA, 201-2.
\item[24] MA, 227-32.
\end{footnotes}
Jones’ few surviving drawings for the masque design show that the entrance of Apollo must have been truly spectacular, yet his first words proclaim that ‘it is no dream,’ that the presence of the god within the Banqueting House is real. Apollo then alludes to his own associations with music (an essential element of the masque form), architecture (the walls of Troy were raised by the sound of his lyre) and divination (the subject of this particular masque). Apollo’s children are also closely associated with the arts of the masque: for example, Orpheus, the son of Apollo and Calliope (the muse of poetry), is associated with song; and Linus, the son of Apollo and Terpsichore (the muse of dance) is associated with music. By incorporating all these allusions – indeed, spelling them out explicitly in the extensive marginalia to the printed text that was given to masque-goers – Jonson invites the audience to reflect on the nature of the masque and the location of its performance, as much as its ostensible content.

Jonson goes on to link the inauguration of the Banqueting House with the establishment of the Roman College of Augurs. Apollo sings directly to the king that Jove has commanded him ‘To visit thee, / And in thine honour with my music rear / A college here / Of tuneful augurs.’ As Martin Butler notes, ‘Jonson imaginatively links the celebration of the Banqueting House with the praise of Prince Charles and the masquers by representing them as the college of aristocratic priests who inhabit the new structure and give support and divine endorsement to James’s state.’

The sole surviving sketch of Jones’ backdrop for The Masque of Augurs shows a proscenium arch, with a perspective view of an avenue of classical buildings, leading to a circular, domed temple with pedimented portico – presumably the College of Augurs – with an aperture in the sky above to allow the senate of the gods to be discovered. Roy Strong suggests that Jones regarded The Masque of Augurs as ‘a vehicle for an architectural statement as if to emphasise the relationship of his stage buildings to the ones he was actually erecting.’ The masque is performed in a classical building designed by Jones, against the backdrop of another classical building of Jones’ design. In the way that it echoes the classical design of the venue, Jones’ stage design is every bit as metatheatrical as Jonson’s text.

Jonson’s endnote acknowledges the collaborative nature of the masque. Jonson credits himself with the ‘expression’ of the masque, Jones with the ‘scene’, and the two of them jointly with the ‘invention’. D.J. Gordon has explained that ‘invention’ was understood to mean literally ‘the finding of the subject of the poem’; whereas ‘expression’ refers to the words by which that invention is conveyed. Many of the earlier masques on which Jonson and Jones had collaborated are described as having been ‘invented’ by Jonson alone but, in the case of The Masque of Augurs, Jones and Jonson jointly determined the theme, which seems apt for an entertainment celebrating the inauguration of the new building.

Jonson’s text has been described as a ‘pyrotechnic display of learning on the art of augury in classical antiquity,’ just as Jones’ building and scenery were exercises in using classical architectural forms. Throughout the masque, Jonson repeatedly draws the attention of the audience both to the artificiality of the performance and to the new room in which it is

25 Jones’ surviving drawings, of Apollo and of Jove with the Senate of the Gods, are in the Devonshire Collection at Chatsworth House. See: http://art.chatsworth.org/search/keywords/augurs
26 MA, 258-62.
27 MA, p.600 n.
29 MA, 374-8.
being held. An appreciation of the design and novelty of the venue informs our understanding of the masque, and the masque itself illuminates the classical, royal and religious associations of the basilica form on which the Banqueting House interior was based.

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Names are Everything: For Oscar Wilde, Posing as a Letter and Visiting Card

Elaine Hernen

Abstract: This paper considers two artefacts created by Oscar Wilde: The manuscript of ‘Epistola: In Carcere et Vinculis’, and an example of a visiting card bearing Wilde’s post-prison pseudonym, ‘Mr Sebastian Melmoth’. The Victorian obsession with categorisation acted as a ‘panoptic’ surveillance mechanism, creating a self-conscious and self-monitoring society. In contrast, Wilde adopted a transgressive and performative approach to ‘self-consciousness’, to naming and constructing the self, and the ‘self as artist’. Wilde’s prison experience left him defiantly convinced of both his own and the artist’s importance, despite bearing the ravages of a brutal incarceration. A comparison of these two artefacts aims to show that Wilde renamed the self to reclaim the artist.

