

Eva Ehninger

The Modern Dream of Order

Victoria, Photography, and the Social Imagination



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For Boris

Society is concerned to tame the Photograph, to temper the madness which keeps threatening to explode in the face of whoever looks at it.

Roland Barthes, *Camera lucida*, 117



The Madness of Being a Queen

On May 22, 1856 the London-based neurologist and amateur photographer Hugh Welch Diamond gave a lecture at the Royal Society, titled *On the Application of Photography to the Physiognomic and Mental Phenomena of Insanity*. As superintendent of the Female Department at the Surrey County Lunatic Asylum, Diamond regularly photographed his patients in their different mental stages, with the aim to record patterns of psychological diseases. The doctor argued that their photographed physiognomy would reveal their underlying mental illness. He posited that in addition to serving diagnostic purposes, photography also had a positive impact on the process of his patients' recovery.

In his lecture at the Royal Society, Diamond described the case of the twenty-year-old female patient A.D., whose portrait he took in 1855 (Fig. 1).¹ A.D., a member of the working class, suffered from the delusion of being a queen, and regarded any occupation as beneath her dignity.² In their therapy sessions, Diamond confronted A.D. with the photographic portraits of all the patients at the asylum who imagined themselves to be “Queens or Royal personages.”³ This form of delusion seems to have been quite frequent. Psychiatrists working in other asylums regularly mention cases as well, and records from Bethlem Asylum, where Diamond had received his

- 1 Since Diamond had his series of patient portraits organized and titled not by names but by diagnosis, it is difficult to connect the psychiatrist's various statements about individual patients to specific photographs. In patient A.D.'s case, there is at least a strong indication that this image shows the 20-year-old patient he mentions in his talk. The “Lunacy Patients Admission Registers” of the National Archives lists a patient Anne Dines (No.34419), who had been a patient at Bethlem Hospital for one year and, after having been discharged uncured, was admitted by Diamond to the Surrey County Lunatic Asylum in August 1854.
- 2 Anon., “On Photography Applied to the Phenomena of Insanity,” *Journal of the Photographic Society* 3, no.43 (July 21, 1856): 88–89, reprinted in Sander L. Gilman, *The Face of Madness. Hugh W. Diamond and the Origin of Psychiatric Photography*, 2nd ed. (Vermont: Echo Point Books & Media, 2014), 23. In 1858, Diamond's colleague John Conolly wrote a series of essays on “The Physiognomy of Insanity” for *The Medical Times and Gazette*, which were illustrated with Diamond's photographs and popularized the application of photography in psychiatry.
- 3 Diamond in Gilman, *The Face of Madness*, 23. Diamond also reports that initially A.D. refused to be photographed amongst the other kings and queens. She insisted that she was “born a Queen,” while they “imagined” their titles. *Ibid.*

1. Hugh Welch Diamond, *Mental Patient Dressed as Ophelia*, c. 1852, albumen print from a wet collodion negative, 18 × 14 cm. Royal Society of Medicine, London, Plate 32

training, also list imaginary kings, queens, tsars, and emperors amongst their patients.⁴ Their mental disorder, expressed in their sense of entitlement and resulting deviant behavior, was considered a potentially destabilizing force for society as a whole. A.D., however, when looking at the photographic portraits of herself and her fellow queens, gradually realized that she had only imagined her royal status. In reflecting on her own appearance, bluntly documented by photography, she could acknowledge her delusion. According to Diamond this was a necessary prerequisite for her cure. “Her subsequent amusement in seeing the portraits and her frequent conversation about them was the first decided step in her gradual improvement,” wrote the doctor, “and about four months ago she was discharged perfectly cured and laughed heartily at her former imaginations.”⁵

A.D.’s claim to be a queen throws into relief the fragility of traditional social hierarchies in mid-nineteenth century Britain. Diamond’s patient threatened to unveil the apparently stable structure of contemporary society, hard-won through constant visual and verbal negotiation by its members, as a mere construction, an illusion. A woman from the working class claimed the title of the queen, and with it all traditional privileges, most decisively the privilege of leisure. Photography historian John Tagg has pinpointed the deep-set worry in nineteenth-century photographic discourse that such pathologies might overrun the social body. Modern society’s “paranoia,” as Tagg calls it, motivated the constant definition, monitoring, and interpretation of the boundaries of that body by means of photography.⁶

Diamond’s patient only moved away from the apparent misjudgment of her social status when she was confronted with her own likeness and that of her fellow patients: photographic portraits which did not look like conventional images of royalty. Her doctor confronted her with the photographic “truth” as proof of her assigned place in society.⁷ If we follow Diamond’s argument, A.D. had internalized the evidentiary

4 See Colin Gale and Robert Howard, *Presumed Curable. An illustrated casebook of Victorian psychiatric patients in Bethlem Hospital* (Petersfield and Philadelphia: Wrightson Biomedical Publishing Ltd, 2003). Daniel Benstead, a 30-year-old master barman, even wrote to Queen Victoria to make sure she had abdicated for him to take the throne. *Ibid.*, 40.

5 Diamond in Gilman, *The Face of Madness*, 23. See also Adrienne Burrows and Iwan Schumacher, *Portraits of the Insane: The Case of Dr. Diamond* (London: Quartet Books, 1990).

6 John Tagg, “The Discontinuous City: Picturing and the Discursive Field,” in *Visual Culture. Images and Representations*, ed. Norman Bryson et al. (Hannover and London: Wesleyan University Press, 1994), 88–89. Tagg refers to Michel Foucault, who described the “clinical gaze” as a defining quality of modernity: by means of new quantifying methods such as statistics (or photography) it defines a norm, from which anything anomalous is differentiated. Michel Foucault, *Naissance de la clinique: une archéologie du regard médical* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963). See Claudia Blümle, “Aus dem Dunkel ans Licht. Michel Foucaults Bildgeschichte des Wahnsinns,” in *Innen-Außen-Anders. Körper im Werk von Gilles Deleuze und Michel Foucault*, ed. Ann-Cathrin Drews and Katharina D. Martin (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2017), 67–96.

7 This is not to say that A.D.’s portrait was really a neutral documentation, of course. It shows A.D. with a grave expression in three-quarter profile, with a tiara made of leaves and twigs carefully placed on her head, and a dark blanket thrown over her shoulders like a shawl. The garland likens the sitter to Shakespeare’s Ophelia, a character often employed in Victorian art and literature to represent the



2. Hugh Welch Diamond, *Copy of a Bust of Her Majesty Queen Victoria, by Joseph Durham, Esq. F.S.A., 1857*, albumen print, as published in *The photographic album for the year 1857: Being contributions from the members of the Photographic Club*, London: Charles Whittingham, 1857, 1. Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin, Gernsheim Collection, purchase (acc. no 964:0324:0001)

status of photography so thoroughly that upon seeing herself not looking like a queen, she could acknowledge the schism between her internal understanding of herself and her external representation. This provided the basis for her to accept her actual social position, and to resume her working life as a productive member of society.

