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Cover: detail of James McNeil Whistler, Nocturne: Blue and Gold – Old Battersea Bridge, c.1872–5, oil on canvas, 68 × 51 cm, Tate Gallery London. Copyright © Tate.

Back Cover: detail of John Linnell, The Cornfield Cradle, (1859), oil on wood, 67cm × 100.5 cm. York Museum Trust, CC BY-NC-ND.
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PREFACE

Vides has always been about making connections. The essays make connections between different kinds of creative output or historical evidence to generate new insights into the past. The production process, meanwhile, helps students on the MSt in Literature and Arts stay connected after the last of the programme’s formal meetings in Oxford. This issue of Vides has been created at a time when our connections have been tested in extraordinary ways. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected every aspect of our lives since last spring. One of its consequences is that the creators of this issue have not, for the most part, seen each other in person for over a year. They have also, for most of that time, been unable to see books, paintings, and other historic artefacts without the aid of a screen, as libraries, archives, and museums have closed their doors. While the pandemic has cast a long shadow, this issue has also been produced in the wake of anti-racist protests in the early summer of 2020. These protests and the conversations and actions they prompted have encouraged us to think about how the past is present in our society and how best to understand and commemorate it.

This issue of Vides shows what can be achieved through hard work and collaboration even at a time of unpredictable and unprecedented challenges. Creating a new issue of Vides involves much more than writing essays, though this is no small task. There is also the work of copy-editing each essay according to agreed style guidelines, checking the permitted uses of each image, designing the covers and layout, arranging the contents, and writing an introduction. Everyone who has played a part in this process can be proud of what they have achieved.

The essays in this issue offer a brilliant kaleidoscope of perspectives on the past. Some consider how individuals presented themselves and how they were represented by others. Another cross-section of essays looks at the experiences of groups of people and how they were perceived, represented, and manipulated. Some essays shine a light on developments in science, while others explore how artists and writers took inspiration from religion and ritual. A number of essays focus on the influence of British culture and the workings of British imperialism in other parts of the world, while other essays look at the influence of other cultures on Britain. In the past year we have been reminded that history is not fixed—it is a collection of stories that are constantly changing as they are retold. I am sure that readers of this issue will find plenty of stories to interest them and make them look at the past with fresh eyes.

Carly Watson
Course Director 2019–21
INTRODUCTION

A gold watch; a four-hundred-year-old lock of hair; some Victorian nursery wallpaper; a notebook documenting a lost language; a mug of cocoa... Standing on the shoulders of its predecessors, this ninth edition of *Vides* brings together a thrillingly varied range of artefacts and approaches. It would be impossible to impose any conceptual unity on such a diverse array of texts. However, some overarching themes do exist, and we have used these as a guide in weaving the collection together.

One such theme is colonialism. To study British history is, often inevitably, to study the history of the British Empire, and several pieces in this volume address different facets of British imperialism. In the first essay in the collection, Nesma Shubber explores how the giving—and refusing—of gifts can constitute “a strategic manoeuvre representing the cultural dynamics of geopolitical domination”. Drawing on Marcel Mauss and Jacques Derrida, Shubber provocatively juxtaposes two instances of colonial gift-giving, comparing an image of an Indian Maharajah presenting a photograph album to Queen Victoria, with a gold watch given by a British General to an Iraqi tribal leader in 1922. Colonial dynamics are further explored by Sarah Gray Isenberg, who details how Hans Sloane—botanist, plantation owner, and later, founder of the British Museum—studied cacao through the lens of Baconian empiricism in Jamaica, and later published *Natural History of Jamaica* (1707, 1725). Isenberg notes that it was through his contact with Indigenous and enslaved peoples during his stay in Jamaica that Sloane was able to conduct his scientific investigation, observing that “Jamaica’s colonial infrastructure facilitated Sloane’s ‘bioprospecting’ and yielded his later scientific and commercial successes”.

This is followed by James Bonney’s study of acts of listening and silencing in early colonial New South Wales. Bonney uses a very contemporary analytical lens to examine how two documentary artefacts—the first, a notebook used by a British official to record Indigenous language, and the second, a poem—respond to the settler colonial context in divergent ways. The first is testament to “an active, working and unresolved engagement with Indigenous voices”, while the second, Bonney contends, “is best understood as a form of expedient epistemic violence which operates in tandem with acts of literal violence inflicted on Indigenous peoples by British colonists”. Chala Dodds’ study of representations of Victoria Falls similarly examines colonial renderings of landscape. Dodds examines the visual language of colonialism, drawing on the writing of Stanley Livingstone and the work of artist Thomas Baines, both of whom sent informative and evocative representations of Victoria Falls to an intended audience of British citizens back home. Their efforts contributed to a migration to South Africa by Britons who were encouraged by what they read and saw in Livingstone’s report and Baines’ landscape art.
Other authors in this collection explore colonialism through the cultural influence of Britain on the world, and of the world on Britain. John Gray considers how an interdisciplinary sensibility can be useful in unpacking certain characteristics of ‘informal empire’, in this case the influence of British culture in late-nineteenth century Mexico. He documents the influence and success of the British clown Ricardo Bell and the Circo Orrin, of which Bell was the star performer. Gray examines how two artefacts linked to the clown and the circus are emblematic of the way British cultural norms were implanted in the heart of Mexican society. Jonathan Parker is also interested in how cultural influence was facilitated by British global expansion, although his essay inverts the telescope in order to trace how Japanese aesthetics impacted on Victorian visual culture. Parker contrasts Whistler’s *Nocturne in Blue and Silver* (1872–5) with a newspaper review of a ‘Japanese Native Village’, to examine how Orientalist influences were deployed in wildly differing ways. Focusing on a somewhat earlier period, Timothy Hanson also considers the influence of Japanese on British culture, juxtaposing Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s painting *The Blue Bower* (1865) and a Japanese writing box fashioned into the shape of a koto. Hanson considers both objects in the context of nineteenth-century geopolitics, and specifically Japan’s reopening to the West in 1854. Hanson argues that the koto in Rossetti’s painting is a proxy for the female genitalia. An intensely gendered object, the koto assumes multiple roles in the visual language of Rossetti, and *Blue Bower* stands as an emblem of transgressive social mores and nineteenth-century Orientalist tastes.

Several other essays in this collection foreground questions related to gender and sublimated physicality. Amy Norton studies two items from the seventeenth century—John Donne’s poem ‘The Relique’ and a relic of hair lace—to explore how, in spite of the censure of the church, hair was integral to expressions of love and remembrance in the seventeenth century. Norton argues that “hair is a way in which to reassert the importance of touch and the body” in an era in which the body was seen as radically distinct from the spirit. Jumping forward in time, but maintaining a focus on the human body and remembrance, Natasha Shirman examines a particular aspect of Victorian society, namely the cult of mourning. Customs and rituals of grief were infused with gender differentiation in Victorian popular culture; the widow became a “decidedly visual symbol, a ‘vessel of grief,’ with her ‘body serving as a very public signifier and embodiment of her loss’.” Shirman analyses two Victorian artefacts connected to death—a bale label manufactured by a mourning house in 1860 and the palingenetic lover in Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s *Beata Beatrix* (1864–1870)—to highlight how the female form was used to “popularize and sell the visual cult of death”.

Moving on from ‘gender’ and the human body, several essays in this collection could broadly be said to take questions
of ‘class’ as their central concern. In her examination of the life and work of Joseph Skipsey (1832–1903), Joy Brindle traces how a marked duality permeated the sense of self of a man who was both a working miner and a poet, or ‘a miner who writes’. Brindle investigates the “inherent tension between his ‘miner-ness’ and his ‘poet-ness’”, which becomes evident when examining two photographic portraits. Catherine Usher, meanwhile, compares two depictions of the rural labourer, discerning a perhaps comparable duality between John Linnell’s oil painting The Cornfield Cradle (1859) and textual descriptions by Richard Jefferies. Usher argues that, while Jefferies’ apparent altruism fuelled his desire to improve the ‘lot of the labourer’ and represent the labourers’ toil, the validity of Linnell’s visual narrative is compromised by personal ‘religious and commercial’ motives: “Linnell saw the labourers as if in Arcadia, and Jefferies as if in Hell”. Nicola Catterall similarly examines how class intersects with landscape, as well as conducting a formal investigation into the function of landscape and portraiture in visual arts. Catterall details the similarities that exist between Thomas Gainsborough’s painting Mr. and Mrs. Andrews (c. 1750), and Cornelia Parker’s sculpture Landscape with Gun and Tree (2010), which was inspired by the Gainsborough portrait. Catterall’s study challenges what she terms the “straightjacket” definition of portraiture to argue that landscape in art may be understood in terms of the same criteria that are applied in the analysis of portrait painting.

Jane de Beneducci approaches Victorian class anxiety by setting nineteenth-century pseudo-science (in the form of Lorenzo Niles Fowler’s phrenological bust) against William Frith’s painting Ramsgate Sands (Life at the Seaside) (1854). At a time when the exploding urban population was eroding the social boundaries of previous centuries, “[T]he urban crowd was a mirror of Victorian modernity that was both terrifying and exhilarating.” Phrenological studies offered a reassuringly clear demarcation between peoples, allowing an individual, as Fowler argued, to truly ‘know [one]self’. De Beneducci shows how these two artefacts served in different ways both to express and to assuage the Victorian bourgeoisie’s anxiety about social and racial difference. Staying with Victorian conceptions of the self, Eleri Ryley compares two artefacts from the era—an article written in 1853 by Charles Dickens and a swatch of Robinson Crusoe–inspired wallpaper designed to be hung in a nursery. In his article ‘Frauds on the Fairies,’ Dickens argues that classic children’s stories should be kept “pure” rather than be adapted for moral purposes. The Crusoe wallpaper was considered by Victorian parents to be a suitable subject for a nursery, instilling particular values in the children who viewed the images as they fell asleep each night.

The collection concludes with three extended meditations on the nature and power of images. Celia Jarvis considers how, in the Victorian era, representations served to mould people’s
behaviour and experience. Jarvis focuses on a poem and a painting, created fifty years apart, to examine the desire of the poet and artist, both men of deep religious conviction, to inspire a nation to worship in their daily lives. John Keble’s ‘Easter Eve from the Christian Year, Thoughts in Verse’ (1825) and William Holman Hunt’s painting, *The Shadow of Death* (1873) illustrate the impetus to uphold the idea that Christ was still relevant in the everyday lives of people in the nineteenth century. Following this, in order to evaluate Percy Shelley’s literary representation of the Uffizi Medusa, Andrew Turner undertakes an examination of the nature of ekphrasis. Turner explores the reciprocal relationship between written and visual works: since Shelley’s ekphrastic poem on Medusa serves as a “representation of representation” or a “literary reflection of visual art”, the Uffizi painting can no longer be read independently from its literary successor. In this way, the “Uffizi painting has become a fragment unless it is married to Shelley’s forever-fragmentary text”. Lastly, inverting the approach of several previous iterations of *Vides*, this collection concludes with the essay that covers the earliest time period, Oliver Markeson’s revealing investigation of the power of images in the early Tudor period. Markeson argues that Henry VIII was in fact a defender of Catholicism during the early years of the Reformation, before England’s break with Rome in 1533. The artefacts he considers “reveal defence of the faith to be an instrument of political persuasion, as well as an expression of religious ideology.”

There is no need to highlight the unusual and often challenging circumstances that surrounded the production of this volume of *Vides*. The final product is a testament to the vision, commitment and readiness to collaborate of this year’s cohort, as well as the support and guidance we have received in doing so.
'Kind words from a distant friend are the most precious of all gifts': manifesting colonial power under the guise of ‘gift’, from India to Iraq

NESMA SHUBBER
Beyond mere expressions of sentimentality or altruism, gifts are mechanisms of exchange providing sociological and anthropological insights into systems of power and governance, as well as highlighting the role that material culture may play in manifesting that power. Intercultural gifts exchanged under colonial rule were invested with financial, political, and cultural significance. This article analyses two colonial artefacts that represent the act of gifting from either side of this hierarchical divide: an image of gift-giving between an Indian Maharajah and Queen Victoria (c. 1884-90) and a gold watch given by a British General to an Iraqi tribal leader in 1922. Analysing the artefacts in conjunction permits an exploration of the relationship between the roles of giver/receiver and those of the coloniser/colonised.

Figure 1. Attributed to Madho Prasad, Queen Victoria is presented with a book, c. 1884–90, hand-coloured albumen print, 16.6 x 23.1 cm. RCIN 2907350, Royal Collection Trust / © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2021
‘Impossible’ is the word that best describes the gift. This is according to the French philosopher Jacques Derrida (1930 – 2004), for whom ‘[a] gift must not be bound, in its purity, nor even binding, obligatory or obliging’. The philosophical paradox at the centre of this assessment is predicated upon the assertion that gift-giving is inevitably motivated by personal gain and never unconditional. Accordingly, gifts form part of a cyclical chain of exchange galvanised by expectation or indebtedness. This article builds upon this theory by analysing two artefacts that illustrate the gift as a mechanism of manipulation in opposing ways, yet with the same outcome: the construction of empire through material manifestations of colonial power.

The first artefact is a hand-painted albumen print (c. 1884 – 90) (Figure 1), attributed to the Indian artist Madho Prasad, which depicts Queen Victoria (1819 – 1901) receiving the gift of a bound photo album from the Maharajah of Benares (1855 – 1931). The Queen is depicted in a black dress with white trim, a symbol of her widowhood and the prolonged mourning she observed after the passing of her husband Prince Albert in 1861 until her own death forty years later. In her seated pose, the inky, voluminous skirt drapes over her bent knees and chair and, in conjunction with the cascading white chiffon veil, configures the Queen into a visually striking monochromatic pyramid. This figural geometry is echoed through the body of the Maharajah, whose outstretched arms also create a pyramidal shape, reinforced by the slight tilt of his head and upper body, which in turn causes his sherwani to slope diagonally outwards and downwards. The print is striking in the simplicity and symmetry of its composition: in addition to the triangular echoes, each of the two figures occupies one side of the rectangular image and each is framed to one side, on the outer edge, by a singular, cropped vertical shape in the form of an item of domestic decor. Queen Victoria, seated at the left of the image, is flanked by a red curtain, while the Maharajah of Benares appears beside a fluted columnar plinth topped by a decorative urn. In this tableau, the curtain and the column serve to bracket the figures within the intimacy of an interior setting, yet at the compositional centre of the image there is nothing but blank wall, so that between the giver and the receiver there is a gulf of emptiness.

Void of objects, figures or decorative embellishment, the space at the centre of the image is instead filled with dark blotches and faint green swirls that give abstract substance to absence, imbuing the air with a sense of static. The blotches and swirls that define the surface of the image here expose its very medium; they expose the craft of photography and the art of painting and serve as evidence of the image as artefact. This heralding of the medium, most specifically in the composite nature of the hand-painted albumen print, is exacerbated through the treatment of colour. For the Maharajah, it is illustrated through the vibrancy of his gold embroidery, his striking purple turban and his bright emerald sleeve studs. For Queen Victoria, it is in the pop of pastel blue through her sash, the luminous green of her chair, the rubies adorning her gold jewellery and the exaggerated flush of blush across her cheeks. The saturated tones of these chromatic elements serve as testimony of artistic manipulation and of photography as art. There is a synergy here between the gift represented in the image, the Maharajah’s photo album, and the photographic representation itself: photography as noun constructed by photography as verb.

There is another double meaning embedded within the image: the central static is both literally an innominate, inanimate body of atmospheric particles and also, metaphorically, a quiet quiescence that reflects the role of ‘giver’ ascribed to the gift-presenting Maharajah. The albumen print depicting the gift exchange scene serves as evidence of a ritual that structured the relationship between

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much like the aftermath of the Indian Uprising of 1857, whereby violence effected policy change within that colony – precipitated an end to direct British rule in the newly-named Iraq.4

The gift from General Haldane, given in 1922, is an eighteen-carat gold double hunter pocket watch (Figure 2), handmade in Switzerland around 1897–99 by master watchmaker brothers Ditischeim. Upon opening the back case, their brand name ‘Volta’ can be seen stamped into the cuvette alongside eight decorative coins (Figure 3). The top case hinges open to reveal a white clock face with black Arabic numerals and two additional miniature dials. As a gift, the pocket watch is both the medium and the message. With its notable material expense and engineering ingenuity, the pocket watch was imbued with symbolism, representing modernity through inventiveness and refinement through skill. In deploying this symbolism, portable personal timepieces of this era expose a society in which material objects could play a part in the construction of a particular social identity. The rise in popularity of the pocket watch in England from the seventeenth century onwards established the culture of timekeeping itself as ‘a major stimulus to the individualism which was an ever more salient aspect of Western civilisation’.5

The pocket watch was part of the tangible construction of these ‘individualist’ social identities, a visible performance of status to be worn on the body and exhibited at each reading of the time. The pocket-watch-as-gift compounds this performative element with the fostering of interpersonal relationships, which were mediated through the gift exchange. Writing about imperial gifts in Atlantic Africa in the nineteenth century, Julia Binter correspondingly notes the integral role played by material goods, and consequently gifts, in ‘cosmopolitan self-fashioning’6 and how the ‘unpredictable, fluctuating and competitive world of individual self-creation’ provided fertile ground for mediating colonial exploits through gift-giving.7

The gift of the gold pocket watch features in General Haldane’s memoir, A Soldier’s Saga (1948), involving a different recipient, not Abu Tabikh, which reveals that General Haldane used the device of gold-watch-as-gift on more than one occasion. According to the account, the British General had once pardoned a southern sheikh, who received a gold pocket watch as a token of appreciation.

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4 The official name of the country was changed from ‘Mesopotamia’ to ‘Iraq’ with the enthroning of the British-sanctioned monarch, King Faysal, on 23 August 1921.
7 Karin Barber quoted in Binter, p. 62.
Abdul Wahid, from the death penalty and so, at a later meeting of the two men, in 1922, Haldane suggests to the Iraqi that ‘he would doubtless like to celebrate the occasion of our meeting by making some return for what I had done.’ Haldane’s recounting of the narrative continues:

Before I left Iraq it came to my knowledge that the debt had been paid. I thereupon directed [an associate] to purchase, by means of a fund at my disposal, a gold repeater watch and have engraved inside it in Arabic, “A man of his word,” and in English characters by whom the gift was made.

The gift to Abdul Wahid is therefore directly linked to the Iraqi’s compliance; the watch served to reward a reward. As Haldane’s anecdote unfolds further, he notes that the sheikh accepted the watch ‘in the customary unemotional way of Easterns’ – a description that is reminiscent of Queen Victoria’s passive expression when receiving the Maharajah’s gift in the albumen print. It is also a description ‘based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between “the Orient” and […] “the Occident”’, a distinction that forms the basis of Edward Said’s second definition of Orientalism.8

The entanglement of selfhood, ‘othering’ and power (re)structuring inherent to the enactment of ‘colonial encroachment’10 is represented through the gift in the series of gestures, prejudices and meanings embedded within it.

General Haldane’s commission of the engraving within the pocket watch is integral to this discussion, most notably through its bilingualism and the inclusion of his own name on the artefact. Tied to the notion that material objects were integral to the creation of self-fashioned social identities is the idea that gifts become ‘containers for the being of the donor who gives a portion of that being to the recipient’,11 which the personal engraving intrinsically expresses verbatim. According to Haldane, Abdul Wahid’s ‘eyes glistened with pride and pleasure as he deciphered the inscription’.12 While the Arabic note serves to flatter the receiver in his own language, the English note serves as testament to the generosity of the giver. The engraving literally and indelibly marks General Haldane as the benefactor within a territorial act of giving, upholding Derrida’s philosophical assertion that: ‘The simple consciousness of the gift right away sends itself back the gratifying image of goodness or generosity, of the giving–being […] in a sort of auto-recognition, self-approval, and narcissistic gratitude.’13

By commemorating the act of giving within the gift itself, the Maharajah of Benares similarly partakes in this act of auto-recognition within the Queen Victoria albumen print. For Abu Tabikh, General Haldane’s engraving unmistakably represented this iconography of ‘narcissism’: according to the Iraqi’s son, Jamil, his gift bore a similar engraving to Abdul Wahid’s, and the distinct patch of scratched surface inside the front case of Abu Tabikh’s watch (Figure 4) – an insular part of its anatomy that is unlikely to suffer such precise, substantial damage through wear and tear alone – represents the deliberate effacement of the engraving and General Haldane’s name.14 In its original state, it is also said to have read ‘A noble fighter’, a reference to Abu Tabikh’s presence on the battlefield during the Revolt of 1920, and earlier at another battle against the British at Shu‘ayba in 1915.15

On the one hand, the gifting of the pocket watch may be seen as a microcosmic performance in the greater ceremony of peace-making; on the other, it may be argued that it forms part of a power play in which the exchange intrinsically casts giver and receiver into parallel roles of ‘meritorious benefactor’16 and blessed recipient. This raises further questions on the intent of the gesture, such as to what extent is the gift-giving based on reciprocity? Haldane’s account of the exchange with Abdul Wahid continues:

A little later [Abdul Wahid] […] intimated that he wished, as was the custom, to make me a return gift, and drew from a finger a silver ring set with a large turquoise which he urged me to accept. I thanked him, but shook my head, saying that on such an occasion I preferred not to follow the usual custom of the East and accept a return gift.

In his seminal book The Gift (1925), the French sociologist Marcel Mauss (1872 – 1950) writes extensively about ‘the cycle of obligations’ that the gift ‘triggers’: ‘the gift would always be the anticipation of the counter-gift, a deferred expectation of restitution, which is the rule of calculating reason.’17 In refusing the return gift from Abdul Wahid, General Haldane not only claims the final say in this sequence of indebting acts (the cycle of obligations), but also, he does this by

10 Binter, p. 62.
12 Haldane, p. 385.
13 Derrida quoted in Champetier, p. 15.
14 Author’s interview with Jamil Abu Tabikh, 19 February 2021.
15 Rutledge, p. 112.
17 Champetier, p. 6–7.
dictating the rules of the gift exchange according to his preference. By suspending the cycle of this exchange after the presentation of the pocket watch, General Haldane monopolises the tangible act of gifting indefinitely; an act that, in this instance, invests the giver with hierarchical superiority. Shunning the offer of the turquoise and silver ring – contrary to local custom – is further assertion of such hierarchical superiority as it ‘twist[s] the reciprocal activity of [the] gift exchange such that only the European [is] capable of giving anything desirable that could be categorised as a gift.’

This not only reinforces the established colonial binary view of English civilisation versus Arab primitiveness (galvanised by the ideology of the ‘civilising mission’ and reiterated by the pocket watch as a symbol of modernity), but it also shows that General Haldane is not interested in reciprocity represented by material goods. Declining the ring does not negate Haldane’s expectation for a return gift; it merely suggests that what is sought after is both intangible and more valuable: loyalty. The guise of gift does not belie the strategy to bribe, which was a strategy implemented more candidly before the Revolt of 1920: in April 1917 British officials, including Sir Percy Cox and Miss Gertrude Bell, had offered numerous Iraqi notables “‘presents’ […] in the form of large sums of Indian rupees’, Abu Tabikh, being one of the many sheikhs and sada to receive such an offer, declined the money. At a subsequent meeting with Miss Bell, in May 1917 at her office in Baghdad, Abu Tabikh noted that she had become ‘angry’ with his non-collusion, eliciting the following note of advice from him: ‘if you English want to consider me a friend, as his Excellency the Civil Commissioner put it in his letter, I tell you, a friendship only of individuals will not suffice: instead you must be friends with all the Iraqi people.’

The stance of declining gifts from a colonial counterpart was similarly taken by Queen Victoria in 1861. After the dissolution of the East India Company, and with the Crown assuming control of the colony, the Queen received numerous presents from her Indian subjects in the form of dresses, shawls, furniture and other ornate artefacts, prompting her to write to Governor-General Lord Canning with a new policy on gifts: ‘Her majesty … desires it to be understood by your Political Officers that it will be their duty to discourage such manifestations of loyalty in the part of the princes and chiefs of

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18 Aragon, p. 50.
19 Rutledge, p. 132.
20 The Arabic word ‘sada’ is the plural of ‘sayyid’, an honorific title denoting male descendants of the Prophet Muhammad. ‘Master’ or ‘lord’ are the closest English equivalents.
India. Elaborating this point, the Queen demanded the dispensation ‘of anything beyond verbal expressions of loyalty’, encouraging letters from her subjects instead, from which she would ‘not feel less sensible of the sincerity of the sentiment of devotion to the Throne’. She expressed this policy in another letter to the Maharajah of Jammu and Kashmir, Ranbir Singh, with a singular diplomatic statement: ‘Kind words from a distant friend are the most precious of all gifts’.

As with the case of the silver and turquoise ring, Queen Victoria’s declining of material gifts equates to a suspension within the tripartite cycle of giving, receiving and returning. It is a move that indicates that ‘higher status individuals are the ones better able to define the nature of the exchange’. In defining this nature similarly, both the Queen and the General also demonstrate that negation of the gift, or declining to receive material goods, is as equally power-sensitive and power-generating as any attempt to gift can seek to be. This leads to the conclusion that it is not the material artefact itself that wields the power within the exchange – it is within the act of giving or receiving, under the guise of gift, that the potential for dominion can be executed.

By substituting material goods for ‘verbal expressions’ or ‘kind words’, Queen Victoria – and later General Haldane – converts ‘manifestations of loyalty’ into manifestations of power. After refusing the reciprocal gift of the ring, General Haldane’s encounter with Abdul Wahid reaches its conclusion:

This seemed to distress him, and he wailed in Arabic, ‘But you will forget me!’ [...] I replied that that need cause him no concern, for to forget him after the trouble he had given earlier would be impossible [...] So the scene ended as he broke into laughter at my words, and before we parted he promised never again to give the British trouble. Indeed, he went further, and undertook that if at any time we were threatened by a disturbance he would come to whoever succeeded me as Commander-in-Chief and give him warning.

The gift-giving scene culminates in Haldane winning over the Sheikh’s allegiance. A transaction has taken place: a gold watch in exchange for loyalty. It is a transaction that exposes the myth that the General neither requires nor desires anything in return for the ‘gift’. The account is therefore illuminating as it reveals the mechanism of intent and the camouflaged reciprocity at the heart of the colonial gift exchange.

23 Letter from Queen Victoria to the Maharajah of Kashmir, quoted in Hannam.
24 Aragon, p. 51.
In the case of General Haldane and Abu Tabikh, two men of influence on either side of the coloniser/colonised divide, the pocket watch as an object was conceived of as a token of political and social leverage, while the act of its exchange functioned as a strategic manoeuvre representing the cultural dynamics of geopolitical domination. The inscription inside the front case reinforces ‘the processual notion of contract’ enacted by the gift through its very literal reminder of the roles of giver and receiver, which in turn are bound to the roles of coloniser and colonised; roles that are ordained through the exchange.26

Both the albumen print and the pocket watch represent receiving and giving from different sides of the coloniser/colonised divide, but both exchanges illustrate the same point. Instead of fixed roles according to giver/receiver, the hierarchy of the power exchange takes place between coloniser and colonised, and in this dynamic it is the coloniser who possesses the power. These artefacts are not only evidence of the exchange of goods between coloniser and colonised, but also illustrations of the significance that these exchanges held in enacting dominion and how they played into a network of political strategy. As such, they exist as pieces of evidence citing the role material artefacts played in colonial governance. They suggest that empire was carved out not only through military prowess, but also through an intricate nexus of personal relationships forged both along and against traditional political, martial and racial lines. The colonial agent emerges as an individual who was immersed in an exchange of signifying artefacts, which traversed imperially constructed divisions; public and private, war and peace, giver and receiver, coloniser and colonised. In the contexts of both Queen Victoria and the Maharajah of Benares, and General Haldane and Abu Tabikh, the giving and the receiving become strategic exchanges in which gifts facilitated the forging of bonds between giver and receiver, and sought to manoeuvre these relationships into polarising state of subjugation.

Both the albumen print and the pocket watch serve as examples of the creation, or preservation, of empire through the material object. As such, they enrich our understanding of the ways in which the British conceptualised and exercised power in the colonies. Assessing these artefacts as agents in shaping the environment in which they operated offers a timely insight into the complexity of British overseas relations and, more specifically, the significance of colonial relationships in a post-colonial world.

26 Binter, p. 62.
Cacao and colonialism: examining the intersection between science and commerce in the life and work of Sir Hans Sloane
Sir Hans Sloane, who would become the founder of the British Museum, sourced his early knowledge of natural history from Jamaica, acquired during his visit there in 1687–9. Sloane documented the various species of tropical flora (particularly cacao harvested by Jamaican slaves and used by natives) with empirical acuity for his private London herbarium and for his two-volume *Natural History of Jamaica* (1707). Sloane published botanical sketches of cacao that influenced taxonomist Carl Linnaeus. This study examines the intersection of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century scientific and commercial interests through two material artefacts: an engraving of cacao from Sloane’s second Jamaica volume (1725), and three glazed earthenware cups that Sloane used for drinking chocolate.
Sloane's knowledge of the plant's uses is bound in two volumes, titled *Voyage to the Islands Madera, Barbados, Nieves, S. Christophers, and Jamaica, with the Natural History ... of the Last of Those Islands*, or simply, *Natural History of Jamaica*, published in 1707 and 1725.\(^2\) Sloane's volumes are emblematic of an intersection between seventeenth- and eighteenth-century science and philosophy. Cacao, and its lucrative progeny – chocolate – were a part of Sloane's larger project, which aimed at an accumulation of scientific knowledge – a project enabled by this period's transatlantic trade and colonialism. Jamaica's colonial infrastructure facilitated Sloane's 'bioprospecting' and yielded his later scientific and commercial successes.\(^3\) With a view to trace Sloane's influence on seventeenth- and eighteenth-century science and consumerism, this essay will define Sloane's work within the context of Baconian empiricism and millenarianism, venture to describe the innovative features of *Natural History*, then it will turn its attention toward patterns in consumption and consumerism and its ties to New World colonialism.

Sloane gleaned his methods of collection and meticulous documentation from writings on natural history by Francis Bacon (1561–1626), a philosopher of whom Sloane was a disciple. Bacon viewed modern science as the means to reclaim Eden, a belief that was broadly defined as millenarianism. Bacon believed knowledge must be sought at various corners of the globe to restore the world to its ideal – or Edenic – state. In *The Advancement of Learning* (1605), Bacon expounded upon the intimacy between knowledge (science, philosophy) and matters of the State, including policy and commerce. He called upon the 'the King [to] take order for the collecting and perfecting of a Natural and Experimental History of the world, precipitated through increased 'proficience in navigation'.\(^4\) According to Bacon, such navigational 'proficience' promised an 'augmentation of all sciences'\(^5\) which would, therefore, unite the 'material globe, the lands and seas' with the 'intellectual globe'.\(^6\) Bacon's exegetical eye lent itself to the inscription on the frontispiece of his *Instauratio Magna* (1621) – words that were copied by his acolyte Sloane onto the title pages of his own folio volumes. The inscription is sourced from the Book of Daniel (12:4): 'Many shall go to and fro and knowledge shall be increased.'\(^7\) In a letter to his uncle, Lord Burghley, dated 1592, Bacon famously posits knowledge as man's 'philanthropia', to which he, as a natural philosopher, contributes 'industrious observations, grounded conclusions, and profitable inventions and discoveries' to the benefit of mankind.\(^8\) Bacon called for reform of the sciences, built upon a 'solid foundation of well-weighed experience of every kind'.\(^9\) Bacon's *interpretatio naturae*, or 'interpretation of nature', propounds methodologies (though not comprehensive) for inductive investigations and exploration of the natural world. Such methodologies became the foundation of modern empiricism, and heavily influenced Sloane's scientific undertaking.

Additionally, the work of John Ray (1628–1705), an intimate friend of Sloane's, was at the forefront of seventeenth-century proto-taxonomical studies of exotic and native English plants.\(^10\) Ray built upon principles of Baconian empiricism. In a letter to Sloane dated 1684, Ray outlined his own intentions to publish a three-volume systemized record of the natural world, the most comprehensive at that time:


\(^{2}\) Both volumes of this text are referred to as the *Natural History of Jamaica*, and will appear by that title from this point.

\(^{3}\) Delbourgo, p. 35.


\(^{6}\) Francis Bacon, *Novum Organum, or the True Suggestions for the Interpretation of Nature* (New York: P.F. Collier & Son, 1902), digital reprint.


\(^{10}\) Linnaeus is credited with the first real taxonomic studies of the natural world.
... I endeavour an enumeration of all the species already described and published... [to facilitate the learning of plants, if need be, without a guide or demonstrator, by so methodizing of them, and giving such certain and obvious characteristic notes of the genera... and the description, to find out infallibly any plant that shall be offered to him, especially being assisted by [the] figure of it. And, lastly, because no man of our nation hath lately attempted such a work.\textsuperscript{10}

Jamaica would soon become Sloane's proverbial Eden, and its 'reclamation' depended upon the execution of the quasi-millenarian agenda begun by Ray: the 'methodized' documentation of flora, acute visual renderings of specimens, and thorough written descriptions. Expressed in a letter prior to Sloane's journey to Jamaica, Ray 'heartily wish[ed]' that Sloane would 'search out and examine thoroughly the natural varieties of that island [Jamaica]'. Ray encouraged Sloane to continue such systemized studies of the natural world, for the collective benefit of science and man (Bacon's 'philanthropia'): 'Much light might be given to the history of the [exotic] plants, by one so well prepared for such an undertaking... Nay... that history, we might justly expect, would not only be illustrated but much improved and advanced.'\textsuperscript{11}

Cacao was not native to Jamaica; it had been transplanted from the American mainland by the Spanish (Fig. 1). Prized for its versatility and exploited for its profitability in the Americas and Jamaica, cacao featured prominently in Sloane's second folio volume (1725). When Sloane began collecting and documenting specimens in Jamaica, precise forms of scientific representation of various studies were in their early stages. A codified system of classification did not emerge until Linnaeus published his twelve-page \textit{Systema Naturae} (1735), using binomial (rather than polynomial) nomenclature. Sloane's \textit{Natural History} was objectively novel because it was written in English rather than Latin, the \textit{lingua franca} of contemporary science; therefore, Sloane's work possessed greater utility for a non-academic, English-speaking audience. However, it was not simply this end – the scientific benefit to mankind – that echoed Bacon's philosophy. Sloane also supplied visual accompaniments to his textual descriptions of Jamaican flora. His work reflected the Baconian scientific 'reforms', which altered pre-existing means of scientific investigation: the focus of documentation would shift from solely textual records and descriptions to include empirical visual studies of plant specimens, a scientific pursuit exemplified by the cacao engraving.

Botanists that practiced in the later eighteenth-century Linnaean tradition of taxonomy would gather a surfeit of plant specimens to closely study and record. From these examples, botanists would scrutinize a particular characteristic of the plant, poring over multiple specimens in order to derive a complete understanding of its properties. After analyzing a body of samples, they would produce a compositesketch of a specimen, trusting that a range of specimens would yield a more accurate representation of the entire species. However, Bacon and his proselyte Sloane saw that a greater degree of factuality lay in the study of a single specimen, whose 'unidealized' and 'unsystematic' variety revealed the nuances that existed in the natural world.\textsuperscript{14} Referencing pages 59 and 60 of the fifth volume of Sloane's personal Jamaica herbarium, the sketch of a cacao plant adjoins the preserved specimen, which was used to render the drawing with acuity. Sloane glued (then subsequently, taped) the specimen next to the sketch for reference.

This form of study required Sloane – as well as his sketch artist Reverend Garrett Moore, who accompanied him in Jamaica – to levy an empirical eye when capturing the minute characteristics of individual specimens. For example, true to the empirical principles of observation, Moore rendered some sketches in \textit{situ}, drawing them extant in nature, without relying on slaves to harvest specimens for later study. This is true of Moore's drawings for the \textit{Arborum fructiferarum} in Sloane's second volume, which pictures a variety of trees – including cacao – rendered on site in their 'natural Magnitude.'\textsuperscript{15} More than a decade elapsed after Sloane's return to London – in 1689 – before he commissioned Dutch draughtsman Everhardus Kickius to draw live and preserved cacao specimens, combining details from each. Although not produced in the Linnaean fashion, Kickius' drawings were, in fact, composite renderings.

\textsuperscript{10} John Ray and Edwin Lankester, editor, \textit{The correspondence of John Ray: consisting of selections from the philosophical letters published by Dr. Derham}, and original letters of John Ray in the collection of the British Museum (London: Printed for the Ray Society, 1848), p. 139.
\textsuperscript{11} Ray and Lankester, editor, p. 192.
\textsuperscript{12} Delbourgo, p. 96.
\textsuperscript{13} Delbourgo, p. 102.
Charged with visually cataloguing Jamaican specimens, Kickius sourced his illustrations from Moore’s sketches and Sloane’s verbose descriptions of native life.

During the seventeenth century, scientific investigation and information about the practical uses of plants, often sourced from the native population, were common in natural history. In his first Jamaican volume, published in 1707, Sloane recognized the ‘considerable profit’ that cacao fetched for European and American traders, without expanding further on its utilitarian or commercial potentiality.16 However, Sloane dedicates considerable space in the second volume to pontificate about the origins of the plant, its palliative properties, and its various monetary and culinary uses for the Indians and Spaniards.