Figure 1: Wilde’s visiting card as ‘Sebastian Melmoth’ (© Callum James)

The rise and fall of Oscar Wilde has been seen as a Victorian spectacle that débuted the modern obsession with celebrity, enacted the martyrdom of the artist, and witnessed the emergence of the ‘homosexual’ as a type.¹ In these readings, the significance and symbolism of Wilde is championed, but these narratives come at the expense of a balanced reading of the final years of Wilde’s life, making it the inevitable playing out of a last act of a tragedy. By considering two artefacts created by Wilde: The manuscript of Epistola: In Carcere et Vinculis² (Letter: In Prison and in Chains), which appeared in expurgated form as De Profundis; and an example of a visiting card using Wilde’s post-prison pseudonym of ‘Mr Sebastian Melmoth’, we can not only see how late Victorian society worked to create self-

¹ See Dollimore et al.
² Hereafter, shortened to Epistola.
conscious self-monitoring individuals, but how Wilde acted in opposition to this, by a conscious exploration and assertion of the individual as an artist, right up until his death.

Superficially, these two objects seem to contradict each other: one is an essential but disposable piece of ephemera, bearing an assumed name – another one of Wilde’s many masks; the other is a 55000-word document, composed when he was stripped of all names, which is perceived to be an epic autobiographical outpouring, the last testament of a man who had finally cast all masks aside. However, each artefact shows Wilde to still be the ‘Prince Paradox’ he had always been, each encapsulating the dichotomies he played with throughout his life and work, and continuing his use of contradictory and oppositional statements to provoke a re-evaluation of the values of society, the individual and of art itself.

In Wilde’s work, the themes of role-playing, the fluidity of identity and the literal naming of things are explored by the situating of his characters in a social milieu that is tightly constrained by the boundaries of convention. In life, too, he self-consciously adopted poses and played the persona of ‘Oscar Wilde’ within High Society. The price one pays for transgressing boundaries – and the even greater price the self pays if one capitulates to them – are also integral themes of his work and his aesthetic and political position regarding the role of art in modern society. These themes are still clearly visible in the Epistola and the visiting card, despite the perception that the trials and imprisonment created a humbled Wilde that elevated suffering above his ideals of art and beauty.

An obsession with rules and labelling was an integral part of the Victorian ‘panoptic’ system of social control, where the individual had to be seen to conform to rigidly defined norms, and obliged to be self-conscious and self-monitoring. The strict definitions of what constituted the correct behaviour within society can be seen in Victorian etiquette literature. The function of etiquette (a word derived from the Old French, estiquet, meaning label) was to act as a system that regulated social interaction, proscribing and prescribing the actions of all those who moved in the ‘right circles’. This is clearly seen in the conventions regarding the use of the visiting card, which acted as a proxy for the person.

The use of these cards, and the rituals surrounding their use, was a mandatory form of ‘status theatre’. The company you kept, or whose cards surrounded yours in the deliberately displayed collection, acted as a visible endorsement and a means of networking, akin to today’s social media systems – like an exclusive Victorian Facebook group. The card was needed to gain entry to that world, and it was intended as a means of regulating membership of Society and keeping out undesirables. It was the means by which you were seen by your peers – literally: You would not gain admittance to anyone’s home and be seen in person without having first left your card as a virtual fragment of yourself. Without your card-based persona, you did not exist:

the stress laid by Society upon the correct usage of these magic bits of paste-board, will not seem unnecessary, when it is remembered that the visiting card, socially defined means, and frequently is, made to take the place of one’s self.

Visiting cards have assumed totemic importance in the story of Oscar Wilde. Not only were they part of the trappings of the social world he satirised, the craze for the photographic carte-de-visite has given us many of the most familiar images of Wilde. The constructed poses in the series of photographs by Napoleon Sarony give us visual evidence to accompany the eye-

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4 See M. Curtin, Propriety and Position: A Study of Victorian Manners (Garland: 1987)
6 Davidoff, ibid, p.42.
witness accounts of the impact Wilde made, and helped to spread his fame. Most importantly, it was the Marquess of Queensberry’s action, in leaving his card with a potentially libellous statement in his own handwriting, which triggered the chain of events that led to the creation of both the *Epistola* and ‘Sebastian Melmoth’.