However, photography's promise to provide access to and allow the assessment of reality turned out to be a false friend to this desire for reason and order. On the one hand, the photographic record apparently allocated each person clearly and distinctly in an all-encompassing structure of society, thus making him or her transparent, visible, and controllable. On the other, this "fantasy of knowledge," as Tagg calls it, was based on a shared belief in the objectivity of the documenting medium, whose visual evidence was anything but unambivalent.⁸

The photographic representation of Queen Victoria herself is a case in point. One year after his lecture, the same Dr. Diamond provided a photograph of Queen Victoria's marble bust for the cover of the first issue of the Royal Photographic Society's Journal, the *Photographic Album of the Year 1857* (Fig. 2). Here Diamond found a way to provide a photographic image of Victoria that confirmed the self-evident difference and distance between the photographed queen and all other photographic portraits. The journal's cover featured Diamond's photograph of an idealized portrait bust of the young Victoria, made of white marble. The queen's ageless beauty was underscored by a decorative rose blossom defining her delicate neckline. The enlarged print of Diamond's photograph was cut into an

oval format in reference to antique cameos, further underscoring the image's reference to timeless classicism. The Latin caption supported the image's transtemporal claim as well. "Quis Solem dicere falsum Audeat?" it asks: "Who would dare accuse the sun of deceit?" The quotation, taken from the ancient Roman poet Virgil, refers to photogra-

asylum's mad woman. See Shari Addonizio, "Portraits of Madwomen: Another Look at Dr Hugh Welch Diamond's Photographs of the Insane Female in Victorian England," *Athanos* 17 (1999): 53–59. Writing about the photographic documentation of captured criminals, Tagg calls this mechanism, which puts sitters in their place and exposes them there, the "violence of photography." John Tagg, *The Disciplinary Frame. Photographic Truths and the Capture of Meaning* (London and Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), XXVI. Tagg refers directly to Foucault.

8 Tagg, *The Disciplinary Frame*. Jordon Baer, *Disillusioned. Victorian Photography and the Discerning Subject* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2015), 4–5.

phy's claim to be a copy of reality, which is cleverly pitted against the marble likeness of the queen captured by the photographer.⁹ The caption suggests that the photograph's faithfulness as an image produced by the sun underscores the truthful likeness of the idealized portrait it represents.

Just a few years later, however, Victoria's timeless marble bust was eclipsed by the rapid commercialization of her photographic image in standardized formats like the *carte de visite* (Figs. 3–6). As an anonymous writer for the *British Journal of Photography* remarked in 1863: "From the cartes de visite we learn the astounding fact that kings and queens are in dress and features precisely like other people."¹⁰ Suddenly, Victoria became available as a living person, imprinted like everybody else on albumen paper, apparently by the force of light alone. Commercial formats such as the *carte de visite*, first introduced to the British public in the early 1860s, were an important factor in the sweeping success of the new medium of photography.¹¹ The portrait photograph of the queen contributed to the visual leveling between herself and her subjects. Along with all of them—including Diamond's patients—she entered into one shared photographic space.¹²

Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century the regular, intimate, yet casual encounter with the diminutive cardboard cards, which could be bought for relatively little money, singly and in stacks, decisively shaped and changed routines of representation and interaction. Contemporary observers noted that such photographs could be found in virtually every household.¹³ The cards provided their owners with

9 *The Photographic Album of the Year 1857, Being Contributions from the Members of the Photographic Club* (London: Charles Whittingham, 1857). In *Pencil of Nature*, Henry Fox Talbot had pointed out the merits of photography for the visual reproduction of marble busts. The whiteness of the stone and the possibility of moving the heads into the sunlight assured a very favorable outcome. See Talbot, *Pencil of Nature*, Plate V (Bust of Patroclus).

10 Anon., "The Disenchantment of the 'Carte de Visite,'" *British Journal of Photography* 10, no. 200 (October 15, 1863): 409–410.

11 In the 1870s, other standardized formats were introduced as well, with illustrious names such as "Victoria," "promenade," "boudoir," and "imperial." However, the *carte de visite* (c. 9 × 5 cm image mounted on 10 × 6 cm cardboard) and later the slightly larger cabinet card (15 × 10 cm image mounted on 17 × 11 cardboard) remained the most popular formats throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. Alison Gernsheim and Helmut Gernsheim, *The History of Photography from the Camera Obscura to the Beginning of the Modern Era* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1969), 301, 303. John Rohrbach, "Introduction. Making Photography Modern," in *Acting Out. Cabinet Cards and the Making of Modern Photography*, ed. John Rohrbach (Oakland: University of California Press, 2020), 15.

12 Victoria might even have come face to face with A.D., when she looked at Diamond's photographic series of his patients that were included in the 1854 exhibition at the London Photographic society.

13 G. J. Banner, "The Social Influences of Photography," *The British Journal of Photography* 11, no. 234 (28 October 1864): 424. In what can be considered the first monograph on the *carte de visite*, William C. Darrah accordingly describes its introduction as a "revolution of photography," which effected an intellectual revolution that placed the photographic image on a par with the printed word in human communication. William C. Darrah, *Cartes de Visite in Nineteenth Century Photography* (Gettysburg, PA: W.C. Darrah, 1981), 1. The latent and implicit but all-encompassing impact of media that are located below a certain threshold of attention has been highlighted by Friedrich Balke and Maria Muhle, eds., *Räume und Medien des Regierens* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2016).



3. W. & D. Downey, *Queen Victoria*, 1866, albumen print on photographer's mount, image 20.2 × 14.9 cm. National Portrait Gallery, London, (acc. no. NPG Ax7264)

4. Cornelius Jabez Hughes, *Prince Albert Victor, Duke of Clarence and Avondale; Queen Victoria*, 1864, albumen carte-de-visite, 10.1 × 6.2 cm. National Portrait Gallery, London (acc. no. NPG x196307)

5. William Henry Southwell, Thomas McLean & Co, *Queen Victoria*, 1860, albumen carte-de-visite, 8.5 × 5.3 cm. National Portrait Gallery, London (acc. no. NPG x13971)

6. London Stereoscopic & Photographic Company, *Queen Victoria*, 1860s, albumen carte-de-visite, 8.8 × 6.1 cm. National Portrait Gallery, London (acc. no. NPG x36263)



the freedom to combine and contextualize photographs of themselves and their own social circles with those of well-known personas, such as the members of the royal household. In the semi-private, playful, and personal display formats of fireplace mantelpiece, picture frame, or photo album they were free to imagine and visually construct their own ideas of social order. The visual contingency of Victoria's photographic representation, then, was exponentiated by her photographs' ubiquity, their broad dissemination and reach within all social spheres. In multiple photographic forms, Victoria was integral to what—during the timespan of fifty years between the early 1850s and her death in 1901—increasingly became an everyday visual experience.

As mass-produced commercial products, the queen's photographs were copied hundreds of thousands of times and subsequently integrated into diverse contexts, such as commercial photocollages, private albums, drawings rooms, and public lantern slide shows. In what follows I investigate these specific contexts, where the portrait of the queen takes on the complex task of ordering the social sphere of its owners and viewers around its orbit. In the face of massive change and increasing uncertainty about the "form" a modern society could and should take, the queen's photographs were applied across social strata to visually construct and agree upon ideas of social order.

Today, hundreds of thousands of carte de visite portraits, showing the faces of unknown sitters, collect dust in albums and archives around the world. Despite their staggering numbers, they constitute no more than the pitiful remnants of the unstoppable output of largely anonymous nineteenth-century studio photographers who produced portraits for a living. Due to its unwieldy size and unapologetic commercialism, this immense body of material has been largely ignored by the field of art history. As "raw history", commercial photography is also methodologically difficult to handle.¹⁴ Both the makers and the sitters of the photographs are unknown for the most part. The contemporary success of their portraits was not based on the images' aesthetic qualities or visual originality, but rather on their personal use value. Many photographs have been destroyed, removed from their original contexts, or integrated into other visual narratives. Existing archives are incomplete, and sources regarding specific photographs rare. Against this backdrop, many conventional art and photo historical points of inquiry are bound to miss the mark. The aesthetic appreciation of the work of select portrait photographers skews the perspective on these images' everyday functions, much as a general differentiation between "artistic" and "commercial" photography

14 Elizabeth Edwards uses this term for the photographic holdings of ethnographic collections, which are to a large extent of commercial origin as well. Elizabeth Edwards, *Raw Histories. Photographs, Anthropology and Museums* (Paul Gilroy et al., *Materializing Culture*) (Oxford/New York: Berg, 2001). See also Geoffrey Batchen, "Vernacular Photographies," *History of Photography* 24, no. 3 (2000): 262–271; Tina Campt et al., eds., *Imagining Everyday Life: Engagements with Vernacular Photography* (Göttingen: Steidl, 2020).

does.¹⁵ Reconstructions of the history of a specific photo studio, or research on individual photo albums and their makers, provide helpful case studies for understanding how photography was produced and consumed in historically and socially-specific surroundings.¹⁶ But the fundamental question of how photographic practices played into the personal and communal imagination of society, and how they were applied as a means to visually communicate social affiliation and distinction, though often acknowledged, has not been sufficiently addressed.