Sloane carefully studied the economic exclusivity of cacao. Sloane remarks that in ‘certain Provinces which are call’d Guatimala and Soconusco, there is a growing great Store of Cacao… [cacao] from [Soconusco] to Nova Hispania and Nicaragua’ to cultivate it… [and] Honduras… 18 Furthermore, Sloane remarks that ‘[w]hen the Spaniards went first to Mexico these Nuts went for current Money.’ Indians prized cacao, using it as currency prior to the arrival of the Spanish: ‘…the Nuts pass for Money, in Costa Rica, between Portabel and Nicaragua, on the Coast of Caraccas and in the South Seas at Guiaquil, Colima, and Jamaica.’ 19 Sloane’s record continues, ‘…[t]he Indians planted them in a hot and moist Ground, and purchas’d with them whatever they wanted of their Neighbours.’ 20 Such records suggest the early commodification of cacao by the Spanish. In the markets of the West Indies, cacao could be used to barter for coveted goods, as it ‘goeth currently for Money… or Fair, and may buy any Flesh, Fish, Bread or Cheese, or other Things.’ 21 The monetization of cacao also formed the foundation of the Indian economy, and Sloane further suggests that possession of the nuts had some influence over the social dynamics within – and between – the populations of Indians, Spanish, and English (after 1655). He follows this statement by writing, ‘The Indians when taken Prisoners by us Strangers shew’d their Esteem for these Nuts more than any other Commodity.’ 22 Relative to almonds, another expensive commodity, cacao was exorbitantly priced: ‘The Indians of this Country pay the King their Tribute in Cacao, giving him four hundred Carga’s, and every Carga is twenty four thousand Almonds… The chiefest Merchandise in Suchetepexi and Guazacapan is Cacao.’ 23

After his expatriation on cacao’s intrinsic value to both the Jamaican natives and the colonists, Sloane turned his attention to the culinary and medicinal uses of the plant. Early preparations of the plant by the Indians were labor-intensive; the most common product was a beverage, followed by early forms of solid chocolate to be consumed. The cacao had to undergo torrefaction of the nut, ‘having so much Oyl that it may be squeeze’d out of them’, which allowed it to be ‘pour[ed]… out of one Vessel into another, from on high, to bring the more oily Parts and Froth uppermost, to be drank.’ In all cases, ‘moderate heat’ is needed to cause the separation of the solid and the liquid; what is left – the ‘compound’ may be eaten for ‘nourish[ment]’. Both the Indians and Spanish 24 – and later, with the culinary knowledge Sloane carted back to London, the English – enjoyed chocolate beverages.

Sections of Sloane’s second volume echo, almost verbatim, the firsthand accounts of Girolamo Benzoni, an Italian merchant and conquistador, from his Historia del Mondo Nuovo (1565). Whether Sloane lifted these words from the pages of Benzoni’s work or the comparison of chocolate to a ‘drink [only] suited’ for pigs was ubiquitous throughout the New World remains unclear. However, Sloane would have encountered Benzoni’s writings in this research about the plant. Both men describe chocolate as an ‘ungrateful Drink’ they lacked an immediate taste for: ‘To make Drink the Indians dry [nuts] on an earthen File, grind them with Stones to Powder, and mix it with Water and Pepper, which makes a Difla fitter for Swine than Men.’ Sloane continues, ‘… [I]t was a Year before I could drink of it, for which the Indians would laugh at me; it does not inebriate; and is in great Esteem among the Indians.’ 25 Sloane and Benzoni’s acceptance of chocolate was reluctant, but they noted how the Spanish quickly grew fond of the chocolate drink. According to Sloane, it became palatable to the Spanish with the addition of ‘Chille,

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24 The French also had chocolate recipes dating from the seventeenth century.

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or sweet Pepper and Achiote', and soon, the Spanish partook in 'drinking Chocolate five or six Times a Day.'  

While Sloane does not specify whether the Spanish partook 'five or six Times a Day' out of mere enjoyment of drink, he goes on to tout the plant's analgesic and health–promoting properties for its consumers, 'provided it be moderately us'd'.  

Sloane's catalogue of medicinal uses for cacao reflects his interest in the study of physic, and foreshadows the development – and later promotion of – 'medicinal chocolate' in the eighteenth century: 'Three or four Nuts first rolled stop the Bloody Fluxes', cacao aided the body in 'dissipat[ing] malignant Humours' and 'keep[ing] the Body cool and in good order'. It possessed palliative use for people who were 'hectical and consumptive' and 'extenuated', and its 'anodine' qualities were 'good in all Inflammations'.  

The above diagnoses recorded in the Jamaica volume for which cacao was prescribed as a purgative or laxative remain still largely ambiguous.  

Additionally, Sloane reports that taken as an aphrodisiac, the 'compound [solid] Sort promotes Venery'. When researching and writing his Natural History, Sloane would have referred to the work of his contemporary, Dr. Henry Stubbes (1632–1676), who was one leading authority on chocolate in the seventeenth century and prepared the concoction for Charles II. Sloane and Stubbes were appointed to similar positions during their respective stints in Jamaica. Stubbes was appointed His Majesty's Physician in Jamaica in 1661, and by the next year, authored The Indian nectar, or, A discourse concerning chocolate (1662). Two decades later, he returned to the subject of chocolate in The Natural History of Coffee, Thee, Chocolate, and Tobacco (1682). In a near propagandistic fashion, Stubbes' essay uses the Bible to peddle chocolate as a miracle drug. Stubbes, and later Sloane, both suggest that chocolate was a crucial implement to a grand millenarianist design. During the seventeenth century, chocolate appealed to the sexually indulgent consumer, and Stubbes goes so far as to say that chocolate could be used as an accessory to people the planet, as God had intended: '…Adam is commanded in Paradise to increase and multiply, therefore I hope this little Excursion is pardonable, being so adequate to this Treatise of Chocolate…'  

Sloane circulated amongst men, like Stubbes, who all saw science as the mechanism to execute God's will. Whether these early musings were evidence of his

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milennarianist affinities or commercial speculation, once he returned to London in 1689, Sloane’s holistic approach to the study of cacao facilitated a new economic opportunity: the popularity of chocolate throughout Europe was aided by the trade in another cash crop, sugar, in which Sloane also had a hand.

Sloane’s involvement in transatlantic commerce – a network that traded knowledge of cacao and lucrative commodities such as sugar – engendered a taste for chocolate in England. The sphere of colonialism in which Sloane was enmeshed, which can be broadly defined as the triangular trade that united Europe, Africa, and the Americas, promulgated consumerism as well as scientific understanding. In the decade that preceded Sloane’s arrival in Jamaica, naval shipping lists recorded an exponential spike in the export of cacao. From 1675–8, a total of three metric tons of cacao left Jamaica and Barbados, bound for other countries. However, between 1678–9, that total more than quadrupled from the previous years to 14 metric tons.31

To put this in perspective, cacao was rivaled only by sugar, a commodity whose exports topped 3,650 metric tons.32 The cultivation of cacao proved difficult; it was susceptible to disease and vulnerable to the tempestuous weather of the Caribbean. A blight befell the crop in Jamaica during 1670–1, a fact which Sloane documented in Natural History. The loss of the crop could partly account for the low quantities of exports from 1671–7, and its relative scarcity could account for its exorbitant cost. However, while cacao exports from Jamaica plummeted to negligible levels in the last decade of the seventeenth century, sugar exports from the island increased seven hundred percent.33 Although scholars still debate how and why chocolate gained popularity in England in the last decades of the seventeenth century, the addition of sugar into chocolate – made possible by ever-increasing imports of sugar into England – could have made the otherwise ‘distasteful’ drink palatable for English taste.

On May 11, 1695, during this decade of unparalleled growth in the sugar trade, Sloane married Elizabeth Langley Rose – a match which ‘linked [Sloane] permanently to Jamaica and slavery.’34 Elizabeth’s former husband Fulke Rose owned 3,000 acres in Jamaica and had been one of Jamaica’s chief slave owners. As dictated by the laws of coverture, Elizabeth relinquished her one-third share of net profits from the Rose plantations in Jamaica to Sloane after they married. Sloane benefited from the trade in sugar, a fact recorded in shipping ledgers from the early eighteenth century. By the time of Elizabeth’s death in 1724, Sloane amassed a total fortune of £3 million pounds (in today’s money) from the sugar plantations.35 To some extent, Sloane’s knowledge of cacao – its medicinal properties, preparations, and rituals – and his contribution to the trade of sugar, an ingredient necessary to make the drink palatable, helped to popularize the drink in London.

The increased demand for chocolate in Britain in the latter decades of the seventeenth century and first half of the eighteenth century gave rise to a culture of conspicuous consumption. Along with the importation of cacao beans and knowledge of early preparations of the beverage, Sloane inadvertently contributed to the transmutation of the Mesoamerican chocolate–taking rituals in England, which evolved and spread from the Americas to Jamaica with the help of the Spanish.

Chocolate’s consumption initially possessed spiritual connotations for the Mesoamericans, namely the Aztec and Maya. Appropriately, Carl Linneaus assigned the plant its taxonomic name *Theobroma cacao* in 1753; the first part of the binomial, *Theobroma*, synthesizes two Greek roots, *theo* ("god") and *broma* ("drink").36 Sloane’s knowledge of chocolate and its accoutrement is a product of European colonialism in the Americas and the transatlantic trade networks which forged a link between the New and Old Worlds. Although Sloane arrived in Jamaica after the island transferred from the hands of the Spanish to the English in 1655, much of the Spaniards’ early sixteenth-century knowledge about chocolate–taking accessories had persisted. In the second volume of *Natural History*, Sloane records this established knowledge of the chocolate vessel that had remained from the Hispanic era. Sloane writes, ‘The Indians drink their Chocolate in Calabashes... the great Use of [calabash] is to make Cups and Vessels to drink out of, called Thecomates, especially for Chocolate.’37

For the Mesoamericans prior to their domination by the Spanish during the first decades of the sixteenth century, the taking of chocolate was a ceremonious affair, in which ‘chocolate was imbied from drinking vessels made for that purpose’: ‘During the pre–Hispanic era, finely painted lacquered gourds and ceramics were manufactured exclusively for chocolate... Known in Nahua as *tecomatl* (for ceramic cups) and *xicalli* (for the calabash variety), these vessels...’

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32 Gaps exist in the records; sugar also used for molasses and rum may account for the high number of exports.
33 Eltis, p. 643.
34 Delbourgo, p. 149.
35 Delbourgo, p. 149.
Rising demand for chocolate throughout Europe in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries fueled the demand for its accoutrements. Transatlantic trade facilitated the transmutation of Mesoamerican chocolate-taking ritual, and with rising ‘...demand for... chocolate... came yearnings for accessory implements, spurring European manufacturers to produce porcelain chocolate pots...’

The calabash cup, tecomates, jicaras of middle America were readily replaced by sumptuous, decorative alternatives in Europe.

While chocolate was partaken from dishes during the seventeenth century, the chocolate cup quickly replaced the dish in England. However elusive their use for the enjoyment of chocolate drinks, Sloane himself owned a set of tin-glazed earthenware cups made for the beverage (Fig. 2 above). Although Sloane explored a rich history of Mesoamerican chocolate rituals and their evolution at the hands of the Spanish, little is known about his own chocolate cups, except for an extant description from his manuscripts: ‘Eleven chocolate cups of various shapes & designs, some broken from Abbe Sterbini’s collection’. Sloane imported the cups from Bernardo, or ‘Abbe’, Sterbini, who dealt in antiquities in Rome during the 1730s. The cups are emblazoned with scenes from the Old Testament that seem to reflect Bacon’s millenarian design. The rightmost cup depicts Moses striking water from a rock, after which he proclaims that ‘that the people may drink.’ At his feet, unidentified figures lap up the water as it issues forth. His possession of such cups links him inextricably to Jamaica through ties of the transatlantic cacao trade which first cultivated knowledge of the exotic plant, its origins, and rituals, but later, a consumer society bent around the preparation of the beverage and the accoutrement to facilitate its consumption. Whether Sloane intended it or not, the cups can be read symbolically as the fulfillment of Baconian millenarianism: Sloane’s empirical studies of cacao ushered in scientific – and culinary – change in Britain. Sloane, like Moses, allowed his public to ‘drink’ to prosperity, partaking in whatever beverage they saw fit. The gilded cups reaffirm the heightened social status of chocolate consumption in the era preceding industrialization, when mass production of chocolate made it more economically accessible to the general public. Sloane’s possession of these cups suggests that he partook – however indirectly – in a culture of conspicuous consumption.

Sloane’s scientific and commercial successes illuminate a nuanced, dynamic intersection of knowledge and profit in the late decades of the seventeenth century and into the eighteenth century. Jamaica’s colonization proved advantageous to Sloane and his contemporaries on multiple fronts: its exoticism fostered a curiosity in the science of the New World; its accessibility and profitability fueled commercial prospecting; and its rich colonial history shaped – and continued to reshape – European consumerism in the eighteenth century.
‘The ign’rant present’s all’: acts of listening and silencing in early colonial New South Wales
This study excavates divergent approaches to the British colonial project by analysing two artefacts created by British colonial officials living and working in Sydney during the long eighteenth century. Whilst a 1790 language notebook made by William Dawes can be understood as an act of listening, an 1823 poem by Barron Field constitutes an act of silencing. Ultimately, both approaches cannot be reconciled with the inherently perverse dynamics of settler colonialism. Dawes finds the dominant colonial narrative undone by lived reality. Field finds lived reality undone by the dominant colonial narrative.
JAMES BONNEY / VIDES
ACTS OF LISTENING AND SILENCING

Artefact 1., a notebook entitled ‘Vocabulary of the language of N.S Wales in the neighbourhood of Sydney. (Native and English)’ is one of several notebooks written and compiled in Sydney between 1790 and 1791 by the British colonial official William Dawes. Born in Portsmouth in 1762, Dawes trained as a marine and was employed variously as an engineer, surveyor and astronomer. In 1788, aged only 26, he sailed from Britain to Australia as part of the first wave of British settler colonists. During his relatively short residence in New South Wales, Dawes oversaw the building of an observatory in Sydney Cove, and spent a considerable amount of time with the Indigenous peoples whose land the British had invaded, making sustained records of his encounters in notebooks such as the one considered in this study. In addition to documenting linguistic data, Dawes wrote down snippets of conversations and made brief personal commentaries on local cultures, relationships and ethics. In its attempts to engage with Indigenous presence, Dawes’ notebook is somewhat exceptional, stepping outside dominant colonial discourse.

Artefact 2., a poem entitled ‘On Reading the Controversy Between Lord Byron and Mr Bowles’, was published in 1823 by Barron Field, another British colonial official who sailed from Britain to New South Wales to live and work in the settlement of Sydney. He was employed in 1817 as the judge of the Supreme Court of Civil Judicature of New South Wales but like Dawes, left colonial Australia relatively soon afterwards in 1824. In his spare time Field fancied himself a man of letters, and in 1819 he published First Fruits of Australian Poetry, the first book of poetry published in colonial Australia. ‘On Reading the Controversy’ appears in the second edition of this volume and in contrast to Dawes’ notebook speaks very much from within the dominant colonial discourse.

In the opening pages of Dawes’ notebook, listening is foregrounded quite literally. Phonemes of the Sydney language are recorded in a matrix handwritten in cursive script. Dawes records ‘Letter’, ‘Name’, ‘Sound’, and how to generate such sounds ‘as in the English words’. There are corrections marked with inked scrawls; visible traces of the author grasping towards aural accuracy as he interacts with the people who come to visit him in his observatory. Adjacent to the phonetic records, half-effaced pencil markings trace outlines of what resemble aerial rendering of coastlines or landforms. Dawes is invested in attuning to the physical environment and situating himself within it. Superimposed on the pencil outlines are translations of multiple reactively recorded words and phrases relating to that environment: ‘North wind’, ‘South wind’, ‘East wind’, ‘West wind’, ‘did these potatoes grow at tdāra’, ‘bye & bye, when the warm weather comes’. The juxtaposition of these seemingly unrelated translations betrays the responsive approach adopted in Dawes’ attempt to understand the Sydney language. The palimpsestic structure of the notebook charts multiple present moments where Dawes marks his attempts at listening in ink and graphite, never settling on a final and definitive interpretation.

The subsequent pages list Sydney language words in alphabetical order according to Dawes’ romanized phonetic renderings of them, as well as English translations of the terms. In addition to broadly utilitarian descriptors such as ‘yesterday’, ‘two’, ‘skin’, ‘father’, Dawes records value-laden concepts. He translates ‘Bīrong or Mīron’ as ‘Belonging’, which is prefaced by a spring-like correction, again indicating Dawes’ attempts to listen closely and edit his interpretations in light of new understanding. Whilst ‘Belonging’ is a polysemic term, it is reasonable to assume that Dawes records it in this instance as an abstract noun rather than a verb given that he later records another term ‘Nalarinji’ as ‘Ours, Belonging to us’. In any case, what is notable here is that Dawes is not merely interested in linguistic data which aids extraction of resources for colonial gain, but rather that which is emotionally and culturally resonant. On subsequent pages, visual and aural openness are further indicated through the deliberate placement of blank space left for future records of information: the form of the notebook itself is then conducive to an active, working and unresolved engagement with Indigenous voices.

If Dawes’ notebook can be characterised by its acts of listening and formal openness, ‘On Reading the Controversy’ is best understood through its acts of silencing and formal enclosure.

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3 Dawes, ‘Vocabulary’, p. 27.
4 Dawes, ‘Vocabulary’, p. 27.
6 Barron Field, ‘On Reading the Controversy Between Lord Byron and Mr Bowles’ in First Fruits of Australian Poetry (Sydney: 1823)
7 Higgins, p. 221.
10 Dawes, ‘Vocabulary’, p. 27.
11 Dawes, ‘Vocabulary’, p. 27.
13 For a brilliant discussion of silences and silencing in history, see Trouillot, Michel-Rolph, Silencing the
“Ship” does not depend on [nature] but ‘confers its own poetry upon the waters—and heightens theirs.’ Field’s speaker suggests that this debate is complicated by his observations in New South Wales; ‘here’ it is proclaimed, it is necessarily the case that a ship is poetic because ‘Nature is prosaic, / Unpicturesque, unmusical’ and ‘Nature–reflecting Art is not yet born’.

On one level the narrator’s derision of the Australian sights and sounds he encounters as ‘prosaic’, ‘Unpicturesque’ and ‘unmusical’ may offer a sincere reflection of Field’s own subjective inability to comprehend an alien empirical environment and his place in it. Yet, more importantly, these dismissals constitute an act of silencing. The environment has no right of reply in the text and is instead used instrumentally, subsumed as a mere abstract, negative premise in Field’s argument in support of Byron’s position.

The oblique and opaque ways in which Indigenous presence is addressed by Field’s narrator constitutes another more significant act of silencing which stands in stark contrast to the close listening in Dawes’ notebook. On a basic level, nowhere in the first four lines of the poem (or in the entire poem for that matter) does Field’s narrator refer explicitly to there actually being an existing Indigenous population in the region. This is despite the fact that he is making claims about these peoples, for example by asserting that ‘here’ ‘Nature–reflecting Art is not yet born’. The operation of this line deserves closer attention. In setting up the poem in terms of the British aesthetic ‘Controversy Between Lord Byron and Mr Bowles’, Field tacitly transplants culturally and environmentally specific philosophical assumptions into a different context where these assumptions are not necessarily applicable. More precisely, Field’s speaker assumes that there is a universal, robust and coherent ontological distinction between ‘art’ and ‘nature’. Indeed, the contention that ‘here’ ‘Nature–reflecting Art is not yet born’ effectively precludes the ontological possibility that ‘nature’ and ‘art’ are in fact one and the same. Moreover, it implies that Indigenous forms of knowledge are less developed and thus inferior to those of European colonists.

This dual erasure and silencing of Indigenous presence in the verse is best understood as a form of expedient epistemic violence which operates in tandem with acts of literal violence inflicted on Indigenous peoples by British colonists in early colonial New South Wales. Illegitimately invading a landmass and claiming a right to occupy it necessitated not only the use of instrumental terror against Indigenous peoples from the outset but narrative justifications for such actions. The paradoxical doctrine of terra nullius, or nobody’s land, which essentially rendered non–agriculturist Indigenous peoples as incapable of ownership or even non–existent, not only animates ‘On Reading the Controversy’ but also acted as an implicit (then later explicit) premise underpinning British colonial policy in New South Wales. As Justine Clemens highlights, it is not merely coincidental that Field’s poetry should be complicit in such epistemic violence when he was the first judge to formalise the long–established performative use of terra nullius in Australia in law.

Where ‘On Reading the Controversy’ enacts forms of colonial violence, ‘Vocabulary of the language of N.S Wales’ listens to Indigenous responses to such colonial violence, revealing the inherent perversity of settler colonial narrativization. Patyegarang, a 15–year–old girl who became Dawes’ main language teacher and features heavily throughout the


17 Byron, p. 130.


20 Ford and Clemens, p. 9.
notebook, makes it crystal clear how the local population feels about British settlement in the following extract from the notebook:

D. Mínyn gūlara eóra? Why are the b. m. [black men] angry?
P. Inyám ŋal wí w. Because the white men are settled here.
P. Tyérun The kamarigals are afraid.
D. Mínyn tyérun k_gál? Why are the k. ._. afraid?
P. Gunín Because of the Guns. 21

The very real threat of colonial violence never strays far from the details recorded in the notebook and continues to make itself apparent in the linguistic data collected by Dawes. For example, on the page following the extract above, Dawes notes how Patyegarang clarifies a ‘difference between speaking of we two and we three’, using the example of ‘a white man beat us three’, ‘a white man beat us two’. 22 Such details also nestle jarringly amid moments of apparent personal connection. Dawes gives a translation for ‘you winked at me’ 23 and later records Patyegarang telling him, ‘Kamarāta, beríadinye: My friend, he sings about you.’ 24 amplifying the absurdity of colonial inhumanity under the auspices of humanity.

It is also important to note that whilst Dawes engages in such acts of close listening, he nevertheless remains a coloniser and cannot be absolved from his complicity in forms of colonial violence. For example, when he tells Patyegarang ‘if she would wash herself often, she would become white’, 25 he makes an implicit, racist appeal to his perceived white supremacy. Whether or not this comment is made in jest, it must be considered in light of the contemporaneous instrumental violence employed by colonists in defending their claim to occupy New South Wales, 26 as well as more recent hagiographical scholarship which consistently neglects to mention Dawes’ own racism and deep personal flaws. 27 Yet, the notebook does give voice to Patyegarang’s defiant response to Dawes’ comment: ‘Tyerábárrbowaryaou: I shall not become white.’ 28

In the fragmentary records of

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21 Dawes, ‘Vocabulary’, p. 42.
22 Dawes, ‘Vocabulary’, p. 43.
23 Dawes, ‘Vocabulary’, p. 34.
25 Dawes, ‘Vocabulary’, p. 35.
27 For a discussion of this issue see Cassandra Pybus, ‘“Not Fit for Your Protection or an Honest Man’s Company”: A Transnational Perspective on the Saintly William Dawes’ in History Australia, 6 (2009), pp. 121–27.
28 Dawes, ‘Vocabulary’, p. 35.
these particular encounters, it is possible to glimpse the fraught entanglement of the personal and the global. Slippages between jest and genocide reveal the contradictory and asymmetrical foundations of Dawes and Patyegarang’s relationship. Intimacy, exploitation and resistance co-exist uncomfortably throughout the language lists. Further down the same page Dawes’ vocabulary list reads, ‘Tyelkála: To embrace. To hug’, ‘Tóana: To court. To make love to.’, and ‘Tyérun: To run away.’ The radically lop-sided colonial power dynamic and desire for understanding and human connection that jostle throughout the notebook cannot ultimately be reconciled in any obvious way.

Indeed, Dawes’ alleged initial refusal to participate in a disproportionately large-scale and violent punitive expedition against the local Bidjigal clan, organised by Governor Phillip in late 1790, gives an indication of his struggle to reconcile his dual position as coloniser and close listener.29 Dawes did eventually participate in the (ultimately failed) reprisal attempt30 but later made it clear to Governor Phillip that he regretted having been persuaded to take part and would not do so again in the future.31 These remarks, as well as other allegations of Dawes’ misconduct, drove a wedge between Dawes and the Governor which widened into irredeemable hostility.32 By December 1791 Dawes had left New South Wales, having been effectively forced out of the colony by Governor Phillip, and was shipped back to Britain with his notebooks.

By the time Barron Field arrived in Sydney in 1817, Dawes’ work on the Sydney language had been all but erased from colonial memory.33 Ongoing anti-colonial resistance to British occupation of the Sydney area by Indigenous activists such as Pemulwuy (who had prompted Governor Phillip’s 1790 punitive expedition),34 ultraviolent colonial reprisals by the British35 and smallpox contagion had resulted in the decimation of local Indigenous populations.36 Expedient narrativization of this ongoing genocide was necessary to justify colonial conduct in New South Wales. The acts of silencing in Field’s ‘On Reading the Controversy’ operate within this enduring context. However, they are not singular or unambiguous in this regard.

This becomes clear in the erasure of Indigenous historical presence which is performed in the first half of the poem. New South Wales is declared ‘A land without antiquities, with one / And only one, poor spot of classic ground, / (That on which Cook first landed).’37 The narrator continues:

Where’s no past tense; the ign’rant present’s all
Or only great by the All hail, hereafter!
One foot of Future’s glass should rest on Past,
Where Hist’ry is not, Prophecy is guess.38

Where Hist’ry is not, Prophecy is guess.39

The poetical persona brands New South Wales as timeless (‘the ign’rant present’s all’); weaponizing time as a means to trivialize the contemporary decimation of Indigenous peoples. The perceived contrast between Indigenous absence of history and British historical presence is further amplified through a somewhat heavy-handed allusion to Shakespeare’s Lady Macbeth.40 Yet, as David Higgins highlights, the allusion to Lady Macbeth betrays an ambivalence towards the colonial project.41 In branding New South Wales as timeless and devoid of history, there is no guarantee of a coherent or stable colonial future; ‘Where Hist’ry is not, Prophecy is guess.’ In the earlier line ‘We’ve nothing left us but anticipation’,42 ambiguity plagues ‘anticipation’. Without an existing historical presence to build on, a feeling of dislocation prevails.

Field’s speaker seeks refuge from a colonial space forcibly bereft of content and form by turning in the second half of the poem to his ‘home wand’ring phantasy.’43 He seeks to allay his malaise (whilst continuing to reinforce the supposed inhumanity of the Indigenous population) through the “news of human kind”44 brought by British ships. The ships themselves offer the speaker a tangible trace of the metropolitan, Christian society he yearns for: the ‘tall anch’ring masts, a three-spir’d minster / Vane-crown’d; where Hist’ry is not, Prophecy is guess.’45 Ultimately however, the visiting ships cannot compensate for the isolation...
the speaker feels and his appeals to British cultural discourse serve only to fuel his obstinacy and myopia. In the end the speaker dreams foremost of escape from New South Wales via a ship whose ‘wings will bear me from this prose-dull land.’ Shortly after the poem was published, Barron Field’s wish for escape came true when he boarded a ship bound for Britain in 1824.

In wholly different ways then, both ‘Vocabulary of the language of N.S Wales’ and ‘On Reading the Controversy’ demonstrate failures to find stability or coherence in New South Wales. Acts of listening and silencing both prove only to amplify the inherently violent origins and perverse narrativization of settler colonialism. Dawes finds the dominant colonial narrative undone by lived reality. Field finds lived reality undone by the dominant colonial narrative. Given the ongoing systemic and environmental racism, as well as mass ecocide, wrought by settler late liberalism, making the historical workings of early settler colonialism more transparent for reflection is not only of academic interest but politically urgent. Enduring silences and perverse narrativization must be unlearnt and undone, leaving space for close listening today.

46 For a discussion of Field’s extensive reliance on allusion throughout his corpus, see Justin Clemens, ‘First Fruits of a Barron Field’ in Critical Quarterly, 61 (2019), pp. 18–36.
47 Field, p. 14 (l. 32), this line is itself an imitation of a passage from Byron’s letter on the “poetry” of the “Ship”: ‘Even an old boat keel upwards wrecked upon the barren sand—is a “poetical” object… whilst a long extent of sand & unbroken water without the boat would be—as like dull prose as any pamphlet lately published.’, Byron, Lord Byron: The Complete Miscellaneous Prose, p. 130.
48 Kathryn Yusoff, A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018), pp. 45–48.
Persuasive landscapes: representations of Victoria Falls and colonial migration in the mid-nineteenth century

CHALA DODDS
This article studies the representations of Victoria Falls through David Livingstone’s descriptions in Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa and Thomas Baines’ colour lithograph, The Falls from the Western End of the Chasm, exploring how the portrayal of the landscape through text and image encouraged migration to the colony.
Following the abolition of slavery in 1833, the civilising mission became the means to maintain control and power in the African colonies by bringing religion, medicine, and education to those in the ‘dark continent.’ This approach meant that a number of missionaries and explorers continued to operate in Africa, as they had before the abolition of the slave trade, working in and exploring Southern Africa and relaying their findings through journals, sketches and paintings back to the motherland. Not only did these findings expand their scientific knowledge of the regions, but the tales of adventure and descriptions of this beautiful, exciting, fertile, and unpopulated world became a tool to maintain control over, and continue building, a successful colony by encouraging migration to Southern Africa and relaying their findings through journals, sketches and paintings back to the motherland. Not only did these findings expand their scientific knowledge of the regions, but the tales of adventure and descriptions of this beautiful, exciting, fertile, and unpopulated world became a tool to maintain control over, and continue building, a successful colony by encouraging migration to Southern Africa. David Livingstone’s activities fulfilled the desires of three different audiences back in Britain. The scientific community demanded ‘accurate observations of the geography, flora and fauna’, the general audience was riveted by tales of adventure and danger in this unknown continent, and finally there was the audience who sought to gain information ‘to enable the exploitation of Africa for either commercial gain or evangelizing purposes.’

Both Livingstone’s Missionary Travels and several paintings of Victoria Falls by Thomas Baines can be analysed through these lenses to explore how they sought to fulfill these desires. This article will study the works of Thomas Baines and David Livingstone, analysing their representations of Victoria Falls, the intentions behind the works and how they were likely to be received back in Britain.

David Livingstone, born to ‘poor, honest, God-fearing parents’ in Blantyre, Scotland on 19th March 1813, first set sail to Cape Town from England in 1840. In David Livingstone: The Weaver Boy who became a Missionary, published in 1874, Henry Adams describes Livingstone’s aim as ‘to minister to the temporal and spiritual wants of the benighted millions in that far land, – to heal the sick, as far as human means could do so,– and at the same time to direct them to the Great Physician who alone could cleanse them from the leprosy of sin, – this was the work which he had set before him for which he was now pursuing the study of medicine and divinity.’ In order to achieve this, he studied medicine and divinity at Glasgow University.

John Thomas Baines, born in Norfolk in 1820, sailed to Cape Town two years after Livingstone following a five-year apprenticeship as an ornamental painter. His talent as an artist and cartographer enabled him to join a few expeditions. As a war artist, he documented the bloody events of the Eighth Frontier War before joining Augustus Gregory’s 1855–1857 expedition across Northern Australia, as the official artist. His experience led him to be selected by Livingstone to be the artist and storekeeper for his Zambezi expedition in 1858. The goal of this expedition was ‘to open up the Zambezi River for navigation from Indian Ocean to the Victoria Falls to act as a conduit for commerce and colonisation.’ However, the expedition failed on many counts. Baines was falsely accused of theft and left the party under a cloud. Despite this, his desire to explore the interior of Southern Africa continued and he joined trader-explorer James Chapman on an expedition to Victoria Falls in 1861. Livingstone was the first European man to discover Victoria Falls on the 16th of November 1855 and Baines was the first artist to see and illustrate the Falls seven years later. Both men documented their observations in great detail; Baines through a series of detailed sketches of Victoria Falls and Livingstone through Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa and later, A Popular Account of Dr. Livingstone’s Expedition to the Zambesi and Its Tributaries: And of the Discovery of Lakes Shirwa and Nyassa.

David Livingstone’s detailed yet emotive descriptions appeal to those seeking a gripping and informative view into the Southern African ecosystem. As he nears his first glimpse of Victoria Falls, he describes the ‘columns of vapour’ that rise above the landscape. He describes these five columns ‘bending in the direction of the wind, they seem placed against the lower ridge covered with trees; the tops of the columns at this distance appear to mingle with the clouds.’ The attention that Livingstone gives to his descriptions reveal a desire to invite his readers to experience this scene through his words, and to appreciate its beauty as he does. Livingstone reports that ‘the banks and islands are adorned with sylvan vegetation’ and that ‘...several trees were spangled over with

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4 Ibid., p. 4.
6 Ibid., p. 39.
7 Ibid., p. 40.
8 Ibid., p. 41.
9 Ibid., p. 41.
10 E. Liebenberg, p. 42.
11 Ibid., p. 42.
12 Livingstone, p. 519.
13 Ibid., p. 519.
blossoms.  His observations, compact with decorative verbs and adjectives, seek to personify the vegetation in front of him. ‘Towering over all...’ he describes ‘...the great burly baobab, each of whose enormous arms would form the trunk of a large tree, beside groups of graceful palms, which with their feathery-shaped leaves depicted on the sky, lend their beauty to the scene.’15 Livingstone gives no scientific information on individual species of flora or fauna, which certainly creates flora or fauna information on individual species of the world that those in Britain can only be too far removed from a typical British reader’s experience to be real. These descriptions give enough familiar information to intrigue the reader and encourage them to understand that the landscape he describes is more beautiful than what can be found at home. He explained, ‘some trees resemble the great spreading oak, others assume the character of our own elms and chestnuts; but no one can imagine the beauty of the view from anything witnessed in England.’16 Livingstone’s connections between England and foreign landscapes become more persuasive as he asks his reader to:

Imagine the Thames filled with low, tree-covered hills immediately beyond the tunnel, extending as far as Gravesend, the bed of black basaltic rock instead of London mud, and a fissure made therein from one end of the tunnel to the other down through the keystones of the arch, and prolonged from the left end of the tunnel through thirty miles of hills, the pathway being 100 feet down from the bed of the river instead of what it is, with the lips of the fissure from 80 to 100 feet apart, then fancy the Thames leaping bodily into the

It is difficult to picture exactly what Livingstone saw and impossible to share in that experience without visual representations. Hence why it was so important to have an artist like Baines on such expeditions. The colour lithograph The Falls from the Western End of the Chasm (Figure 1) by Baines was created from sketches he did on site during his expedition with James Chapman. Although they are not illustrations of Livingstone’s descriptions, the similarity is undeniable. In Baines’s work we see ‘the falls are bounded on three sides by ridges 300 or 400 feet in height, which are covered with forest, with the red soil appearing among the trees.’16 In the background we see the ‘dense white cloud’ where a ‘great jet of vapour rises’19 and in the foreground the rainbow that Livingstone discusses. The focal point of Baines’s artwork is the white foam that rises from the chasm which Livingstone describes as a ‘snow-white sheet [which] seemed like myriads of small comets rushing on in one direction, each of which left behind its nucleus rays of foam.’22

In ‘The Great Victoria Falls in Africa,’23 an article by Baines published in The London Journal in 1864, Baines gives his own remarkably similar account of this scene. He describes this body of water rushing ‘forward with so much violence as to break up the whole into a fleecy, snow-white, irregularly seething torrent with its lighter particles glittering and flashing like myriads of living diamonds in the sunlight.’14 Baines also describes the ‘lighter particles’ of water forming into ‘comet or rocket-like trains of spray and vapour...’25 These descriptions, paired with Baines’s artwork, reveal a scene out of this world; a landscape of abundance where water glitters like diamonds and flies like comets; a landscape that has to be seen to be believed and designed to encourage migration to the colonies where lay the

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14 Ibid., p. 519.
15 Ibid., p. 519.
16 McAl eer, p. 157.
17 Ibid., p. 159.
18 D. Livingstone, p. 519.
19 Ibid., p. 520.
20 D. Livingstone, p. 520.
21 Ibid., p. 521.
22 Ibid., p. 521.
24 Ibid., pp. 397–98.
possibility of experiencing them in the flesh.

Advertised in exhibitions, fairs and publications, images of Africa were designed ‘to portray the colonies... as worthy of investment, as places where civilised society had been firmly planted and taken root, and where the scientific and technological advancements of nineteenth-century Europe were being deployed for the benefit of the settlers.’26

The Great Exhibition of 1851 was one of many platforms that the colonies used to showcase their landscapes to the European public.27 There is no doubt that, as an artist, Baines was aware of the use of suggestive landscapes which held the promise of a better life in the colonies, he saw these images as tools to actively encourage migration to the colonies. Baines displayed many of his works in Alexandra Palace, London, as well as in the Paris Exhibition of 1867. However, he was disappointed by the artworks selected for display, claiming that ‘...they chose all the pretty homesteads that would encourage immigrants to go to the Cape, and not my best pictures.’28 Baines seems to recognise that his ‘best pictures’ were not the pretty homesteads, but the dramatic, untamed landscapes.

The selection of paintings that depict a beautiful, established community imply that it would be more appealing for viewers of the artworks to see a landscape which was immediately accessible and a life which they could easily identify with.

Although The Falls from the Western End of the Chasm does not fall into the category of a ‘pretty homestead’, Baines was very aware of what his market wanted and this conveniently unpopulated, fertile, idyllic view of Victoria Falls, abundant with flora and fauna would be appealing to his audience. Both Baines and Livingstone can be seen to fulfill these requirements in the portrayal of this beautiful landscape and the comparisons with landscapes and flora that the European audience would be familiar with.

The missionary movement played a key part in the migration of Europeans to form settler colonies in Southern Africa.29 The abolition of the slave trade ‘was the first evangelical success in terms of orientating Britain’s relationship with the wider world to Christian principles espoused at home.’30 Consequently, ‘religion became fashionable and newsworthy, and information about missionary endeavours was highly sought after.’31

The works of David Livingstone, paired with images like Thomas Baines’s, appealed to this audience and were widely circulated. Baines’s artworks were published as colour lithos and made into lantern slides. This meant that they could be copied, distributed and easily accessible for the ‘civilised society’ that they were intended for. The conversion of works such as this into lantern slides revealed a market that desired to be submerged in this imagined world and experience it in their own homes, if not in the real landscape itself.