By leaving his card at Wilde’s club, the Albemarle, Queensberry had provided evidence that could not be disputed, so his defence had to be the proof that what he had written was true. There has been much debate about the wording on Queensberry’s card, but the consensus is that it reads, ‘For Oscar Wilde, posing as (a) So(m)domite’. His misspellings have been seen as mistakes, but acted as a means of widening the interpretation of the handwritten accusation. He need only prove that Wilde was ‘posing’ as a sodomite – the charge of sodomy was notoriously difficult to prove. When the defence succeeded in this, Wilde was forced to drop the case and was arrested himself. He would eventually be found guilty of gross indecency and sentenced to hard labour for bearing ‘the love that dare not speak its name.’

Wilde had known from birth that the actions of naming or not naming had an almost magical power; that identities could be constructed and played with, and appearances could be deceptive: For Wilde, his name was his *complete* name of Oscar Fingal O’Flahertie Wills Wilde, and one he took pride in. He was named Oscar Fingal by his nationalist mother, as a conscious act of invoking the mythic power of Irish legend – so he could never be just ‘plain Oscar’. His mother, Jane, had used the pseudonym of ‘Speranza’ to write in the Irish republican journal *Nation*. Later, he became known as the dandy and aesthete, ‘Oscar Wilde’, self-consciously cultivating this public persona. Under this name, he would be successful and fêted, only to be stripped of both name and reputation on his imprisonment.

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8 Note Queensberry’s use of the French ‘Marquis’ rather than ‘Marquess.’
9 This quote from Bosie’s poem, *Two Loves*, has become a euphemism for homosexuality.
Figure 3: Deposition by Wilde in the 1895 libel trial, stating his full name, and his occupation as ‘dramatist and author – I take great interest in matters of art.’ (© National Archives)
Figure 4: Covering letter by Major Nelson, showing the type of blue foolscap paper used by Wilde for the *Epistola* manuscript. (© National Archives)
Wilde had courted controversy and even notoriety, but bringing the family name to disgrace was a source of shame. In prison, ‘Oscar Wilde’ was replaced by a functional label, ‘C.3.3.’—the number of his prison cell. He would choose to embrace this, and it would become the first *nom de plume* he used after leaving prison, when *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* was published. By the time of his release, his wife and sons had adopted the name ‘Holland’ to be rid of the infamous Wilde name, and ‘Oscar Wilde’ was now *persona non grata*. After leaving prison, he would be obliged by the etiquette of the time to have a visiting card to ‘take the place of the self.’

The small white card should bear the name, in capitals, across its centre and a basic address in the bottom right corner. However, there was no obligation to use his real name, and so Wilde was able to conjure up a whole new disguise in the space of two words. He chose the pseudonym ‘Sebastian Melmoth’, a name that echoes some of the themes found in the *Epistola*, a name even more mythically resonant than his own. Drawing on the legend of Sebastian, the twice-martyred saint, and the title character of his great-uncle’s novel, *Melmoth the Wanderer*, Wilde neatly summarised his status as the archetypal outcast. As ‘Sebastian Melmoth’, he would embody the paradoxical: both divine and damned, victim and predator.

Like so much in Wilde’s life and work, the history and reception of the prison manuscript that became known as *De Profundis* is complicated and open to often contradictory interpretations. His intentions cannot be fully known, due to the problem of establishing a definitive text and title for the work. What is known is that it was written between January and March 1897, as a letter addressed to Bosie, Lord Alfred Douglas. It was composed on blue stamped prison foolscap paper, apparently one page at a time, after a long period during which he had been denied books, pen and paper, or any of those things that would confirm him as ‘Oscar Wilde’ rather than ‘C.3.3.’ Each evening, the page would be removed, and the entire document would not be handed to him until the day of his release.