Queen Victoria's photographic representation certainly has productive contact points with the more conventional approaches outlined above. For example, as royal portraiture, her photographic image is in constant and tense conversation with the genre's idealizing conventions. Furthermore, the court's dynamically changing policies of awarding royal sittings, or of removing the copyright from select portrait photographs, spotlights the careers and business models of certain photographers and their studios. In this study, Victoria's photographic image has a different function, however. It acts as a common thread that winds through and interconnects different agents, media, spaces, and social spheres. Produced by the best contemporary photographers, her portraits were subsequently copied by countless anonymous studios, and reached the majority of British households as reproductions of reproductions that could be freely integrated into households, page designs, albums, or glass slides. Her infinitely reproducible, easily affordable, and readily available photographic portrait effortlessly moved from hand to album and drawing room to city hall, visually weaving in different groups and collectives, and structuring their respective constructions of society.

In tracing Victoria's photographic presence in various social contexts, I consulted a broad range of archives. The source material relevant for my research was collected by these institutions for different reasons. The Royal Photographic Collection at Windsor Castle is home to the roughly one hundred and thirty photo albums that Queen Victoria assembled herself during her lifetime. While a majority of the queen's photographic portraits produced during the second half of the nineteenth century can be found here, the collection also provides insight into Victoria's own practice of col-

15 For example, see: Phillip Prodger, ed., *Victorian Giants. The Birth of Art Photography. Julia Margaret Cameron, Lewis Carroll, Clementina Hawarden, Oscar Rejlander* (London: National Portrait Gallery, 2018); Colin Ford, *Julia Margaret Cameron. 19th Century Photographer of Genius* (London: National Portrait Gallery, 2003); Jeff Rosen, *Julia Margaret Cameron's 'fancy subjects': photographic allegories of Victorian identity and empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016); Diane Waggoner, *Lewis Carroll's photography and modern childhood* (Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2020); Carol Meyer, *Becoming: The Photographs of Clementina, Viscountess Hawarden* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999); Suzanne Fagence Cooper, "Through the looking-glass: Photographs by Clementina, Lady Hawarden," *The British Art Journal* 20/3 (2019): 3–11; Lori Pauli, ed., *Oscar G. Rejlander: Artist Photographer* (Ottawa: Canadian Photography Institute of the National Gallery of Canada, 2018).

16 Ulrich Pohlmann and Paul Mellenthin, eds., *Adolphe Braun. Ein europäisches Photographie-Unternehmen und die Bildkünste im 19. Jahrhundert* (Munich: Schirmer/Mosel, 2018); Isobel Crombie, "The Work and Life of Viscountess Frances Jocelyn: Private Lives," *History of Photography* 22, no.1 (1989): 40–51.

lecting, assembling, and ordering photographs. Her commissions and albums illustrate how she employed photography to reflect on her position as queen and empress of the nineteenth century. The National Science and Media Museum in Bradford, UK, owns a number of photographic albums from the 1870s to 1900, which document the different uses of albums for collecting images of one's own family members, contemporary celebrities, or travel memories. The archive's collection also shows the range in size and format of commercially produced albums aimed at a broadening consumer base. It suggests that ownership of such items was common practice by the 1870s and 1880s. The Harry Ransom Center in Austin, Texas houses by far the largest collection of Victorian photography, compiled by Helmut and Alison Gernsheim since the 1940s and purchased by the Center in 1963. Meant to document the history of photographic production since the beginning of the medium, the Gernsheim collection includes photographic collages from the 1860s created by members of the aristocracy and landed gentry, commercially produced photo albums filled by anonymous middle-class collectors during the 1870s and 1880s, as well as popular history publications with photographic illustrations published in the 1880s and 1890s. In all of these I found the image of the queen. The Royal Portrait Collection in London owns an impressive selection of cartes de visite, which speak to the creativity of commercial photo studios in their re-use and re-interpretation of Victoria's royal portrait. Originally collected by this institution for the single reason that they feature a portrait of the queen, these single cards have allowed me to analyze how Victoria's image moved through a multitude of formats and contexts, serving diverse narratives of social cohesion and order.

Another important source for my study was the numerous new photographic journals and manuals, which began to emerge in the early 1860s and played an important role in the professionalization and consolidation of the photographic community in Britain. This discursive field is difficult to organize: articles range from practical advice on photographic techniques, the building and furnishing of the studio, and the handling of the sitters to theoretical debates about the aesthetics and function of the photographic image, to economic as well as ethical considerations of the many uses of photography. As Steve Edwards has pointed out, authors mostly remain anonymous, and their contributions are often not original but instead follow conventions of aesthetic and moral value.¹⁷ My reading of this source material is focused specifically on integrating the contemporaneous discussion of photography into the larger discourse on social order in times of change. I trace how the queen's photograph played into the era's discussion of photographic likeness, photographic truth, the social cohesion that photography enables, and the dangers of the visual leveling made possible by photography. The image production that utilized Victoria's photographic portrait as a source material was not merely an outcome of the discourse documented in these journals.

17 Steve Edwards, *The Making of English Photography: Allegories* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 2006).

Rather, the images were themselves arguments, which transmitted aesthetic, social, and political convictions about belonging and exclusion, and contributed to the discussions taking place in the written contributions.¹⁸ The application of Victoria's photographic likeness for the visual imagination of society went far beyond the initial intentions that Victoria or the court originally had in mind when they allowed the commercialization of her photograph.

My opening example proves this point: Diamond the scientist documented, unwittingly, the personified "paranoia" of the Victorians about the loss of order in modern society. His patient A.D. embodied the combined forces that might unsettle social norms and conventions—she was a member of the working class, a woman, and was considered psychologically deviant. Diamond the amateur photographer, on the other hand, produced an ideal photographic portrait of the queen as the symbolic head of Britain. His photograph of the marble sculpture counteracted the depiction of the problematic asylum-queen with a timeless royal ideal. Both images refer to the figure of the queen to negotiate social order—while simultaneously illustrating photography's ambivalent, unreliable role in this effort.

In nineteenth-century Britain virtually everyone owned a photograph of Victoria. But how did those who viewed it come to identify as a social entity, an individual, a gender, a family, a class, or a nation by consuming it? Tracing Victoria's commercially marketed images in their varied materializations and contexts allows me to analyze the all-encompassing practice of imagining and imaging oneself and one's social surrounding by means of producing and consuming photographs. This is not a book about Queen Victoria, then. Rather, it is a book about looking at her, touching her, and owning her, a book about the use of her image for purposes of identification, self-representation, for the structuring and ordering of society, and for the narration of biography and history.