Livingstone’s Missionary Travels, published by John Murray in 1857, had 12,000 advance subscriptions and it was not long before 30,000 copies of the guinea edition were printed. This was achieved in a time where travel narratives rarely sold over 10,000 copies and highlighted how sought after Livingstone’s accounts were.32 Looking back to his early life and his initial reasons for choosing his career path, Henry Adams explains that, ‘with a deep sense of the responsibility of his holy calling, [Livingstone] had left home and friends to go forth into the desolate places of the earth, for the salvation of souls.’33 With this in mind, McAleer claims that ‘many of those who brought the Christian message to Southern Africa believed that the landscape encoded the work and provided evidence of the perfection of a divine creator.’34 This influence is seen clearly in Livingstone’s descriptions of Victoria Falls. He states that, ‘[Victoria Falls] had never been seen before by European eyes; but scenes so lovely must have been gazed upon by angels in their flight.’35 In this description, he appeals to both evangelists and those hungry for adventure: who would not be tempted to share this experience fit for angels?

Livingstone describes the rainbows over the falls as ‘the abode of Deity.’36 He explains that some of the Makololo who travelled with him looked up at the scene with the same awe. When the rainbow is seen in the sky it is called ‘motse oa barimo’ – the pestle of the gods. Regardless of religion, Livingstone describes this as a holy place. Baines cultivates this same heavenly scene in his artwork, highlighted by the presence of the rainbow or ‘pestle of the gods’ in the right-hand corner of his artwork. However, Livingstone goes on to say that although the Makololo were aware of the presence of a God, they were not aware of his God. They were ‘...not aware of His true character, they had no admiration of the beautiful
and good in their bosoms. They did not imitate His benevolence, for they were a bloody, imperious crew.'38 Livingstone emphasises the need for missionaries in this part of the world, to educate those about his God and to emulate His ways. Furthermore, he highlights the importance of resident missionaries in civilizing local tribes and nurturing this fertile, unpopulated paradise to its full potential. In *A Popular Account of Dr. Livingstone’s Expedition to the Zambesi and Its Tributaries: And of the Discovery of Lakes Shirwa and Nyassa*, published in 1875, Livingstone explains how the ‘hippopotami had destroyed the fruit trees’ that he had planted on his first visit, claiming that ‘...when a tribe takes an interest in trees, it becomes more attached to the spot on which they were planted, and they prove one of the civilizing influences.’39

Thomas Baines’s artworks of Victoria Falls, accompanied by David Livingstone’s descriptions give us insight into the power that the representation of Southern African landscapes had in encouraging migration to the colony. The abundance of flora, fauna and unpopulated fertile land made it appealing to those who sought a life of adventure, exploration and the potential wealth and status that populating a relatively small, new community promised. Livingstone and Baines reveal enough in their detailed portrayals of the landscapes to show what is there, whilst hinting at what is missing and can only be found by witnessing it in the flesh. The wild, untamed landscape, with its heavenly beauty made it attractive to both adventurers and those who wanted to be closer to God and take part in the ‘civilizing mission.’

The undeniable similarities in both Baines’ and Livingstone’s representations of the landscape, albeit their differing disciplines, suggest an individual fascination and awe of the environment, as well as an awareness of a shared wonderment and intrigue that would be felt by the recipients of their artworks and publications.

38 Ibid., p. 524.
British culture in Porfirian Mexico: the clown Ricardo Bell and the Circo Orrin
British actors had a lasting socioeconomic impact on Mexico throughout the period of the Porfiriato (1876–1911). Understanding this influence demands a interdisciplinary sensibility that moves towards what Robert D. Aguirre calls ‘an expanded account of British informal imperialism in Mexico and Central America, one focused not merely on trade and politics but on the transatlantic networks of culture that accompanied and enabled them.’ This article focuses on two examples of British cultural influence in Porfirian Mexico: the practice of the British clown Ricardo Bell, and the Circo Orrin, a circus established by three Anglo–American brothers– It is suggested that, by importing British cultural forms, Bell and the Orrins also implanted British cultural norms in the heart of Mexican society, thereby contributing to the broader transformation that was the overarching goal of the Porfirian project.

Figure 1. Unknown author – Ricardo Bell (c.1900). Private collection
‘La risa y el gesto del clown son una nota esencial, clásica, de la vida británica; una rueda y un movimiento de la magnífica máquina del Imperio […] El clown no constituye un tipo, sino más bien una institución, tan respetable como la Cámara de los Lores. El arte del clown significa el domesticamiento de la bufonería salvaje y nómade del bohemio, según el gusto y las necesidades de una refinada sociedad capitalista.’

José Carlos Mariátegui – ‘Esquema de una explicación de Chaplin’ (1928).

[‘The laughter and the gestures of the clown are an essential, a classical note in British life; a wheel and a movement of the magnificent machine of the Empire… The British clown does not constitute a type so much as an institution, as respectable as the House of Lords. The clown’s art signifies the domestication of the wild, nomadic buffoonery of the bohemian, in line with the taste and needs of a refined capitalist society.’ ‘Outline of an explanation of Chaplin’.

Lorenzo Meyer has characterised the Porfiriano – the dictatorship of José De La Cruz Porfirio Díaz (1876–1911) as ‘a golden age in Anglo-Mexican relations’. Aiming for fast-track industrialisation, Porfirio Díaz actively courted large-scale British investment, while for their part the British saw the autocrat as ‘the sole means of disciplining the feckless Indians and mongrel mestizos of Mexico’, in Alan Knight’s provocative but no doubt representative formulation. Thus the South American Journal proclaimed in 1884 that ‘the gates of Mexico will be opened wide to the influx of British enterprise and capital, which have done so much for the progress and development of other Spanish–American states’, and British actors did indeed have a lasting socioeconomic impact on Mexico over the period. However, the subject is somewhat under-studied within British historiography, typically being subsumed into the broader Latin American context, or eclipsed by the more economically significant relationships with Brazil and Argentina. Furthermore, traditional concepts of ‘cultural imperialism’ or ‘informal empire’ – in the narrowly economic sense in which the latter was initially applied to Latin America by H.S. Ferns – can fail to capture the subtleties of the relationship between the two countries. Limited formal government involvement in Mexico partly accounts for this. Despite the best efforts of Porfirio Díaz, British influence was mostly exercised at one remove, through independent actors or companies, making it harder to discern an overarching narrative. Understanding this influence therefore demands an interdisciplinarity sensibility that moves between economic, diplomatic, social and cultural history, and towards what Robert D. Aguirre – in his Informal Empire: Mexico and Central America in Victorian Culture (2005) – calls ‘an expanded account of British informal imperialism in Mexico and Central America, one focused not merely on trade and politics but on the transatlantic networks of culture that accompanied and enabled them.’ On a similar note, Louise Guenther observes that the debate around informal empire in Latin America benefits from ‘the recognition that historical questions of commercial and military might are already closely related to those of the cultural turn’. This article focuses on two examples of British cultural influence in Porfiriano Mexico: the practice of the British clown Ricardo Bell, and the Circo Orrin, a circus established by three Anglo–American brothers, of which Bell was the star performer. The impact of these two institutions will be approached through two emblematic artefacts, namely a publicity photograph of Bell in his full regalia around the turn of the century, and the motto that adorned the façade of the Circo Orrin, built in 1891. It will be suggested that, by importing British cultural forms, Bell and the Orrins also implanted British cultural norms in the heart of Mexican society, thereby contributing to the broader transformation that was the overarching goal of the Porfirian project, as well as facilitating British commercial involvement in the country.

The Clown Ricardo Bell

Asked by an American diplomat why he would not allow the Mexican people to participate in democratic elections, Porfirio Díaz answered: because they would vote for Ricardo Bell. This revealing anecdote gives a sense of the
vast popularity that Bell enjoyed, and of the esteem in which he was held. As we will see, Bell’s stage persona was a definitively British invention, but his humour was carefully tailored to Mexican tastes – so much so, indeed, that he came to seem a fundamentally Mexican performer, such that none other than Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera could call him ‘nuestro gran artista, nuestro gran satírico, nuestro gran poeta cómico’ [‘Our great actor, our great satirist, our great comic poet’].11

Historians have largely concurred with this evaluation: Luis Reyes de la Maza, for instance, ranks Bell among the five most important figures in the history of the Mexican stage.12 Bell’s success gained him access to the Mexican elite. He was a Mason and a member of the Jockey Club de México, the organisation which brought together the most influential figures in Porfirián Mexico. He was also a hunting partner of the President himself – not, it should be noted, in any case, but as the Circo Chiarini; recently established by an Italian empresario, this was the first circus in the European style in Mexico. Bell definitively settled in the country some years later and joined the Circo Chiarini, of which he quickly became the star. The Orrin brothers, its founders, had been born in Britain and raised in New York, before coming to Mexico to join the Circo Chiarini themselves. In 1881 they set up on their own, initially as a peripatetic troupe, before building their own permanent establishment in Mexico City in 1891, although they continued touring the Republic on an annual basis. Over the course of the Porfiriato, the circus became the most important form of mass entertainment in Mexico,14 and the Circo Orrin was at the forefront of this development: by all accounts, it was the most popular circus in the country at the time, and Bell the most beloved entertainer.

Richard Bell was born in Deptford, London, in 1858, into a family of circus artistes (his father was a well-known producer of pantomimes at the Crystal Palace).13 He gave his debut performance at the age of three and first came to Mexico at eleven, when he arrived with his family to join the Circo Chiarini; recently established by an Italian empresario, this was the first circus in the European style in Mexico. Bell definitively settled in the country some years later and joined the Circo Chiarini, of which he quickly became the star. The Orrin brothers, its founders, had been born in Britain and raised in New York, before coming to Mexico to join the Circo Chiarini themselves. In 1881 they set up on their own, initially as a peripatetic troupe, before building their own permanent establishment in Mexico City in 1891, although they continued touring the Republic on an annual basis. Over the course of the Porfiriato, the circus became the most important form of mass entertainment in Mexico,14 and the Circo Orrin was at the forefront of this development: by all accounts, it was the most popular circus in the country at the time, and Bell the most beloved entertainer.

In 1906, Edward Orrin closed the circus in order to concentrate on his other business concerns, and Bell decided to open his own. Porfirio Díaz duly gave him some land in the centre of the city to establish the Gran Circo Bell, the main attraction of which was a troupe comprising himself and his thirteen children. It was not a success, however, largely due to Bell’s failings as a businessman,15 although mounting levels of hostility towards foreigners may have played a part. In any case, he fled Mexico in 1911 after the outbreak of the Revolution, and shortly afterwards died in New York at the age of 53, having heard that his Mexican City mansion had been sacked by insurgents, and his circus’s train carriages commandeered for transporting troops.

Bell’s practice and influence

Figure one shows a promotional postcard depicting Bell in one of his many costumes, most of which were fabricated by his wife.

It is important to note that Bell’s costume embodies a specifically British tradition. Just as the modern phenomenon of the circus was pioneered by Londoner Philip Astley in the second half of the eighteenth century, what would today be considered the typical figure of the clown was an innovation of Joseph Grimaldi, one of Regency England’s most famous performers. Grimaldi essentially divorced the figure of ‘Clown’ from its continental antecedents, giving rise to a uniquely national cultural phenomenon, ‘the clown’.16 It was Grimaldi who pioneered the garish costume overloaded with tassels and ruffs, and the whiteface make-up with thick red lips, which are among several elements that Bell incorporated into his own persona more or less unaltered, as this photograph depicts. In England in the same period, Harry Payne, his generation’s most renowned clown, was likewise building on Grimaldi’s legacy.

While Bell’s persona would have been familiar in England, in Mexico it was impactfully novel, and spawned a generation of clowns who based their act on Bell’s. Indicative of the extent of Bell’s influence in Mexico is a woodcut by José Guadalupe Posada, depicting the archetypal ‘Clown Mexicano’ (fig.2). Although it does not name Bell, this illustration is a clear evocation of him or his followers: the quiff, the ruff, the make-up, the conical hat, the baggy trousers and the brightly-coloured patches are among the signature elements of Bell’s stage persona, derived in turn from Grimaldi’s. Even the stance is reminiscent of contemporary images of Bell. It is also telling that the word ‘clown’ is used,

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13 For a concise and largely accurate biographical sketch of Bell, which is also revealing of his lasting legacy, see L.F. Bustamente’s ‘Ricardo Bell: El Clown Dandy’, Revista Historica, año 5, no. 535 (1949). Revolledo’s El Siglo de oro contiene a more extensive account, drawing on Bell, a biography by his daughter, Sylvia Bell de Aguilar (Mexico City: private printing, 1984).
14 On this, see Eduardo Patino Díaz’s documentary Ricardo Bell: El poeta de la risa (TV UNAM, 2008), available on YouTube.
rather than the Spanish ‘payaso’. This macaronic title is suggestive of how Bell himself adapted an English tradition to a Mexican sensibility, giving rise to a truly transcultural artefact.17

Turning briefly to Bell’s performance style, according to the leading historian of the Mexican circus, in the 1880s Bell became ‘the standard for a new, educated clown’.18 With his family-friendly capers and invariably clean jokes, Bell represented a wholesome, cosmopolitan alternative to the raucous Mexican street theatre, as embodied in the ‘carpas’ (tent theatres that moved around working-class neighbourhoods) and ‘jacalones’ (shacks that provided short comedies at affordable prices). This form of theatre embodied a rural culture of innuendo and subversion, one which preserved mestizo and even Indigenous elements.19

As Peter Stallybrass and Allon White argue, late-nineteenth-century Europe saw a ‘middle-class rejection of the indigenous carnival tradition’.20 The bourgeoisie ‘disowned’21 the carnivalesque, with its bawdy, anarchic overtones and rural roots, and in this it was ‘one of many casualties in the movement towards an urban, industrial society’.22 In Mexico, Porfirio Díaz was aiming to effect just such a movement, and his embracing of Bell can be read as an aspect of this broader project.23 Moreover, a central goal of the dictator was to implant European values in Mexican society, a project into which Bell also fit. In this regard, we might return to the observation of the great Peruvian philosopher Mariátegui, excerpted at the start of this article. Writing some years after Bell’s heyday, his text nonetheless gives a sense of how the British clown was perceived in Latin America as integrally linked to British imperialism – a cog in ‘the magnificent machinery of the Empire’ – as well as embodying core British

17 Can Bell’s practice as a clown be thought of as a somehow integral and unitary artefact? Simon J. Evnine’s Making Objects and Events: A Hylomorphic Theory of Artifacts, Actions, and Organisms (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016) is interesting in this regard. Evnine outlines how certain actions could be considered to constitute an artefact, giving the examples, among many others, of a circus performer’s act (p.236), the telling of a joke (p.240), and singing and dancing (p.250).
18 Revolledo, El Siglo De Oro, p.145.
19 Paul Alonso resumes how the carpas combined ‘the medieval Spanish and Aztec traditions of the public theatre’, creating ‘a space for social criticism and dissident humor’; Alonso also notes that the carpas are the root of a Mexican tradition of subversive clowns, among them Cantinflas, Roberto Gómez Bolaños’ El Chavo del Ocho, and Víctor Trujillo’s Brozo, although these characters also bear characteristics that are clearly derived from the tradition inaugurated by Bell. See Alonso, ‘Brozo’s El Mañanero: Televisa’s Grotesque Clown as Transgressive Journalism in Mexico’, in his Satiric TV in the Americas: Critical Metatainment as Negotiated Dissent (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 76–96.
21 Ibid., p.178.
22 Ibid., p.177.

Figure 2. Jose Guadalupe Posada – ‘El Clown Mexicano: Cuaderno No. 6’ (ca. 1880–1910), The Metropolitan Museum of Art Collection
values: for Maridueña, the clown is as emblematic an institution as the House of Lords. Meanwhile, the British clown’s ‘domestication of the wild, nomadic buffoonery of the bohemian’ anticipates the argument of Stallybrass and White, and corresponds to Bell’s role in Mexico. If Bell was patronised by Porfirio Díaz, it was because the dictator saw in him an opportunity to integrate ‘refined capitalist’ values into Mexican society via a relatively innocuous means.

Here, then, we have an example of British cultural influence on Mexican society that resists elucidation in terms of traditional concepts of ‘cultural imperialism’, which typically presume a) previous military occupation, and b) deliberate agency on the part of the metropolitan authorities. Likewise, traditional notions of ‘informal empire’ cannot entirely capture the situation. Did Bell think of himself as a sort of secret agent on behalf of British imperialism? Was his ultimate goal to pave the way for an influx of British capital? Or was he simply an emigrant artist who settled in a place where he could be successful – and enjoy a style of life he could not have accessed at home – and hence only inadvertently a vector of British values? In short, in order to conceptualise Bell’s position in Mexican society, we need to consider him not solely in terms of economic and political conditions, but also of more diffuse cultural factors.

**El Circo Orrin**

We have seen that, in the case of Bell, the ideological ramifications of the championing of British culture by the Mexican establishment are somewhat abstract. For a more concrete and explicit application of British socioeconomic ideals, we will turn to the circus where Bell performed for much of his career.

A tourist brochure published in 1898 by the Mexican National Railroad Company (at the time an American enterprise) characterises the Circo Orrin in this way: ‘Circus and high-class vaudeville. Only American place of amusement in Mexico.’34 As well as American culture, the circus was a showcase of European talent, variously featuring French singers, Viennese dancers, and Italian and Spanish actors.35 The Orrin brothers themselves were pillars of Anglo-American and upper-class society, organising charity dinners and fundraising functions that were attended by the political elite and sometimes by Díaz himself.36

Alongside this, Edward Orrin was a well-established entrepreneur – the Directorio General de la Ciudad de Mexico, 1893–1894 notes that he owned three separate addresses dedicated to various business ventures, while, according to the Daily Anglo American,37 he was co-owner of a dairy farm outside the city.38

The permanent seat of the Circo Orrin was built in 1891, further distinguishing it from its ‘nomadic’, autochthonous alternatives. Designed by a French architect named Del Pierra, the Teatro Circo Orrin was a strikingly modern building, constructed primarily of steel and glass at a time when adobe and tezontle – a volcanic stone – were the predominant building materials in the region. The main theatre was complemented by smoking rooms, bars, a bakery and a candy shop.39 In the space in front of the complex there was a ‘jardín inglés’, a small square landscaped in a manner evocative of the principles of the English garden as it was characterised at the time, and clearly intended to serve as a microcosm of order and elegance.40

We could also consider it in light of Aguirre’s observation regarding visual depictions of Mexico, that ‘the enfolding of Mexico into European conventions of landscape aesthetics suggested its availability for control and exploitation from afar.’41 In short, the theatre building was a flagship of European architectural principles.

**Labor omnia vincit**

As a way to think about how the Orrin brothers’ circus dovetailed with the broader Porfriian project, we could home in on the motto which adorned the façade of their establishment: *Labor omnia vincit.*

Meaning ‘Work conquers all’, this phrase from Virgil’s Georgics has a long history. It was recycled in various different colonial contexts, no doubt partly because ‘vincit’ is a particularly loaded verb in such settings. In the case of Mexico, in 1588 King Phillip II of Spain made it the motto of the city of Zacatecas, one of the most important mining regions in the New Spain (the Spanish having laboured to conquer,
it was now the conquered who had to labour). That the phrase remained associated with the exploitation of Indigenous labour is suggested by a photograph in the Fototeca Pedro Guerra of the Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán. Taken some time between 1885 and 1925, it depicts the façade of the principal building of the Sacapuc ‘hacienda’ (plantation) in the Yucatán, with our phrase prominently inscribed on it. In the photograph, the hacienda’s workforce is arrayed for a religious procession, the majority of them likely Yaqui people from the Sonora region. 33

In early-modern Europe, the phrase was also ‘a verbal fixture in the educated humanist imagination’, particularly in relation to pedagogy. 34 It is in this sense that we often find it applied in the context of British colonialism. Early examples include its use as the motto of the College of Engineering, Guindy, in Chennai, India, which was initially founded by the East India Company in 1794 as the ‘Revenue Survey School’; 35 and of St. Jago High School in Jamaica, established in 1774. It is also the motto of Cheltenham College, the first of the Victorian public schools, founded in 1841. Subsequently, the phrase came to be associated with labour movements in the US, including the seminal American Federation of Labor, established in 1886 – only a few years before the construction of the Circo Orrin.

As these examples of its use suggest, this potent phrase folded together a range of different associations, among them imperial domination, the formation of a workforce out of colonised peoples, and the valorisation of the Protestant work ethic. Thus, while it might strike one as a somewhat incongruous motto for a place of leisure, the choice of this phrase makes explicit the broader ideological dimension of the Circo Orrin’s place in society. Porfirio Díaz welcomed British and American companies and investors with open arms. As Bell was performing in the Circo Orrin, such companies were operating in virtually every aspect of the country’s economic and industrial life, from mining and railways to real estate and commerce; their owners ‘desired to stabilize the work force, train permanent workers, extend their hours and days of work, and increase productivity. Therefore, they had to separate the worker from his village and land [...] and transform him into an industrial worker dependent entirely on wages.’ 36 This desire corresponds closely to the Porfirian elite’s overarching goal of capitalist transformation, and both ends are well served by the philosophy of ‘Labor omnia vincit’ becoming ingrained in the minds of the workers.

As it happens, their theatre was not the last intervention that the Orrin brothers made in the built landscape of Mexico City. Edward Walter Orrin was a prime mover behind the construction of ‘la colonia Roma’, a neighbourhood to the west of the colonial-era city, principally comprising grand mansions and pseudo-Parisian boulevards. 37 Now, ‘colonía’ is simply the administrative term used to denote ‘neighbourhood’ in Mexico, while ‘Roma’ is a reference to the name of the hamlet around which the new development was built, namely ‘la Romita’. Nevertheless, it would be disingenuous to think that its builders were oblivious to the imperial resonances of this designation. Further to this, all of the streets bear the names of different cities and regions of Mexico. 38 It is possible to read this naming device as a spatial articulation of the centralising tendency of Porfirian rule, a tendency which was facilitated by the railway network that British and American engineers were busily installing at this time: all roads lead to la Roma.

As much as gunboats and investment bankers, then, the Circo Orrin underwrote informal imperialism, implanting cultural values which could be leveraged on a political or economic level. In Alan Knight’s summation, ‘The British presence in Latin America [...] involved ideological and cultural proselytization [and] the dissemination [...] of British attitudes, ideas, and cultural practices.’ 39 To return to Mariátegui, we would certainly be justified in seeing the work of both the Orrin brothers and Ricardo Bell as ‘una rueda y un movimiento de la magnifica máquina del Imperio’.

33 ‘Hacendados, trabajadores y sacerdote frente a la casa principal. Se trata de la Fiesta Religiosa de la Hacienda Sacapuc que perteneció al Dr. Alonso Patrón Espadas entre los años 1885-1925’, Fototeca Pedro Guerra, Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán. See Gilbert M. Joseph, Rediscovering the Past at Mexico’s Periphery: Essays on the History of Modern Yucatan, (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2003); this photograph is reproduced on p.77.


37 Edgar Tavares López’ Colonia Roma (Mexico City: Clío, 1998) remains the best study of the history of la Roma. On Orrin’s involvement in its building, see Ch.1.

38 It is often said that, every time the Orrins’ troupe returned from a tour, a newly-built street was named after the place they had visited. However, Tavares López pointedly refrains from repeating this claim, and the present author has yet to find confirmation for it in a primary text. Tavares López cites Salvador Novo’s affirmation that the street names in la Roma are the product of ‘una tardía ola de compensador nacionalismo geográfico’ [‘an overdue wave of compensatory geographical nationalism’]. In Tavares López, Colonia Roma, P.31.

The Nocturne and the ‘Native Village’: contrasting Japonismes in late-Victorian London

JONATHAN PARKER
This article contrasts two manifestations of the late-Victorian fascination with Japonisme – James Whistler’s painting Nocturne in Blue and Silver (1872–5) and the Daily News’ review of Tannaker Buhicrosan ‘Japanese Native Village’ (1885) – to question how, within the metropolitan context of Victorian London, Orientalist influences could be deployed in radically different ways, for (apparently) different ends. Comparing their antithetical approaches to claims of authenticity, I explore Buhicrosan’s ‘Japanese Native Village’ as a problematic, and ultimately unsustainable, exercise in cultural containment, within an increasingly-cosmopolitan city, and offer a reading of Whistler’s painting as an Orientalist cultural construction that resists an Orientalist reading.
At ten o’clock in the evening on Friday 20th February 1885, as the ‘Japanese Native Village’, only recently installed at Humphreys’ Hall Knightsbridge, closed its doors on another day’s trading, just over a mile away at Prince’s Hall on Piccadilly, James McNeill Whistler stepped out onto the stage in full evening dress and commenced his ‘ten o’clock’ lecture – a much-hyped talk in which he outlined his provocative and passionately-held views on the relationship between art, nature, and beauty. After speaking for almost an hour, Whistler drew to a close: ‘the story of the beautiful,’ he concluded, ‘is already complete’ – it is to be found ‘hewn in the marbles of the Parthenon’ and it is ‘broderied, with the birds, upon the fan of Hokusai – at the foot of Fusi-yama.’ Whistler had agonised over the speech all winter and his ‘ten o’clock’ would endure from this night forward as the clearest expression of his artistic beliefs he would ever make; that the final image Whistler left hanging in the minds of his audience that night should have been of a Japanese fan, adorned with imagery by the great Japanese master Hokusai, was a calculated move that would not have come to be a personal trademark. As John Updike put it so well, Whistler had been:

the first to seize upon Japanese art as a clue to the future, when the abyss of three-dimensional perspective opened by the Renaissance would be sealed shut by the frankly two-dimensional canvas.

Whistler embraced all the possibilities that Japanese art might afford his painting, and played a crucial role in shaping ‘the British Orientalist imaginary’ as, in Grace E. Lavery words, ‘Japan passed quickly from obscurity into eccentric modernity’. By February 1885, the Victorian fashion for Japanism was approaching its zenith: among Whistler’s audience at Prince’s Hall that night sat Sir Arthur Sullivan, whose Mikado was in rehearsal around the corner at the Savoy Theatre; while only a few hundred yards away on Regent Street, the Liberty & Co. store ‘East India House’ boasted ‘Japan – Bric-a-Brac, Toys, Lacquer Ware’ at the top of its list of ‘Eastern Art’ and, as John MacKenzie has noted, employed ‘a Japanese boy called Haru Kitsui’ among its small staff. However, nothing quite matched Tannaker Buhicrosan’s ‘Japanese Native Village’ in its scale and ambition: an attempt to reproduce Japanese rural life within an exhibition space in London’s West End, populated with one hundred Japanese workers and purporting to be, above all else, the one thing it most obviously wasn’t: authentic.

In this brief article, I provide a fresh perspective on this moment when Japanese culture was transported to, and transformed within, the imperial cityscape of Victorian London by paying close attention to two objects associated with this night in February 1885: firstly, an early review of the ‘Japanese Native Village’ published in the Daily News on 26th January 1885; and secondly, one of Whistler’s paintings, today known widely as Nocturne: Blue and Gold – Old Battersea Bridge (1872–5) but as this paper actively seeks to ground these artefacts in their historical moment, I shall be referring to the painting by its 1870s / 1880s title, Nocturne in Blue and Silver. In doing so, I hope to excavate some of the tensions that arose from the relocation of Japanese cultural artefacts and practices into the metropolitan cultural space of Victorian London.

Like the more obvious money-making enterprise down the road, Whistler’s ten o’clock lecture was also first and foremost a commercial venture: Whistler had spent over £12 on advertisements to help him clear a £109 profit. Meanwhile the 1885 ‘Japanese Native Village’ in Knightsbridge attracted a staggering 250,000 visitors in its first 112 days – before a fire in early May 1885 killed one and injured many of the Japanese workers, razed the village to the ground. The village had been masterminded by a dubious character named Tannaker Buhicrosan who fittingly, given the illusory nature of the exhibit, seems far more likely to have been a distinctly British rogue, rather than the Dutch-Japanese merchant presented in the Victorian press, as Paul Budden’s recent book has demonstrated convincingly.

3 James McNeill Whistler, Mr Whistler’s ‘Ten O’Clock’ (New York: Marion Press, 1908), p. 29.
6 Sutherland, p. 206.
8 ‘Advertisements & Notices’, Pall Mall Gazette, 3 December 1880, p. 16.
10 Glasgow, Glasgow University Library, MS Whistler W1053r; MS Whistler D131r
To accompany the exhibition, Buhicrosan’s Japanese wife, Otakesan Buhicrosan, wrote a guide book for visitors that succinctly explained the display was ‘intended to take the form of a complete Village, erected and peopled exclusively by native men, women and children, and designed to illustrate, in a unique and comprehensive manner, the industrial, social, and domestic life of Japan’.

The opening of the Japanese village prompted a flurry of press reviews but the Daily News’ write-up stands out from its rivals for one key reason: the reviewer seems peculiarly interested in how the display may reveal more about the British public than the Japanese ‘exhibits’. It begins:

A collection of written opinions from English visitors respecting the Japanese village at Knightsbridge would doubtless be a curious study. How much more curious, on the other hand, would be the opinions entertained by the hundred or so of interesting Japanese villagers on view daily in Humphreys’ Hall.

The reviewer, palpably dismayed at the rudeness of the British masses as they gawp and pronounce their verdicts (‘how very droll!’, ‘Oh, do look at her hair!’), then goes on to imagine exactly what the Japanese villagers must think of the endless procession of Britons before them, concluding acerbically that:

Should there be a special correspondent amongst them whose contributions will be republished hereafter, we should probably find that our visitors are not altogether lost in awe and admiration of Western civilization in its own home.

True to the radical spirit of the paper, which had been founded by Dickens in 1846, this represents a deliberate reversal of the established hierarchy of the colonial gaze – starkly contrasting the best of Japanese culture and civility (‘they are picked workmen, the very elite of the industrial classes of Japan’) against the vulgarity of the British public with withering wit:

It is a peculiarity of the visitors of the Japanese village to address the people connected with the exhibition at the top of their voices, as indeed we invariably do when speaking to foreigners anywhere.

A similar inversion was pictorialised in Punch the same week – a cartoon depicting ‘An English village from a Japanese point of view’ which shows a metropolitan Japanese audience wandering, with expressions ranging from dismay to humour to horror.

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15 Ibid.
16 Ibid.
through a grotesque depiction of British rural life with its drunkards, freakshows, pig farms and dog fights. However, the additional layer of irony in the case of the *Daily News* is that the reviewer has inadvertently fallen into the same trap of Anglocentricism he aims to critique, by assuming that the ‘very elite of the industrial classes of Japan’ would agree to spending two years performing and posing eleven hours a day for public entertainment, in a cramped exhibition hall on the other side of the world. In fact, as Amelia Scholtz, Hugh Cortazzi, and Kurata Yoshihito have shown, Tannaker’s performers were anything but the elite of Japanese cultural enterprise – the vast majority were a hastily-assembled group of amateurs, selected principally for their willingness to make the 6,000-mile journey to Britain:

The *Daily News* review demonstrates just how completely the oriental scene encountered at Humphreys’ Hall in 1885 was suspended in misunderstanding – taken out of context deliberately and literally – allowing a wide spectrum of readings and, more often, misreadings. Whistler’s exposure to Japanese cultural artefacts made an undeniable and significant impact on his artistic practice, but more difficult to verify is the depth of Whistler’s encounter with, or understanding of, the intellectual and social contexts within which Japanese art was made. Ayako Ono observes:

It is true that Whistler derived inspiration from Japanese art in terms of composition, space and harmony of colour in order to accomplish his own style; but he did not mention Japanese aesthetics, nor is there any sense in this [his ‘Ten o’clock’] lecture that he had a real philosophical understanding of Japanese art.19

*Nocturne in Blue and Silver* is one of a group of paintings produced by Whistler from 1866 to the mid-1880s – many capturing scenes along the Thames at night or in a dim half-light. Hélène Valance describes them deftly as ‘a series of night landscapes characterized by almost monochromatic abstraction’, with Whistler borrowing the ‘nocturne’ title from Chopin’s moonlight compositions, on the advice of his friend and client Fredrick Leyland.20 The oriental presence in *Nocturne in Blue and Silver* is not as overt as in Whistler’s works such as *Variations in Flesh Colour and Green – The Balcony* (1864–1870; with additions 1870–1879) or *Caprice in Purple and Gold: The Golden Screen* (1864) which feature Japanese costumes and art objects as their subjects; yet in spite of being less instantly visible, the Japanese influence in the series of Thames views painted in the 1870s that Whistler christened his Nocturnes is arguably more fundamental. Successive critics such as Shin Ando (1983), Ayako Ono (2003) and Peter Russell (2017) have pointed out the clear compositional similarity between *Nocturne in Blue and Silver* and Hiroshige’s ukiyo-e print *Kiyobashi Takekashi / Bamboo Yards, Kiyobashi Bridge, No. 76 from One Hundred Famous Views of Edo* (1857) – but just as important are the restricted palette and the monotone of deep blue that pervades his evening views of the Thames, reflecting the striking unity of hue and tone present in ukiyo-e prints of evening landscapes, together with a provocative abandonment of the artist’s strict adherence to Renaissance perspective as the incontrovertible method of rendering space in two dimensions and an equally dangerous rejection of pictorial realism as the best way of capturing a sense of place. Together, the effect is to defamiliarise the view for the viewer by a process of abstraction. As Grace E. Lavery puts it neatly,

21 Lavery, p. 82.
22 Ruskin’s famous attack followed the Grosvenor Gallery’s 1877 Summer Exhibition, where Whistler exhibited *Nocturne in Blue and Silver alongside Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket* (1875) – focussing on the latter, Ruskin accused Whistler of ‘flinging a pot of paint in the public’s face’ – a comment later deemed to be libellous. See: John Ruskin, ‘Letter LXXIX’, *Foras Clavigera*, 2 July 1877, pp. 181–213.

For many of his contemporaries, and John Ruskin in particular, Whistler’s process of defamiliarisation and abstraction went too far – straying beyond the limits of what could be considered art.22

*Nocturne in Blue and Silver* was submitted as evidence in the infamous libel lawsuit Whistler v. Ruskin, which had its day in court on 15th November 1878. In the absence of the official court transcript, which has long been lost, Whistler’s own telling in *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies* (1890), describes (with questionable reliability) the painting’s appearance in court and the questions it elicited from the judge, Baron Huddleston towards Whistler (in the witness box):

Cross-examination continued: “What was the subject of the nocturne in blue and silver belonging to Mr. Grahame?”

“A moonlight effect on the river near old Battersea Bridge.”

[...]

The picture called the nocturne in blue and silver, was now produced in Court
“That is Mr Grahame’s picture. It represents Battersea Bridge by moonlight.”

Baron Huddleston: “Which part of the picture is the bridge?” (Laughter.)

His Lordship earnestly rebuked those who laughed. And witness explained to his Lordship the composition of the picture.

“Do you say that this is a correct representation of Battersea Bridge?”

“I did not intend it to be a ‘correct’ portrait of the bridge. It is only a moonlight scene and the pier in the centre of the picture may not be like the piers at Battersea Bridge as you know them in broad daylight. As to what the picture represents that depends on who looks at it. To some persons it may represent all that is intended; to others it may represent nothing.”

“The prevailing colour is blue?”

“Perhaps.”

“Are those figures on the top of the bridge intended for people?”

“They are just what you like.”

But it is important to note that this is not a term Whistler seems to have ever used publicly himself. Rather than denying this painting is a portrait of Battersea Bridge, in court Whistler insists instead that it was never intended as a ‘correct’ portrait of Battersea Bridge – promoting the primacy of the viewer in conceptualising meaning and ascribing a subject at the moment of seeing, rather than the picture’s meaning(s) being fixed by the artist’s intention at the point of composition, or the material scene that appeared before his eye.

By bringing together Japanese pictorial aesthetics with British topography, Whistler seemed to recognise the possible instability of visual meanings in an increasingly-globalised world. In much the same way as a Japanese Village in the heart of Knightsbridge created a plurality of meanings that allowed some viewers to see ‘poor benighted barbarians’, others the ‘very elite of the industrial classes’, and yet others ‘a reckless national disgrace’ – the influence of Japanese woodcuts on Whistler’s images also created ambiguity, out of which some might see Battersea Bridge, others a moonlight scene, yet others nothing at all.

A possible source of this ambiguity might be found in the fact that both the Nocturnes and ‘subjectless’ paintings but it is important to note that this is not a term Whistler seems to have ever used publicly himself. Rather than denying this painting is a portrait of Battersea Bridge, in court Whistler insists instead that it was never intended as a ‘correct’ portrait of Battersea Bridge – promoting the primacy of the viewer in conceptualising meaning and ascribing a subject at the moment of seeing, rather than the picture’s meaning(s) being fixed by the artist’s intention at the point of composition, or the material scene that appeared before his eye.

Behind this entertaining exchange, revealing the inevitable mismatch between Whistler’s foggy aesthetic penumbra and the black and white letter of the law, it is possible to trace an explanation of why Whistler experimented with Japanese modes of painting in his nocturne scenes. Critics still have a tendency to refer to the Nocturnes as ‘subjectless’ paintings, but it is important to note that this is not a term Whistler seems to have ever used publicly himself. Rather than denying this painting is a portrait of Battersea Bridge, in court Whistler insists instead that it was never intended as a ‘correct’ portrait of Battersea Bridge – promoting the primacy of the viewer in conceptualising meaning and ascribing a subject at the moment of seeing, rather than the picture’s meaning(s) being fixed by the artist’s intention at the point of composition, or the material scene that appeared before his eye.