What we also know is that Wilde named the 55000-word document, *Epistola: In Carceret et Vinculis*, and would not have known it as *De Profundis*. This was the name chosen by Robbie Ross for that part of the manuscript published five years after Wilde’s death, in 1905. This confusion has persisted ever since: Ian Small has outlined its publication history as being a series of differing excerpts of the original, but bearing the same name, due to legal reasons (especially a potential libel action by Douglas), and the difficulty of establishing the textual integrity of the various transcripts of the original text.

Wilde’s early death has robbed us of knowing what the *Epistola* may have become. As a result, various critical evaluations have been established using the initial perception of *De Profundis* (i.e. *From the Depths*) as an authentic cry from the heart, an act of contrition; the *apologia* that society wanted to extract from him. After the first unabridged version of *De Profundis*, in 1949, the persona of a suffering and contrite Wilde was challenged by the new voice of an outraged and aggrieved Wilde, addressing a careless and faithless lover. The overall effect is unguarded yet eloquent; the writer, having been stripped of any signifying name, is finally seen without a mask, without his previous poses.

The assumption could be that this is primarily a private letter revealing the true self, while Wilde was hidden away from the world. Consequently, the text has been seen as an anomaly, marking a break with Wilde’s earlier writing, and not really part of his body of work. However, investigation by scholars such as Small into its production history offers clear evidence that there was always the expectation of other readers, not just Douglas himself. This begins with the circumstances of its creation, during which every page was read

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11 See Figure 1 and Note 6.
12 See Figure 4: Wilde’s intention was for the document to be sent first to Robbie Ross and Ross would send it on to Douglas.
and monitored by the prison authorities. This undermines the notion of the \textit{Epistola} being created in a private and spontaneous confessional mode. Wilde had already been granted book privileges by Major Nelson, the new prison governor, and thus had finally obtained the tools of his trade – a library of sorts, and writing materials.\footnote{Ellmann, ibid, pp.476-9.} He now had the means to recreate his working environment and reassert himself as an artist.

Wilde’s instructions to Ross regarding the letter\footnote{Oscar Wilde and Rupert Hart-Davis, \textit{The Letters of Oscar Wilde} (London: Hart-Davis, 1962) pp.423-511.} make it obvious that he was aware that if he merely sent the original manuscript to its intended recipient, it would probably be destroyed, perhaps even without being read. The prison document was copied, and a typescript was sent to Douglas – who did, indeed, destroy it after reading the first couple of paragraphs. But Wilde had taken steps to preserve his work for posterity. This indicates that he regarded it as more than a cathartic self-justification, but a continuation of his oeuvre. Ross described Wilde’s manuscript as ‘the last prose work he ever wrote’,\footnote{Oscar Wilde and Ian Small, \textit{De Profundis: ’Epistola: In Carcere Et Vinculis’}, \textit{The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde Vol. II} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) p.311.} rather than just a letter, and by giving the handwritten document to the British Library, ensured that Wilde’s actual words still exist in a form that cannot be misinterpreted.

More interesting still, is the fact that Wilde made specific choices about the paper stock and layout of the copies. He asked for two copies to be made, one for himself, which was to be ‘on good paper such as is used for plays’ and stipulating that ‘a wide rubricated margin should be left for corrections’. This is in keeping with what is known of Wilde’s working methods, indicating an intention to revise and rework the material, either as an edited version of the document or as a basis for another work.\footnote{\textit{Complete Works}, II, p.13.} The sheer size of the document argues against the idea that it was intended simply as a letter to Bosie, and Ross’s Preface to the 1905 edition of \textit{De Profundis} quotes Wilde’s instructions and thoughts about the work at great length. In it, we see how the ability to write again gave Wilde his sense of self back, and that self was an artist: ‘expression is to an artist the supreme and only mode of life. It is by utterance that we live’. Regaining his voice gave him hope for the future.\footnote{\textit{Complete Works II}, p.311.}

If the expurgated version of the document published as \textit{De Profundis} is compared with the \textit{Epistola}, it is obvious that the original is a much more balanced if paradoxical work. \textit{De Profundis} seems to show a man who has come to his senses, seeking redemption in the suffering caused by the prison experience and the loss of face. There is an embracing of humility and for Wilde’s contemporary champions an embarrassing identification with Christ. However, the perception of \textit{De Profundis} as a meditation on the nature of suffering and tragedy is due to its truncated nature; it begins at that point in the original manuscript where Wilde has looked to the past and what has brought him to his current circumstances. This emphasises what would have been only one side of Wilde’s theme – an outline of his experiences as a kind of martyrdom. This is Oscar in the pose of Saint Sebastian.