In analyzing how Victoria's photographic image was utilized within unofficial and commercial as well as private and personal contexts, I can discuss how individuals and groups communicated their social affiliation with the help of images, their selection, arrangement, and contextualization. These practices are well known to us in our own use of visual media today. The historically specific case of commercial photography illustrates, as I will show, how visual technologies perpetuate social conventions. Modernity seen from this vantage point is not defined solely by the dramatic social, political, economic, and technological changes of the nineteenth century, but rather also by the personal and communal work to counteract such changes via the visual

18 Trade journals are an important source for some of the most convincing current literature on Victorian photography and its entanglement with fundamental questions of social order and individual freedom. See e.g. Jennifer Tucker, *Nature Exposed. Photography as Eyewitness in Victorian Science* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005); Bear, *Disillusioned*. However, their discourse analysis does not take the photographs themselves into account as valid theoretical objects which partake, as rich, generative sources, in the discussions conducted in the numerous publications.

affirmation of continuity and stability. I also show how members of all social domains took part in this process, and how their ideas about society were shaped by photography's doubtful evidentiary status. My approach necessitates two theoretical and methodological shifts.

Convention: The Modern Dream of Order

One recalibration concerns the theoretical framework of my investigation. During the nineteenth century, the development of photography as part of the daily visual experience ran parallel to a heated debate about how self and society might be imagined and imaged in the contemporary "age of transition."¹⁹ Social, political, economic, and technological parameters were perceived as under fundamental renegotiation and revision. This discourse encompassed the writings, statements, and activities of contemporary historians, philosophers, political activists, advisors in moral conduct and female propriety, art critics, designers, and photographers. From their respective standpoints, each of them advised on how modern society and the modern individual could position themselves more securely and definitively in an increasingly complex world.

This discourse also played out in the daily activity of handling and viewing photographs in private photo albums, in illustrated newspapers, or as wall-to-wall projections in public lectures. All of the writers and thinkers that will have their say in the following chapters—from the historian Thomas Carlyle to the political theorist John Stuart Mill, from the art critic John Ruskin to the designer Charles Eastlake, and from the nurse Florence Nightingale to the decorator Lucy Orrinsmith—participated in the communication of shared values and social affiliation by means of the production and exchange of photographic portraits. Their own photographic practice informed their theoretical reflection on modern society and their assessments of the risks of its rapid change, illustrating the dream of social order they shared with many of their contemporaries. Though multi-voiced, ideologically tainted, and often contradictory, this discourse demonstrates the commonly felt need for a broadly accepted and readily discernable "image" of modern society.

My decision to set my analysis of commercial photography in the context of these contemporary theories of representation contrasts with well-known histories and theories of photography. Usually, the photographic practice that I am concerned with, namely the casual, daily activity of communicating social affiliation with help of stan-

19 The term "age of transition" was introduced by John Stuart Mill and then applied regularly by authoritative voices of the nineteenth century, such as Thomas Arnold, Prince Albert, Thomas Carlyle, Benjamin Disraeli, William Morris, Herbert Spencer, and many more. John Stuart Mill, "The Spirit of the Age," in *The Spirit of the Age, On Liberty, The Subjection of Women*, ed. Alan Ryan (New York: Norton & Company, 1997), 1–40, here 9–10; see also A. Dwight Culler, *The Victorian Mirror of History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 6; Richard Price, "Historiography, Narrative, and the 19th century," *Journal of British Studies* 35, no. 2 (April 1996): 220–256, here 226.

standardized, mass-produced portrait photography, is integrated into modernist narratives of increasing alienation and isolation in an industrialized, capitalist society. The cultural critic Walter Benjamin set the tone in his essay *Kleine Geschichte der Fotografie* (1931). He described the standardized studio portrait photograph of the second half of the nineteenth century as an illustrative example of how human perception and processes of self-representation and identification were transformed by technology and commerce. According to Benjamin, these mass-produced cards present both world and self as discrete, isolated, unrelated, and decontextualized elements and entities.²⁰ For him, commercial photography serves as an illustrative example of how the modern subject is embedded in industrial production and consumption, and how its apparently seamless integration into the capitalist flow is aided, and simultaneously obscured, by new image technologies.²¹ In contrast to this overarching critique, I aim to trace the localized processes of self-representation and affiliation that are at play in the reciprocal interaction between imaging technology and image consumers; and I understand them as affirmative rather than alienating practices, which contributed to the contemporary discourse on how to safely position the modern subject in a clearly structured and unambiguously depictable modern society. The commercially available portrait of the queen, an image of the head of state that was visually and materially identical with any other carte de visite that was produced at the time, proved to be a tool for this task.

One concept that had enormous theoretical and ideological weight in the nineteenth-century discourse on representation is that of convention. Authors examined the role conventions play in social interaction from a multitude of perspectives. Thomas Carlyle confirmed the necessity of shared “values and customs” to stabilize the social sphere, whereas John Stuart Mill warned about the risk of the “majority opinion” circumscribing personal freedom. Florence Nightingale bemoaned women’s self-curtailed individual development due to their unquestioning adherence to social “rules.” John Ruskin, problematizing the transfer of painterly “traditions” into other visual media, highlighted their role in the visualization of social distinction. Efforts by designers and educators such as John Eastlake or Lucy Orrinsmith threatened to undermine these

20 Walter Benjamin, “Kleine Geschichte der Fotografie (1931),” in *Medienästhetische Schriften*, ed. Detlev Schöttker (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2002), 300–316. In his *Kunstwerk-Essay*, Benjamin specifically stressed the transformation of human perception due to processes of mass production. Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction (1935),” in *Illuminations. Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968), 219–253. See also Gisèle Freund, *Photographie et société* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1974); Allan Sekula, “The Body and the Archive,” *October* 39 (Winter, 1986): 3–64. John Tagg, “The Discontinuous City: Picturing and the Discursive Field,” 83–103, as well as John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation. Essays on Photographies and Histories* (London: Macmillan 1988).

21 As Jonathan Crary has pointed out, the dichotomy between the agency of machines and the fantasy of the sovereign subject is in and of itself a historical argument of the early twentieth century, intimately connected to the emergence of new technological forms of spectacle, projection, attraction, and recording. Jonathan Crary, *Suspensions of Perception. Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture* (Cambridge/London: The MIT Press, 1999).

markers of social standing by providing upwardly mobile customers with lessons about the “common sense” of taste.

As becomes apparent in this preliminary list of protagonists and their convictions, convention was situated at a precarious turning point between social order and social disorder. As an accepted and known frame of reference, it apparently stabilized social interactions. But if conventions become a coveted piece of knowledge regarding taste and comportment, they can also subvert given rules of social distinction. As a marketable commodity, they become available to all paying customers. And another quality of conventions becomes apparent: they are abstract ideas about accepted norms and values, and they are shared and affirmed by means of their visualization. Conventions and images, then, are in intimate relationship with each other.

Let me demonstrate how both observations play into the argument of the liberal philosopher and politician John Stuart Mill, and which conclusions he drew from them.²² In his highly influential article *On Liberty* (1859), Mill described the symbolic order of modern society as a product of culture, based on traditions and customs and defined and confirmed by means of constant repetition. By the middle of the nineteenth century, Mill observed, members of different social ranks, spaces, and industries increasingly read, heard, and saw the same things, accessed the same educational institutions, means of communication, and products, nurtured similar hopes and fears, and enjoyed the same rights and freedoms. But this dynamic did not lead to increased social equality, according to Mill. Rather, “public opinion,” based on anachronistic conventions, became authoritative. Mill feared that it threatened to codify society and to petrify the dynamic process of society’s imagination as well as the imagination of the individual. The conventional symbolic order of society was confirmed by constant repetition in broadly shared cultural institutions and visual media. Society, according to Mill, was a tyrant.²³

Such a codification of social conventions seems to be at the core of commercial portrait photography, where a marketable template of self-representation and social order, readily available due to a new image technology, was utilized by individual customers and consumers. Mill himself was complicit in this practice. He regularly sat for successfully marketed cartes de visite like this one by the studio John & Charles Watkins (Fig. 7). It shows the philosopher striking a thoughtful pose in the studio interior, with a book open in his lap, the ever-present curtain to the left. Cartes de

22 To be sure, Mill was a controversial figure in nineteenth-century Britain. A radical utilitarian, his convictions regarding each individual’s sovereignty led, for example, to his outspoken endorsement of both women’s rights and the abolition of slavery. John Stuart Mill, “The Subjection of Women (1869),” in *Spirit of the Age, On Liberty, The Subjection of Women*, ed. Allan Ryan, (New York, London: Norton & Company, 1997), 133–215. Anon. (John Stuart Mill), “The Negro Question,” *Littell’s Living Age*, Boston: E. Littell & Company, Vol. XXIV (January February March 1850): 465–469.