By bringing together Japanese pictorial aesthetics with British topography, Whistler seemed to recognise the possible instability of visual meanings in an increasingly-globalised world. In much the same way as a Japanese Village in the heart of Knightsbridge created a plurality of meanings that allowed some viewers to see ‘poor benighted barbarians’, others the ‘very elite of the industrial classes’, and yet others ‘a reckless national disgrace’ – the influence of Japanese woodcuts on Whistler’s images also created ambiguity, out of which some might see Battersea Bridge, others a moonlight scene, yet others nothing at all.

A possible source of this ambiguity might be found in the fact that both the Nocturnes and ‘subjectless’ paintings...
‘Japanese Native Village’ and *Nocturne in Blue and Silver* display considerable ambivalence to the modern city around them. The material presence of a Japanese village in the heart of London is a result of, and a celebration of, the modern connectivity of Britain’s imperial networks, yet it also deliberately and necessarily must exclude and reject all ideas of ‘modernity’, ‘Britain’ or ‘connectivity’ to achieve its effect. A particularly telling moment in the *Daily News* review occurs as the writer is shown around by Tannaker Buhicrosan and they are approached by one of the lacquer-makers in a state of excitement:

> He had conceived the idea that the foreigners (the British ticket-holders) would prefer some design that was not Japanese, and offered for approval some perfectly sketched pen-and-ink designs of an English frame which he had copied. The sparkle went out of his black eye, when it was explained [by Buhicrosan] that the more Japanese everything in the village can be the better.

Likewise, Whistler displays a similar ambivalence to the forces of modernity (although, thankfully, without the overt racism). On the one hand, *Nocturne in Blue and Silver* is a picture painted with a new aesthetic mode, made possible by the transcendent networks that connected Victorian London to the rest of the world; it captures – and perhaps celebrates – the glow of city gas lamps and the bursting cascade of fireworks, launched into the inky sky from the cosmopolitan playground of the Cremorne Gardens. Yet, it also shows us a city populated by ghosts: contorted human silhouettes haunt the scene and Whistler seems drawn to the glimmers of an older city that was being cleared away in his lifetime. At the time of painting, Old Battersea Bridge was the last remaining wooden bridge over the Thames – a relic that was deemed unsafe and closed to traffic in 1883 before being replaced by a new cast-iron crossing, designed by London’s Moderniser-in-Chief, Sir Joseph Bazalgette in 1890. By depicting Old Battersea Bridge with the new iron Albert Bridge visible under construction, in scaffolding just down river, Whistler was, to borrow a phrase from Walter Benjamin, ‘making it possible to see a new beauty in what is vanishing’. For Whistler, paradoxically perhaps, the techniques of Japanese art afforded a new way of seeing that which was disappearing.

By bringing the ‘Far East’ into uncomfortable proximity with the modern metropolitan realities of London, Whistler and Buhicrosan ‘artworks’ reveal a desire that Said found ‘everywhere amongst Orientalists’:

> the ambition to formulate their discoveries, experiences, and insights suitably in modern terms, to put ideas about the Orient in very close touch with modern realities.

Later in *Orientalism*, Said’s critique of Ernest Renan (a contemporary of Whistler and Buhicrosan) also feels pertinent to Whistler and Buhicrosan’s handling of Oriental culture, as Said concludes:

> He constructs, and the very act of construction is a sign of imperial power over recalcitrant phenomena, as well as a confirmation of the dominating culture and its “naturalization.”

Arguably Said’s criticism of Renan is one that could also be levelled at both Whistler and Buhicrosan. While the case against Buhicrosan looks open-and-shut, the question it begs in relation to Whistler is whether the act of a ‘Western’ artist using ‘Oriental’ techniques or modes of representation to ‘construct’ an artwork is always an act of imperial domination – or whether it could ever be something closer to hybridity. And if we can argue for Whistler’s hybridity within the four walls of a canvas, why not Buhicrosan’s construction within the four walls of Humphreys’ Hall? As Said turns to single out Renan’s truth claims for criticism – his presentation of his text ‘as if it were the truthful narrative of a natural life’ – we can identify a significant point of difference between Whistler and Buhicrosan. Whereas Buhicrosan promised a village ‘so arranged that every characteristic of the country will be fully and accurately demonstrated’, Whistler actively eschewed any claim of veracity: his cultural signature was to defy all easy explanations of his work – both in and out of court. In this sense, within the global networks of Victorian London, Buhicrosan’s village offered a commodification of Japanese culture that propagated misunderstanding; Whistler, meanwhile, melted hierarchies of space and place in a painting that fused cultural influences and exposed the subjective nature of understanding in the process. When, in the days after his ‘ten o’clock’ lecture, Whistler received a note from Oscar Wilde writing only half-jokingly about the perils of explaining one’s own work, it was advice to his friend ‘Jimmy’ Whistler, but it was also both an apology and an apologia for critics everywhere:

> Be warned in time, James; and remain, as I do, incomprehensible: to be great is to be misunderstood.

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31 Ibid, p. 146.

32 Buhicrosan, p. iv.

33 MS Whistler W1046r
From gentility to genitalia: the *koto*, a Japanese writing box and the transformative power of Dante Gabriel Rossetti
In the latter half of the nineteenth century, a wave of interest in Japan that was comparable to Hokusai’s Great Wave off Kanagawa, broke upon western shores. The profound influence that this had upon western art and design spawned the name ‘Japonisme’. This article examines Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s 1865 painting, The Blue Bower and specifically his depiction of a Japanese koto instrument. Rossetti’s artistic intentions are unraveled by comparing his painting to an eighteenth-century Japanese writing box which has been fashioned outwardly into the shape of a koto. Both painting and box draw upon the koto’s gendered nature, but the female attributes to which they allude are very different. This essay offers a new analysis of Rossetti’s The Blue Bower and suggests its association with both Titian’s Venus of Urbino and Japanese ukiyo-e art.
From 1639 until 1853, Japan applied a policy of sakoku or 'closed country' which limited the export of its goods. With our current access to information and global interactions, it may be difficult to capture fully the wonder and curiosity that Japan must have engendered once its borders opened fully to international trade. The resulting western infatuation with Japan would lead to long-lasting artistic and cultural changes in both the West and Japan. In this article, I consider a lacquerware writing box or suzuribako, that was used for calligraphy and made in Japan during its period of relative isolation in the eighteenth century, but which was eagerly acquired in the West a century later. I also examine the 1865 painting by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, entitled The Blue Bower, that exemplifies the early assimilation into western art of Japanese objects but also builds upon a more general, pre-existing interest in the East. Notwithstanding that a decorative box is, of course, a different artistic form from a painting and, further, that their creation is separated by both time and region, they disclose a common artistic approach in their depiction of the Japanese koto instrument which forms a central feature of each object. Analysis of The Blue Bower painting further leads to the conclusion that Rossetti's attitude to the pleasures of the flesh had more in common with Japanese culture than it did with the repressed Victorian mores that prevailed in his own time.

From the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, exciting new wares from the Far East had become increasingly available in Europe. Whilst Samuel Pepys might have noted that his first taste of tea in 1660 had come all the way from China, consumers could, however, be forgiven for some 'geographical confusion' with regard to other artefacts. Even assuming an initial awareness as to the separate origins of Chinese and Japanese porcelain, for example, both were referred to as 'china'; were often displayed together, and could even be combined in what was described as a 'Chinese room'. Similarly, lacquered goods could be described as having been 'japanned' even though they might have originated from China, or indeed, from elsewhere. Whilst greater discernment in the purchase of artefacts did develop, imported porcelain and lacquered goods were novel in Europe no matter where they had originated, and so too were the patterns that were decorated upon such wares. They appeared to be fluid, unregulated and often contained bright exotic motifs that could, for instance, be based upon nature, mythical animals or figures that were clearly non-European. By the early eighteenth century, therefore, European manufacturers sought to compete with these fashionable imports and produced objects in a similar style, sometimes giving them a western twist by mixing in elements of the rococo, baroque or gothic. In the late nineteenth century, the term 'chinoiserie' was coined to describe the goods that resulted from this process.

Curiosity at the opening up of Japan to the West in 1854, therefore, built upon an existing interest in the Far East that had, further, already entered into European artistic design. Like the collectors before them, nineteenth century artists such as Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and his friend James McNeil Whistler, could have a passion for collecting old blue and white Chinese porcelain but also enjoy a fascination for Japanese artefacts, upon which this new spotlight of interest shone. Rossetti and Whistler sourced many of their Japanese artefacts from Madame Desoye's shop on Rue de Rivoli in Paris. However, other outlets existed, including the nearby 'La Porte Chinoise', which, like the 'Chinese room' of some houses, obviously felt that there was nothing in a name to constrain its showcasing objects that were not, in fact, Chinese.

Given the public’s fascination with the Far East generally, and increasingly with Japan in particular, it was natural for artists to incorporate into their work objects and themes with which such regions were associated. Inevitably, this might enhance the prospects of selling their art, but the creative and competitive spirit of artists also acted as incentives. Japan generated particular interest as an idyllic, possibly primitive culture that was untainted by modern innovation and industrialisation, yet

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1 The Dutch East India Company had enjoyed a privileged status and had been able to trade with Japan. See V & A, ‘Japan’s Encounter with Europe, 1573–1853’ <www.vam.ac.uk/articles/japan-s-encounter-with-europe-1573–1853> [accessed 4 February 2021].


3 See, for example, the Japanese figures at Erdig, Denbighshire referred to in Patricia F. Ferguson, Ceramics: 400 Years of Collecting in 100 Masterpieces (London: Philip Wilson Publishers, 2016), p. 41, or the Japanese vases placed in a Chinese Temple at p. 70. Note that the Dutch East India Company seems to have sourced Japanese pottery in a Chinese Wanli style when war disrupted exports from China during the latter half of the seventeenth century: William Watson, The Great Japan Exhibition: Art of the Edo Period 1600–1868 (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 1981), p. 267, item 211.


5 David Beevers 'Mand’rin only is the man of taste: 17th and 18th Century Chinoiserie in Britain', in David Beevers (e.d.), Chinese Whispers: Chinoiserie in Britain 1650–1930 (Brighton: Royal Pavilion & Museums, 2008), pp. 13, 15.

6 Hence the eclectic mix of items that were Chinese, chinoiserie, Japanese, and Indian which were sold following Rossetti’s death in 1882. See 1882 auction particulars 16, Cheyne Walk, Chelsea: The Valuable Contents of the residence of Dante Gabriel Rossetti (Deceased) <https://www.google.com/books/edition/Dante_G_Rossetti_deceased_Catalogue_od_i/109oGAAAQAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1> [accessed 19 March 2021].

still capable of producing objects that could be unrivalled in their beauty and sophistication.8 Japan would, therefore, have chimed with artists like Rossetti, who had already shown an affinity for medievalism. Japanese influence is notable in several of Rossetti’s picture frames where decoration was simple and restrained and included Japanese emblems or mon motifs.9 It is also revealed in Rossetti’s book cover designs that might include Japanese style roundels or a grille pattern.10 In fact, both these latter features find expression in the japanned sofa that Rossetti designed in 1861 for Morris & Company.11 However, it is his 1865 painting, The Blue Bower in Figure 1 that is chosen for close analysis in this article, where inspiration comes from both the Far East and the great Venetian painters of the cinquecento period.

9 See for example the roundels on the frames to Proserpine (1874) and Astrate Syriaca (1877). Note also the mon or Chinese Yin and Yang symbols to the corners of the inner slip to Rossetti’s frame for A Christmas Carol (1867).

The Blue Bower is presented within an English gilded frame, which appears to be original to the painting, but the style is not Japanese as Rossetti had chosen for various of his other paintings. Instead, the frame is in a classical Italian cassetta form with scrolling foliage detail. Rossetti was very particular about the framing of his pictures and, as will be discussed later, his decision in this respect provides a clue as to his inspiration. The painting further features a pale, blue-eyed woman with auburn hair who is decidedly western, if not ‘very English’.13 In many other respects, however, Rossetti appeals to the sensuous exoticism with which the Far East was then associated and blends together items from this region.14 The woman is wearing a Chinese ‘kingfisher’ hair clip and is dressed in what appears to be a fur-lined Chinese robe.15 Significantly, the robe

Figure 2. Japanese writing box in the form of a koto in gold and silver lacquer inlaid with lead, 1700–1775, 7.5 cm (h) × 10.8 cm (w) × 24.8 cm (d), accession number W.54–1922. (© Victoria and Albert Museum, London.)
is plain and lacks the busy decorative motifs that were typically depicted in Japanese garments of this period. Behind the woman are tiles decorated with Oriental prunus blossoms (that Rossetti probably copied from a Chinese vase that he had collected), whereas the hexagonal shape of the tiles suggests an Arab inspiration. The central activity depicted in the painting, however, involves the playing of a koto, being a stringed instrument that has long been associated with Japan.

The koto was introduced into Japan around the eighth century, having first originated in China. It is a form of zither but the individual bridges over which each string sits are capable of being moved, thereby altering its tuning. However, as Henry Johnson has observed, the depiction of equidistant bridges in The Blue Bower appears to be inapposite for the Japanese pentatonic tuning system. As Johnson further notes, Rossetti seems to have been unaware of how the instrument would be played as he depicts the musician’s hands as being next to each other, so that they appear to be on one side of

Figure 3 & 4. Plan view with lid (above) and internal tray to writing box, sitting above inkstone and water dropper (below). (© Victoria and Albert Museum, London.)
Blue Bower as ‘Rossetti’s most musical’ painting. 21 Certainly, the background shapes of the tiles and bursts of flowers do seem to visualise the percussive sounds that would emanate from a koto and, further, convey its strange, exotic sound (to western ears at least.) However, given the earlier technical analysis, it is doubtful that the koto which Rossetti depicts could have produced any music, or at least authentic Japanese music. 22 It has already been noted why such a Japanese object might have appealed to both an artist and ultimate purchaser of a painting. However, it is necessary to consider if deeper aesthetic reasons existed for its inclusion and particular depiction. Some insight into Rossetti’s artistic thinking may be gleaned by comparing this painting to an eighteenth-century Japanese writing box (Figures 2–6) which also depicts a koto in its outward form. 23 As will be argued below, the writing box and Rossetti’s painting demonstrate a congruence in artistic thought that assists an understanding of what Rossetti was seeking to achieve.

Rossetti is understood to have painted the koto in The Blue Bower from a real instrument, albeit exercising some artistic licence, and it may well be that he had, himself, bought this miniature version on one of his collecting forays. 24 The writing box (which is now held by the Victoria and Albert Museum), was part of an English nineteenth century collection of Michael Tomkinson (1841–1921). 25 He was fascinated by the artistic and technical merits of Japanese lacquerware which, at its best, was unsurpassed. 26 There is no doubt that it would also have appealed to Rossetti. Rossetti, for example, owned at least one Japanese box, albeit a far plainer one than this example. 27

This writing box is, however, a curious object in that outwardly it is fashioned as a koto. (See Figures 2 and 3). Such design was not an isolated example, as other comparable boxes exist, so what may have been the thinking behind it? 28 The answer appears to lie in the fact that each element of the box is a statement of certain values or accomplishments that would have been highly prized in Japan during the period that it was made and, in particular, considered desirable on the part of a young woman.

The koto emerged from a court tradition and was played by both men and women. However, those who were of noble birth, affluent or simply aspirant, came to encourage their daughters to have a knowledge of the koto to signify their daughter’s status and gentility. In this way, the instrument became part of an artistic home life. 29 Perceptions of the koto were also influenced by early Japanese literature that linked the koto to romantic tales of beautiful women who were discovered only by the sound of their koto music. 30 During the Meiji Period (that commenced during the decade that Rossetti painted The Blue Bower), proficiency in the koto by young Japanese women became something of a necessary preparation for marriage and a sign of good breeding. 31

Unlike the creator of the writing box, Rossetti may not have been aware of all these associations, but he would certainly have appreciated the link between the koto and young women. Japanese ukiyo-e art, in the form of woodblock prints, flooded Europe during the last four decades of the nineteenth century and these prints sometimes included young women playing the koto. 32 Rossetti would likely have seen such images and, indeed, purchased four books of Japanese prints during November 1864 from Madame Desoys. 33 Additionally, Rossetti’s brother, William, could have been a source for such prints. William came to possess some eighty volumes of Japanese prints and even had an article published on the subject as early as 1863. 34 This may also explain William’s familiarity with Madame Desoye, which Rossetti refers to as William’s shop in 1864. 35 The fact that the koto is depicted

as being played by a woman in The Blue Bower, is, therefore, consistent with Rossetti having acquired knowledge as to the gendered nature of this instrument and, most probably, derived from Japanese prints.

Inside the writing box, we find an inkstone, where ink would have been ground from an inkstick, and then mixed with water. The brass water container shown in Figures 5 and 6 is in the shape of a ribbed fan that has been partially unfolded. 36 Obviously, such a shape has a decorative value, but its choice of inclusion adds to the messages conveyed by this writing box. Given the hot summer months in Japan, fans were used by both men and women to keep cool. However, highly ornate and colourful fans, tended to be used by women and, of course, also became highly collectable in the West simply as decorative objects. 37 It is important to appreciate, however, that fans also functioned as intrinsic elements in other art forms, such as in Japanese dance and theatrical performance. In the latter instance, the fan could operate as a ‘symbolic prop’ which, with skilful manipulation, could indicate objects, actions or emotions. 38 By inclusion of the fan-shaped container, therefore, further art forms are alluded to by the creator of the writing box.

The primary function of the box, however, was for housing the necessary implements for writing and, in particular, calligraphy. To this end, the box would also have once contained a brush and paper in the tray. In the Far East, calligraphy was (and remains), not simply a matter of good handwriting executed through the medium of brush and ink, but rather a major art form, with various identifiable traditions or styles. 39 It has long been part of Japan’s high culture and practised by educated men and women. 40 The development of different writing systems in Japan, including kanji whereby Chinese characters act as ideograms, and the later phonetic hiragana and katakana, no doubt contributed to the richness of Japan’s calligraphy. 41 Japanese calligraphy can comprise written script alone or act as an intrinsic component to a larger painting and, further, be employed upon a variety of


41 See, for example, Yuuko Suzuki, An Introduction to Japanese Calligraphy (Tunbridge Wells: Search, 2005), pp. 6–12.
mediums. An example from the poet tradition of Japanese calligraphy can be seen in Figure 6 where the poem also operates as visual art. When referring to good Japanese calligraphy, Yoshiaaki Shimizu and John Rosenfield emphasize its potential for qualities of balance, rhythm, vitality, contrast and continuity. These, they argue, are qualities shared with painting, music and even dance and, therefore, see calligraphy as a bridge between these various art forms.

It is clear that the writing box, therefore, celebrates artistic expression through music, writing and visual art but, further, creates links to theatre and dance. The design of the box suggests, therefore, that a proficiency in at least the three former art forms was to be prized, and given the gendered nature of the koto, particularly in a young woman. In conveying this message, the creator of the box was adept in visualising one art form as a component of another and, in so doing, draws an association between each. Accordingly, the artefact appears in the form of a koto but functions as a writing box, while the fan shaped object within, actually operates as a water dropper for writing, or calligraphy. Further, the fan, itself, can represent something beyond its physical form and act as a symbolic prop when used in theatrical performance, just as a poem expressed in calligraphy can function, also, as visual art. In suggesting a relationship between different art forms, therefore, the writing box parallels a debate that occurred during Rossetti’s own time and, in particular, the extent to which other art forms could and should take inspiration from music. In placing music at its ultimate, exterior form, it is arguable that the creator of the writing box highlights music over other art forms that are included within; perhaps even anticipating Walter Pater’s famous observation that ‘all art constantly aspires to the condition of music’. It is, however, the box’s suggestion that music, and, specifically, a koto, can assume multiple roles that will now be explored in the context of The Blue Bower.

The Blue Bower painting was not one of Rossetti’s ‘double-works of art’ where, for instance, a poem might be inscribed onto the frame of his painting. (A practice which was different to Japanese calligraphy, but which bears some comparison.) However, there remains justification to draw a link between this painting and certain of Rossetti’s poems. Rossetti describes the bower in his poetry and strongly associates it with lovemaking. His poem, The Song of the Bower, for example, describes the ‘prize’ of sexual pleasure that awaits ‘entry’. The female lover of that bower is described as having ‘large lovely arms and a neck like a tower’, a description that one can readily associate with Fanny Cornforth. She was Rossetti’s sitter for The Blue Bower painting, but also his lover for many years. Significantly, Cornforth’s own identity was relevant to this painting because Rossetti creates a visual pun on her name by his inclusion of cornflowers in the foreground, just next to the koto. This reference to her name might, therefore, explain why Rossetti also depicts the koto (incorrectly) with fourteen strings. As Johnson has suggested, the name Fanny Cornforth has fourteen letters that correspond to the number of strings depicted. Johnson does not offer an explanation, however, as to what purpose Rossetti might have had in the identification of the koto with Fanny Cornforth, but this aspect will become clearer in the analysis which follows.

In this painting, Cornforth engages with the viewer primarily by her direct outwards gaze that renders the viewer a participant to her music-making. The sense of space in The Blue Bower is confined, but the complex, almost hallucinogenic effect of the background, emphasizes Cornforth’s figure and accentuates the feeling of her proximity. The viewer feels involvement in a very intimate scene. Cornforth’s hair is shown down, as would have been appropriate in a private, intimate setting of that time, but it is also uncombed with strands that fall haphazardly down her neck, as might have resulted from lying down. She, therefore, projects sexual readiness in a scene that is saturated with rich sensuous colours and the perceived scent of flowers. Many of the features just described in relation to The Blue Bower (facial expression, tilted head, direct engagement with the viewer, hair worn down, sexual readiness, prominent placement of flowers and use of colour) are, in fact, reminiscent of Titian’s Venus of Urbino.
who, whilst naked, engages with the viewer but with her left hand touching her pudendum. It is suggested that it is because of this association to Venetian art that Rossetti further showcases The Blue Bower in an Italian Renaissance style frame. Whilst commentators have often emphasized the Venetian influence of colour in The Blue Bower, it may not be surprising that they have neglected to explore a direct analogy between The Blue Bower and Titian's Venus of Urbino. After all, Cornforth is not nude, but is shown with garments. More importantly, she is depicted playing a musical instrument which occupies both of her hands. It is argued, however, that this would be to overlook Rossetti's use of erotic suggestion that transforms the koto from a decorative object to female genitalia that she does, indeed, touch. Cornforth is wearing a soft textured silk robe that is also fur-lined and unfastened to the front, but nothing to indicate undergarments. An important sensation of touch is, therefore, conveyed of fur upon skin. However, Rossetti heightens the erotic nature of this image because the edges of the fur robe also create a thin aperture that receives emphasis in the light. This allows Cornforth's chest to be glimpsed but is also suggestive of her vulva. The heart-shaped pendant (that ordinarily suggests romantic love) hangs in the centre of the painting, towards the top of this opening of fur. In this context, the pendant may be suggestive of the clitoris; the upper two red jewels giving further definition to such structure. This reading of the pendant is also supported by jewels being objects of value and desire, just as Rossetti describes in The Song of the Bower the 'prize' of sexual pleasure that awaits. In fact, jewels have long been used as a metaphor for genitalia and in French, the word bijou has long referred to both. Such association can also be seen in Japanese art with which Rossetti had some familiarity. In Images from the Floating World, Richard Lane illustrates an anonymous cover sheet for a Japanese Shunga scroll from 1660 that he gives the title Courtesan and Lover. It is unlikely that Rossetti would have seen this early print, or if he did, that he would have understood the inscribed text. However, in terms of composition and sentiment, it is not dissimilar to many other Japanese prints containing genre scenes. Like The Blue Bower, it depicts a woman who is clothed and playing a stringed instrument (in this case, the samisen) but with a man lying to her side. The inscribed text to the image, however, eroticizes the handling of the instrument to masturbation and, like Rossetti's fur aperture and pendant, alludes to the woman's genitalia as being a 'Jewelled Gateway'. It is argued that these erotic sentiments are also seen in The Blue Bower.

In The Blue Bower, Cornforth's attentive gaze upon the viewer is arresting. It conveys her keen interest in the reaction to her dexterity from the viewer, rather than the process of creating music itself. Rossetti then uses touches of red to guide the viewer's eye. The red in the hair clip highlights the fact that Cornforth's hair is down and, in general, loose. Next, the eye is drawn diagonally to her red lips; then vertically down to the red jewels of the pendant that hangs above the fur aperture and, finally, to the tassel on the side. The inscribed text to the image, however, eroticizes the handling of the instrument to masturbation and, like Cornforth's own genitalia that she touches. It is to this end, that Rossetti further associates Fanny Cornforth's name to the instrument by the placement of cornflowers to its side and, arguably, by giving the koto fourteen strings, Rossetti further matches the number of letters in her name. The background features of the painting that were earlier described as potential visualisation of the sound of the koto, also now function as the viewer's resulting euphoria at Cornforth's sexual performance. It is no coincidence, therefore, that Rossetti has depicted passion flowers that bloom in full glory behind Cornforth. Further, the web-like effect of the tiles conveys a feeling that the viewer is very much entranced by Cornforth and under her control. Paul Spencer-Longhurst seems to acknowledge some sexual dimension to the playing of the koto when he observes that it is 'hinting perhaps at an absent lover', but the analysis in this article suggests that the lover may in fact be the viewer.
As we see Cornforth through the gaze of Rossetti (as both artist and lover), the latter would also be biographically correct.

Like the writing box, therefore, The Blue Bower depicts a koto as a decorative object which has the additional capacity to transform into something quite different. The mechanism for transformation, however, is not the same. The box is a physical object that separates to reveal its function for writing and calligraphy. In contrast, the koto in The Blue Bower has the potential to transform only in the mind of the viewer; Rossetti’s technique being comparable to a conjuring trick where the participant’s thoughts or choices are influenced by the subtle use of suggestion. An understanding of the messages conveyed by each object, however, depends upon an appreciation of the gendered nature of the koto and, in both instances, attention is drawn to certain female attributes. In respect of the writing box, this is to a proficiency in certain forms of artistic expression by a young woman and the sense of gentility that results. In the case of the painting, it is a celebration of female sexuality.

Whilst gentility and genitalia are obviously very different female attributes that each object addresses, Rossetti’s celebration of female sexuality would not have been out of place in Japanese culture at that time. Sexuality had long been openly and frankly acknowledged in Japan and was simply part of the vitality of nature.59 As such, it did not provoke embarrassment. Even sexually explicit work, known as Shunga art (or ‘pictures of spring’), was accepted in Japan and was widely produced and distributed.60 During Rossetti’s career, in contrast, European artists risked condemnation if, when portraying sexuality, they strayed too far from accepted academic standards.61 A month after Rossetti had started The Blue Bower, Edouard Manet (1832–1883) famously caused outrage by his work Olympia when it was exhibited at the Paris Salon in May 1865.62 Manet’s depiction of a naked Parisian prostitute who engaged with the viewer almost as a client, was offensive because it was considered too close to the grime of contemporary life. In mitigation for such artistic misdeed, Manet pleaded that he had taken partial inspiration from Titian’s

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60 Even Katsushika Hokusai (1760–1849), a Japanese artist who became particularly well known in the West, produced work of this nature. See for example his 1814 Dream of the Fisherman’s Wife <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/A_OA-0-109> [accessed 15 March 2021].
Venus of Urbino. However, it was not enough to save him from vilification.

It has been argued in this article that Rossetti was in part influenced by Japanese *ukiyo-e* art but also took inspiration from Titian’s *Venus of Urbino* when painting *The Blue Bower* and, further, conjures up a similar scene. As Manet’s *Olympia* demonstrates, the works of Titian, and Venetian art more generally, remained part of the dialogue between artists and critics during this period. Of course, Rossetti also visited Manet’s studio in November 1864, so it is possible that he could even have seen *Olympia* or at least its concept have emerged during discussions. Rossetti was not to start *The Blue Bower* until the following spring, so some connection in creative thought is possible and notwithstanding Rossetti’s critical reaction to his visit. However, in contrast to the overt sexuality that is depicted by Titian or Manet, there is a sense of plausible deniability in Rossetti’s *The Blue Bower*. Rossetti’s figure is clothed and it is only by erotic suggestion that Cornforth is doing something other than playing a Japanese *koto*. Her sexual performance, therefore, can take place only in the imagination of the viewer. Further, Rossetti sets his scene in the Far East rather than, as Manet chose, a place to which his audience could relate. By appealing to an exotic, distant realm where ‘unusual’ things might happen, Rossetti avoids an overt challenge to the mores of his own society and, therefore, minimises the opprobrium that could result from his depiction. Of course, the fact that Rossetti was also reluctant to exhibit any of his artworks publicly, also limited the scope for adverse comment. Although Rossetti was to suffer deeply from later criticism at the sexuality contained in his poetry, *The Blue Bower* seems only to have raised a few eyebrows from those that saw it. In fact, during October 1865, it was the subject of a glowing review by F.G. Stephens in *The Athenaeum.*

What is surprising, however, is that whilst scholars have since referred to *The Blue Bower* as ‘sensuous’, encapsulating ‘desire’ and even a ‘strongly erotic’ work, they have failed to explain fully the features that make it so. In particular, the dynamic and metaphorical role played by the *koto* has hitherto been overlooked or, at least, has remained unstated. In ‘The Rossetti Archive’, for instance, Jerome J. McGann relegates the *koto* to a ‘purely decorative function’, not even acknowledging the gendered significance of the instrument. Yet in a different work, McGann identifies how certain of Rossetti’s Venetian style pictures can ‘operate as machines of desire’ and extend beyond the painting by way of ‘dialectical exchange’, which he likens to ‘an act of magic’. Surprisingly, *The Blue Bower* is not included by McGann in this list and, in fact, is not included in this particular text at all.

The review by Stephens in 1865 perhaps gets closest to explaining Rossetti’s technique of erotic suggestion, when he dwells upon Cornforth’s ‘act of slowly drawing the luxurious music from the strings so that the eyes and ear of fancy go together’. Propriety at that time would have prevented Stephens from giving a more explicit and expanded account but, in any event, would only have damaged Rossetti’s reputation. William Holman Hunt had once compared an earlier painting by Rossetti to ‘foreign prints’ and suggested, therefore, that Rossetti’s work did not reflect the values of his own society. As has been addressed in this article, Rossetti’s approach to the pleasures of the flesh had more in common with the mores of Japan than England. Sadly, and wholly unrelated to *The Blue Bower*, public criticism on such score was to cause Rossetti profound anguish and ill health, eventually contributing to his death on 9 April 1882.

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63 The 1860s and 1870s saw particular interest in Venetian art and both John Ruskin (Volume V of *Modern Painters* 1860) and Walter Pater (*The School of Giorgione* 1877) wrote extensively on the subject.


65 William Michael Rossetti, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti as Designer and Writer* (London: Cassell & Company Ltd., 1889), p. 54: ‘...while it attracts some eyes, it is in comparative disfavour with others.’


‘This subtile wreath’:
the significance of hair in John Donne’s ‘The Relique’ and an example of seventeenth century hair lace

AMY NORTON
This essay explores the significance of hair in John Donne’s ‘The Relique’ and an example of hair lace from the early seventeenth century. Whether given in courtship or threaded into a widower’s button, hair is an integral part of expressions of love and remembrance in the seventeenth century, depicted in verse and incorporated into sentimental tokens. While a lock of hair could be offered as a sign of eternal devotion, relics of the body and of human hair in burial rituals underwent censure, regarded as examples of superstitious idolatry along with intercessory prayers for the deceased. Donne’s ‘The Relique’ explores faith and doubt in a context of ‘misdevotion’. ‘The Relique’ and the lace bracelet’s use of human hair represent a desire to memorialise the body separate from institutionalised religious practices.

Idolatry, Faith and Doubt

By analysing a piece of hair lace the origins of which little is known and ‘The Relique’, I argue that hair is a way in which to reassert the importance of touch and the body in response to a culture wrestling with the power of persons, words and objects to transcend their materiality. Donne’s poem ‘The Relique’ interrogates the possibility of an eternal union of lovers in death and the place of the body in this union, a theme of Donne’s verse elsewhere in ‘The Funeral’ and ‘The Canonization’. Religious reforms of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries emphasised a ‘theocentric’ account of the afterlife emphasizing the primacy of the soul, not the body in burial rites. The inclusion of objects, hair bracelets and other love tokens, buried alongside the deceased in the grave (a feature of English burial practices pre-Reformation) was discouraged by the early modern church, regarded as a superstitious ritual of late medieval Catholicism. A 1551 injunction called on clergy to prevent ‘any cross, wax or wood or any other thing to be sewed or to be put secretly upon or about the dead body; or else whether any pardons, relics, or such other be buried by the dead body’. Practices such as having an individual parishioner’s name inscribed into the wall of a church came to be regarded a form of simony, individuals’ paying for a deceased family member’s inscription in order to secure a loved one’s place in heaven. Reforms led to burials being permitted beyond the church walls avoiding the reuse of the same family burial plot because, as seventeenth-century writer John Dunton explains, ‘souls shall not enjoy the less felicity for the remoter distance and separation of the bodies’.

Llewellyn argues that the English Reformation marks the beginning of a process in which death, its associated rituals and material expressions in gravestones and mourning objects, undergo a process of secularization. This process of secularization of what were previously religiously inscribed burial rites find expression in the imaginative culture of the age. Greenblatt suggests

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2 Ibid, p.23.
5 Ibid, p.245.
6 Ibid, p.245.
with which to manifest a person’s presence in their absence. A lock of hair was believed to embody the spiritual character of the giver, as Megan Kathleen Smith argues. In the play How a Man may chuse a good wife from a bad20 (1602) the hero says he was once a melancholic person ‘one that did use much bracelets of hair’ suggesting that wearing a lover’s hair as a bracelet was, as for the Biblical Samson, hair used as a restorative, a quasi talismanic object.

In public life, hair was regarded as a social signifier of health and privilege as Snook demonstrates.21 In Lady Mary Wroth’s ‘Urania’, contemporary with Donne’s ‘The Relic’, hair is a ‘telling signifier’22 that declares social rank. Hair was an important marker of social status, its brightness of colour and softness a signifier of aristocratic birth as reflected in Wroth’s poem ‘Urania’.23 Veralinda, a shepherdess, has long bright tresses that declare her aristocratic origins, origins of which she is unaware. In Wroth’s work, hair belongs within a pastoral pageantry tradition which delights in social transformation with aristocrats disguised as shepherds and vice versa, and of the romance tradition in which a hair lock might be given to seek preferment at court, a sign of affection in courtly love rituals.24 The popular motif of the “boxer” figure in sixteenth and seventeenth century domestic designs and embroidered samplers of the period represents a male figure with one arm raised in offer of a flower to a lady, a design copied from continental embroidery pattern books of the previous century that memorialised courtship rituals in decorative sewn goods. In Thomas Carew’s ‘Poems with a maske’,24 a pastoral verse dialogue between the shepherds Cleon and Celia, the separation of lovers is marked by the giving of a wreath of a severed lock, with which to manifest a person’s presence in their absence. A lock of hair was believed to embody the spiritual character of the giver, as Megan Kathleen Smith argues. In the play How a Man may chuse a good wife from a bad20 (1602) the hero says he was once a melancholic person ‘one that did use much bracelets of hair’ suggesting that wearing a lover’s hair as a bracelet was, as for the Biblical Samson, hair used as a restorative, a quasi talismanic object.

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again suggesting a hair lock belongs within a culture of late Medieval love rituals, given as a vow of devotion and a way in which to unite lovers for eternity:

But this small wreath, shall ever stay
In its first native prime,
And smiling when the rest decay,
The triumphs sing of time.23

A lock of hair could be worn close to the heart, sewn into an embroidered handkerchief or set into a mourning ring. As a textile, hair could be in daily contact with a beloved’s skin, tied to the wearer as a physical manifestation of an absent loved one. The household inventory of sixteenth century widower Claver Morris records his commission for gold buttons and a locket incorporating strands of his wife and daughter’s hair. The feminist textile historian Rozsika Parker26 suggests women’s embroidery be interpreted as a record of women’s emotional life with symbols such as broken hearts, a way in which women could express private sorrows in love. Men’s wearing of hair in garments and fastenings for clothing expressed emotional attachment in the domestic sphere, in ways that a man’s wearing of a lovelock signified his domestic presences that move, eat, touch and kiss. All of the phrasing emphasises touch; touch is depicted as the route to understanding the lovers’ lived experience, without recourse to God, miracle or state decree to prove its truth, a view further reinforced by the implication that the lovers do not marry ‘our hands ne’er touched the seals which... Nature... sets free’.28 The speaker argues that it is the Church and monarch’s authority through which the authenticity of the imagined (and mistaken) relics are canonized or become sacred, suggesting ways in which public institutions of state and Church impose themselves on the private intimacies of love. From the gravedigger’s discovery of the hair and bone relics, the second stanza proceeds to satirise those that authorise the sacred status of the bone or hair into a sacred relic, an idolatrous act in which a private secular love, and the authentic beloved, is, paradoxically, the authentic and rare miracle.

Love Tokens and Locks of Hair

The beloved’s misinterpretation as a Mary Magdalene represents the problem of misdevotion in ‘The Relique’. Her image remained a popular subject of embroidered tapestries of the period. Depicted with flowing yellow locks of hair Mary epitomises penitence. Susan Frye argues in Pens and Needles: Women’s Textualities in Early Modern England: ‘A woman’s embroidery of biblical Women Worthies allowed her to express connections with female exemplars known for their personal virtue and beauty, as well as for adventures marked by eroticism and violence, all within the socially sanctioned activity of sewing.’35 The resurrected Christ’s words ‘Noli me tangere’36 to Mary Magdalene would have stood as a further reminder to Christian devotees of a faith that does not require physical proof to be believed, ideas which find resonance in Donne’s sense of secular devotion as an act of faith in ‘The Relique.’