Unfortunately, by excising the references to Bosie, Ross presented only one half of Wilde’s story, and removed the published version from its original context. In its entirety, it has been plausibly argued that it is a continuation of Wilde’s philosophy of art\footnote{Julia Prewitt Brown, \textit{Cosmopolitan Criticism: Oscar Wilde’s Philosophy of Art} (Charlottesville; London: University Press of Virginia, 1997)} placing him in the philosophical tradition of continental aesthetic theory. Wilde delighted in the pleasures of the mind and spirit, and his celebration of Art as separate from the temporal and mundane harks back to the Romantic’s conception of Art as the eternal reality, and the artist as an...
intercessor or priest. This is reflected in even the earliest version of *De Profundis*, where Wilde gives the almost blasphemous rendering of Christ as Artist not Redeemer.

Throughout his work, Wilde played with the partial, fragmentary and ambiguous rather than the whole fixed and unambiguous products of Victorian categorisation. In this it is striking how he uses the form and styles used by the early German Romantics: the use of the aphorism as ‘fragment’, wit, irony and allegory. These were all techniques used by writers and philosophers such as Novalis and the Schlegel brothers. The fragment carries its own sense of unity, much as each piece of a shattered holographic image carries within it a perfect replica of the larger original.

These are literary forms that allow for the many contradictions and paradoxes of an open mind and a creative imagination while a Hegelian dialectic gave philosophical rigour to the intellectual ideas. Knowing that Wilde used paradox as a form of dialectic, there cannot be a true reading of the prison document without the antithesis of the sacred and suffering; a consideration of the dark side of the artist, the transgressive pursuit of art and inspiration, even to the point of undertaking a Faustian pact. This is Melmoth — powerful and almost superhuman, but ultimately damned.

If we look at the visiting card of ‘Sebastian Melmoth’ as a ‘fragment’, of a shattered but still whole artist, we can see how Wilde intended to continue embodying contradictory principles once he was released from prison. Sebastian is the saint shot by arrows, who survives that attempted martyrdom. Melmoth is a character who operates beyond natural Law, seemingly immortal and appearing in and disappearing from prisons and other places of incarceration, in search of the person who will take his place. Sebastian is an ambiguous figure. There is a conception of Sebastian that ‘confirms the common cultural dogma that sees the homosexual male as a death-tempting, Faustian experimenter in the fast lanes of contemporary erotic life.’

This description is equally valid regarding the perception of Wilde as exhibiting reckless, destructive, almost suicidal behaviour. It also highlights the characteristics of Melmoth, who is actually a death-tempting Faustian, but who is also presented as the romantic beloved in his relationship with Immalee/Isadora. The persona of Sebastian Melmoth says, ‘I am divine and I will live forever’. This shows that Wilde was broken but unbowed. He knew he had:

> a sort of eternity of fame to a sort of eternity of infamy, and sometimes seem to myself to have shown, if indeed it required showing, that between the famous and the infamous there is but one step, if as much as one.  

As a result, he casts himself as an almost mythological figure, bigger than the society that shunned him. He is back to being the creator of his own narrative and characterisation. Wilde reclaims himself by these two new acts of self-fashioning: the act of writing the letter, the narrative of his truth, and the statement of record of his point of view. Then, there is the creation of a new name, comprising both the diabolical and divine, as a declaration of himself as an almost mythic — and certainly, fictional — character, an immortal who is not bound by the rules of the mortal society that both lauded and derided him.

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21 *Complete Works II*, p.102.
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