23 John Stuart Mill, “On Liberty,” in: *The Basic Writings of John Stuart Mill. On Liberty, The Subjection of Women & Utilitarianism*, ed. Jerome B. Schneewind and Dale E. Miller (New York: The Modern Library, 2002), 3–56, here 6–7.



7. John & Charles Watkins, *John Stuart Mill*, 1865, albumen print, partially overpainted in ink wash, 29.2 x 23.5 cm. National Portrait Gallery, London (acc. no. NPG P46)

visite, one might argue, are materialized public opinions, veritably illustrating the “cold mechanics” of majority rule, the unthinking adoption of conventionalized ideas.²⁴

Mill’s worry about the power of “public opinion,” due to its promotion by modern commerce and media technology, brings to mind the later, twentieth-century critique of commercial photography spearheaded by Benjamin.²⁵ But if we sidestep Mill’s concern for a moment and focus on his description of how the “majority rule” comes into existence (and arguably can also be changed), his insistence on shared experiences for the development and confirmation of accepted values and opinions comes to the fore. Increasingly, these shared experiences were made possible by the means and media of communication. Mill defined “value,” “meaning,” and “truth” as communicative acts—as the activity of *agreeing upon* values, meanings, and truths. The

results of these acts are always temporary, local, and subject to change. They are constantly renegotiated by all agents who apply them to organize their social life together.²⁶

Three arguments of this nineteenth-century thinker are of fundamental importance for my analysis of commercial portrait photography’s role in the construction and communication of social affiliation during the second half of the nineteenth century. First, the necessary recourse to visual conventions for the communication of shared values, meanings, and truths. Second, the importance of increased accessibility of media and technologies of cultural exchange for this task. Third, the overarching public and private interest in defining and visualizing a symbolic order for modern society at a time when this ideal was becoming increasingly untenable.

24 Mill, “On Liberty,” 61. Mill warns that the majority of social customs are accepted blindly, “mechanically,” by middle-class majority. Mechanics here describes behavior that does not result from the individual formation of an opinion, or rise from any mental activity, and does not lead to a further development of individual character. The vital power of the individual is banished in favor of a smoothly running machine. Mill, “On Liberty,” 63, 72–73.

25 For Mill, as for Benjamin, modern subjectivity needed to be safeguarded from social norms and conventions that are confirmed and petrified in the use of new media technologies. Despite their historical distance both authors considered this danger as symptomatic of modern, industrialized, and technologically advanced society. On the troubled reception of Mill in the history of photography see Dominique Kuenzle and Michael Schefczyk, *John Stuart Mill zur Einführung* (Hamburg: Junius, 2009), 12–13.

26 Mill, “On Liberty”; Kuenzle and Schefczyk, *John Stuart Mill zur Einführung*, 145.

It should also not go unmentioned that Mill's radical relativization of ontological verities has a powerful, if latent, presence in subsequent, highly influential theories of photography. Mill's utilitarianism was at the basis of the pragmatist sign theory of the philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce. This standard *carte de visite* shows the latter as he combined the two conventional poses of casually crossed legs and determined hand on the hip, while cane and top hat are artfully distributed amongst the crowded studio furniture (Fig. 8).²⁷ Peirce published his semiotics in the late 1870s, when commercial photography was already a broadly accepted presence in daily life. In his writings, he joined Mill in arguing that shared meaning is produced by communication: we agree on "truth" by comparing experiences with one another, and verifying or falsifying them in the process. Accepting the meaning of something, or the truthfulness of this meaning, then, is dependent on common experiences, and on a shared system of signs as a means to communicate them. Peirce argued that by the late 1870s, a social majority had agreed to define the photographic image as a true likeness of reality based on their own experiences with the photographic medium and its mechanical production.²⁸ This knowledge, which he called "collateral" or "pragmatic" knowledge, was the outcome of a stabilizing process of social knowledge about photography throughout the past decades. According to Peirce, then, the "authenticity" of photography is not a



8. Carl Suck, *Charles Sanders Peirce*, 1875?, *carte-de-visite*, 12.7 × 8.25 cm. Houghton Library, Harvard University, Charles Sanders Peirce Papers (MS Am 1632, MS 1643)

27 Charles Sanders Peirce, "How to Make Our Ideas Clear," *Popular Science Monthly* 12 (January 1878): 286–302. The philosopher William James acts as an intermediary between Mill's utilitarianism and Peirce's pragmatism. James dedicated his *Pragmatism* lectures, a series of public lectures given in Boston in 1906, to Mill. He regularly referred to both authors in his writings. See e.g. his "Lecture II: What Pragmatism Means," in *Pragmatism and Other Writings*, ed. Giles Gunn (New York: Penguin, 2000), 24–40, here 25. Regarding Peirce's relation to photography see François Brunet, "Visual Semiotics versus Pragmatism: Peirce and Photography," in *Peirce's Doctrine of Signs*, ed. Vincent M. Colapietro and Thomas Olschewsky (Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 1996), 295–313; Mirjam Wittmann, "Fremder Onkel. Charles S. Peirce und die Fotografie," in *Das bildnerische Denken: Charles S. Peirce*, ed. Franz Engel, Moritz Queisner, and Tullio Viola (*Actus et Imago: Berliner Schriften für Bildaktforschung und Verkörperungsphilosophie*, Vol. 5, ed. Horst Bredekamp) (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2012), 303–322.

28 Photography's specific qualities, which are connected to its mechanical production, are regularly mentioned in contemporary sources: the representational force of photography's "minute accuracy" and its "peculiarly touching" connection to the subjects it depicts. Patrizia di Bello, "Seductions & Flirtations. Photographs, histories, theories," *Photographies* 1, no. 2 (2008): 143–155, here 146. David Brewster, "Photogenic Drawing, or Drawing by the Agency of Light," *Edinburgh Review* 76 (1843): 309–44. Elizabeth Eastlake, "Photography," *Quarterly Review* 101 (1857): 442–468, reprinted in *Photography: Essays and Images*, ed. Beaumont Newhall (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1980), 81–95.

quality of the image itself, but rather a result of its conventional use. This argument was crucial for the French philosopher Roland Barthes's later definition of photography as an "intermediate sign." As Barthes observed, consumers of photography agree to dismiss the medium's cultural coding in favor of its apparently automatic production by a neutral machine. Because of this conventionalized interpretation of photographs as "natural" images, its users can dream the dream of reality.²⁹ Current scholarship has taken up the nineteenth-century discussion about photography's evidentiary value with a specific interest in its scientific applications. But, as both Jennifer Tucker and Jordon Baer have argued, the scientific use-value of photography, as it was discussed in the mid-nineteenth century, also throws into relief the social order that produced and sustained it.³⁰