Seventeenth century embroidery underwent a change away from religious images towards secular designs that celebrated English and more exotic birds, flowers and trees. The hair lace’s scene of a hunt is, like the hair bracelet in ‘The Relique’, testament to love as a ritual that requires the submission of

29 Ibid, p.23.
31 This is a view dismissed by others who regard the line ‘we never touched those seals’ to suggest that the lovers die chaste. For a fuller discussion of the paradoxes in ‘The Relique’ between chaste and amorous love see Altizer, A.B.. Self and Symbolism in the Poetry of Michelangelo, John Donne and Agrippa D’Aubigne. Netherlands, Springer Netherlands, 2012.
34 V and A, https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O10701/band-of-lace-unknown/
one body to being “caught” by another. The lace band in Figure 1 memorializes the chase of the stag and the dog, itself an image invested with medieval ideas of love as a pursuit; the inclusion of the parrot on a branch reveals the fashion for displaying fauna of distant lands into English embroidery designs. Donne’s verse, however, rejects Petrarchan poetic ideals of the medieval age. Its bravura dismissal of a distant beloved of Petrarchan poetic forms with a continual emphasis on touch is a view explored by Moshenska and others who read ‘bone’ meeting ‘hair’ to imply the lovers’ sexual intimacy is intended in the hair and bone image. Whether designed to memorialise intercourse or not, Donne ‘insists on the obligation to touch the human body, whether acutely alive or newly dead’ suggesting that touch confers its own authority in the senses. Thomas and Anne Carew’s grave inscription from 1656 at Haccombe, Devon offers a similar image of love and in winding sheet. The emphasis in Carew’s inscription is on a union of souls in the afterlife whereas the hair lace creates a lasting memorial to a chivalric ideal of courtship in the lace’s love chase motif.

Famed Lovers

In their work on Donne, Leath Mills and Carleton suggest two specific sources for Donne’s startling ‘bright’ hair image that exemplify hair’s significance in literary histories of famed lovers from the medieval Romance tradition. A gift of a hair lock as a love token is mentioned in Chretien de Troyes’ twelfth century romance, ‘The Knight of the Cart’ and is concealed into a garment in ‘Eливд’ by Marie de France. Leath Mills suggests that in writing ‘The Relique’ Donne had in mind an image from Giraldus’ ‘Speculum Ecclesiae’ in which a burial scene leads to the discovery of famed lovers’ remains.

In Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory, Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass argue that the act of dressing was, in the early modern period, a time consuming exercise involving the lacing, tying and fastening of fabric around the body in the bodice or codpiece. The sheer amount of lacing required by an aristocratic woman meant a second pair of hands was necessary as Mary Verney’s letters testify; her lack of a housemaid to help dress expresses this anxiety. Dressing is a daily reminder of the making and unmaking of what Llewelyn terms ‘the social body’ of the Renaissance. ‘The Relique’ speaker, like the unknown wearer of the lace band performs a tying ritual. Each hair lock’s ‘wearer’ ‘puts on’ part of a lover’s body, suggesting that hair not only outwits time but closes the distance between loved ones, hence its inclusion not only lace but in wax seals of letters of the period, given as a sign of the good faith of the giver. Catholic poet Thomas Carew’s 1656 grave inscription utilizes a similar metaphor of tied fabric as a signifier of a love that transcends death, ‘They die but not depart who meet/In wedding of the Queene buried with Arthure founde a yellow Locke of womens heaire, both faire of it self, and also twisted together with wonderful curiositie which when they touched moulded away to nothing.’

Carleton suggests that Donne’s association with William Camden would have given him access to the source material for ‘Britannia’ containing Leland’s translation of Giraldus’ text. What is striking in Leland’s account is both how Guinevere’s hair dissolves when it is touched suggesting its fragility, not robustness against time, and in its association with the medieval romance tradition which reverses courtly ideals of an ennobling aristocratic love, ideals which Donne appears to entirely disregard in his use of the image of bright hair. Although Donne reverses youth (‘the speaker’s beloved’s hair is ‘bright’ not ‘white’ or ‘grey’) as hair is elsewhere in Donne’s verse, a point made by Gray who reminds us that a severed

44 In Thomas Carew’s poem on the same theme of separated lovers. ‘To my mistrise in my absence’, contemporary with Donne’s verse, Carew writes of a heavenly– based union of lovers in a ‘wreath’ that ‘weaves’ a ‘net’ of ‘secret thoughts’.
lock retains its lustre and “youth” when the giver does not),\textsuperscript{52} he does not revere the Petrarchan artifice with which false idols are made grounded in worldly love. The lace bracelet imitates the fecundity of nature through its pastoral scene of interweaving vines, foliage and flowers, visually similar to Elizabethan blackwork which features free flowing designs of flowers and vines. Its use of hair may be regarded as a way in which the giver offers a part of herself or himself in courtship, in lace designs which in their delicacy and transparency, loop and flow recreating vines suspended in the air.

Donne emphasises the contradictions inherent in choosing between art and nature, the body or the word, as the authoritative history or “text” of a person. While arguing for the potential longevity of (his) art, ‘this verse will instruct’\textsuperscript{53} the speaker acknowledges the failure of language in capturing the totality of the beloved ‘she’. It is the miracle of the beloved that rejects false interpretation, and secular love that ushers in the transformation of the lovers’ remains from death to life making the speaker’s ‘masculine verbal force’ an antidote to a Petrarchan ideal of the distant adoration of a woman. A lock of hair perhaps unlike other love tokens of the period made of wood, or in textiles sewn with any other thread, is its own apotheosis, arriving from a distant past to shock the present with the resurrection of a lost body in material form. In both the poem and the hair bracelet, hair is a revelation of the private body memorialised, unencumbered by society and free of religious censure. A lock of hair recovers the body from its public creation reinstating its erotic, secular and domestic meanings either as a renunciation of Petrarchan conceits or through the continuance of the love chase hunt, material culture enabling a post-Reformation world to maintain a belief in the transformative power of the body, and in love to outwit time.

\textsuperscript{52} Erik Gray. Gray, Erik. “Severed Hair from Donne to Pope.” Essays in Criticism 47.3 (1997): 220–220.

Covetousness and commodification: the eroticised female body and cultural representations of death

NATASHA SHIRMAN
The Victorian cult of mourning meant that the ritual of death became a visual affair, which placed women firmly at its centre. These gendered experiences of mourning and death raise interesting questions about the female body and how it was scrutinised, eroticised, and constructed by men. This article will explore constructions of the eroticised female form and their relationship to death by analysing a fabric bale label for ‘Best Black’ material which was manufactured by ‘Black’ Peter Robinson’s Mourning House (1860) and the painting Beata Beatrix by Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1864–1870). It will explore what these artefacts from two different mediums of visual culture can tell us about male representations of the female body, and how the form was used to popularise and ‘sell’ the visual cult of death.

Figure 1. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Beata Beatrix*, c. 1864–1870, oil on canvas, 88 cm x 69 cm, Tate Gallery, London. Copyright © Tate Creative Commons, CC-BY-NC-ND 3.0 (Unported) https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/rossetti-beata-beatrix-n01279
To say that the Victorians created mourning customs and rituals would be fallacious, to say that they popularised these traditions, transforming them into a fashion, or ‘cult’ would be more accurate. The rise of the print industry and improving literacy levels meant that the relationship with death and mourning became more textual and visual. Poetic elegies and novels featuring scenes of death or dying became more popular, and it became the fashion to send funereal and condolence cards to grieving homes. In this way, death became a part of Victorian popular culture, its new-found visibility opening it up to ‘scrutiny and surveillance,’ however, the act of dying still took place within the privacy of the home, with death-bed vigils kept by women. While the Victorian cult of mourning was by no means an exclusively female rite, it is impossible to ignore that there were gendered differences when it came to the art of grieving. After all, when one considers the archetypal image of the grieving Victorian, she is female and is covered in swathes of black crape, paramatta and silk, and wearing a veil and gloves. Confined by her widowhood for two years, the widow became a decidedly visual symbol, a ‘vessel of grief,’ with her ‘body serv[ing] as very public signifier and embodiment of her loss.’ Her clothes communicated for her as cultural signifiers, eliciting sympathy and encouraging sensitivity from those she might encounter. The visual reading of the weeds also opened her up to scrutiny and judgement about the stage of her mourning and the value placed on the departed.

At the centre of the female cult of mourning were the giants of mourning–wear – Jay’s Mourning House and Peter Robinson’s Court and Family Mourning – who capitalised on, and were partly responsible for, the promotion and creation of the fashionable and cultural elements of mourning. ‘Black’ Peter Robinson’s Court and Family Mourning Warehouse offered home visits from their tailors and seamstresses free of charge, to support women at their most emotionally vulnerable. These businesses monopolised mourning fashions, advertising their products and services in catalogues, etiquette books, and magazines, to which middle-class women would be exposed. These companies purposefully placed women at the centre of their promotions, utilising the rise of the textual and visual popularity of death to their advantage, and exploiting the middle-class woman’s desire to adhere to fashions and cultural expectations of mourning. They achieved this by advertising their funereal wear and materials as funerale fashions, consolidating the relationship between women, fashion and mourning. As well as their printed advertisements for mourning fashions, manufacturers capitalised on the relationship between the depth of affection and the depth of one’s pockets, through the varying qualities of the black material they provided. The lengths of material were marked by bale labels and the best quality material for mourning–wear was known as ‘Best Black.’

Although originally designed to allow visual identification of a specific fabric for non-English speakers thus allowing for ease of trade and export, the bale label also became an additional opportunity for advertising the fabric and its manufacturer: a visual stamp of quality. Peter Robinson’s Mourning House followed the tradition of utilising decorative and ornate bale labels, with theirs for ‘Best Black,’ depicting scenes of grieving women, reinforcing that the Victorian experience of mourning was female and that women were central to popularising the fashionable image of death. The ornate design of the bale label places the widow’s body at its heart; the circular stamp of the label supports the grieving widow and her loved one, enclosing them in a ‘frame’ of support. A bower of trees and flora create a protective canopy above the figure and the deceased, placing the living female form at the centre of the image. She is depicted leaning wistfully against the sarcophagus, her torso and arms pressed tightly against its exterior, her head resting heavily on her hand while her face turns away from the tomb and towards the world which she must now face. The bottom section of the label unites the natural border of the canopy with a carpet of grass providing the widow with a soft ground on which to grieve. The bold lettering ‘Best Black’ is printed on a ribbon which snakes its way beneath the widow and the sarcophagus: a physical representation connecting the superior material with prized qualities of feminine dignity, peace and support.

The advertising materials circulated by these male–run businesses demonstrate a clear understanding of the psychology of women. They recognised that for a middle–class woman the concept of the public ‘show’ of widowhood was of great importance, but they also understood that women enjoyed being seen as fashionable and that men enjoyed the autonomy over their body which shopping for clothes afforded them. In her important study of the history of shopping, Rachel Bowlby explores the relationship between women’s vanity and commodification, stating that:

There is an obvious connection

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2 Ibid. p. 30.
3 Ibid. p. 53.
4 The bale label for Peter Robinson’s ‘Best Black’ was produced in sheets, with each individual label, an embossed print measuring 5.8 x 7.6cm. The artefact in question depicts a woman leaning against a sarcophagus in grief. The border of the label is constructed of vines and trees and the product name, ‘Best Black,’ is printed on a ribbon which forms the lower half of the label. BALE LABEL, 'Best Black,' [Peter Robinson’s Court and Family Mourning House], [1860], Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford. Accessed through: John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera, Shelfmark: Label 16 (90a), 20080603154821kg http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&res_dat=xri:jjohnson&rft_dat=xri:jjohnson:rec:20080603154821kg
between the figure of the narcissistic woman and the fact of women as consumers. “What does a woman want?” is a question to which the makers of marketable products from the earliest years of consumer society have sought to suggest an infinite, variety of answers, appealing to her wish or need to adorn herself as an object of beauty. The dominant ideology of feminine subjectivity in the late nineteenth century perfectly fitted woman to receive the advances of the seductive commodity offering to enhance her womanly attractions. 5

By controlling and constructing their outward appearance, women reclaimed autonomy over their body in the public sphere, with department stores acting as an extension of the private, providing women with an empowering space to adorn their body. The construction of the female form in advertising material, such as the ‘Best Black’ bale label feeds into this belief, promoting women as having a choice over their public appearance, even in widowhood, shifting the focus from widow back to woman. These culturally acceptable images of the fashionable widow are created by men however and are promoted to women through visual and textual mediums with the sole purpose of making a profit. Peter Robinson’s, bale label reflects the purpose of making a profit. As such, the widow’s body becomes a complex site, symbolising the convergence of life and death, reminding those who see them of the proximity of death to their lives but also that the ‘cult of death was one of materiality.’ 7

As such, the widow’s body becomes a ‘living canvas,’ defined by its proximity to death, transforming the female body into art. Elizabeth Bronfen explores this, claiming that both ‘death and femininity are treated as images,’ 8 going some way to explain the visual connection that I have introduced between death and the female form in Victorian mourning customs; she continues in this vein stating that, ‘the feminine body as death turns the woman into an object of sight – the dead feminine body comparable to an exhibited art object.’ 9 Bronfen, sees the point of convergence between death and the erotic as female; the desire to look, possess or create as decidedly male. The combination of the need to create and study the female image in a near-death and therefore erotic state is important to consider when understanding the work of Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

It has been said that Rossetti, alongside Burne-Jones and Millais, ‘projected [his] sense of death as sensual onto the figures of women,’ 10 with his art presenting a ‘themes that brought death, revivification, sensuality and inspiration’ 11 to the forefront, thereby creating a vision of female beauty that was defined by its proximity to death. For Rossetti, Lizzie Siddall epitomised this beauty – her dazzling red hair, translucent skin, swan-like neck and hooded eyes are legendary – but perhaps what made her the perfect image of beauty replacing the ideal of beauty was her “ thinner and more death-like and more beautiful and more ragged than ever,” 12 romanticising her fragility, and Rossetti called her a ‘stunner’ 13 despite (or perhaps because of) her consumptive illness. For Rossetti, the anguish moments of Lizzie Siddall’s life are what made her beautiful, her ‘liminality between life and death’ 14 what made her more desirable, and as she succumbed to illness, addiction and depression, she became the ‘embodiment of unattainable, adored beauty.’ 15 To prevent the loss of the image of desire meant to draw her, the perfect image of beauty replacing the real body of Siddall. Her artistic body – a fragile beauty nearing death – has become immortalised as a myth on canvas, created and owned by him.

The male construction of the female form be it through funereal fashions, or in the role of artist’s muse, converges in the visual spectacle of the female body and its proximity to death. These images, either real or imagined, ‘serve to reinforce women’s status as objects of a gaze that would control, sexually

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7 Gleeson, p. 46.
9 Ibid. p. xiii.
11 Ibid. p. 23.
12 Ibid. p. 41.
13 Ibid. p. 25.
14 Bronfen, p. 168.
15 Bronfen, p. 170.
16 Ibid. p. 170.
objectify, and commodify. In the case of Rossetti, one of the most iconic images of Siddall which both ‘enshrines and eroticizes [her] death’ can be found in the Beata Beatrix (1864–1870), a painting which has been called a memorial, a death mask, a resurrection and tombstone (Figure 1). It is an image where the boundaries between fact and fiction, myth and truth have become blurred, where Lizzie portrayed as the equally ill-fated Beatrice, is held forever in the way that Beatrice’s body merges death, and this is further emphasised when the final breath is taken, not at an unknown destination, creates an uneasy juxtaposition between life and death. Rossetti captures the moment she ascend beyond the world of mortality.

In this way, Beatrice is neither dead nor living, and is a ‘wonderful vision of the border–realm which lies between life and death,’ Rossetti made his vision of Beatrice’s liminality explicit, stating that the painting was, ‘not at all intended to represent Death . . . but to render it under the resemblance of a trance, in which Beatrice seated at the balcony overlooking the City is suddenly rapt from Earth to Heaven.’

The choice to describe her in a state of rapture, eroticises the moment of Beatrice’s demise, objectifying her body as her soul leaves it; her body entirely passive, frozen in time at her most beautiful and vulnerable as we, the voyeurs scrutinise her transition. The body of Beatrice is foregrounded and fills the canvas, her robes of green and purple, ‘the colours of hope and sorrow as well as of life and death,’ a visual reminder of her existence between two worlds and her body which is the convergence of these states. There is a ‘heaviness, even a grayness, about her face’ and she adopts a pose of acceptance, indicated by her hands which are no longer clasped in prayer — her physical body one of willing and passive acceptance.

In her face, however, is all the animation of sexual ecstasy, her heavy-lidded closed eyes, upturned face, and parted lips indicative of a ‘sexually charged rapture where spiritual transcendence and sexual ecstasy are conflated.’ The connection between the eroticised female body and death is evident, but where the connection originated is less clear. For Rossetti, ‘sex and death become linked moments’ and this aligns with what we have seen through the Victorian man’s interest in possessing and creating the female form in relation to funereal fashions. The fascination with the female figure, therefore, comes from its proximity to death because this is when the body is most passive and vulnerable, but also most alive, drawing on the idea that, ‘eroticism is assenting to life up to the point of death’. In the case of Beata Beatrix, the canvas itself becomes a complex site, depicting a moment of absolute freedom and absolute restriction. At the moment of death Beatrice leaves her body, denoting freedom, but in doing so she renders her physical body at its most vulnerable and it is important that Rossetti chooses this specific moment for his work. Here, the Beatrice of Dante’s poem is held forever at her most passively beautiful, but also in an erotically charged state: simultaneously alive and dead. Rossetti’s idea of female beauty exists in a fluid state, somewhere between this world and the next, with the lifeless female body the focus of scrutiny and fascination. Macabre as this may seem, the relationship between beauty and death has always been a feminised one, the passive object of the female form is desirable, but their beauty is made more intoxicating by their unattainability in death; the covetous need to own what cannot be possessed is entirely alluring. Bronfen recognises the forbidden allure of the beautiful dead, positing that:

Beauty however, always also includes death’s inscription, because it requires the translation (be it fantasy or in reality) of an imperfect, animate body, into a perfect, inanimate image, a dead ‘figure’ [. . .] beauty places man’s object of sexual desire at a distance, but preserves this object in its status as object. Beauty arouses sexual desire at the same time that it forbids it, because it is intangible.

This theory is encapsulated in Beata

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18 Ibid. p. 621.
19 Bronfen, p. 177.
22 Stephens, p. 46.
23 Lutz, p. 29.
24 Orlando, p.623.
25 Lutz, p.42.
27 Bronfen, p. 64.
Beatrix. She is the earthly ‘dead’ figure preserved as a passive object of perfection, her intangibility what makes her desirable. This transformative concept becomes even more complex when we consider it in relation to the painting’s famous sitter: Lizzie Siddall.

It is widely accepted that when Lizzie entered the PRB’s circle, her name was changed, dropping the ‘l’ and becoming Siddal, a name that Rossetti felt had more artistic appeal. By surrendering her name, she became reborn as Rossetti’s possession and creation, thus Lizzie Siddall ceased to exist. The infamous retrieval of Rossetti’s poems from Lizzie’s grave seven years after her death and the apocryphal story that follows emphasise his belief that he had ownership over her body, that he had a right to revisit the vision of beauty that he had created.28 As such there is a blurring of lines between myth and reality when it comes to Lizzie Siddall, where does the woman end, and the artist’s creation begin? Lizzie existed somewhere between the two points which is paralleled in Beata Beatrix; she is the male-constructed ideal female form – motionless, beautiful, erotic and for sale.

The idea of profiting through the commodification of the female form in its beautiful but vulnerable state – when near to death – goes some way to connecting the world of art with the traditions of funereal dress and the bale label discussed earlier in this article. My earlier claim that we could see the widow’s body as a ‘living canvas’ is valid when considering the ways in which men construct the female form, commodifying and profiting from them because of their closeness to death, however, the presence of the erotic seems problematic here. The full coverage that the widow’s weeds provide promote abstinence rather than eroticism, the Victorian widow is ‘literally weighed down in her grief’29 with her mourning-wear symbolising the loss of her husband and the loss of her purpose, her body in double mourning. The widow publicly mourns her spouse and in doing so mourns the loss of her life, as for many, ‘Widowhood was a final destiny, an involuntary commitment to a form of social exile.’30

The cultural expectations of gendered mourning practices are also important to consider here. Under the guise of kindness and an understanding of the separate spheres, mourning warehouses such as Peter Robinson’s promoted clothes that offered the grieving woman a shield against the world, with even their pictorial bale labels reminding the widow that ‘Best Black’ material provides privacy whilst visually communicating their position to the world. The enclosed space of the label indicates Robinson’s understanding of the private nature of grief, with the bower and supportive grounding provided by the earth and the product name shielding the widow and providing her with seclusion, as such ‘Best Black’ material envelops the widow and provides her with the barrier she requires. The visual spectacle of mourning is also evident in the image, the widow in the bale label gazes outwards, connecting her gaze with other widows, reflecting their shared experience, and reminding them of the importance of maintaining the ‘show’ of mourning. As it was ‘women who espoused mourning conventions and tended to be hardest on each other,’31 the bale label when working in tandem with Peter Robinson’s advertisements in fashionable ladies’ magazines, communicate that as a mourning warehouse, they understand the personal nature of grief but also the female desire to ‘keep up appearances.’

The gender expectations of women as vulnerable and emotional necessitated making the mourning process as easy to adhere to as possible, and the clothes themselves and the companies that provided them were advertised as bearing the burden for the widow so that she was not over-taxed. While there can be little doubt that there were many widows who valued the privacy afforded to them by the traditions of funereal dress, it is hard to see any altruism in the male-run businesses that provided these clothes. Once again, as seen with the Beata Beatrix, we see that men’s need to control the image of the female form when at its most passive and vulnerable is present, particularly in relation to death. While the widow is not ascending to death as Beatrice / Lizzie is, they are a visual reminder of their recent bodily contact with death. They are also held in a liminal state because of their proximity to death, the widow’s body a signifier of how she ceases to exist as wife, her weeds a mark of the transition of her female form and her lack of earthly purpose. The figure in the bale label indicates just this, she is recognisably female, but she is also no longer just a woman, instead she is in the process of transitioning into widowhood. The widow in the bale label is faceless, her body and role defined by her proximity to death, and by purchasing ‘Best Black’ the human widow becomes a walking advertisement for Peter Robinsons, she willingly becomes the image depicted in the bale label, popularising the image that male manufacturers have created. If we see the widow’s body as being in a state of liminality, paralleling Beata Beatrix, then we can also see that the full coverage provided by her widow’s weeds does not desexualise her body, in fact it invites scrutiny and as such, the widow becomes an object of desire and

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28 The story relayed is that when Lizzie’s coffin-lid was opened, she was well-preserved, radiantly beautiful with her abundant red hair cascading across her shoulder. So surprised were those who participated in the retrieval of Rossetti’s book of poetry that they were mesmerised by her beauty, most importantly mesmerised by her beauty in death.

29 Gleeson, p. 49.

30 Jalland, p. 231.

31 Gleeson, p. 12.
eroticism – her body a reminder of her sexuality, and her clothes a tantalising reminder of her unavailability. The veil itself is a reminder of the widow’s sexual experience and it is designed to evoke pity but also judgement at her lack of virginity which is no longer sanctified within marriage. The widow’s veil becomes an enticingly thin ‘veil’ between Bronfen’s perfect and imperfect female form, while her liminality indicates her potential re-entry into the world of marriage and society. In 1855, The Illustrated Manners Book expressed the notion that, ‘black is becoming; and young widows, fair, plump, and smiling, with their roguish eyes sparkling under their black veils are very seducing,’ emphasising the eroticism associated with the widow’s veiled image and the sexual threat that their body presents.

This article has begun to explore the irrefutable connection between death, the female form and eroticism. In both art and culture, it has examined how the female form is central in creating images of beauty to be coveted and commodified. The widow’s body as a symbol of grief becomes marginalised and marked as other, by the male-constructed fashions which she so rigidly and willingly adheres to. Her willingness to wear the weeds mean that she is complicit in her own objectification and much like Lizzie Siddall, who relinquished her name to embark on her new identity as muse,

‘Miner poet’ or ‘seer and singer’?
Joseph Skipsey’s performance of the identities of miner and poet
Northumberland poet Joseph Skipsey (1832–1903) published 11 volumes of poetry between 1858 and 1895. For the majority of this time he was also working as a coal miner, and his poetry can be seen as part of a North-East working-class tradition looking back to earlier local ballads, and forward to the work of Tom Pickard and the Morden Tower poets of the 1960s and beyond. This article explores the dual identities of Joseph Skipsey through his first published pamphlet, *Lyrics*, and through visual representations of the poet, in particular the photographic portrait ‘Skipsey in his Working Clothes’. It argues that Skipsey’s choice to ‘try on’ a multiplicity of visual personas through the emerging art of photography provides a parallel to the development of both his lyric voice, and his identity as a poet in the world outside his poems.
Skipsey's work was grounded in his lived experience as a miner, but he also strongly self-identified as a poet, which for him was a bardic, magical role (‘seer and singer’) with the power to teach society as a whole. This role is eternal and outside class hierarchies. From his earliest work, Skipsey combined representation of his community and lifestyle with contemplation of the role of the poet and the nature of fame; his aspiration to fame, on the same terms as the great poets who had gone before, can be seen as a political stance. At the same time, Skipsey was dependent upon patronage to support his ability to publish. There is a tension for Skipsey himself between his ‘mineress’ and his ‘poetness’, and this also plays out in his relationship with the literary establishment. The photograph in Figure 1, published by Skipsey’s patron Robert Spence Watson, is a concrete example of Skipsey the published poet consciously inhabiting and performing the ‘miner’ persona: in a sense he is dressing up as himself.

This article explores the portrait of Skipsey in the context of photography as a new art form, and the conventions which were emerging as the form developed. It compares Skipsey’s visual self-performance in the portrait, with his poetic self-performance in his Lyrics, assuming a (varying) degree of creative agency in both performances. It argues that both forms of artistic production act out the tension between Skipsey’s identities. The content, form and use of the poetic persona in the Lyrics embody Skipsey as both ‘Rhyming Joe’ (the pitman in his community who is also a poet), and as a serious poet seeking fame in the wider world. The photograph both challenges, and works within, the conventional portrayal of workers at this time; it is a portrait of a recognisable, serious self, but it also uses clothing and tools as shorthand for ‘worker’ in a way which was legible to, and could be used in the agendas of, the political and literary establishment. Photography created a further artistic channel through which the poet’s private self could engage in the public domain.

Rhyming Joe and the laurel wreath.

In the 1850s, Joseph Skipsey was in his twenties, working at Percy Main and Choppington pits, but also reading widely, and writing the Lyrics published in 1858. The collection contains a range of lyric forms, but the majority of the poems are brief and in short stanzas with regular rhythm which could be described as musical; many, such as ‘The Lad o’Bebside’, ‘Jemmy stops Lang at the Fair’ and ‘Hey, Robin’, are in ballad style. This connects them with both North-East miners’ songs and canonical traditions; Skipsey acknowledges an existing popular song for the chorus of ‘Jemmy’, and Twelfth Night as his source for the first two lines of ‘Hey, Robin’. The majority of the poems are about love, with timeless themes such as the dangerous, beguiling woman (‘Annie Lee’) and the unattainable woman (‘To a Young Lady’, where love is hopeless because of class). Most importantly, the poems express individual emotion, exemplifying Wordsworth’s description of poetry as ‘the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings’ and this lyrical ‘I’ is often explicitly signalled as identifiable with Skipsey the poet. An example is the domestic love poem ‘To Sara (During Illness):’

For I feel when I gaze on my baby and thee,—
I feel my lost strength back returning to me;
And my heart, from this sick bed up leaping, declares
My Sara has one yet to lighten her cares.

From the title onwards, the lyric persona is identified with the poet within his family unit, in the vulnerable state of sickness, and from the almost physical perspective of the sickbed.

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2 Lyrics, by J. S., a coal miner, pamphlet (Durham, printed by George Procter, 1858).
4 J. S., Lyrics. Poems cited: Fame (p. 14); The Lad o’Bebside (p. 8); Jemmy Stops Lang at the Fair (p. 22); Hey, Robin (p. 7); To Sara, During Illness (p. 19); The Lass of Willington Dene (p. 12).
Even where Skipsey writes in a narrative tradition where the poetic persona is often an observer, his perspective is present. In ‘The Lass of Willington Dene’, a traditional story of the girl who steals all the lads’ hearts but is destined for the protagonist, this is taken further: the poet steps out of the anonymity of the ballad-singer, and the group of lads in the narrative, naming himself in the third person while singing in the first:

Rhyming Joe, so distressed for the rest of the fair,
Cries, let Meg the choice of her fancy declare,
Then—though her fair kind may her fortune envy,
Their hatred will change to a blessing of joy!

But if, like a bairn in a summer-deck’d bower,
She cannot well mention her favourite flower,
One life-lasting favour of her I would beg...

This poem is full of named characters who also appear in other poems, creating the sense that this is a real community Skipsey is writing about (again this is in the tradition of North-East mining songs where recognisable characters regularly appear). In a poem which is fairly formulaic, Skipsey draws our attention to himself as a poet, implying that he is known as such in the community.

That Skipsey aspired to be a ‘serious’ poet is clear from another poem, ‘Fame’:

Deep, deep must you dig
In the earth ere you come
To that treasure which brightens
And comforts our home,—
That keeps out the cold
In the keen wintry night,
And converteth the cot
To a hall of delight.

But deeper than this
Must you search in the mind,
Ere that charm can be found
Which so many would find—
That charm which upreareth
The fabric of fame,
And commandeth the nations
To worship a name.

O! yes! But by dint
Of hard labour and toil—
By the battling with sorrow
And ridicule’s smile,
Is the laurel obtained
That encrowneth the brow
And marketh the children
Of genius below.

The poem moves from mining to fame in three economical stanzas. The first stanza equates coal with treasure, social value (not, at this point, the hard graft of extraction). The second uses the pit as a metaphor for the mind which must be mined for creative inspiration; this elusive commodity is there for the finding, but not found by many. The reward for finding it is fame. Finally, the toil of the miner and that of the poet are equated. Being a poet is a trade, a work of mental sweat, and also of loneliness (sorrow and ridicule). In publishing his poetry, Skipsey is presenting the fruits of his labours in the hope of starting on the path to a classical laurel wreath. ‘Fame’ is confidently rooted in his own personal experience, but the idea of inspiration as an elusive charm which can conjure fame contains trepidation.

The lyrics clearly suggest Skipsey’s dual identity. In life, and in the community suggested in the poems, he is known as a miner, who is incidentally also ‘Rhyming Joe’. However, Lyrics as a published object positions him as a poet, yet one who is anonymous as a man, identified as ‘a Coal Miner’, ‘A Working Man’. At this stage in his career, Skipsey’s lyric persona within the poems seems more confident than his poetic persona in the external literary world of his aspiration.

Photography and the curation of a public self.

Geoffrey Batchen describes the explosion of photography in the mid nineteenth century as ‘an avalanche of images which swept modernity along in its wake and gave pictorial certainty to that era’s peculiar sense of self.’ From their genesis as experimental forms at the turn of the 1840s, when the rival processes of daguerreotype (using silvered copper sheets) and calotype (using paper) emerged from the work of Louis Daguerre and Henry Fox-Talbot, photography quickly became recognised as a commercial opportunity. The market was primarily linked to portraiture because photographic portraits were cheaper and more reproducible than those produced by artists. From the mid 1850s, process improvements allowed an explosion of cheap, popular formats such as the carte de visite, which promoted public engagement through collecting, whether for the family album or to possess portraits of celebrities or curiosities. Andrew Wynter, writing in 1863, noted that forty portraits could be had for a couple of guineas.

Collecting photographic images was, and is, an act of choosing and curation, a statement of the self-conception of the collector. Sitting for a photograph is an even more overt performance of self; Batchen notes that in sitting, ‘the subject...got to make all sorts of choices about how they wished to appear’. Nineteenth-century studio photographers actively facilitated self-performance, initially by the middle classes but later more widely, through...
the use of poses, props and backdrops, and this was invariably an aspirational exercise, as well as being good for business. Wynter decried the tendency for ‘the lower stratum of the middle classes’ to adopt upwardly-mobile dress and poses:

Miss Brown…. Why should she shiver in a ball–dress on a verandah, and why should we be called upon – instead of looking at her good honest face – to admire the far–stretching lake–like prospect at her back? 10

The idea of the ‘good honest face’ hidden by borrowed signifiers of wealth is a value–laden one, conjuring a social upstart sitting in a Gainsborough painting, pretending to be monarch of all she surveys. Wynter’s positive–sounding notion of the ‘good honest face’ is an encouragement to Miss Brown to know her place. Whilst celebrating the new photographic art–form, Wynter is displaying unease with social change.

The curation of personal image was no less dominant among writers and other ‘men of eminence’ who embraced the craze to be seen through collectible cartes and photographic compendia. The first two images below show Dickens and Thackeray, ostensibly in the act of writing or thinking, surrounded by the accoutrements of scholarship and respectable endeavour.11 Draped curtains, writing implements and books abound; the painted backdrop of books in the Thackeray portrait is unavoidably reminiscent of the curated Zoom background of 2020. These portraits are ‘real’ in the sense that they capture the features of the writers, but are entirely staged by the photographer in collusion with the sitter. They are intended to create what Brian Maidment, in his anthology of self–taught Victorian poets, calls a ‘Parnassian’ image of the writer.12 The third image, embracing the same aspirational convention, is the earliest extant published photograph of Joseph Skipsey.13

The Dickens and Thackeray photographs are from the early 1860s and were taken for publication or distribution. The Skipsey image is c.1850s, closer to the infancy of the form, and is a family photograph meant to be displayed only in a domestic setting. But the style and aspiration are recognisably the same. It is impossible to know whether the photograph was instigated by Skipsey himself or his family (his biographer indicates that he was spending his

10 Wynter, ibid, p. 299.
13 Photograph of Joseph Skipsey c. 1850s, from Skipsey family archive, available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Skipsey.JPG. The photographic medium is not given, and is unclear from the digital image. The photograph has white markings which could indicate paper or be adhesions from a facing page, but also contains scratches showing a darker under–surface, suggesting metal or glass.
own earnings on books at this time), but the mode of presentation is surely influenced by him. 14 Thinking about the photograph alongside the poem ‘Fame’, the classical statue and fringed tablecloth of the image echo the embellishments of ‘encrowneth’ and ‘marketh’ in the poem.

Labourers and pit lasses.

The early photograph shows Skipsey performing the role of autodidact and writer, not that of manual worker. Why, some fifteen years later, does he choose to be photographed in his miner persona? In order to explore this, it is useful to think about how working people were portrayed in early photographs. Asa Briggs and Audrey Linkman both note that portraits of workers (where the primary aim of the photographer is to capture the likeness and character of the sitter) were rare, particularly in the early days of the art form. 15 The photographs below display some of the purposes for which workers’ images were made. These can be categorised as documentary, reforming and commercial. All of these forms require the sitters to be in their working clothes.

Figure 5 documents workers in their workplace, albeit in resting mode and looking at the camera. It was taken in the early 1850s by William Delamotte, who had been commissioned to document the construction of the Crystal Palace. 16 Among his detailed architectural photographs is this image of those doing the constructing; it acknowledges their presence as part of a portfolio celebrating modernity and progress, but they are still presented as ‘characters’ or picturesque. Their timeless, almost rustic, quality is set against the clean lines of the modern technological wonder behind them.

Figure 6 is taken from John Thomson and Adolphe Smith’s 1864 compendium London Street-life; it shows John Day, ‘The Temperance Sweep’, and is accompanied by an improving description of his rise from dissipated vagabond to master sweep making plenty of money, once he gave up the demon drink. 17 Although Day is named, he is presented as a type and a parable.

Figure 7 is one of a series of collectible

14 Robert Spence Watson, Joseph Skipsey: his life and work (London: T. F. Unwin, 1909), p.19. If the image is a daguerrotype, it would have been expensive, costing around half a guinea according to John Werge, an itinerant daguerrotypist in the North East in 1850. In his Evolution of Photography (London: Piper and Carter, 1890) p. 40, Werge describes basing himself variously in Hexham (where he hires a sitting room to take ‘parlour portraits’; it is ‘a slow place’), Seaham Harbour (where people were ‘too poor for me to continue long’), and Tynemouth.


16 Philip Henry Delamotte, Breakfast time at the Crystal Palace, Sydenham, (1852–4), Albumen print, British Library.

of Lancashire ‘pit-brow lasses’, produced as curiosities by James Millard and other Wigan photographers.18 These were studio photographs, and thus a reconstruction of an imagined workplace for commercial purposes. They were posed with hefty props such as shovels and riddles; sitters were asked to look as if they had done a day’s work by posing in dirty clothes, and sometimes with dirty hands and faces. Sarah Edge has explored the power relationships in these images, in particular focusing on the collection of civil servant Arthur Munby, who liked pictures of pit-brow and other working women ‘in their dirt’ so much that he commissioned many himself.19 Associating women with hard manual labour, wearing trousers, could clearly cause shock or titillation or both.

All these portrayals of workers use them as generic figures, signifiers of a wider cultural preoccupation; whether that be progress, the state of the city and the poor, industrialisation, commercial opportunity, morality, or sexuality. The selves of the sitters are less important than what they represent, and that is tied to their occupation. Andre Adolphe-Eugene Disderi, patentor of the carte de visite process, believed that a photographic portrait must allow the viewer to ‘deduce who the subject is, to deduce spontaneously his character, his intimate life, his habits; the photographer must do more than photograph, he must “biographe”’.20 By that definition, these images of workers are not portraits.

It is this which distinguishes the photograph of Skipsey in his mining clothes (see Fig. 1) from the more common generic images of workers. This is a portrait of an individual, fulfilling Desderi’s requirement of intimacy and a sense of inner life. This intimacy comes from a collaboration between the photographer and the sitter, and such a relationship gives the sitter the same agency as that granted to the sitters in the aspirational portraits of writers discussed above. The photograph portrays Skipsey with the tools of both his trades, a book and a miner’s lamp. His clothing clearly signifies ‘miner’ but his pose is thoughtful and ‘Parnassian’, inviting the viewer to think twice and not to simply interpret the surface. Unlike the unnamed writer of the Lyrics, this photograph is of a named man and one known for poetry; the portrait can thus be seen as carrying an overt message - by an expression of a high order of intelligence. The dress he had on consisted of a large-checked grey-cloth coat…in his hand was what I at first thought was a small tin can, but which a second glance allowed was a safety-lamp.21

Of course, the idea of ‘choosing’ a visual image is also connected with Skipsey’s aspiration to become part of the literary world, and what that might require him to do in order to gain recognition. By the time he sat for this photograph, Skipsey had spent his childhood and adult life as a miner, producing five collections of poetry which attracted a degree of acclaim in the North-East, though circulation was narrow (200 copies of his 1864, The Collier Lad, and 300 of Poems in 1871).22 He had also experienced a brief period (1859–63) of alternative employment, before returning to mining. These alternative roles were secured with the help of patrons; firstly, he became an under-storekeeper at the Hawks and Crawshay ironworks in Gateshead through the influence of James Clephan, editor of the Gateshead Observer; he then briefly worked as a sub-librarian at the Newcastle Literary and Philosophical Society, through the auspices of Robert Spence Watson, Gateshead liberal, solicitor, educationalist and secretary to the ‘Lit and Phil’.23

This patronage was undoubtedly admiring, and instrumental in Skipsey’s ability to continue publishing, but it carried assumptions which were not necessarily in keeping with Skipsey’s own vision of himself as a poet. An early example is Clephan’s reported statement at a Burns Night banquet for ‘the principal inhabitants of the town’ of Newcastle in 1859:

Mr. Clephan, the editor of the Gateshead Observer, introduced a pitman poet, Mr. Skipsey…Mr. Clephan said that Mr. Skipsey had published that day a batch of poems which were equal to any in the English language, and yet he was in poverty. Before concluding the proceedings it was determined to devote the surplus, after paying the
expenses of the meeting, to purchase copies of Mr. Skipsey's book to be circulated amongst the Mechanics' Institutes of the North.24

The Newcastle Courant's account of this occasion attributes the proposal to seek donations from those assembled to a second speaker, Mr Barkas. This support is double-edged: the speakers offer practical financial assistance and seem to support Skipsey's claim to be a serious poet; yet Clephan introduces him as a 'pitman poet' (a term he coined for Skipsey in a review in his newspaper), envisages the potential marketplace for his work as Mechanics' Institutes, and positions Skipsey simultaneously as poet and supplicant through his physical presence among the great and the good.25 This patronage relationship is complex and cannot simply be interpreted as patronising. Clephan and Spence Watson, and later Dante Gabriel Rossetti, regarded Skipsey's work with genuine admiration and not just as 'quite good for a miner'; however, there is undoubtedly a sense in which these patrons gained impetus for their own liberal agendas by portraying Skipsey as a 'pitman' poet and not simply as a 'poet'.

The only Skipsey publication to contain an image of the poet is his 1878 collection, A Book of Miscellaneous Lyrics.26 Of a number of extant images from this period, Skipsey chose (or approved for publication) the central one, which was produced as a lithograph by Newcastle artist Ralph Hedley, possibly based on photographs taken alongside the first image. Skipsey used the lithograph as a calling card, inscribing it to supporters including Dante Gabriel Rossetti, to whom he sent a copy with his latest volume in 1886.27 The 'miner' image was published retrospectively by Skipsey's patron, Robert Spence Watson, in an 1898 collection of Lit and Phil lectures where Skipsey was used to illustrate excellence in the continuation of the Northumbrian ballad tradition.28

It is tempting to suggest that the published lithograph dresses Skipsey in a respectable but plain collar and tie, rather than the grander dinner suit to the left, or the miner's flannels to the right, positioning him in the middle ground between his Parnassian poet and miner identities.29 The 'miner'

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25 Gateshead Observer, 10 October 1858, p. 6.
26 Joseph Skipsey, A Book of Miscellaneous Lyrics (Bedlington: Richardson, 1878), frontispiece.
27 Ralph Hedley, lithograph of Joseph Skipsey, Tyne and Wear Archives & Museums, https://collections-search.twmuseums.org.uk/tdetails/escatalogue_1162256. TWAM dates the lithograph from the accompanying letter to Rossetti, 1886, but their copy is identical to the image in the 1878 Book of Miscellaneous Lyrics.
image presents both of these personas in the same image. Skipsey's choice to 'try on' a multiplicity of visual personas through the emerging art of photography provides a parallel to the development of both his lyric voice, and his identity as a poet in the world outside his poems.
Pastoral perfection or tormented toil? contrasting views of rural labour in the second half of the nineteenth century, in works by Richard Jefferies and John Linnell

CATHERINE USHER
This article considers and contrasts the representations of the life of the agricultural labourer in the second half of the nineteenth century by Richard Jefferies (1848–87), and John Linnell (1792–1882), one a writer and the other an artist. Linnell painted the labourers as happy and contented. Jefferies wrote of them as downtrodden, hungry and miserable. A comparison is made of passages from articles originally written by Jefferies for magazines and an image by Linnell, The Cornfield Cradle (1859). This article will argue that Jefferies was driven by a desire to improve the lot of the labourer and that Linnell was following accepted artistic and social conventions, while also being influenced by religious and commercial considerations.
Richard Jefferies (1848–87) had only a short life, dying aged 38 after a long illness, but wrote extensively for newspapers and magazines and in novels about the countryside of southern England. He wrote lyrically about what he saw but was also not afraid to comment with a sharp pen on social issues. By contrast, John Linnell (1792–1882) had a long life dying just shy of his ninetieth birthday. He started as a portraitist and settled into landscape painting, mostly in Surrey and Sussex in the mid-nineteenth century. He was scarred in his youth by the bankruptcy of his father and determined at a young age that he would not suffer the same fate. This influenced his choice of subjects, and he viewed art as a business rather than a vocation. Both men came from humble backgrounds with fathers who suffered financial failures: they were students of nature, and in the landscape, they both, in their different ways, found the divine. Both were non-conformist in matters of religion and their politics were of the radical conservative strain. Despite those similarities, they had deeply divergent views on how the lives of agricultural labourers in the south of England should be described and depicted. Linnell saw the labourers as if in Arcadia, and Jefferies as if in Hell.

'The emphasis on rural misery was always more suited to literary than artistic expression.' This proposition by Christiana Payne can be supported with regard to Jefferies and Linnell by examining texts from Jefferies and analysis of Linnell’s *The Cornfield Cradle* (1859). Here is an example of Jefferies writing after his travels through rural locations around Swindon in Wiltshire:

In the life of the English agricultural labourer there is absolutely no poetry, no colour...The sun burns and scorches...the heated earth reflects the rays, and the straw is warm to the touch...the standing corn, nearly as high as the reaper, keeps off the breeze...grasping the straw continuously cuts and wounds the hand...the woman’s bare neck is turned to the colour of tan; her thin muscular arms bronzed right up to the shoulder...right through the hottest part of the day they labour...cases of vertigo and vomiting are frequent...gleaning - poetical gleaning - is the most unpleasant and uncomfortable of labour, tedious, slow back aching work. This description, using direct and almost violent language, lays out the unhappy working life of the reaper and gleaner for whom there is no romance in ‘poetical gleaning’, just the harsh reality of injurious physical labour.

Considering this against Linnell’s *The Cornfield Cradle*, it is not difficult to see the disjunctive dissonance and incompatibility of the visual and the verbal.

The meanness of the lives of the labouring poor had no place in Linnell’s Arcadian images and neither political nor social issues were permitted to encroach on his aesthetic vision as can be seen from an example of his work, *The Cornfield Cradle* (see Fig. 1).

In this painting, a plump young mother is piling stooks of corn into a wigwam to protect her toddler from the sun. Her hair is neat and covered by a cap, she has lace at the collar of her pink gown, there is no sign of Jefferies’ ‘thin muscular arm bronzed up to the shoulder’. She has her long sleeves rolled up and has an air of serenity. Her husband, brawny with a ruddy countenance, shows a lower arm that is too pale to have had much exposure to the sun, nor is he ‘burned black and visibly thin’. The blond and well-covered infant has a rosy complexion and is smiling happily. Another young woman wearing a ribboned bonnet holds out her arms to play with the child and inside the improvised tent are the provisions for the day. This is a happy family taking care of their child. At the rear of the picture, four men can be seen scything the corn, which for Linnell is symbolic of God’s bounty. He believed that God was the source of his inspiration and that God revealed his divinity visibly in the natural world, and that belief allowed Linnell to use the landscape as a forum for his religious sentiment. The landscape unfolds behind them with Linnell’s characteristic billowing white clouds scudding across the sky, occasionally parting to show the blue sky. This could be, given Linnell’s religious feelings, an echo of the Holy Family. The iconography is of Mary and Joseph, the humble parents of the Christ child, laying him on a bed of straw as they did in Bethlehem. In this image, there is poetry and colour and none of the harshness on which Jefferies comments, and scant sign of the ‘life of endless labour’.

In *The Cornfield Cradle*, there is no contamination of the landscape with starving labourers bent to the scythe. By contrast, Jefferies described the reapers in forceful and graphic language which emphasised the physicality of their work and suffering:

They worked and slaved and tore at the wheat as if they were seized with a frenzy, the heat, the aches, the illness, the sunstroke, always impending in the air, the stomach hungry again...
before the meal was over... never was such work ... these miseries would have prayed for permission to tear their arms from the sockets, and to scorch and shrivel themselves to charred human brands in the furnace of the sun.9

The family shown by Linnell suffer none of these privations; they add narrative interest and assist composition and colour. Linnell is preserving rather than disrupting and seeking to control not only the landscape but the people in it. It could be argued that he is displaying some measure of social awareness by including labouring figures at all, but he does not disclose their hard lives and presents an Arcadian vision.

Myths of Arcadia, a place where man lived in harmony with nature, survived into the nineteenth century. It was the subject of poetry and art over many centuries going back to Virgil’s Georgics in 29 BCE but by the middle of the nineteenth century, the realities of an agricultural labourer’s existence bore no resemblance to the myth. Nevertheless, although writers were more willing to expose reality, not many landscape painters chose to do so: ‘very few Victorian pictures actually convey the sense of physical strain and grinding labour that harvesting involved.’10 Despite these factors, as is evident from this harvest scene, Linnell located Arcadia in the present, or what appeared to be the present, as he sketched en plein air.11 He excluded all signs of modernity such as farm machinery which might otherwise defile the purity of nature and he stereotyped the workers as well-fed and contented.

By contrast, Jefferies writes of the life of the labourer as unremittingly harsh, living in out-of-repair, dilapidated and tumbledown cottages hard by the roadside. In an article for Fraser’s Magazine, ‘The labourer’s daily life’, he describes the typical cottage:

The rain comes through the hole in the thatch...the mud floor is damp... the cold wind comes through the ill-fitting sashes...there is a constant tendency in rainy weather for the water to run in...the thatch is saturated...the wretched place looks not unlike a dunghill...Here there was nothing but hard and scanty fare, no heat, no light, nothing to cheer the heart, nothing to cause it to forget the toil of the day and the thought of the morrow.12

Jefferies documents what he sees in an unsentimental way, using plain and blunt language. He gives a sense of the bleakness - ‘nothing to cheer the heart’ - with the damp, dripping and dispiriting cottage offering no refuge from either the weather or the world.

He does not constrain himself in the interests of politeness to make scenes of the worker’s life prettier than they were. He aims to evoke reality in the reader’s mind, and he claimed that he described real people, places and events.13 He rhetorically asks why the labourers undertake agricultural work and answers: ‘because hunger and thirst drive them.’14

If any confirmation of Jefferies’ desolate view is needed then it can be found in the 1867 ‘Commission on the Employment of Children, Young Persons and Women in Agriculture.’15 Although the title refers to women and children, this lengthy report lays bare the desperate state of many agricultural workers, of all ages and genders, who did not enjoy even the limited protection given to factory workers. The report comments on the cottages unfit for human habitation, the lack of education for children who were taken out of school to work on the land and the poor pay and conditions for agricultural workers generally. The agricultural economy was in a period of transition from the eighteenth century and through the nineteenth century, evolving in reaction to factors including: national population increase, the enclosure movement which favoured landowners and removed traditional rights to cultivate common land, and technological developments in machinery which meant that there was reduced ability for self-sufficiency in food production. These factors resulted in increasing hardship and lowering wages for the peasant class.

Linnell’s painted Arcadian aesthetics were not shared by Jefferies who commented that it was a mistake made by painters that they ignored ‘modern aspects, doubtless under the impression that to admit them would impair the pastoral scene’ and that, although the images could be beautiful, ‘they lack the force of truth and reality.’16 Jefferies was by no means alone in drawing attention to the lot of the agricultural labourer. In 1825, William Cobbett in Rural Rides described them as: ‘Thin, ragged, shivery, dejected mortals such as never were seen in any country upon earth’.17 It should be noted however, that not all writers took such a grim view of agricultural life. There was, for some, a vested interest in demonstrating it as highly desirable, using a picturesque description as, for example, an aid to selling a book such as Pictorial Calendar of the Seasons (1854), as this extract shows:

14 R. Jefferies, in Miller and Mathews, Richard Jefferies, p. 51.
See yonder that line of lusty mowers... how vigorous, how cheerful their appearance...truly cornfields... suggest to us many wonderful and lovely passages of life from the remotest times.18

This conforms much more to Linnell’s idyllic scenes, which came out of the Romantic tradition of the picturesque, but the artist was ignoring an insistent and increasing focus on the situation of the agricultural worker, not only from the pen of Jefferies but also in periodicals such as The Cornhill Magazine, which supported the labourers in attempts to improve their ‘hard and joyless existence.’19 Although some critics agitated for more realism, particularly in the 1860s and 1870s, when the differences between what was shown on canvas and what was, in reality, happening in the fields was becoming noticeable, others were very content with Linnell’s depictions.20

Linnell continued painting these picturesque and invented scenes because that is what his customers desired to buy: they wanted the reassurance that the world was stable and would carry on in the future as it had in the past.21

There was a nostalgic and sentimental appeal of a return to innocence and nature, and the evocations of rustic simplicity were a solace.22 Many of the buyers were northern industrialists only too aware of the terrible living and working conditions in the towns. Would such a purchaser want to hang in his home a picture which showed the true reality of rural life? As remarked by Janet Wolff, ‘what gets produced is often determined by straightforward economic facts.’23 This observation is echoed by Susan Owens: ‘Landscape[s]...had become therapy...they sold.’24 Landscape painters benefited from the greater acceptance of landscape as a noble and suitable subject for great art, and it was a time described as ‘The Golden Age of the living painter.’25 Linnell, with his images of harmonious, heart-warming and sentimental harvest scenes was one of the most highly paid artists of the time. Further, to have painted the harsh realities might have fed fear of social unrest among the propertied classes. In the nineteenth century there were outbreaks of machinery breaking and rick burning. Jefferies remarks: ‘The Arcadian innocence of the hayfield...is the most barefaced fiction’.26

‘Everything he did was conditioned by his desire to earn sufficient, for Linnell, art was a business and he viewed himself as a tradesman, calling his studio a ‘workshop’.26 From the age of eighteen, he kept careful account books and never allowed buyers, whether dealers or not, any credit. His attitude to money was well known in the artistic community and did not conform to contemporary practice.

His fear of bankruptcy, and the size of his family, with nine children and twenty-nine grandchildren goes some way to explain why he was willing to paint to satisfy popular taste and thereby to increase sales. It was the art market’s appetites that drove Linnell’s artistic production. As he got older, his painted labourers became fatter and jollier: they were freighted with sentimentality and myth.

Jefferies had a similar start in life in the sense that his father failed in his agricultural business and became a member of the servant class, but he did not pander to sentimentality in the passages discussed here.27 His reaction to his father’s reduced circumstances was not as extreme as that of Linnell although in his writing he did struggle with the conflict between the romantic and the realistic. ‘We all know so well the dread of poverty,’ wrote Jefferies.28 The evidence from the Jefferies passages quoted in this article suggests that, even if he was conflicted, he was not afraid to use bold language to uncover what he saw as empirical and observed truth: ‘you cannot get away from the coarseness...of life’.29 Jefferies writes of the ‘blunting of all fine feeling’ in the labourers:

The coarse, half cooked cabbage, the small bit of fat and rafy bacon... makes no very hearty supper after a day such as this...His bodily frame becomes rusted over...and with this indifference there rises up at the same time a corresponding dullness.30

He is describing the deadening effect on body and spirit of a miserable life constrained by poverty. None of this is apparent in the family in The Cornfield Cradle.

Linnell wrote poetry and believed that painting should reveal a moral or spiritual truth. This extract from one of his poems makes plain his strong religious feeling that good things, such as a bounteous harvest, come from God:

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18 John Wilson, quoted in C. Payne, Toil and Plenty, p. 27.
20 C. Payne, Toil and Plenty, p. 21.
25 Jeffries, Toilers of the Field, p. 87.
26 Linnell, Blake, Palmer, Linnell and Co., p. 21.
27 Miller and Mathews, Richard Jefferies, p. 479.
28 Miller and Mathews, Richard Jefferies, p. 486.
29 Miller and Mathews, Richard Jefferies, p. 484.
30 Jefferies, Toilers of the Field, p. 72.
I’ll paint the reapers in the harvest field  
At work or rest, for both will yield Pictures of happiness and bounteous love,  
Bestowed on just and unjust from above.31

Jefferies was himself religious, without ever accepting any formal religion. He describes spirituality in mystical terms in lengthy texts of intense feeling praying ‘that I might touch to the unutterable existence infinitely higher than deity.’32 Nature and the natural world was his religion and he believed, above all, in the soul: ‘an inner consciousness which aspires.’33 Nevertheless, the powerful spiritual forces that resided in him did not blind him to the harsh realities that he observed and wrote about in trenchant terms.

John Barrell argues in The Dark Side of the Landscape (1980), and concerning the seventy years up to 1840, that it was not merely social, (rather than aesthetic) convention that dictated the appearance of the labourer in paintings as cheerful, submissive and grateful; it was also a deliberate act of subversion of the truth for the benefit of the “rich” who feared social unrest arising from ‘increasing literacy and their own class consciousness.’34 In the aftermath of the French Revolution, artistic sentiment moved from reason and order to a focus on emotion and imagination.35 As noted above, Linnell displayed a Romantic tendency in his landscapes of southern England. In his depiction of agricultural labourers, he shows a functioning hierarchy and social harmony; he ignores the realities of their lives and also evades showing the march of progress through the mechanisation of agricultural work. Steam-powered threshing machines were widely used by the mid-century but do not make an appearance in his images.36 As “the rich” were Linnell’s patrons, he had a reason to subvert the truth although there is no evidence that he feared social unrest and so deliberately falsified his images. He was more concerned with depicting ‘nature’s aura’.37

During the period in which Jefferies was writing, the plight of the agricultural worker was a much more widely discussed problem than could be believed from evaluating the offerings at the Royal Academy exhibitions in the period, where artists depicting the dark side of the landscape were few and far between.38 As Jefferies wrote: ‘Behind the beautiful aspects comes the reality of human labour, hours upon hours of heat and strain...the wheat is beautiful but human life is labour’.39 George Eliot was also aware of the discrepancies between fact and fiction writing: ‘the painter is still under the influence of idyllic literature, which has always expressed the imagination of the cultivated and town-bred, rather than the truth of rustic life.’40 Social realism – that is the more accurate depiction of the poor – took hold in painting in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Its antecedents included the Pre-Raphaelites with their mantra of ‘truth to nature’ and the magazine Illustrated London News, which published woodcuts of the starving Irish following the potato famine of the late 1840s. However, for the majority of the century, in landscape art, the idyllic trumped the real.

Jefferies and Linnell present different versions of the rural labourer. One is a polemic raging against their treatment, and the other a balm which harks back to a golden age that perhaps never was but is nevertheless a long-lasting theme in British art. The unflinching pen of Jefferies and the idyllic brush of Linnell are in opposition. Linnell presents an imaginative and peaceful world suffused in God’s bounty, where the peasants are happy in their place and grateful to be there. The function and purpose of the countryside for Linnell was to produce a pleasing image that he could sell, and, for him, profit and piety were easy bedfellows. Jefferies used his pen to condemn the system which required the labourer to work for the benefit of others and remain poor. Jefferies was writing a documentary, while Linnell was painting a fantasy.

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36 Payne, Toil and Plenty, p. 21.
37 Wood, Paradise Lost, p. 58.
38 Owens, Spirit of Place, p. 218.
Why set a portrait in a landscape or a landscape in a portrait? 
A comparative analysis of the functions of landscape in Thomas Gainsborough’s 
*Mr. and Mrs. Andrews* (c 1750) 
and Cornelia Parker’s 
*Landscape with Gun and Tree* (2010)
Consideration of the 2010 sculpture that clearly references the 1750 painting, selecting and exaggerating just a few of the painting’s elements, draws attention to compositional, symbolic, biographical and contextual aspects of the earlier painting. As a site-specific structure, Parker’s work is framed in and by the landscape it inhabits, causing us to consider anew the specificity of Gainsborough’s setting and the holistic composition of the painting. This comparison helps to both ground the painting in the social, political and geographical world of its sitters, and reveal the controlling hand of the artist. The symbolic nature of the gun and tree in Mr. and Mrs. Andrews is highlighted by Parker’s work, and the lack of explicit sitters questions the nature of portraiture, allowing us to probe the boundary between landscape and portrait painting to uncover the particular enhancing effect of combining them.
Painted in Suffolk when Thomas Gainsborough was, at most, 23 years old, this marriage portrait of local newly-weds (Fig. 1) was likely commissioned to commemorate their inheritance in 1750 of large swathes of fertile agricultural land, rather than simply to celebrate the union in 1748 of two commercially successful families, the Andrews and the Carters. 

Gainsborough had been at school with Robert Andrews and had recently returned to Suffolk after a London apprenticeship, following the death of his father. He was newly married himself but struggling financially. He was yet to move to Bath and then London to paint the fashionable portraits and romantic landscapes for which he became famous. The fact that the painting is unfinished (Mrs. Andrews’ lap is unpainted), was originally untitled and never exhibited by Gainsborough, might rank this as an early experimental picture, like the unfinished oil sketches of his family. This painting shows the stiffness of his early work and is less painterly, less confident, than his later work. Yet it has a directness and acuity of observation lacking in his later, more formulaic, portraits or idealized landscapes, and is unusual in combining landscape with portraiture, creating an “unexpected harmony.”

The National Gallery classifies the work as a ‘triple portrait’, referring to the two sitters and to their land, and as an eighteenth-century ‘conversation piece’. 

Gainsborough had not travelled abroad but was familiar with, and influenced by, an unusual combination of the dark naturalism of Dutch landscapes and French Rococo colour and sensuousness, as well as the wit of Hogarth. At this stage of his career, Gainsborough’s style was very much his own, neither tailored to the fashion of the day nor paying any credence to the art—historical intellectualism of his contemporary, Joshua Reynolds, who promoted the artistic superiority of history painting over portraiture and portraiture over landscape painting. Reynolds lamented that Gainsborough had not ‘learned from others the usual and regular practice belonging to art.’

Unheeded, Gainsborough indulged his passion for landscape painting throughout his life, alongside a more commercially lucrative, visually sumptuous, portraiture practice.

Unknown during his lifetime and unrecorded except for one mention in 1904, Mr. and Mrs. Andrews is now one of Gainsborough’s most recognized paintings, becoming famous overnight when first exhibited by descendants of Andrews, in 1927. Excessive exposure over the next three decades culminated in the painting being bought in 1960 by the National Gallery, for a record sum of $130,000. 

Accused of being a chocolate-box cliche, the painting has nevertheless ‘survived its destructive popularity’ because it sets observation above convention and therefore remains influential and relevant today, worthy of close analysis. This essay approaches an analysis of this painting through comparison with one of the many works it has inspired, Cornelia Parker’s Landscape with Gun and Tree (2010) (Fig. 2).

Nicky and Robert Wilson, wealthy owners since 2001 of Bonnington House, a neo-Jacobean mansion and estate, have restored the house and returned their grounds to a contemporary landscape sculpture park. The Wilsons commissioned Cornelia Parker to mark the opening of Jupiter Artland (2009) with a public commemorative event, following up in 2010 with a commission for a permanent work. Like Gainsborough, Parker knew the couple commissioning her, having taught Nicky at Camberwell and Chelsea art schools. After spending time in residence with the Wilsons, she ‘felt inspired to make a kind of portrait of them... the landscape was reminiscent of that in Gainsborough’s painting... I decided to focus on the gun and tree in the painting and remove the couple, scaling up Robert’s gun... to a nine-metre tall cast iron and Corten steel version that stands as if leaning against a tree.’ Comparison of this twenty-first century sculpture with Gainsborough’s eighteenth-century oil painting (both the similarities and differences), helps us to “read” the original work and explore the roles of biography and geography, portraiture and landscape.

Like Gainsborough’s commission, Parker’s response was informed by knowledge of her sitters, both her perception of their personal

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1 Bulmer & District History Group, Robert Andrews bulmerhistory.co.uk, [Accessed 20 December 2020].
4 Vaughan, Gainsborough, p. 56.
7 Sir Walter Armstrong, Gainsborough and his place in English Art (London: William Heinemann, 1904) p. 257. Exhibited at the Gainsborough Bicentenary Memorial Exhibition, Ipswich Museum, 5 November 1927
8 It was toured or exhibited over 16 times by 1958, in the UK, Europe and America, Mr. and Mrs. Andrews - Wikipedia, [Accessed 20 December 2020]. Gettyimages, Auctioneers and Audience at Art Auction, Gainsborough Sold For Record $130,000 March 23rd, 1960. Gainsborough... News Photo – Getty Images [Accessed 20 December 2020].
10 A Moon Landing, a firework display inspired by Whistler’s Nocturne in Black and Gold, the Falling Rocket.
11 Cornelia Parker, The Generous Landscape: Ten Years of Jupiter Artland (Edinburgh: Jupiter Artland Foundation, 2018) p. 120.
12 Parker, The Generous Landscape, p. 122.
relationship and of their power and status as landowners. As well as the painting, she explicitly references its cultural currency since 1927, particularly the Marxist John Berger’s insistence on Mr. and Mrs. Andrews’ ‘proprietary attitude towards what surrounds them.’

The Wilsons and the Andrews are not titled gentry, but rich through successful trading, in natural health remedies and cloth, respectively. Gainsborough positions his couple clearly within their specific Suffolk lands at Auberies, as if masters of all around them, yet showing more than is topographically visible from the spot. In doing so, Gainsborough emphasises the sense of place as a valuable commodity, deploying his landscape-painting skills to project the landowners’ status and power.

One biographer, by studying the will of Andrews’ father, realised that all of Gainsborough’s Suffolk patrons moved in the same tight circles, and ‘the two young people in the cornfield gained a new significance; they were powerful and controlled others.’

Like Berger, human geographers have made much of the depiction of the land as a symbol of capitalist property, and this is a convincing interpretation.

16 Hamilton, Gainsborough, A Portrait, Chapter 14.
attention to the presence in the painting of the oak tree, still growing in that spot today, a symbol of longevity for a newly rich couple establishing their own legacy and lineage. In Parker’s work, the oak also stands in for Mrs. Wilson, and its relationship to the oversized gun (a proxy for Mr. Wilson) is one of gentle touching, yet independence; each is structurally self-supporting and would survive the loss of the other. Looking afresh at the proximity of Gainsborough’s couple, there is a physical distance between them which would have been a normal composition for the time, but there is a suggestion, in their poses and expressions, of an emotional distance and little warmth. Gainsborough’s is perhaps a more edgy commentary on their arranged marriage, with the hint of a less sympathetic, less friendly attitude of the artist towards his more prosperous sitters. Again, the landscape is utilized, this time to evoke mood. The dark clouds in the sky are an unlikely inclusion in a studio-painted marriage portrait, surely signaling difficulties ahead. As in Gainsborough’s melancholy Portrait of the Artist with his Wife and Daughter of 1748 (Fig. 3), painted soon after the death of their first child, he deliberately paints the colours and mood of the landscape to reflect his impression of the feelings of the sitters. As Jonathan Jones observes, ‘some of his most revealingly emotional uses of nature are in paintings of his own family.’

Parker’s use of stand-ins for her couple also draws attention to Gainsborough’s use of artifice in the way he poses and dresses his sitters, drawing our attention to the fact that the viewer is being manipulated, thereby alerting our critical eye. The figures appear doll-like (indeed it is claimed that Gainsborough used small marionettes, a ‘conscious artifice’, to help compose his paintings). This apparent naivety throws up insights. Another Suffolk portrait, of Mrs. Andrew’s parents, Mr. and Mrs. Carter (Fig. 4), is of a similar date, and here the discrepancy in size between the figures may well be intended to be comical. As many have commented since his friend Philip Thicknesse first observed it, there is a definite “stiffness” in Gainsborough’s early figures. But the effect in the Andrews portrait is successful – unsettling, psychologically ‘edgy’, conveying a certain ‘hauteur’ and overall giving the impression of something pretentious and sham. Robert Andrews’ clothes are not what

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24 Tate, ‘Mr. & Mrs. Carter’, Art and Artists, ‘Mr and Mrs Carter’, Thomas Gainsborough, c.1747–81, Tate, [Accessed 29 January 2021].
was worn in the countryside and perhaps not quite the height of fashion.²⁷ His wrinkled stockings and slouchy powder pouch are unkempt and unflattering. Parker’s giant, erect and cocked shotgun exaggerates and subverts the obvious phallic symbolism of the gun in the painting. Gainsborough’s sexual innuendo, through the husband’s downturned shotgun and flaccid powder bag, coupled with his wife’s sly expression, is one of a lifestyle and libido curtailed by a dominant wife. Parker described her own work as ‘naughty’ in the context of implied sexual frisson, and the same adjective is used by Sister Wendy to describe the absence of sexual prowess implied in Gainsborough’s painting.²⁸ Much has been made of what Gainsborough intended to paint in the unfinished lap of Mrs. Andrews (Fig. 5). The space may have been left unpainted, pending later inclusion of a baby, but the sketchy outline that is visible suggests a dead cock–pheasant. The shape is undoubtedly phallic, prompting Gainsborough’s latest biographer to liken it to a “drawing of a penis on her” and conclude that the painting’s incompleteness signals a falling out with his patron.²⁹ This reading is consistent with an interpretation of a satirical, mocking undercurrent. Gainsborough lets the figures reveal self-aggrandisement, rather than pumping them up with classical props. And the inclusion of penned-in donkeys in the middle-ground can be interpreted uncharitably too.³⁰ Gainsborough’s knowing, rather gloomy reflection on the personal prospects of a marriage is picked up on by another contemporary artist, David Hockney. In his 1971 double portrait of close friends, Mr. and Mrs. Clark and Percy (Fig. 6), Hockney reverses the position of the sitters, but echoes the composition and trapped, melancholic mood of Gainsborough’s Mr. and Mrs. Andrews, with the cat Percy as the phallic symbol, portending infidelity. Clearly Gainsborough’s painting is more than mimesis, both in terms of his transparently satirical, almost Hogarthian, unsympathetic depiction of the couple, and in the artful rearrangement of nature in his landscape, ‘redolent of Suffolk’ and ‘evocative of place,’ but not descriptively accurate.³¹ Comparing the overall composition of the two works helps identify additional meanings implied by the landscape elements in the portraits. The fabrication and engineering

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30 Cadogan Tate, Gainsborough: Hidden symbols and scandalous nature, 10 October 2017, Gainsborough: Hidden symbols and scandalous nature | Cadogan Tate [Accessed 20 December 2020].
required to place a self-supporting nine-metre replica shotgun against a tree on the Wilson’s estate, draws our attention to the choice of the exact location and prompts questions about its relationship to the park as a whole, the house and the other sculptures. The verticality of *Landscape with Tree and Gun* naturally prompts photographs of the structure in portrait format, as in Fig. 2 and almost all of the authorized illustrations. Yet its relationship to the whole estate, in its positioning to the left side of a large horizontal panorama turns it into landscape format (Fig. 7, a site map showing relative scale and marked position of the work, foregrounded, to the left). Similarly, at 119.4 cm wide × 69.8 cm tall, the layout of Gainsborough’s painting ensures we approach the portrait as a landscape. A horizontal two-dimensional format requires verticals, and perspective, to successfully evoke the setting. Like Parker, Gainsborough ignores the more conventional use of architecture, such as the owners’ country house, achieving verticals in the composition using the oak tree instead. Sharp detail of the near objects, including the corn sheaf, contrasts with the sketchy mosaic of viewpoints in the background. Crowded foregrounding of the detailed couple, bench, dog and props helps achieve perspective, but is cleverly prevented from being too overpowering by the use of light-coloured clothing. This is achieved by the use of white and light blue paint especially, as cool colours recede into the picture and create the illusion of insubstantiality, as well as echoing the colours of the sky. Parker’s two verticals are clearly well-balanced, drawing the eye upwards to slice through the horizontal landscape, prompting scrutiny of how Gainsborough balanced his composition. The scale of the couple and their positioning, to the far left of the painting, marginalizes them and maximizes the amount of canvas devoted to the scenery. The couple and the view are both important, the canvas ‘composed so as to question the relationship of figure and landscape. He shoves his subjects to the side.’ Unlike Reynolds and other contemporary portrait painters, Gainsborough painted the entire canvas himself rather than focusing on the face and employing assistants to paint the rest. He approached portraiture holistically, paying as much attention here to the setting and clothing (and, in later works, to the painting of sumptuous fabrics) as to faces, to the extent that his later portraits are more successful as paintings than as specific likenesses. By the 1780s, Gainsborough’s abstraction of commissions into stylized conversation pieces is epitomized in the marriage portrait *Mr. and Mrs. Hallett*, which was renamed *The Morning Walk*

(Fig 8) to reflect this. Parker saw this generalizing reflected in her own work: “I had toyed with the idea of calling the piece Mr. and Mrs. Wilson, but on seeing the finished installation, I renamed it Landscape with Gun and Tree, a suitable nod to Gainsborough’s other titles.”35 In choosing the title, she is flagging the wider relevance of her piece, as well as the importance of the landscape in the portrait. What we now know as Mr. and Mrs. Andrews was probably originally untitled. It was an unfinished early painting, commissioned to hang privately over a neighbour’s mantel. Whilst still in the family’s ownership, Gainsborough’s biographer in 1904 lists it in his catalogue of portraits as Andrews, Mr. and Mrs. R. and a 1941 press article labels the painting Robert Andrews and his Wife.36 The current title was likely attributed by the auction house37 prior to its acquisition in 1960 by the National Gallery.38 Unlike the later Mr. and Mrs. Hallett, the Gallery has not been tempted to rename it, preserving the distinctiveness of this earlier, more sitter-specific portrait. In this case, the painting is an insightful portrait, within a landscape that underlines biographical elements, creating a successful holistic painting. Gainsborough’s early style, exemplified by Mr. and Mrs. Andrews, also inspired the modern figurative artist John Bellany, particularly in the non-topographical evocation of the landscape of his childhood (Scottish fishing villages rather than Suffolk farmland.)39 Like Parker and Gainsborough, Bellany understands the resonance in the biographical integration of portrait and landscape. Parker’s use of “landscape” in her title speaks to a broader role for the scenery in which the “portrait” is set, as it speaks geographically and biographically of its owners and objectifies and commemorates them within their own creation, Jupiter Artland. Formed by 1750 sketches of a formal landscape with extensive hunting grounds around Bonnington House,40 the Wilsons have restored the house and ha–ha. They are creating a carefully curated sculpture park around them, perhaps a modern equivalent to a Capability Brown garden, as they reclaim surrounding Andrews–like fertile arable farmland. The Wilsons self-identify as creating a single, ‘total work of art’41 in Jupiter Artland, in the manner of Ian Hamilton Finlay’s Little Sparta, but also in the eighteenth-century tradition of a connoisseur collector, such as Horace Walpole at Strawberry Hill House.42 In this sense, Jupiter Artland in its entirety can be read as a self–portrait, one where ‘the relationship between the artworks and the landscape with which they engage is crucial, not incidental.’43

Comparison of the figurative in Gainsborough’s painting and the symbolic in Parker’s sculpture prompts us to challenge and extend any straitjacket definition of portraiture. The absence of the subject is not new, when evoking the sitter. Turner painted a ‘poignant memorial to Scott’ soon after his friend’s death, showing a walking stick propped against a stool, at a favourite viewpoint on Scott’s estate (Fig 9).44 The deliberate and skilful use of setting by these artists also challenges the classification of artworks as either portrait or landscape, embracing the idea that the latter can be part of the former. Indeed, as the collecting policy of a national portrait gallery confirms, a topographically significant landscape painting, in itself, can be classified as portraiture.45 It was perhaps inevitable that once he left Suffolk for studios in Bath and London, Gainsborough conformed to a more conventional eighteenth–century practice that artistically segregated portraiture from landscape painting. In Mr. and Mrs. Andrews, Gainsborough better fits a more modern, more fluid, idea of portraiture, achieving something unconventional, a painting that is “spontaneous and intuitive.”46 It richly fuses the two genres to create a balanced and holistic work of art, however we choose to classify it. As a highly exposed object, displayed in a national gallery, the picture has become a trope, inspiring contemporary artists like Hockney, Bellany and Parker, as well as entering popular culture. Many museum objects are in important senses not just themselves – they are their citations...which enhances the aura of the original and still does not prevent a real encounter with the object that is moving or revealing.”47

38 National Gallery, Thomas Gainsborough | Mr and Mrs Andrews | NG6301 | National Gallery, London [Accessed 20 December 2020].
47 Nicholas Thomas, The Return of Curiosity: What Museums are Good for in the 21st Century (London: Reaktion
Transition Gallery in 2014, for example, commissioned ten artists to respond to the painting, to “Meet the Newlyweds.”48 Like Parker’s response, they focus our attention on particular elements and moods in the original painting, as in Dolly Tomsett’s The Secret life of Mrs. Andrews. In concentrating on her ‘erotic reverie’… the artist makes us look again at this famous portrait from the perspective of the supposedly unpowerful female, putting…her musings centre stage.49 Similarly, comparison of Parker’s piece with the painting that inspired it, enables a fresh encounter with the familiar whereby ‘the avant-garde reveals the past, because you can see it from a novel vantage point, so from a fresh angle.’50 By bringing specific elements into focus, we see that portraits need not be only about likeness. As even Reynolds conceded of his rival’s unconventional techniques and disrespect for the strict delineation of landscape from portrait painting, Gainsborough ‘was always attentive to the general effect, or whole together.’51

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48 Alex Michon, Meet the Newlyweds – Alex Michon (transitiongallery.co.uk), December 2014, [Accessed: 28 January 2021].
49 Alex Michon, Meet the Newlyweds – Alex Michon (transitiongallery.co.uk), December 2014, [Accessed: 28 January 2021].
Know thyself? Did Phrenology help William Powell Frith address middle-class Victorian crowd anxiety?
Lorenzo Niles Fowler’s Phrenology bust of circa 1850 has achieved a modern iconic status as an artefact that represents either a quackish pseudoscience or early attempts to understand the functions of the brain. Fowler maintained that Phrenology could allow you to ‘know yourself’. This article will investigate the history and context of Phrenology to understand why knowing thyself and others aided William Powell Frith’s painting Ramsgate Sands (Life at the Seaside) (1854) to be interpreted by the public as a celebration of the crowd.