During the second half of the nineteenth century, commercial photographic portraiture was employed to dream contemporary reality as readily depictable and understandable despite its undeniable complexity. Because of its conventionalized reception as a document of reality, photography was used to communicate and stabilize a common "truth" about social order. However, the permanent need to confirm this order is apparent in the multiple and varied ascriptions and denials of "truthfulness" within the photographic practices of the late-nineteenth century. Truth was attributed to or detracted from the photographic portrait of sitters, as well as their respective social position, which was implied in their pose and the furnishing of the studio. There was a constant slippage between the "truth" of a photographic image and the "authenticity" of a portrait. The diverse photographic practices that I will discuss in this book are aimed at keeping this slippage at bay—retouching, collage, the arrangement of images on album pages, in albums or slide series, their combination with other visual material, the decoration of the photo studio, and the integration of photographs into private and communal living spaces. The photographs of Queen Victoria demonstrate this task. In the medium of photography, her royal portrait does not simply naturalize a given hierarchy. Rather it participates in multiple local-

29 In their interpretation of Barthes's writings, Peter Geimer and Bernd Stiegler speak of the "dream of the real" as a pre-semiotic space, untouched by culture or ideology. Peter Geimer and Bernd Stiegler, "Reale Irrealität. Photographie als Medium der Verwandlung," in *Roland Barthes. Auge in Auge. Kleine Schriften zur Fotografie*, ed. Peter Geimer and Bernd Stiegler (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 2015), 323–342, here 326. Barthes himself doubly qualifies this promise of photography. He regards photographs as witnesses, emanations of a reality that is always already in the past. See Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida. Reflections on Photography* (1980), trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 2010). And he combines his concept of the historically determined "studium" in the reception of a photograph with that of the "punctum" as an individual, spontaneous, and largely uncontrollable element of reception, as well as the "spectrum" as the temporal order of photographic reception.

30 Tucker, *Nature Exposed*, focuses on photography's contested authority as visual evidence; Baer, *Disillusioned*, discusses the growing awareness about visual discernment as a matter of individual agency. Both authors position these discourses on science and perception in the larger socio-political context of Victorian Britain.

ized, inconsistent, and ongoing processes of determining and agreeing upon an ideal of social order.

Quasi-Objects: The Spaces of Photography

My second methodological recalibration concerns the understanding of photographs as objects that establish social affiliation. Sociological literature on the uses of photography, most prominently represented by Pierre Bourdieu, provides a logical reference point. In his writings Bourdieu examined the dynamics of social distinction, and discussed photography as one of its markers. However, his approach has attracted criticism from a “sociology of associations,” spearheaded by Bruno Latour. According to Latour, Bourdieu understands the social as a distinct, static realm of life, instead of as a principle of connections. From this critical viewpoint, Bourdieu’s interest in photography is limited to its function as an illustration of existing social hierarchies. Its role in the making of social connections remains largely invisible.³¹

For my purposes Latour’s qualification of the social as the constant activity of making and dissolving connections is productive. I examine the way individuals, families, and other groups actively constructed their respective social sphere through their uses of photography, rather than the abstract social forces that seem to be at work behind the backs of these agents. I do so by focusing on the photographs themselves, whose specific material qualities allow for them to act as crucial mediators in these processes of association and affiliation.³²

In order to understand how photographs were utilized to imagine and image mid-nineteenth century British society, their doubled quality as material objects and media of communication needs to be foregrounded. The French philosopher Michel Serres, whose writings were an important reference point for Latour’s “sociology of associations,” introduced a term that describes the mutual interdependency of these two qualities. He calls objects which help designate social relations and determine their

31 Pierre Bourdieu, *La Photographie: Un Art Moyen, essai sur les usages sociaux de la photographie* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1981). See also Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, ed. Randal Johnson (Oxford: Oxford Polity Press, 1993). For Latour’s critique see Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 65, 248.

32 Given the strong reactions that any mention of Latour triggers, it seems necessary to point out that I do not aim to “apply” Latour’s actor-network-theory to my study of the uses of historical cartes de visite. I find the allegation that this theory ascribes intentionality and agency to non-humans (objects, ideas, processes) unfounded, and refer to Latour’s own reply for clarification: Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*, 71–72. Nevertheless, I do not fully subscribe to the theory and methodology of ANT. First, Latour is not concerned with the material make-up of his non-human agents and the ways this plays into their semiotic qualities. Second, Latour and his colleagues developed ANT in the context of the history of science. The setup of social interaction in a science lab is not seamlessly transferrable to social relations constructed and negotiated in commercially distributed photographs.

respective arenas of use “quasi-objects.”³³ Latour, as well as the German sociologist Niklas Luhmann, subsequently took up the term to describe how non-human agents draw people together in particular relations and function as important operators in the building of society.³⁴ Both point out the necessary conventionality of such “quasi-objects.” In order to stabilize social relations and demarcate spaces of interaction, they need to be broadly recognizable.

The examples the authors give to illustrate the concept of the “quasi-object” render their conceptualization of human relations a highly gendered affair: Serres proposes the football, Luhmann chooses the king. As “quasi-objects,” both football and king are conventional signs. They order the spaces in which they occur according to widely accepted sets of rules. When a football or a king is in their midst, people organize themselves in relation to each other and demarcate a shared space of interaction. Due to their recognizability, football and king provide social constellations with the necessary redundancies to stabilize them, at least visually and temporarily. According to Latour, the focus on “quasi-objects” and the constantly changing spaces they define allows one to describe a different topography of the social—a topography defined and delimited by attachments and affiliations, which put any static ideas of social order to the test.³⁵ A similar topography seems to play out in Victorian photographs, when royal genealogy and the history of anonymous families combine on one print or album page.

Victoria’s photographic representation is a potent but complicated quasi-object. As a little cardboard card, her portrait is made to be passed on from one individual to the other, like Serres’s football. Holding on to it means relating oneself to the monarchy and aligning one’s self-representation to the social hierarchy that the queen defines. But due to the reproducibility and easy recontextualization of the photographic image, the playing field is not determined in advance. The photographic image structures the varied and distant contexts into which it enters, and these contexts in turn impinge on its meaning and representational status. As royal portraiture, Victoria’s image determines an irrefutable social order and hierarchy, like Luhmann’s king. But as a photograph, and one of a female sovereign no less, this abstract claim is doubly qualified: Victoria’s photographic portrait shows no idealized image of a male leader; it documents the aging face and body of a woman of the nineteenth century. Her image’s

33 Michel Serres, *The Parasite* (1980), trans. Lawrence R. Schehr (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 224–228.

34 Just as Luhmann before him, Latour uses the term “social” to describe the highly unlikely, situational occurrence of social relations. Society is not the context, but rather the effect of the associations and connections between heterogeneous actors, techniques, and “material,” or objects. On the importance that Latour ascribes to images for the production and stabilization of signs see Stephan Günzel and Dieter Mersch, eds., *Bild. Ein interdisziplinäres Handbuch* (Stuttgart/Weimar: J. B. Metzler, 2014), 109–117. See also Niklas Luhmann, *Die Kunst der Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1995), 81–82.

35 Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 165.

function to establish visual order is thus in constant need of being reaffirmed and stabilized.