Figure 1. William Powell Frith, Ramsgate Sands (Life at the Seaside), 1854, Oil on Canvas. (Collection: Royal Collection Trust / © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2017 Ref RCIN 405068)
Disparaged by several prospective purchasers as ‘a tissue of vulgarity’ and a ‘piece of vulgar cockney business’,1 William Powell Frith’s (1818–1909) narrative panorama of a British seaside town was exhibited to great acclaim at the Summer Exhibition of The Royal Academy in 1854. One of the highlights of that year, it proved immediately popular with the viewing public who lined up to see it where a guard rail was put in place to protect Ramsgate Sands (Life at the Seaside). The Athenaeum, The Times, and Punch all gave it good coverage, with The Art Journal astutely predicting it would become valuable ‘as a memento of the people, habits and manners of the English at the seaside’.2 Further proof of its success came when Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, on viewing, immediately sought to purchase the painting.

Measuring 77cm x 155cm, Life at the Seaside, as it was originally titled, features over 100 characters and an array of town buildings familiar to Victorian visitors of Ramsgate. The viewer is unusually placed in the sea looking towards the paraphernalia of recognisable seaside sights, a Punch and Judy stand, bathing machines, donkeys and performing animals. However, it is the ordinary people that dominate the scene. Arscott comments that the crowd is diverse enough to offer the ‘excitement of modernity’ but holds fast to the tightly knit normative middle-class family unit.3 The painting is crowded but gentle and domestic, with no hint of crime or vice that comes in his later renowned paintings Derby Day (1858) and The Railway Station (1862). The seashore occupants are relaxed, reading, crocheting, talking, lounging on chairs that seem to come from their houses. In a modern shift, Frith places ordinary domestic pleasures in the seaside’s public domain and produces a work that is neither simplistic nor sentimental. The innovative panoramic narrative of a predominantly middle-class crowd enjoying their leisure by the sea thrilled its viewers with the meticulous detail, modern subject matter and setting.

Frith’s painting was exhibited at a time when the public space had become a sphere of anxiety. The shape of the urban crowd changed forever in the decades preceding the 1850s. During the first half of the century, the population of Britain doubled to approximately 18,000,000.4 The exploding population of the Victorian cities that merged onto streets, squares and parks had disconnected the social boundaries of previous centuries, with each part of society claiming its own right to be there. The crowd became a social and democratic leveller as never before. Individualisation and the population growth of cities such as London, Manchester, and Liverpool throughout the 1800s created problems that were not new but vastly magnified. The poverty, overcrowding and the unsanitary conditions of urban working-class housing and streets provided a breeding ground for diseases such as cholera, typhus and typhoid that spread easily through the socially diverse crowds of cities. Violence and crime were an ever-present threat due to poverty and unemployment. Streets thronged with beggars, aggressive street vendors, prostitutes and pickpockets that even middle- and upper-class citizens could not be immune from.

The Peterloo massacre of 1819 and the Chartists’ meetings, demonstrations and risings that led to violence and deaths in the 1830s and 40s marked a damaging change in the perception of the working-class crowd by the Government and the public alike. Any crowd could become a ‘mob’ and potentially erupt into physical disorder that created an undercurrent of anxiety and tension. Charles Mackay’s widely read text Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds (1841) stated that ‘Men, it has been said, think in herds; it will be seen they go mad in herds, while they only recover their senses slowly and one by one.’ Logan notes that whatever mania, delusion, or protest Mackay uses as an example of crowd behaviour, they always have adverse results.5 This deep suspicion of crowd behaviour remained consistent and powerful throughout the Victorian era. In Gustave Le Bon’s The Crowd (1895), written over fifty years later, Plotz states that Le Bon, like Mackay, still chose to make passing events such as violent working-class protest appear as ‘a deep-seated fact of the human psyche’.6

Negative visual representations of urban crowds were famously depicted by Hogarth in the 18th century, of whom Frith was an admirer. Contemporary paintings by Gustave Dore and Luke Fildes built on these illustrations. Similar literary descriptions were found in the fictional works of William Blake, Charlotte Bronte, Thomas de Quincey, Charles Dickens, Elizabeth Gaskell, and John Ruskin. Henry Mayhew’s journalistic report on the London Labour and the London Poor (1851) provided verbatim evidence of grim urban conditions. William Thackeray’s comment on Mayhew’s report in Punch of that year describes the ambivalent experiences of inner-city existence, ‘A picture of human life so wonderful, so awful… so exciting

and terrible’. The urban crowd was a mirror of Victorian modernity that was both terrifying and exhilarating. The science of Phrenology offered stability within this chaos.

Morrell states that Darwinism has distorted for the modern reader the importance of other life sciences that were emerging during the first half of the nineteenth century that included Phrenology, geology, anthropology, and psychiatry. The prominence of Phrenology to Frith’s audience of the 1854 Summer Exhibition phenology cannot be underestimated. The prolific number of Phrenology pamphlets, journals, books, self-assessment charts published, and lectures given on the subject between 1800 and 1850 attest to its popularity. Numerous Phrenology societies flourished throughout Great Britain, attended by men of science and learning and middle and working-class men and women. For Great Britain, Phrenology consisted of two phases: a scientific phase from 1800-1820, dominated by Viennese physician Franz Joseph Gall (1758-1828) and his colleague Johann Spurzheim (1776-1832) and a social improvement phase from 1820-1850 spearhead by George Combe (1788-1858). Around 1800 after 20 years of painstaking dissection of the human brains and examining skulls, Gall identified 27 common organs or faculties within the brain and promoted a Theory of Organology. Gall’s colleague Spurzheim modified this around 1820 to a total of 35 faculties that are innate and whose size was reflected in the shape of the skull. This modification formed the basis for the newly named science of Phrenology which used Spurzheim’s revisions to construct textbooks, manuals, busts, and conduct examinations that remained constant for over 100 years. Phrenology was fiercely debated in scientific and intellectual circles during the early decades of the 1800s. Critics noted that contradictory evidence was explained away while ‘facts’ that correlated opportunely to individuals remained. The popularity of Phrenology rested partly on its simplistic formula of measuring skulls and feeling for bumps and indentations with callipers and craniometers that correlated to Spurzheim’s standardised system. However, it was to George Combe that Phrenology owed a larger debt. George Combe (1788-1858), an Edinburgh lawyer, attended several lectures given by Spurzheim in 1819 and became enthralled by this science’s possibilities. Phrenology’s sustained

popularity during the Victorian era from 1820–1850, which became known as the ‘Phrenology Craze’, has much to do with Combe’s book On the Constitution of Man and its Relation to External Objects (1828). Cooter suggests that this book propelled Phrenology from an arcane theory of the brain and character to that of a socially respectable scientific vehicle of progressive ideas on social life and organisation. Combe’s book sold 300,000 copies in the period 1828–1899, including a ‘popular’ cheaper edition, and became an international bestseller. It outsold all other non-fiction material during that period, including Darwin’s On The Origin of Species which sold only 50,000 between 1850–1899.

The positivist potential of Combe’s interpretation of Phrenology spoke to an era dominated by self-improvement. By identifying the size of faculties on a scale of 1–7 (very small to very large) on the skull, a phrenologist could recommend limiting negative faculties such as ‘destructiveness’ and activating positive ones such as ‘benevolence’. Combe’s positivist thesis proposed that Phrenology could ‘facilitate education, metaphysics, morals, and legislation’. Phrenology forged a connection with physiognomy, a study of personality traits from the external appearance that had previously been considered the most pervasive Western personality theory. Johann Caspar Lavater (1749–1801), a Swiss theologian and poet, published Essays on Physiognomy between 1775–1778. Lavater’s four abundantly illustrated volumes became widely read and respected in the Western world and revitalised a study of faces that dated back to ancient Greece. Together these ‘sciences’ produced a hierarchy of racial, intellectual, and social types based on skull shape, foreheads, jawlines, noses, and ears. The ability to classify people in a crowd through scientific ‘facts’ became a subject of fascination and obsession for Victorians of all classes. It offered a certainty about types within crowds that created a sense of security whilst denying its prejudicial doctrines.

Lorenzo and his brother Orson Fowler (1809–1897) were Americans who embraced all of Coombe’s social reform ideas with zeal. Phrenology was a powerful and influential movement in the United States which lasted until the end of the nineteenth century, far longer than in Europe. In 1836 Lorenzo commenced his phrenological practice in New York.

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15 Cowling, Victorian Figurative Painting. Domestic Life and the Contemporary Scene, p. 92.
The two brothers were commercially aware of the enormous interest in Phrenology and produced a prolific output of tools to assist practitioners and the public. By the mid-1840s L. N. Fowler and Co was the largest publishing house in New York. Lorenzo Fowler lectured extensively throughout the United States and Europe and settled in England in 1862, where he initiated a new phrenological phase that was unsuccessful and short-lived. Fowler’s ceramic bust remained true to Spurzheim’s original positioning of faculties. Fowler’s bust and other Phrenology tools such as callipers, craniometers, and manuals of instruction allowed Victorians to indulge in their passion for analysing, recording and tabulating information that had the reassuring veneer of science.

Although this article’s focus has been to understand if Phrenology could help Frith’s middle-class audience celebrate the crowd, it must be stated that Frith’s opinion of this ‘science’ is not certain. James De Ville, a devoted phrenologist and largest manufacturer of phrenological busts in Britain, gave lectures on the subject to Frith during his early training at the Henry Sass School of Art. Cowling notes he wrote home disparagingly about De Ville’s ‘science’. Frith’s biographers Christopher Wood and Aubrey Noakes detected an antipathy to Phrenology and physiognomy in his memoirs. However, Caroline Arscott states that he was a devotee of Phrenology.

Whatever his opinion, within Frith’s large circle of friends that included celebrated intellectuals, writers, and painters such as Charles Dickens, Mark Lemon, Augustus Egg, John Leech and Edward Matthew Ward, the application and potential of Phrenology and other natural sciences would have been extensively discussed and their pervasive influence acknowledged.

By 1854 William Powell Frith, aged 36, was a distinguished member of the Royal Academy and a commercially successful artist who had exhibited at the Royal Academy almost every summer since 1840. Prior to Ramsgate Sands, his works had consisted of the traditional art forms of historical, classical, and literary compositions. Frith had stated at an early age that he wished to ‘paint scenes of ordinary life’ and furthermore, was fascinated by the urban crowd. In his memoirs, Frith writes that by 1852 he had become ‘weary of costume painting’ and that ‘I had determined to try my hand on modern life, with all the drawback of unpicturesque dress’. Piqued at the lukewarm critical reception of his contemporary interior domestic painting Evening Prayers or Bedtime (1852), he understood that his audience sought a more modern and novel subject matter.

Frith found the perfect setting at Ramsgate, which his family stayed at for several summer months in 1851, escaping the urban pollution and hectic pace of life. Webb defines the Victorian seaside as ‘cultural resistance to the stresses of modernity’ and represented for Frith some of Mikhail Bakhtin’s carnivalesque qualities of escape. Routines were suspended, family treats and games enjoyed, and social behaviours gently relaxed. Queen Victoria stayed several times in Ramsgate during her childhood. Frith knew that his middle-class audience would have been aware of this royal connection just as they knew working-class day ‘trippers’ preferred adjacent Margate.

Ramsgate Sands on initial viewing may seem crowded and disordered as modern urban society has traditionally been portrayed, but on closer examination, Frith presents a series of miniature domestic units. Frith uses the frameworks of conservative Victorian ideology to reassure and maintain a semblance of governance. Motherhood is represented centrally in the foreground by a mother gently holding her young daughter, who paddles in the sea with another relative hovering protectively and two children peeping from behind the mother’s skirt (see Fig. 4).

The Victorian theme of childhood innocence is portrayed by children happily making sandcastles and playing games. The patriarchal male is represented seated or standing, reading, holding scientific telescopes, and not involved in the domestic duties of childcare. Cowling’s study of Frith’s work in The Artist as Anthropologist states that it is only possible for modern viewers to see the obvious stereotypes. However, for a contemporary audience, the crowd became individuals who were convincingly authentic, immediately and safely readable. Cowling further argues that this audience had an internal subconscious directory of similar common beliefs that appraised human worth through external appearance and applied an accurate class consciousness to any situation. This analytical gaze was underpinned by the ‘sciences’ of Phrenology and physiognomy.

The dominant group are the elegant young ladies in pale dresses seated in chairs and on the ground whilst their father reads his paper and averts his gaze from an itinerant pedlar bothering them (see Fig. 5). The eye contact with the pedlar and the young lady at ground level would have been seen as dangerous and modern.

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16 Greenblatt, p.795
18 Arscott. p. 84.
20 Paxman. p. 20.
The dress, manner and gaze of this group create a narrative completely distinguishable from their neighbours. Frith continually sets up multiple and competing readings within this painting that distract and intrigue, and negate feelings of crowd anxiety. On the young ladies’ left, an elderly couple is hiding under a parasol with the husband wearing old-fashioned breeches and gaiters. Here Frith uses fashion to signify change and modernity, the use of full sunbonnets or ‘uglies’ and long trousers being a modern one. Balanced on the right, critics noted the attractive widow as scandalously talking to her young lover.23

Equally risky is the telescope of one of the gentlemen to the far left trained on the bathing carriages to the far right, again hinting at impropriety (see Fig. 6). Above him is an exotic group of Ethiopian Serenaders, but their identity is ambiguous as they could be English actors blacked out or real African musicians.24 Frith’s appeal to his audience was authentic attention to detail in his models in compositions that included elements of risk and uncertainty.

Frith’s artistic acumen anticipates Michel Foucault’s ‘disciplinary space’ where social position and spatial placement are intimately linked.25 To the rear of the picture are vendors and lower social classes, remaining on the periphery and limiting contact, which acknowledged a social difference. The picture’s central pyramid is resolutely the leisured middle class, whose presence establishes authority and control over the beach. The rear characters are blurred or have coarser features and a broader physique indicating a lower-class Celtic identity. The pedlars and entertainers are poorly dressed. The foreground characters have finer features with high foreheads that correlated through Phrenology and physiognomy to higher intelligence and moral refinement. Together with their lighter hair and pale skin tone, this indicated a superior Anglo-Saxon inheritance. The truthful depiction of characters and narrative that placed ‘realism above artifice’ was hugely important in Victorian art and initiated by the Pre-Raphaelites.26 Although Frith was no admirer of this movement, he takes enormous trouble finding real-life models that fit the part artistically and corresponded to established ideas of type and class. The entertainer in the background with his

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animal family and drummer assistant was persuaded to come to London from Ramsgate to pose. Frith describes the drummer as ‘ugly, but an excellent type of this class’. Frith himself is in the far right of the painting with his friend Richard Llewelyn posing as the gentleman seated reading the paper. Frith’s daughter Cissie is the baby girl paddling. Frith leaves nothing to chance to produce a work that accurately reflected the people, manners and customs of this contemporary urban crowd.

Frith’s painting heralded the emergence of large-scale contemporary works of the domestic genre that celebrated the urban crowd. The reliance on physical aspects to determine intellectual and moral characteristics may seem to a modern reader naïve at best. Nevertheless, it represented an attempt to explore a greater human complexity and individuality than previously recognised. Through Phrenology and its allied ‘science’ of physiognomy, the middle-class Victorian gaze became more confident and authoritative. Art became a medium to respect this new confidence, to project a domestic and social realism that could be celebrated. With Ramsgate Sands, Frith created a narrative that showed a complete understanding of his audience’s belief systems.

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27 Wood, p. 36.
The promotion of moral values through Victorian children’s stories: Charles Dickens’s ‘Frauds on the Fairies’ (1853) and a ‘Robinson Crusoe’ nursery wallpaper design (1875–1900)
This essay considers an article by Charles Dickens on the alteration of fairy tales alongside a nursery wallpaper design depicting scenes from the Robinson Crusoe story. In doing so, it explores the use of stories to promote particular values to children in the Victorian period, and the ways in which ‘classic’ children’s stories could be repeatedly adapted and reinterpreted.
because of the very ‘extravagance’ that marks them as opposed to factual literature. The insertion of the writer’s own opinions (in this case, Cruikshank’s) into such stories is likened to a ‘Whole Hog’ driven into the ‘fairy flower garden.’ Fairy tales, in Dickens’s characterisation, have a purity, and potential fragility, akin to that of childhood itself, and to alter them by inserting morals that are not contained in the original version is to destroy their worth.

Dickens celebrates fairy tales as feeding the imagination of children, by ‘captivating a million of young fancies’. This, and his rejection of didacticism in children’s literature, reflects views expressed by Romantic writers earlier in the century. As children’s literature developed as a genre in the eighteenth century, instruction played a prominent role, but it was often combined with entertainment. John Newbery’s A Little Pretty Pocket-Book (1744), frequently cited as marking the beginning of mass publishing specifically for children,2 used stories and even an accompanying toy as a tool for teaching children acceptable ways to behave, while texts such as Sarah Trimmer’s Fabulous Histories (1786) combined fantasy with moral instruction. However, several Romantic writers saw didactic literature for children as diametrically opposed to the kind of fantasy stories that might nourish a child’s imagination. In an 1808 lecture, Samuel Taylor Coleridge attacked moral tales for children as promoting not goodness but ‘goodness’ and stated a preference for stories such as Jack the Giant Killer, ‘for at least they make the child forget himself.’3 This celebration of the immersive power of fantasy stories, over literature with more worldly aims, is echoed in the concluding paragraph of ‘Frauds on the Fairies’: ‘The world is too much with us, early and late. Leave this precious old escape from it, alone.’4 Dickens’s allusion here to the sonnet by William Wordsworth, ‘The World is Too Much With Us’,5 suggests the influence of Romanticism on Dickens’s thinking. Sir Walter Scott similarly condemned moralising literature, saying that when children read it ‘their minds are, as it were, put into the stocks’.6 The suggestion that material of this kind could hinder the capacity for free thinking is taken further by Dickens, who declares that this has implications for the development not only of individual children but the nation as a whole: ‘a nation without fancy, without some romance, never did, never can, never will, hold a great place under the sun.’

Dickens’s article, however, is concerned not with moral literature as a separate category from fantasy, but rather with the unwarranted intrusion of the former into the latter. By the time he was writing, fairy tales had become widely accepted, and indeed celebrated, as suitable reading matter for children, and the publication of collections such as the Grimms’ tales, translated into English in 1823, marked their elevation to a literary form.7 This shift in the view of fairy tales can be seen in Dickens’s use of the word ‘texts’ to refer to them, in spite of their origins in oral culture. The popularity of such stories might suggest that the Romantic view of children’s literature had triumphed, but the divide between didacticism and fantasy had never been entirely clear-cut, and Cruikshank’s version of Hop-o’-my-Thumb reflected the ongoing integration of the two by many writers.

While Dickens’s article primarily discusses fairy tales, he mentions the Robinson Crusoe narrative as an example of a classic children’s story that might be (mis)used for moralising purposes. This story is also the subject of a nursery wallpaper design produced in the final quarter of the nineteenth century,8 which depicts selected scenes from Crusoe’s time on the island. The very existence of a product such as this, designed expressly for use in a child’s nursery and depicting a story considered suitable for a child, suggests both the heightened status of childhood in the Victorian period and the important place assigned to stories within childhood. Dickens’s view of childhood as a ‘blessed time of life’ was not an isolated one: childhood was often idealised in Victorian culture as a time of innocence that should be protected and celebrated.9 The wallpaper, and others like it, indicates that at least by the second half of the nineteenth century – when such specialised goods began to be produced10 - this stage of life was considered sufficiently important that middle- and upper-class parents might be willing to buy nursery furnishings specifically designed for children’s rooms. It is, however, also suggestive of a view of children as occupying a separate sphere from adults: this is a decorative piece to be used in a part of the house reserved for children, whose access to other rooms might be limited.11 Dickens may express a wish to ‘walk with children, sharing their delights’, but

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4 William Wordsworth, ‘The World Is Too Much With Us’ (1807), Poetry Foundation website
5 Quoted in M. O. Grenby, ‘Moral and Instructive Children’s Literature’ (15 May 2014), British Library website

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7 ‘Unknown, Robinson Crusoe, 1875-1900, 101.6 x 50.9 cm, wallpaper, Victoria and Albert Museum, London <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O74620/robinson-crusoe-wallpaper-unknown/>
8 Lewis, p. 354
10 Hamlett, p. 247
the idealisation of childhood contained in his article maintains a firm divide between children and adults.

Indeed, Jane Hamlett writes of the typically strict separation of the nursery from the rest of the house in middle- and upper-class Victorian and Edwardian homes, as a space for children and the servants who cared for them. The material culture of these spaces could, she notes, be imbued with social significance, for instance in helping to instil gender norms, or teaching children about the importance of neatness and order. Commentators such as the architect Robert W. Edis advised parents to pay close attention to the way in which nurseries were decorated and furnished, arguing that material culture could play a role in fostering the right kind of values in children. As with the Robinson Crusoe wallpaper, stories were seen to play an important part in this. Edis suggested that nurseries might be decorated with scenes from 'Jack and the Bean Stalk, Cinderella [...] and a whole host of other nursery rhymes and tales. The function of these illustrations is not considered by Edis to be purely decorative: he indicates that the choice of stories may also serve a moral purpose, asking 'Why not cover the walls of the nurseries with illustrations, telling of the glories and, if you please, the horrors of war - teaching peace and goodwill by illustrating the antitype [...]?' Edis is not necessarily recommending the kind of retouching of stories to which Dickens objects, but as his comment makes clear, the selection (by adults) of stories and illustrations to be displayed in nurseries often involves the promotion of certain values. The link between children's stories, material culture and moral messages can be traced back to Newbery's *A Little Pretty Pocket-Book* in the mid-eighteenth century, which was sold with an accompanying ball (for boys) or pincushion (for girls), and included instructions on how these items were to be used to encourage good behaviour.

The choice of the Robinson Crusoe story as a suitable subject for a nursery, and the presentation of the story in the wallpaper design, suggests the promotion of particular values to the children who were to be surrounded by its scenes. This does not mean, of course, that its function is purely didactic – the story has held an appeal for generations of children, and adults, as an exciting adventure – but its status as a 'classic' tale is linked to the ideas it can be seen to promote. Many eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century critics, including, most famously, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, had pointed to the educational possibilities offered by the novel, particularly if children sought to emulate its hero. The potential for Crusoe to function as an imperialist role model for Victorian boys may account, at least in part, for the popularity of versions of the story during the nineteenth century. The boyish appearance of Crusoe in the wallpaper when he first arrives on the island (in the frame captioned 'Robinson Crusoe coming from the wreck') encourages a child to identify with him, thereby placing him- or herself in the position of a British adventurer in a foreign land. The depiction of Friday as physically dwarfed by a now bearded and older-looking Crusoe might evoke a child's sympathy, but his initial nakedness highlights his 'otherness', as does the caption 'Robinson Crusoe and his man Friday', with its implication that he is a possession or, at most, a servant of the European. Still more 'other' are the 'savages', who appear in the background, barely distinguishable as people. The incident of 'Robinson Crusoe and Friday firing on the savages' is seen very much from the perspective of those with the guns, rather than dwelling on the human effects of the violence. Weaponry features prominently – Crusoe's gun appears in every image – but the wallpaper does not follow Edis's suggestion of also depicting the horrors of violence.

The choice of what not to include therefore supports an imperialist view of violence towards native people as morally acceptable.

The wallpaper does, however, show an abundance of natural imagery, in keeping with both Edis's recommendations and, to a degree, with Dickens's claim that 'love of nature' is something that fairy tales, in their unedited form, can nurture in a child reader. That Dickens chooses the image of a flower garden to represent the unsullied fairy tales - a metaphor extended by the reference to the unwelcome presence of the 'hog' of didacticism 'among the roses', and the likening of intruded opinions to a 'weed' – suggests a linkage between nature and children's stories, as well as childhood itself. This emphasis on nature again relates to Romantic ideas of childhood, which may be seen for instance in Wordsworth's description of the young as 'Nature's Priest. In the wallpaper, every frame features a backdrop of trees and foliage, some of them 'exotic' in appearance, but others bearing a strong resemblance to English trees. This may perform a similar function to the boyish look of Crusoe noted earlier, helping an English child to identify with the pictures and suggesting the possibility of adventures in their own natural environment. However, the

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11 Hamlett, p. 246
12 Hamlett, pp. 248, 255
14 Edis, p. 228
16 William Wordsworth, 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood', Poetry Foundation website
Anna Barbauld’s image of Crusoe’s island fits in with the imperialistic message suggested by the story’s portrayal: both natural and human resources may ultimately be judged in terms of their usefulness to Crusoe, or to the (assumed white British) audience.

Dickens’s article gives ‘kind treatment of animals’ as another of the ‘good things’ that fairy tales have ‘nourished in the child’s heart’, and the Crusoe wallpaper – like many children’s stories – includes animals, in the scene of ‘Crusoe at dinner with his family’ (the family’ being cats, a dog, and a bird). In the wallpaper, the animals serve to recreate a scene of domesticity, with Crusoe as the paternal figure. Critics such as Andrew O’Malley and Christine Kenyon-Jones have argued that the use of animals (who may represent the lower classes) in children’s literature often serves to support social hierarchies, by representing inequalities as natural, even while they encourage kindness towards the lower orders. Here, the way the animals are looking up at the ‘father’ Crusoe has the effect of reinforcing familial hierarchies, while also suggesting this familiar domestic set-up is so essential as to be reproduced even in the extreme isolation of the island.

The portrayal of weapons and violence in the Crusoe wallpaper can be seen in contrast to Dickens’s assertion that fairy tales – in their unedited form – can nurture ‘abhorrence of tyranny and brute force.’ However, Dickens’s argument implies that the reverse values might be acceptable if they are to be found in the original story. Satirising the idea that the Robinson Crusoe narrative might be edited for moral purposes, as Cruikshank did with Hop-o’-my-Thumb, Dickens asks readers to ‘imagine a Total abstinence edition of Robinson Crusoe, with the rum left out. Imagine a Peace edition, with the gunpowder left out, and the rum left in [...] Imagine an Aboriginal Protection Society edition, to deny the cannibalism and make Robinson embrace the amiable savages whenever they landed.’ Were such adaptations of the story permitted, he declares, ‘Robinson Crusoe would be “edited” out of his island in a hundred years, and the island would be swallowed up in the editorial ocean.’

Dickens’s argument, however, not only overlooks the values inherent in the designation of any children’s story as a ‘classic’, but also denies the mutable nature of the Robinson Crusoe story, especially as a tale for children. Soon after the publication of Daniel Defoe’s novel in 1719, the story began to be reproduced in pirated chapbook editions, and it was often in this form that the tale was first consumed by children, as well as by many adult readers, as sales of these cheaply produced books far exceeded those of the original. In these editions, the story was highly edited to fit the typical 24-page format of a chapbook, a process which involved both the omission of many elements and an emphasis on others. O’Malley argues that chapbook editions tended to focus on aspects of the story that placed it within an existing popular repertoire, leaving out the parts that made it more unique. Jordan Howell sees these adaptations as helping to produce the character of Crusoe that had been mythologised and broadly assimilated into Western culture by the nineteenth century. That Dickens mentions Robinson Crusoe alongside fairy tales suggests he is referring not to Defoe’s original novel but to the popular version of the story. Like fairy tales – which were also widely read in chapbook form during the eighteenth century – this story is not a fixed text, but something which had been repeatedly adapted and modified. The wallpaper provides evidence of the continuation of this process.

Each of the scenes shown in the wallpaper can be found in Defoe’s novel, but the artist has made a choice about which scenes to select and how to depict them. This selective use and interpretation of a story is also done by illustrators whose work accompanies an original text. Indeed, Cruikshank had illustrated some of Dickens’s writing, including Sketches by Boz and Oliver Twist, and this had been at times a source of friction between the two men. From the outset of their working relationship, Dickens insisted that Cruikshank should keep closely to what he had written, rather than seeking to influence the meaning of the text – a concern with the preservation of the original meaning of a work of literature which is also seen in the article, written 18 years after his first introduction to Cruikshank. As an illustrator, Cruikshank saw his relationship with texts differently, seeking not only to decide which scenes he should illustrate but at times suggesting alterations to the text itself. This potential challenge to

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19 O’Malley, p. 23
21 Stone, p. 220
The author’s control over the meaning of the text is particularly pertinent in children’s literature, which commonly features extensive illustrations. Such illustrations can influence the reader’s perception of the text even when it is seen in its original form, by highlighting certain episodes as especially worthy of attention, or suggesting a particular way of imagining characters or events.

The fixed status of texts written for children is further complicated by the different ways in which children consume literature, compared to adults. Younger children will often have the story read to them, giving the adult reader the potential to influence the meaning of the text by how it is read, or even edit what is spoken. The meaning of these texts is not, however, solely controlled by adults, whether authors, illustrators or readers. As Robin Bernstein has argued, children themselves appropriate literature in their tendencies to recreate stories through play. Dickens’s article declares that anyone who alters a fairy tale ‘appropriates to himself what does not belong to him’, protesting against Cruikshank’s ‘right’ to alter such a story. However, this raises the question of who does own these stories. Dickens may be suggesting that such stories belong to children, but he is himself seeking to impose an adult’s judgement on the acceptable form the stories may take, even if this is based on an idea of what children might prefer. Dickens’s opening sentence, ‘We may assume we are not singular in entertaining a very great tenderness for the fairy literature of our childhood’, constitutes an appeal to the nostalgia of his adult readers, but his desire to protect the purity of this literature is threatened not only by adult editors or illustrators, but also by children themselves.

The Robinson Crusoe wallpaper and ‘Frauds on the Fairies’ are testament to the importance of stories in Victorian views of childhood, and to the contested use of such stories in shaping children to become the ‘right’ kind of adults. In ‘Frauds on the Fairies’, Dickens recognises the potential power of stories for promoting particular values to children, but objects to the editing of fairy tales, or ‘classic’ stories such as Robinson Crusoe, for this purpose. However, the article overstates the extent to which the stories it discusses - and, indeed, children’s literature more generally - can be seen as having a fixed form, content and meaning. The history of Robinson Crusoe as a children’s story points to the ways in which such tales have been repeatedly adapted - a process of which the wallpaper provides one example. Even where this is not done for explicitly moralising purposes, the editing and presentation of the story can impact upon the values it conveys. Children’s literature is especially susceptible to reinterpretation, since it is often illustrated, frequently read aloud, and at times recreated in material culture, whether in products such as the wallpaper considered here, or by children themselves through play. These multiple points of reinterpretation make attempts to control the original content and meaning of stories for children particularly problematic.

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Christ in the everyday nineteenth-century experience: examining a collection of daily prayers and a painting of Jesus
John Keble and William Holman Hunt produced work at the bookends of a century renowned for its scientific and industrial progress. Both men, professing a personal faith, sought to make sense of the presence of Christ and the significance of His death and resurrection in an era of fast spreading doubt. In this article, I shall discuss John Keble’s poem ‘Easter Eve’ from The Christian Year, Thoughts in Verse (1825) and William Holman Hunt’s painting The Shadow Of Death (1873). I argue that Hunt’s desire for visual precision and Keble’s ritualistic approach to prayer propel their shared belief that Christ was still relevant in the 19th century and could be encountered even within the monotony of daily living.
John Keble, a member of the clergy, a Fellow of Balliol College and an associate of the Oxford Movement began writing *The Christian Year: Thoughts in Verse for the Sundays and Holydays Throughout the Year* [hence referred to as *Thoughts in Verse*] to inspire the nation’s worship. The aim of his poetry was to bring together the sensibility of a time of ‘leisure and unbounded curiosity’ with the mystical ritual of the liturgical year. What Keble didn’t realise was the impact this poetry book would have on the wider church for generations to come. Anonymous editor H.M pinpoints *Thoughts in Verse* as the very conception of the Tractarian movement.1

Fifty-two years after Keble’s first anonymous edition, William Holman Hunt’s newly completed painting, *The Shadow of Death*, was shipped from its place of its creation in Israel to Hunt’s studio in England. Hunt’s journey to the Holy Lands represented a quest to return to the birthplace of the Christian story. Equipped with Pre-Raphaelite realism, Hunt sought to capture in his painting the verbatim of a landscape that had once echoed Jesus’ voice.

Hunt paints a strong and youthful Christ with no physical imperfections. Keble writes of the ‘silent corse, in funeral fetters wound.’14 Both creators depict Christ differently, yet I argue that they are both attempting to achieve the same message. Both creators wanted to uphold that Christ was still relevant to everyday nineteenth century people. I will begin the argument by examining how both creators portray divine encounters that spring from the rhythms of daily life. Next, how Keble and Hunt redefine the domestic space for worship. And finally, examining how doubt and anxieties surrounding the validity of the resurrection are dealt with in *The Shadow of Death* and Easter Eve.

Keble’s *Thoughts in Verse* begins with ‘Morning and Evening’ prayers intended for daily reading. Morning and Evening account for the first real personal devotion writing of its kind. It uses the model of The Book of Common Prayer as designed for corporate worship and repurposes it for the individual devotee. With two prayers repeated at the same time each day, Keble creates a daily rhythm. Every morning the reader invites Christ to be present with them. Every evening, the reader implores Christ to abide with them. Over time this routine becomes ritual, and in repeating the ritual, the reader experiences new revelations of Christ.

In Hunt’s painting *The Shadow of Death*, Christ, in his workshop, ends his working day. Hunt writes that Christ has:

‘Just risen from the plank on which He has been working, and is portrayed as throwing up His arms to realise that pleasant sensation of repose and relaxation.’15

The saw resting on its bench and the day’s wood shavings scattering the floor, we are to imagine that this is the end to a working day like any other.

In Keble’s *Morning* poem, the act of bringing the same ‘familiar strain’ of prayer before God each morning, ‘asking and asking again,’ opens up the way to ‘finding a spell unheard before.’16 In *Evening* poem, the habitual fading of the sun takes with it the worries of the day. Moreover, the allegory of the absent sun reminds the reader of the presence of the Son: ‘It is not night if Thou be near.’ In these two poems, Keble exploits the cyclical, predictable nature of the day. He loads something as universal as waking up and going to bed with an innate sacred potential. The key to unlocking this potential is through ritually acknowledging these times of the day in prayer. Everyone and anyone who wakes up and goes to sleep can therefore have an experience of Christ.

As seen in this excerpt from *Morning*, part of Keble’s ritual is to tune the mind to look for new ‘treasures’ each day:

If on our daily course our mind
Be set to hallow all we find,
New treasures still, of countless price,
God will provide for sacrifice.6

In Hunt’s painting, Mary is distracted...
from looking at the treasures in the chest by the sight of the shadow-cross on the wall. With Mary’s hands resting on the chest, but attention caught by the shadow, Hunt captures a profound yet quickly unfolding moment. It is as if after years of Mary contemplating the gifts given by the Magi at the birth of Jesus, their symbolic nature is fully realised. The golden crown of royalty is echoed in the red coronet of atonement at the foot of the work bench. The frankincense and myrrh foreshadow Jesus’ soon to be embalmed body. Keble’s Thoughts in Verse follows the liturgical year with a devotional poem for each Sunday and for the days of Holy week. It is interesting, however, that the presence of Christ could now be tangible in the home and not just in the Church building.

The Shadow of Death depicts an imagined scene. It is interesting, however, that Hunt imagined that this interaction between Mary and the shadow-cross should take place in the humble, messy workshop and dwelling. Keble’s Thoughts in Verse, being the new form of personal devotion, was by nature designed for the private domestic space of the literate nineteenth century population. Not only was Keble highlighting the sacred potential of times in the day and days of the year, but also the sacred potential of new spaces to worship. Keble was therefore inviting the population to consider that the presence of Christ could now be tangible in the home and not just the Church building.

Perhaps, The Shadow of Death to some extent provides the later nineteenth century evidence of that legacy. Indeed, much of Hunt’s religious painting traces the theme of Christ in domestic life. In The Light of the World, Christ knocks on the door, in The Awakening Conscience, the conscience is awakened in the living room. Both Keble and Hunt bring Christ into the recognisable, everyday domestic space transforming how and where people worshipped.

Beyond Morning and Evening poem, Thoughts in Verse follows the liturgical year with a devotional poem for each Sunday and for the days of Holy week. It is not certain whether this is the very first draft of the Easter Eve poem penned by Keble. Keble often drafted and sent fragments or entire poems by letter to his friends. This was, however, one of Keble’s earliest versions. The use of the short hand ‘
’ suggests that this particular version was only for Keble’s drafting and reworking.

The verse begins by focussing on the lifeless corpse of Christ: ‘Around those lips where power and mercy hung, / The dews of death have clung;’

Though the reader does have hope of the resurrection to come, Easter Eve provides a sort of poetic pilgrimage to Christ’s grave. Keble’s reader must totally mourn the dead body of Christ laying in the grave before he can experience the jubilation of Easter Sunday. Keble provides a cathartic space – Christ’s grave – in which the reader can spend their tears, reflect upon the cross and be exhorted to pick up the rod of prayer and carry on. In these liminal moments between Christ’s death and resurrection, Keble allows an allegorical representation of the theological premise that believers are buried with Christ in His death before being raised to life with Him in His resurrection.

In the years between Keble and Hunt’s respective works, the threat of advancements in medicine and biological study fueled great anxieties within the Christian community. The publication of Essays and Reviews in 1860 questioned the scientific validity of the resurrection. This scientific approach to matters of faith was groundbreaking. Suddenly, the tenet of faith with which Keble’s readers accepted his work was now under scrutiny itself. This means that religious artists like Hunt were now fighting to defend the basis of their belief. Carol Jacobi traces Hunt’s reaction to this debate in his letters. Jacobi argues that in painting Christ, Hunt was aiming to provide some sort of visual evidence for the case for Christ’s historical reality.

In an age of religious questioning, the apparently precise visualization of an historical moment in Christ’s life validates faith.

Moreover, William Holman Hunt also had a personal preoccupation with

9 Keble, p. 57.
10 NIV Bible, Romans 6:4.
12 Ibid.
death and the frailty of the human body. Hunt wanted to depict a Christ who represented the picture of perfect health. In Hunt’s painting, Christ is very much the living saviour. The shadow of death therefore represents the death that Christ triumphantly vanquishes, not as it seems in Easter Eve. This triumph is Hunt’s main message. The saviour untouched by the lurking threat of death carries on his daily labour, satisfied in the work done and the promise of eternity. Therefore, Victorians are to live like Christ, that is, to rest at the end of the working day in the knowledge that with Christ, death is just a shadow and today is just another day in eternity.

Whereas in Hunt’s painting, the Shadow of Death is just a shadow, in Easter Eve, death has overcome Christ. Keble asks Jesus, ‘Sleeps’t thou indeed? Or is thy spirit fled at large among the dead?’ Keble openly confronts the theological doubts surrounding Christ’s whereabouts in the period between death and resurrection. Unlike Hunt, Keble isn’t attempting to convince an unbeliever of the validity of the Christian story. Keble holds in tow that doubt is part of the journey that the believer must take. This doubt is taken and buried with Jesus in the grave:

Think thou art taken from the cross, and laid
In Jesus’ burial shade;

The shadow in Hunt’s painting is behind Jesus. In Keble’s writing, the reader lies within that shadow. What Hunt achieves visually, Keble takes one step further in creating a four dimensional experience. Keble’s reader dies and lives with Christ. Keble’s reader sleeps and wakes with Christ. Keble’s reader weeps, prays and sings with Christ. For Keble, the rhythms of life, and every emotion and doubt it may contain are accepted as part of the journey to gaining new revelations of the spiritual realm on earth. Keble’s supernatural is better defined as the extraordinary born from ordinary experience and routine.

The collection of Thoughts in Verse as a whole following the pattern of the liturgical year also means that, by nature, Thoughts in Verse is designed to be read and reread over a lifetime of Sundays. Rodney Edgecombe argues that postmodern readings undermine the authentic perspectives of those who experience Thoughts in Verse as devotional literature. For these readers, the text becomes no longer a text, but a way of life as natural as breathing. Moreover, the rereading of Keble’s
work isn’t just aimed at finding new expressions of spirituality, but to fundamentally change the believer’s way of seeing the world. Keble’s mission is to attune the reader to find joy in the everyday experience:

Old friends, old scenes will lovelier be,
As more of Heaven in each we see;
Some softening gleam of love and prayer
Shall dawn on every cross and care. 18

Keble also doesn’t shy away from the hardships of everyday life. Keble simply redirects the reader to lay such burdens in the grave with Christ.

No doubt, William Holman Hunt was aware (and most likely owned a copy) of Keble’s Thoughts in Verse. Hunt’s circle was involved in Oxford and his patron Thomas Combe was a long-standing supporter of the principles of the Oxford Movement. 19 The movement that Keble would father redefined the church. Hunt and his generation lived in the legacy of Keble’s new mode of intercession that allowed for spiritual encounters. Hunt’s own spiritual encounter happened in his vision at Ewell 20 and subsequently influenced all of Hunt’s biblical paintings. The first of such paintings and most famous, The Light of The World, now hangs in the chapel at Keble College, Oxford, a monument to the legacy of Keble himself.

In sum, Hunt’s work tries to proffer tangible, visible evidence for the case of Christ’s existence and resurrection. Keble’s work offers a poetic pilgrimage to Christ’s graveside. Both works stand either side of a volatile and controversial series of mid-century debate that called to question the doubts that Keble so readily embraced and that Hunt so fervently sought to dispel. Both men however were zealous in their commitment that the person of Christ held relevance to the daily lives of the people living in their age. Further, not just that Christ held relevance, but was accessible in new modes of worship and intercession within the domestic space.

Hunt paints Christ in his workshop, surrounded by the familiar symbols of daily labour. The perfected body of Christ in The Shadow of Death serves as a visual reminder of Jesus’ paradoxal total divinity and total humanity. In Hunt’s quest to somehow embody within one visual entity the two extreme and total realities, he takes something as meagre and recognizable as a tool store and transforms it by casting the shadow of Christ over it, forming the shadow-cross.

In Thoughts in Verse, Keble takes something as menial as waking and sleeping to be transmuted into ‘New thoughts of God, new hopes of Heaven.’ 21 Heaven itself can be encountered within the daily rhythms of living. Just like the material objects Mary contemplates in Hunt’s painting, Keble’s text, through contemplation, allows the supernatural to spring forth from the everyday.

18 Keble, p.5.
19 Davenport, p.37.
20 Davenport, p.33.
Reflections of reflections of reflections: Shelley and the terrifying necessity of fragmentary art

ANDREW TURNER
This article is concerned with an analysis of Percy Bysshe Shelley’s ‘On the Medusa of Leonardo da Vinci in the Florentine Gallery’ as a reflection (in the ekphrastic sense) of the Uffizi painting of Medusa (formerly attributed to Leonardo da Vinci) with a special emphasis on the necessary fragmentary nature of the text and its impact on any subsequent criticism of the painting and the mythology it represents.

Figure 1. Flemish Artist, Head of Medusa, 16th century, Uffizi Gallery, Florence. Creative Commons.
In 1819, while living in Florence, Percy Bysshe Shelley came upon a painting in the Uffizi gallery of Medusa’s decapitated head, known typically as the Gorgoneion, a name describing both its shield-mounted and just-severed states. At the time, the painting was incorrectly attributed to Leonardo da Vinci (it still resides in the Uffizi, but it is now simply acknowledged as being of Flemish origin, artist unknown; hereafter called the Uffizi painting), thus Shelley’s draft title of the unfinished poem, ‘On the Medusa of Leonardo da Vinci in the Florentine Gallery.’ Despite the incorrect attribution to da Vinci, there is no question that Shelley crafted his poem from his impressions and interactions with the painting, and this effort represents his only clearly expressed ekphrastic poetic output. This article is concerned with an analysis of the poem as a reflection (in the ekphrastic sense) of the Uffizi painting with a special emphasis on the necessary fragmentary nature of the text and its impact on any subsequent criticism of the painting and the mythology it represents.

According to poet and critic James Heffernan, perhaps the most influential critic to explore ekphrasis, Heffernan, perhaps the most influential critic to explore ekphrasis, suggests that we can only appreciate some characters of mythology, like Medusa, as reflections, especially when considering characters of myth who are closely associated with the divine. The implication is that the greater the distance of a character from the consumer, in terms of background, lifestyle, successes and failures, the less real that character appears. Harold Bloom (1930–2019) echoes this sentiment in The Western Canon: we may appreciate any character of art or literature as a figure of mythology or folklore, codified or otherwise, which is to say, of a formal mythology with sacred underpinnings, like Perseus is to Greek Myth, or of a less formal mythology, like Paul Bunyan is to American folklore. In the first case, we tend to identify figures of sacred myth as reflections of the ideal, and so it is not necessary that we see ourselves or our communities in the exploits of Perseus. In the second case, we tend to identify figures of folklore as reflections of ourselves (in individualistic cultures) and of our communities (in plural cultures). In either case, the art form, whether literary or visual, serves a philosophical and social purpose, providing a method of processing what would otherwise be appreciable but inaccessible by virtue of an insurmountable barrier separating apprehension of the world in terms of human understanding, and that which is beyond human understanding. Thus, works of ekphrastic art are not merely translations of one form to another (say, a painting to a poem, suggesting that one form explicates the other), nor are they amalgams of multiple art forms (suggesting that a poem about a painting somehow melds the two), rather ekphrasis is the act of representing the representation itself, which results in highlighting for the consumer the similarities and differences between the artefacts. This process enhances the value of both the visual and the literal but does not devalue one or the other—we may appreciate Shelley’s poem without ever seeing the painting, and the visual work, likewise, does not require any literature to justify or explicate its beauty.

The ekphrastic form is sometimes viewed with derision, primarily because it is reliant upon an extant work of art, and in this way, it may be argued that ekphrasis is inherently unoriginal and derivative. Lessing, perhaps anticipating post–structuralism, famously decries ekphrasis, arguing that it is an expression of utility not aesthetics, and so it is not properly poetry, since poetry is temporal and visual art is spatial—this is to say, from this perspective, visual art is a static representation, while poetry is fluid; visual art is a reflection of a moment in time, and poetry is the reflection of an event (properly, a series of moments). Thus, even an artistic attempt to impart a sense of motion in a static piece is still no more than a snapshot in time, while a poem of the same subject necessarily delivers to the consumer the perception of action and motion, of change, movement from one thing to another. In this way, Lessing sees poetry as generally inferior to visual art because of its mutability, and he sees in this mutability the promise of ambiguity powerful enough to individualise poetry such that it can have no universal value. Lessing’s criticism (which many often think of as a criticism of Horace and Ars Poetica, rather than a criticism of forms of art), is bolstered by G.F.W. Hegel (1770–1831), especially in Hegel’s chapters on ‘The Religion of Art in Ancient Greece’ in his Phenomenology of Spirit (1807). Hegel is in turn bolstered by other scholarly luminaries of both art and philosophy, each reflecting the other, and building upon the other’s work. Since the early 20th century, many critics have argued in favour of ekphrasis as a legitimate poetic form equal in stature to any other, and

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some have promoted its value above other forms. Ludwig Wittgenstein thought of ekphrasis as perhaps the most powerful poetic form. He saw it as a volatile form of poetry in terms of its danger to poetry, arguing that the most proficient use of the form might be so effective that it perfectly reflects the artefact, installing an image in the mind that supplants the poet’s words such that the image is remembered, and the poetry forgotten. In Picture Theory (1994), William Mitchell argues that Shelley’s poem is the embodiment of fear. Echoing Wittgenstein, Mitchell sees Shelley’s depiction of Medusa as one of the better examples of poetic description that may ultimately be so powerful that it fully eclipses itself, effectively bringing the image to life in the consumer’s mind such that only the image survives. Taken to its extreme, if ekphrastic poetry is capable of fully sublimating the cognitive meaningfulness of the poet’s words into mere image (an image that is effectively the persistent recollection of the consumer, that is the average consumer recalls the image and not the words), then we may argue for the life of the fictitious image just as we would the life of a living image, and in this way the image—fictitious or otherwise—is alive. However, the subject of ekphrasis is important in this theory: after all, an urn or a sunflower are otherwise benign objects in the world, whereas Medusa may be the most dangerous subject a poet could ever undertake to portray, especially using ekphrasis, since the more perfect the poet, the more real the image, and the more real Medusa, the more petrified the poet. Of course, whether we are talking about Medusa as depicted by Homer, Herodotus, Plato, Aristotle, or Ovid (and we’ll beg off discussing later permutations), it is never quite clear whether the magic of paralysis results from seeing or being seen—that is to say, does Medusa petrify her victims when she actively sees them, or when they actively see her? What we do know from the literature (that is, what all the literature uniformly agrees upon) is that Perseus is only able to succeed through the use of his shield as a kind of object—in the-middle that mitigates the power of Medusa’s gaze. This begins the tradition that Medusa ‘must be seen through the mediation of mirrors [...] and through the medium of paintings and descriptions,’ which is to say, visual and literary artistic reflections.

Francoise Frontisi-Ducrox, a Hellenist and philosopher at the Louis Gernet Centre, considers the reflection of Medusa ‘a necessary and sufficient condition of her visibility,’ which is to say she is otherwise invisible. Her nature as a being who cannot be engaged on her own terms makes her a tragic figure, especially through the lens of modernity, since she can only be apprehended as a reduction of her being. Whereas other gods and demigods may consciously mitigate their ontological presence when amongst mortals, Medusa cannot. Her only engagement with another being whom she does not kill through that engagement, is Perseus, who effectively kills her with her own unwanted power. Thus, any description of Medusa, whether visual or literary, can only be a reflection of Medusa. The problem for the poet is whether or not to deliberately fall short, or to follow through: if the poet is authentically successful in their ekphrastic exercise, then they will never finish the poem, because their perfect reflection of Medusa will petrify even them; likewise, no reader or listener could ever consume the poem in full before it consumed them. Thus, we arrive at a not entirely unreasonable, though admittedly fanciful explanation for the fragmentary nature of both the poem and the painting.

Louis Marin has argued that Shelley’s reflection of the Uffizi painting is the ‘displacement from one temporality to another, a passage from the moving, linear time of life and history’ as represented by the painting ‘to the time of representation with its immobility and permanence.’ This interpretation suggests that an image can enjoy both a literal and a figurative existence, and in the case of ekphrastic texts, it is the representation of the same image in two forms, visual and literary, thus the thing represented and reflected remains unchanged by the various media through which it is appreciated, even while those various means of reflection allow for a multitude of interpretations. Marin calls this the ‘Medusan Effect,’ a ‘displacement of temporalities’ between that which is to be reflected by art and the art that so reflects, ‘applied intransitively to itself, reflecting itself, and thereby producing its own petrification.’

However, Marin’s theory presents a unique problem for the ekphrastic text: the instantiation principle informs us that it is impossible for a property to exist for which there is no object. If the success of an ekphrastic text is measured by the elimination of that text as it achieves its telos of perfect reflection (as Wittgenstein argues), then there would be nothing so reflected. Much like if all red objects in the universe disappeared, then the property of redness would likewise disappear, the Medusan Effect itself reflects the process of removing an object from

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10 Garber, pp. 271–273.
11 Mitchell, p. 50.
12 Garber, p. 262.
14 Marin, p. 60.
the world as it is transitioned from a living subject to a fixed, artistically-represented subject. Certainly, we may render representative art of still extant objects—if we paint a picture of a sunflower, the sunflower itself does not vanish. However, unless the painting is incrementally updated and altered to reflect the real-time life of the sunflower, then the captured image is of the sunflower as it once was and not as it is or will be.

The Uffizi painting effectively performs the task of Perseus’ shield, facilitating the consumer’s apprehension of Medusa, while Shelley’s poem, especially as we consider the era in which it was written, reflects the painting for those who cannot view it in person. Significantly, the myth of Medusa’s severed head informs us that whatever power her living gaze held in terms of effecting paralysis or petrification, her severed (and presumably dead) head retains that power with no degradation of impact: Perseus mounts the head upon the Shield of Athena, and returns the shield to the Protector of Athens, whereupon it is used in a number of subsequent myths and stories against various invaders of the Greek city-state. The shield thus adorned is known as the Gorgoneion, and it cannot be viewed by an Olympian god or a mere man without an intervening medium, hence a visual or literary artefact serving as an offset reflection.

The scene depicted by the Uffizi painting and Shelley’s poem would seem to occur at some point between the murder of Medusa and the mounting of her head upon the shield. It should be further noted that in both the Uffizi painting and Shelley’s poem, we cannot see Medusa’s eyes and she cannot see us, a fact that, with the mythology firmly in mind, allows our visual and literary artists the opportunity to render their work without being consumed by it. The Uffizi painting’s unusual perspective (a post-mortem, pre-mounted Medusa as opposed to the typical ready-for-battle Gorgoneion shield, as we see with Caravaggio) affords Shelly the opportunity to avoid a mere reflection (his poem) of a reflection (a painting of the shield) of a reflection (Medusa’s head), which facilitates the unique beginning of Shelley’s poem, his turn away from the standard ekphrastic formula of mere description of an object to a prose-like cold open, in medias res: ‘It lieth, gazing...’ as though we were there, at the very scene of the crime, the very moment following her murder, Perseus’ sickle dripping with her blood, her blood steaming in the air of the chill island morning.

This personalisation of the moment

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16 All quotations from ‘On the Medusa’ are Percy Bysshe Shelley, from ‘On the Medusa of Leonardo da Vinci, In the Florentine Gallery,’ The Poems of Shelley, ed. by Jack Donovan and others (Harlow, England: Longman,
captures the terror of the painting, various vermin, frogs, bats, insects, and rats, fleeing her slowly-cooling body, itself just visible in the surrounding shadows, her last gasp, the last of her own breath misting the air, mouth forever open in a now-silent scream. ‘It lieth, gazing’ and so the painting itself is less the subject of the poem, and it is, instead, the painting’s subject, and the moment of her death we are drawn to, and it is her gaze, now eternally persistent, filled with her own reflection, reflecting her very death, this is the unifying motif of the poem, perfectly reflecting the centre-focus of the painting.

Fittingly, this is the gaze that paralyses with fear, that petrifies. ‘Yet is less the horror than the grace / Which turns the gazer’s spirit into stone’17 and so, Shelley causes us to ponder—who is petrified and who is the petrifying? Poetically, Shelly must be referring to the ‘I’ of the text; but in terms of ekphrasis, it must be the consumer, the reader or the listener, we who experience the phenomenon of Medusa through the medium of the poem, who are turned to stone. Not once does Shelley mention Perseus by name, though by our knowledge of the myth we might naturally attempt to interpose him between us and the Medusan gaze. And again, ‘It lieth, gazing’ quite naturally suggests that it is Medusa gazing, thus her spirit is petrified, not ours (or Perseus’ for that matter). And yet, if this is true, what are we to make of Shelley’s apparent neutering of Medusa, the use of itself instead of herself?

Yet it is less the horror than the grace Which turns the gazer’s spirit into stone, Whereon the lineaments of that dead face Are graven, till the characters be grown Into itself, and thought no more can trace (ll. 9–13)

Perhaps Shelley is devaluing the Medusan gaze on account of her death (‘dead face’), and so the petrifying gaze is now a freeform entity all its own (it rather than her): it (the untethered gaze resident now in the spiritless head) engraves its modality (or powers) onto the gazer’s (Medusa at the quantum instant of death–by–petrification), and so petrifies the gazer (Medusa) ‘into itself’ (now a freeform power) thus we have Medusa’s death as ‘thought no more can trace’ and the entangled instant of the gaze–as–entity: the gazer is Medusa’s mirror image as she sees herself seeing herself.

In the poem’s final transformation this image itself appears as a mirror image written in the poem’s characters:

For from the serpents gleams a brazen glare Kindled by that inextricable error

Which makes a thrilling vapour of the air
Become a [ ] and ever–shifting mirror
Of all the beauty and the terror there –
A woman’s countenance, with serpent locks,
Gazing in death on heaven from those wet rocks. (ll. 34–40)

Carol Jacobs, a Victorian scholar at Yale, writes about the problem of the ‘ever–shifting mirror’ of line 37, theorising that it ‘resembles both the painting and the poem; but that reflection is also the image of a work of art produced from within the work of art.’18 This would suggest that the image of the ‘ever–shifting mirror’ serves as a kind of serial reflection that in turn represents the poem from within the poem, in a Russellian it’s–turtles–all–the–way–down sense. This might address the problem of the gazer’s identity by enabling all possible gazers: the reader’s, the listener’s, the writer’s, Medusa’s, and the post-mortem freeform power of paralysis itself, all converging in Shelley’s ‘ever–shifting mirror.’ However, the central problem with Shelley’s mirror isn’t its function in the poem, but rather its very presence in the poem—there is no indication of a mirror in the painting. One key feature of an ekphrastic text is that it never adds to that which it represents. An ekphrastic text may creatively interpret what it describes, but it cannot represent, even as metaphor, elements which do not exist in the reflected subject. Shelley’s ‘ever–shifting mirror’ is too close to syllepsis, even if purely rhetorical, and so the mirror’s possible reality necessarily disrupts the function of a traditional ekphrastic text, and its presence renders the poem less persuasive as an accurate reflection of the painting.

Nonetheless, there is no reason to entirely dismiss the power or professional quality of Shelley’s poem as a legitimate ekphrastic text purely on account of a debatable instance of rhetoric. There are any number of interpretive techniques available to account for the ‘ever–shifting mirror’ of line 37, including Jacobs’ own theory that the mirror is merely a poetic device used to describe the play of light upon and through Medusa’s final breaths, rendered quite evocatively in the painting as a soft mist escaping her open mouth.19 Moreover, the image of the ‘ever–shifting mirror’ reflects the reflection of Shelley’s words as a reflection of the painting, which itself reflects the death of Medusa: altogether, an ‘ever–shifting mirror’.

Finally, it is this reflection of a mythological death, imaginative in its very nature, with which the interdisciplinary critic (of the Uffizi painting and the Shelley ekphrasis) is most concerned. ‘It is in this sense,’ writes Jacobs, ‘criticism might

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17 Shelley, II. 9–10.
19 Jacobs, p. 18.
well be regarded as an act of the Imagination.\textsuperscript{20} Certainly, one role of criticism is to objectively evaluate a work of art, to explicate and identify its cultural value and its impact on both the consumer of art and the domain of art. Any criticism of the Uffizi-Shelley duo ought not favour one element over another even though we must agree that Shelley's poem cannot exist without the visual art it so beautifully reflects. Nonetheless, and despite the concerns of Wittgenstein, it is difficult to reasonably contend that the Uffizi painting can ever again undergo a truly independent analysis, one separate from Shelley's influence upon it through the medium of his poem. In this way, the Uffizi painting has become a fragment unless it is so married to Shelley's forever-fragmentary text. Likewise, criticism is a form of ekphrasis, reflecting that which it analyses, and like all good philosophy, never fully resolving itself, never reaching a final conclusion: reflections upon reflections upon reflections, always moving closer to truth, and so always, at the last, avoiding paralysis.

\textsuperscript{20} ibid., p. 18.
Defending the ‘faith’: Henry VIII, the Pilgrimage of Grace, and the power of images
The pamphlet Assertio Septem Sacramentorum [Defence of the Seven Sacraments], published in 1521, seeded the idea that Catholicism was not only under attack by the reformation, but that Henry played a powerful role in fighting the reformers. This article explores two artefacts, each symbolising the idea of defending the faith, yet sitting in deep tension with each other: the first, a painting featuring Latin scripture in the hands of Henry VIII; the second, a tapestry badge featuring the wounds of Christ. Both artefacts reveal defence of the faith to be an instrument of political persuasion, as well as an expression of religious ideology. This article uncovers fresh evidence to connect the painting to Henry’s meeting with Francis I in 1532, through whom he sought to influence the Pope, in a last-ditch act of diplomacy before finally breaking from Rome.
On images of Tudor kingship, Sydney Anglo acknowledges the ‘very complex questions, of intentionality and serendipity in the creation of dynastic imagery’. Debate over the date of Van Cleve’s painting suggests that it could be from before, or after, the break from Rome in 1533. Given the most distinctive component of the painting is the scroll held by Henry, featuring a bible verse in Latin which translates ‘Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature’ (Mark 16:15), the origination of the painting is crucial to unlocking the intentionality of the artist: portraying Henry as Defender of the Faith, loyal to Rome, or Defender of the Faith in his defiance of Rome, literally taking the word into his hands. Evidence for the latter is considered by the Royal Collection, ‘The same words were inscribed on Holbein’s title page for the Covarde Bible of 1535’, while acknowledging the scope for serendipity, in being one of ten verses quoted on the title page of the Covarde Bible. The Royal Collection also suggests more compelling evidence which places the painting before the break from Rome: it matches in size, composition and costume to the same artist’s portrayal of Francis I, suggesting they were painted as pendants to commemorate the kings’ 1532 meeting in Calais and Boulogne. This article reveals fresh evidence to support this origination. Hall’s Chronicle containing the history of England, describes in fine detail the exact clothes Henry was wearing at this meeting: ‘The kyng of Englane was appareled in a cote of great riches, in braides of golde laied lose on Russet Velvet, and set with Treafyoles, full of pearle and stone.’ Precisely matches the most distinctive components of Henry’s dress as detailed in Van Cleve’s painting: the defining construct of braids of gold, laid on a reddish-orange velvet, which has been cut to expose the shirt beneath, and, where the braids cross, clusters of pearl and stone jewels are set. The Chronicle was published in 1548, suggesting it likely Hall had referred to van Cleve’s painting for the description, or that perhaps both parties had received the description from a third party. Either way, the painting is closely associated with the meeting between Henry and Francis. Hall continues to describe the tone of this meeting as being greatly positive, ‘the twoo kynges [...] embrased eachother in suche fashion, that all behelde them reioysed’, marking a conciliatory approach to Henry’s foreign policy with France, in the hope that Francis might make a final bid to the pope to grant him the divorce he desperately needed.

Van Cleve’s intended audience must also be carefully considered to identify intentionality over serendipity. A theory discussed by the Royal Collection is that van Cleve had created the painting speculatively, with the hope of winning future royal commissions. This feels a contrivance, as a way of explaining how he came to paint Henry having never been recorded as visiting England. As Anglo also advises ‘it is not always clear just whose gaze [Tudor images] were intended for or whose vanity they were supposed to flatter’, offering examples of paintings which were ‘probably acquired or commissioned by the owner of the house […]’ because he had participated with the king in the various events thus celebrated. The ownership of the painting offers compelling insight, hitherto unconsidered. The painting was acquired by Charles I, from Thomas Howard, 14th Earl of Arundel. While the 14th Earl was a famous art collector, who could well have acquired the painting of his own volition, there is compelling rationale that he inherited it, having been originally acquired by his great-grandfather, Henry Fitzalan, 12th Earl of Arundel. According to Lion Cust ‘for the hereditary instinct [of Thomas Howard’s art collecting] it is necessary to go back to the days of Henry Fitzalan’. Henry Fitzalan accompanied Henry VIII to Calais in 1532, as a page to his court. This would have been a hugely exciting field trip for a fifteen-year-old, and of symbolic foundation to his later appointment as deputy of Calais in 1540. Whether it was Fitzalan, or a fellow courtier, who originally commissioned the work alongside the portrait of Francis, in commemoration of the meeting in Calais, one can imagine this painting as being quite thrilling to own: Fitzalan was a staunch Roman Catholic, and, once decoded, the painting represents an almost embarrassing memento of Henry’s failed diplomacy, in subservience to papal authority.

The composition, cropped closely to Henry’s upper torso, replete with fine details of his clothing, offers a much more intimate relationship with the sitter compared to an imposing full length, hands on hips, Holbein type of portrait. Henry’s hands, instead, delicately unfurl the scroll, which offers the script for the viewers’ benefit, placing Henry in a dutiful role as Defender of the Faith, as the pope had intended. Prayer scrolls themselves, according to the British

3 ‘Joos Van Cleve: Henry VIII’.
5 Hall, Grafton, and Ellis, p. 803.
6 Anglo, p. 112.
DEFENDING THE ‘FAITH’

Figure 2. Unknown, Badge of the Five Wounds of Christ, early 16th Century, embroidered textile, Arundel Castle

DEFENDING THE ‘FAITH’

According to Cust, it was ‘after the death of Henry VIII when [Fitzalan] formed a collection of pictures and works of art [...] “right worthye of remembrance”’. Tantalisingly, Fitzalan had purchased Nonsuch Palace a decade after Henry’s death, and according to Mary Hervey, ‘he completed and beautified the place’. One can imagine van Cleve’s painting sitting pride of place for Fitzalan, as a Catholic, and a witness to the occasion; although perhaps this was not the memorial Henry might have envisaged, in a building that was itself a failed memorial. It is promising to then track Fitzalan’s collection to one recipient, according to Hervey, ‘[he left] Nonsuch, with all its priceless treasures, to his widowed and childless son-in-law Lord Lumley’. An inventory marking the death of Lord Lumley in 1609 includes at least three portraits of Henry VIII. Of this collection, Cust explains ‘it may be conjectured with some probability that a certain number of them, especially portraits of family interest, passed by virtue of direct descent to the only surviving representative of Henry Fitzalan, namely, the aforesaid Thomas Howard, Earl of Arundel.’ According to the Royal Collection, the painting was later acquired from Thomas Howard by Charles I. Arnold Meyer describes Charles I as having ‘a predilection for Italian culture [linked first by] aestheticism, the second Italy, and the last Roman Catholicism’. This delicate painting would have been an aesthetic reminder of the last moment an English monarch had such links to Rome, and perhaps brought Charles strength as he married a Catholic,

11 Cust and Cox, p. 278.
13 Hervey, p. 48.
14 Cust and Cox, p. 278.
15 ‘Joos Van Cleeve: Henry VIII’.
Van Cleve had captured a rare moment of desperate diplomacy and influence, through Francis, to win favour with Rome. According to Richardson ‘but for the power of Charles V, Clement would probably have complied’.17 Charles’s aunt, Catherine, was at risk of public humiliation if the divorce was to be granted, and thus more was being defended by Charles than simply faith. Henry’s attempts at diplomacy had ultimately failed: ‘What had begun as a polite request from an English king to the pope, became a determined campaign to rid England of all papal authority.’18 While Henry continued to use the title Fidei Defensor, this took on a new, uncontrollable, authority. The dissolution of the monasteries soon followed, which as Richardson explains, also had little to do with faith: ‘Financially hard pressed as ever, Henry could not resist the prospect of their wealth’. This was the major factor in provoking the Pilgrimage of Grace, due to ‘the loss of the livelihood and the social welfare services traditionally provided by the monastic orders’.19 Doctrinally, The Act of Ten Articles, published in 1536, had reduced the seven sacraments, which Henry had so vehemently defended, down to three. According to Williams, ‘There does not seem to have been any lively concern with the doctrine of the Ten Articles. Some men were drawn by their fears for the future […] more were alarmed at the abolition of holidays and the clergy were naturally uneasy at the threat to their livelihood’. Faith, however, was used as a powerful symbol of political influence by the Pilgrims, played straight back at Henry.

The Pilgrimage of Grace adopted the symbol of the Five Wounds of Christ for their cause. Given the unplanned nature of the rising, it seems to represent impressively considered branding. Instead, according to Fletcher and McCulloch: ‘A set of these badges was apparently made for a planned crusade in North Africa in 1511; Thomas Cromwell was furious that Lord Darcy allowed the Pilgrims to appropriate them in 1536 in their rebellion.’20 This mixture of ‘here’s one we prepared earlier’ serendipity, met the intentionality of Darcy who, having originally resisted the rebels, succumbed to ‘the fundamental assumptions of Tudor society [in which] the commons expected the gentry to give the lead.’21 He made the gesture of providing these badges with which they might march; a symbol likely to have also been hoisted aloft as banners. His home, Pontefract Castle, was ‘known since the 13th century as the Key to the North’, and it is fitting that the symbol of the rebellion might originate from here.22 Darcy did not get involved until a fortnight after Aske branded the movement a pilgrimage.23 Thus the retrofit symbolism was itself applied after The Pilgrimage had already picked up a head of steam, so should not be considered an image which inspired initial recruitment. That said, in depicting the suffering of Christ, this no doubt inspired the cause of those who wore the badge; according to Walter Hilton, a 14th century canon of an Augustinian priory exclaimed ‘what scripture conveys to the clerks, a picture is wont to exhibit to the layfolk’.24 But the intended audience would primarily have been Henry himself: according to Fletcher and McCulloch, ‘the grace which [the Pilgrimage] sought was not primarily grace from God, but grace from the king for his poor subjects.’25 According to Penny Williams ‘Ultimately the Pilgrimage was a defence of local communities against the intrusion of Cromwell [and] his political henchmen’, and clearly unable to enact any deposition ‘had therefore to rely upon the King himself turning against Cromwell’.26

Sir John Elyot published The Book named the Governour, dedicated to Henry VIII, seeking to codify governance and statesmanship in 1531. He explains ‘we be men and nat angels, wherefore we knowe nothing but by […] some exterior signe, and that is either by laudable report, or excellencie in vesture, or other thinges semblable’.27 The Pilgrims’ badges infused religious with heraldic symbolism: the five

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18 Richardson, p. 131.
19 Richardson, pp. 133–34.
21 Fletcher and MacCulloch, p. 7.
25 Fletcher and MacCulloch, p. 31.
wounds of Christ were formally arranged within a shield shaped outline, and (as exemplified by fig.2) were presented on rich red velvet, and woven with fine gold thread. Such visual language would have appealed to Henry as a Christian, as well as a King, appealing to both religious faith, and feudal ideas of honour and loyalty. Beyond the heraldry, all Pilgrims also swore an oath which specifically protected loyalty to the king. Fletcher and MacCulloch honour the ability of the central organiser, Aske: his ‘achievement in creat[ing] a demonstration that had an atmosphere of honour and chivalry was remarkable.’28 Unfortunately the honour which the Pilgrims sought to do business, was refuted by Henry and his chief negotiator, Norfolk.

The only remaining badge (fig.2) is in the ownership of the current Duke of Norfolk at Arundel Castle: a family keepsake which reflects the key role Thomas Howard, 3rd Duke of Norfolk, took in purloining it. Where Christ’s five wounds resulted from the betrayal of Judas, the 3rd Duke of Norfolk betrayed the Pilgrimage of Grace. Before meeting the Pilgrims at Doncaster Bridge to discuss terms, Norfolk wrote to Henry: ‘I beseech you to take in gode part what the defence of honour, namely that of his aunt. Glenn Richardson considers honour for European monarchs being ‘derived from being regarded as three things: a Christian governor, a generous but discerning patron and above all, a successful warrior’.32 Leveraging the break from Rome toransack the wealth of the monasteries would have demonstrated little honour in the eyes of the many, which according to Richardson ‘produced an unprecedented financial windfall for the king and his favourites’.33 The Pilgrimage of Grace, in response, acted with considerable and contrasting honour. While they could be equally accused of leveraging the idea of faith as a political tool against changes that had affected their livelihoods, there were of course reasonable fears for their belief system. Although labelled rebels, they were neither seeking to disrupt the ideals of monarchy or of Church. Their symbolic synthesis of heraldic and religious iconography, albeit retrofitted, was imbued with chivalric and monarchical honour, which was ultimately defeated by a distinct lack of honour from the very man they were seeking to influence: the King of England, as he continued to defend his own wealth, over that of the commonwealth. Henry might well have sympathised with the cause of the pilgrims, but could not bring himself politically (or indeed economically) to negotiate with them. The idea of defending the faith itself took an interesting turn for Henry, both publicly and privately. Publicly, only a year after the Pilgrimage of Grace, and the publication of the Ten Articles, Institution of a Christian Man, or Bishop’s Book, was published. This was closely edited by Henry, and recovered the four missing sacraments. Although history remembers the Pilgrimage of Grace as a failure, thwarted by the king, it is perhaps not given the credit it is due, nonetheless influencing Henry’s approach to policy. According to Doran, although Henry ‘tried to find a path between the extremes of Roman Catholicism and Lutheranism [he] took up a conservative position on virtually all of the controversial points’.34 This extended to pressure on evangelical publicists, according to Alec Ryrie, ‘if [they] stirred up public dissent, or openly challenged the political and religious status quo, they could expect to be silenced.’35 Henry’s defence of the faith also became expressed privately, according to Doran, he ‘continued his private devotions in Latin [and his] personal convictions [...] remained conventionally pious’, on whose death England was ‘doctrinally Catholic despite the rejection of papal

28 Fletcher and MacCulloch, p. 41.
29 Fletcher and MacCulloch, pp. 34–35. Norfolk letter to Henry VIII.
30 Fletcher and MacCulloch, p. 38.
31 It is entirely serendipitous that the Earldom of Arundel passed to the dukes of Norfolk in the following century, and so the Earl of Arundel and Duke of Norfolk have since been considered the same person.
32 Richardson, p. 5.
33 Richardson, pp. 133–34.
34 Doran.
supremacy'. As demonstrated, however, faith was a concept abused by power and influence. Henry's break with Rome was concerned with power, meaning even a highly conservative movement like the Pilgrimage of Grace that was in tune with Henry's religious conservatism was doomed because Henry would not tolerate any challenge to his political authority. As Richardson explains 'The edifice of English doctrinal Catholicism may have remained virtually intact under Henry, but the walls of the monasteries did not.'

36 Doran.
37 Richardson, p. 133.