My localization of photographic images in practices of relation and affiliation shapes my approach in important ways. I describe the production of meaning in photographs as a process, which is open to different participants at different times and potentially generates diverse results. Meaning is grounded in historically and socially specific contexts. Accordingly, the following chapters focus on different spaces of social relation, which are delimited by the presence of Victoria's photographic image. With this I mean not only the photograph's physical positioning within a given context—for example on a cardboard card, an album page, in a living room, or on the wall of a city hall. I also focus on the virtual spaces that are produced and presented on the photograph's surface, by means of staging, posing, and arranging a person in the photo studio environment, or with the help of technological possibilities such as size reduction or enlargement, or the cutting, rearranging, and pasting of photographic prints in post-production.³⁶ These fabricated spaces relate to the spaces of use in which the material photographs can be found, in different ways. The photographic spaces simulate spaces of use, abstract themselves from them, or combine geographically, socially, or historically distinct contexts on their surface.³⁷

Images are not just dependent on their contexts, then; they are themselves contexts, in which meaning is produced for a specific group of recipients. In order for me to do justice to this quality, the material residues of Victoria's photographic circulation will play an important role in my analysis. I focus on the photographs' different formats and scales, on changing image combinations, the application or absence of color, and on the material difference between canvas, paper print, and glass slide.³⁸ What is more, I take into account the multiple historical discourses on portraiture and representation that are folded into the practice of nineteenth-century portrait photography. With the help of scissors and glue, multilayered references to other motifs, genres, or visual

36 Photography is at the basis of the complex and consistently hybrid nature of nineteenth-century perceptual experience precisely because of its ever-changing materializations. Jonathan Crary, "Spectacle, Attention, Counter-Memory," *October* 50 (1989): 96–107. The variability that comes with scale is emphasized by Bruno Latour in his Actor-Network Theory. See also Alexander Galloway and Eugene Thacker, *The Exploit. A Theory of Networks* (Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 157.

37 David Summers, "Conditions and conventions: on the disanalogy of art and language," in *The Language of Art History*, ed. Salim Kemal and Ivan Gaskell (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 181–212. As Summers's title reveals, his approach is positioned explicitly against a Saussurean understanding of visual signs (in analogy to language) as quintessentially arbitrary. Instead, he is indebted to Peirce, arguing that the "embodiment of the sign," its placement in social and historical contexts, needs to be taken into account. *Ibid.*, 196.

38 This focus on photography's materiality is also in evidence in more recent scholarship of photographic histories. Elizabeth Edwards, "Photographs as Objects of Memory," in *Material Memories. Design and Evocation*, ed. Marius Kwint, Christopher Breward and Jeremy Aynsely (Oxford/New York: Berg, 1999), 221–236; Di Bello, *Seductions and Flirtations*; Margaret Olin, *Touching Photographs* (Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press, 2012).

media of representation are combined, recalibrating centuries of portrait theory on a 10 × 6 cm cardboard card.

Though methodologically challenging, it is highly revealing to step through the many doors and enter into the manifold spaces that a photographic surface provides. Analytically reproducing the material flexibility of the medium, I trace how the visual presence of the queen weaves together mutually exclusive collectives and stabilizes a common image of modern society. “Images do not just represent,” the art historian David Summers maintains, “they place and replace, put what we want to face, realized by materially definite means with equally definite results, in determinative collective spaces.”³⁹ Queen Victoria’s photographic image, I argue, acts as a veritable hinge between the practice of photography and the production of social order.

Like Serres and Luhmann, Summers also made recourse to the image of the king in his image theory. He pinpointed this image as exemplary of an image that “naturalizes” its conditions. The image of the king, according to Summers, “naturalizes the manifest contrivance of the organization in which it plays a part and thus conceals the whole level of ideological significance of that organization.”⁴⁰ It is here that the gender aspect of my argument comes to the fore. The image of a queen is at the center of my book, rather than that of a king. A queen’s position at the pinnacle does not have the “naturalizing” power that Summers posits, since she is always already defined in relation to the king. What is more, during the nineteenth century the practices applied to integrate Victoria’s photographic image into private formats and narratives of representation were for the most part understood as female activities. Women’s skills of selecting and ordering, of decoration and embellishment were applied to spaces that were regarded as female spheres—such as the photo album or the drawing room. This creative work was integrated into a larger argument about female contributions to the good of society. Providing in their home a model of order and comfort, women became powerful mediators of shared values of morality and good taste. Their apparently private work to present an ordered world was shared and multiplied in the virtual spaces of photography. In the overlaps between photographed drawing room and actual drawing room, women invented social affiliations and put them into practice. We will see that in the context of female productions of photographic images and image combinations, imagination does not describe a movement inward. It does not signify illusion, or even delusion, but rather creation. Within their decorated interiors, women shared, recognized, and accepted the social worlds they created on the basis of commercial photography, and with this contributed to a common dream of social order. Contemporary authors regularly utilized the abstract figure of the queen to describe

39 Summers, “Conditions and conventions,” 203. For the importance of an image’s “formatting” as an interface between its structural, immanent and its social, contextual logic see Wolfram Pichler and Ralph Ubl, *Bildtheorie zur Einführung* (Hamburg: Junius Verlag, 2018), 184.

40 Summers, “Conditions and conventions,” 208.

and embellish this politically powerless yet socially influential position of the contemporary woman. Its living counterpart was Queen Victoria.

Importantly, female work with photography cut across different social strata. Not just as customers, but as also as producers, women were involved in every part of the photographic trade—they coated the albumen sheets, decorated the photo studios for customers, acted as hostesses, and retouched and colored photographs in post-production. Jennifer Tucker has pinpointed the rhetoric of nineteenth-century photographic discourse as one reason for the persistent invisibility of this substantial and multi-faceted female investment in the photographic trade. Tucker argues that the rise of commercial photography during the late 1850s allowed people from different social backgrounds to identify themselves as photographers. Contemporary practitioners and theorists sought to professionalize the new trade in order to police their profession against this influx, which they feared would result in the material and moral debasement of their work. The key ingredient for this unifying appeal was that of masculinity. It allowed photographers to align their practice to earlier, gentlemanly activities aimed at beauty, truth, and clarity. Women were necessarily written out of this professional “brotherhood” of respectable photography.⁴¹

Both theoretically and methodologically, then, the analysis of the social applications of the photographed Victoria necessitates a movement away from abstractions and toward historically situated practice. The queen I deal with is the first monarch who became a photographic product. The role of her photographic image for the imagination of society becomes comprehensible only through the examination of the multiple, often anonymous, and highly creative re-designations of her face and body in the social spheres of her subjects and consumers.

What is “Modern” Representation?

As a shared but stratified activity of seeking order in the modern world, the consumption of Victoria’s photographs throughout the nineteenth century adds a new chapter to the discourse of modern representation. Since the 1980s, prominent post-structural theories of representation have discussed modern representation as a process of negotiation, with a largely unpredictable and unstable outcome. In the wake of Michel Foucault, philosophers such as Louis Marin, Claude Lefort, and Jacques Rancière defined the French Revolution — and with it the loss of the king— as a starting point for this paradigmatically different form of representation. Marin’s understanding of representation as a productive power in the construction of reality, Lefort’s definition of democracy as the task to safeguard the symbolic void left at its center, and Rancière’s description of both dynamics as the basis for the aesthetic regime that governs modernity have all had enormous influence on the understanding of representation as a

41 Tucker, *Nature Exposed*, 49–50.

volatile and provisional process of negotiation, and of images as powerful but unpredictable agents in this process.⁴²

The historically specific case of Queen Victoria gives me the opportunity to qualify these authors' overarching claim, which is based on the causal relation between the loss of the symbolic head of society and the advent of modern representation. While Victoria's commercially available image did allow its owners a localized, sometimes even idiosyncratic, determination of their social affiliations, these multiplied and stratified imaginations of society did not necessarily eliminate or subvert a given hierarchy. To the contrary, photography adapted, updated, and confirmed traditional norms and conventions of representation. Due to their flexibility, the images became crucial markers of a social order that was regarded by many as given, but endangered. In late nineteenth-century Britain, the very revolution that would serve the French theorists of the late twentieth century as the turning point of representation was regarded as a warning example. British thinkers such as Edmund Burke, and later Thomas Carlyle and John Stuart Mill, saw not just the immediate violence and social upheaval of the French Revolution, but also its long-term consequences for society as intolerable: the loss of form, structure, and order, and the reign of chaos. Their own theories of representation will serve as the framework of my study. In different ways and with different aims in mind, these authors referred to given and broadly accepted social norms and conventions in order to consolidate the undeniable social dynamics at work in their current "age of transition."⁴³

Since the mid-1990s, the post-structuralist revision of "representation" as a construction, rather than a documentation, of social reality, has also impacted British scholarship on the category of "class" in important ways. The historian Thomas Joyce has built on feminist interventions in Marxist-oriented social history to dismiss the idea of class as a marker of economic and political difference resulting in different life experiences that in turn congeal to a shared "class consciousness." Joyce argues that, contrary to this view, nineteenth-century contemporaries used the language of class not to describe an outcome of new social and industrial realities, but rather to make a political and moral argument. From the early 1830s, the term "middle class" designated a moderate or "mid-

42 Michel Foucault, *Les Mots et les choses. Une archéologie des sciences humaines* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966). Though Foucault does not discuss instances of political representation directly — he examines discourses of science, economy, and philosophy — they are at the basis of his larger argument about how history enters into the order of knowledge. Louis Marin, *Portrait of the King* (1981), trans. Martha M. Houle (London: Macmillan, 1988). Claude Lefort, *Essais sur le politique (XIX^e–XX^e siècles)* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1986). Jacques Rancière, *Le Partage du Sensible: Ésthetique et politique* (Paris: La Fabrique, 2000).

43 Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987). Thomas Carlyle, *The French Revolution. A History*, Vol. 1 (London/New York: J. M. Dent & E. P. Dutton & Co., 1837). Thomas Carlyle, *Past and Present* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1843). John Stuart Mill, "The French Revolution: A History in three volumes. By Thomas Carlyle. Small 8 vo. (London) Fraser, 1837," *London and Westminster Review* V & XXVII (July, 1837): 17–53. John Stuart Mill, "On Liberty (1859)."

dle opinion.” It was a discursive concept applied by all political sides, to steer a middle course between legitimism and aristocracy on the one hand, and Jacobitism and radicalism on the other.⁴⁴ Consequently, as Joyce argues, the term “class” was marginalized in political discourse after the 1840s, in an effort to moralize and purify social relations. Other narratives came to the fore, which were flexible enough to give diverse social groupings a sense of agency and empowerment—most prominently the narrative of personal independence and improvement. While the scope of economic independence and individual improvement, for example by means of education, differed massively between social groups, the shared narrative of these dynamics cut across what is conventionally understood as “working class” or “middle class” identities.

In the context of the British Empire, this ideal of the “common people,” united in their quest for personal and social improvement, was rhetorically extended to circumscribe an imperial citizenship. Not based on any legal code, this citizenship was a pliable construct. It served to produce, often with help of photographs, a virtual communality among an imagined global community of the British Empire.⁴⁵ In order to encompass people living around the globe, imperial citizenship could not be defined by visual markers of race or gender, or by the borders of a nation-state. Instead, the symbol uniting this virtual community was the Queen and Empress Victoria.⁴⁶ In the context of Britain as well as in the context of the British Empire, then, Victoria’s photographic image was a crucial element for the all-encompassing narratives that constructed “modern” society. However, the apparent inclusiveness of these narratives of independence and improvement veiled their exclusionary practices. Since full control of one’s self, one’s property, and one’s labor was foundational for the participation in these dynamics, those who were not independent—the poor and dependent workers, the mentally unfit, women, and by extension the “dependencies” of the Empire—were to be excluded. John Stuart Mill, who in Britain had based his powerful advocacy for representative government and the rights of women on a universalist rhetoric, disputed these progressive developments for the colonies. In his function as administrative official of the East India Company, he reasoned that India was still in need of “vigorous despotism,” in order to prepare its people for “higher civilization.”⁴⁷

44 Patrick Joyce, *Democratic Subjects. The self and the social in nineteenth-century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 161; See also Simon Gunn, *The Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Class. Ritual and authority and the English industrial city, 1840–1914* (Manchester/New York: Manchester University Press, 2000), 16. Both refer to Dror Wahrman, *Imagining the Middle Class: The Political Representation of Class in Britain, c. 1780–1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

45 Gabrielle Moser, *Projecting Citizenship. Photography and Belonging in the British Empire* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2019), 45, 82. The United Kingdom’s first citizenship laws only emerged after the Second World War with the passing of the British Nationality Act of 1948. *Ibid.*, 9.

46 Sukanya Banerjee, *Becoming Imperial Citizens: Indians in the Late-Victorian Empire* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 23.

47 John Stuart Mill, “Of the Government of Dependencies by a Free State,” in *Considerations on Representative Government* (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1991), 336–365, here 345–355. See Abram L. Harris, “John Stuart Mill: Servant of the East India Company,” *The Canadian Journal of Economics and*

Consequently, the case of the nineteenth-century Queen and Empress provides an important historical litmus test for the hopeful ascriptions of photography as a tool for civic engagement and agency. Ariella Azoulay's photographic theory figures large in current scholarship on photography's potential to generate virtual political communities that operate outside of divisive state policies. Azoulay positioned the emancipatory work of photographs in the active "watching" of these images, the imaginary positioning of them in the context of their respective moment of production. The author calls on viewers to exercise their "civil imagination," in order to liberate the photographs' "meaning" from any preconceived political message and recognize their potential as sources for oppositional narratives.⁴⁸

Azoulay's "cizenry of photography," which comes into being if viewers take up their civic duty of actively "watching" photographs, brings to mind the nineteenth-century rhetoric of the independent and improved, de-territorialized and virtual "common people" of modern Britain and its Empire. My historical approach puts the emancipatory power ascribed to photography into perspective. I show that Victoria's photographs and their consumption do not easily fit into Azoulay's dichotomy between state-sponsored photography on the one hand, and the active disruption of its meaning by the viewer-citizen on the other. It is not just that the many acts upon these photographs, by photographers and consumers, consist of far more than simply "watching." They are very hands-on, and involve cutting, pasting, ordering, and coloring. Moreover, I demonstrate how Victoria's photographic image was utilized by each respective owner for purposes of self-representation, and how it bolstered, by making this self-positioning possible, the over-arching rhetoric of a "common people," along with its many discriminations and exclusions.

Photography is regularly regarded as a quintessentially modern medium. A new technology with unequalled distributive power, it is framed as having driven the democratization and media-market-orientation of modern society. In contrast, I focus on the utilization of this technology's products for personal or communal constructions of society. My examination of the recontextualizations and adaptations of the photographic portraits of Victoria reveals the extent to which visual conventions of hierarchy and order are carried forward in brand-new media. The "modern" image of society, constructed and shared photographically, is constantly determined by traditional and broadly accepted norms of representation. Additionally, my approach introduces a range of different actors responsible for these visual negotiations—the mostly any-

Political Science 30, no.2 (May 1964): 185–202. See also Lynn Zastoupil, *John Stuart Mill and India* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994).

48 Ariella Azoulay, Relia Mazali, et al., *The Civil Contract of Photography* (Princeton: Zone Books, 2008); *ibid.*, *Civil Imagination: A Political Ontology of Photography* (London: Verso Books, 2024). Studies that build on and critically historicize Azoulay's approach are e.g. Moser, *Projecting Citizenship*; Sharon Sliwinski, *Human Rights on Camera* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011); Thy Phu, *Picturing Model Citizens: Civility in Asian American Visual Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011). See also Banerjee, *Becoming Imperial Citizens*, 12.

mous commercial-studio photographers, their equally anonymous customers, unknown middle-class women who put together private photo albums, and the public audience of lantern slide shows in city halls throughout Britain. I thus define “modernity” not only through its prominent political and social actors or its sweeping technological changes but, rather, through the everyday reception, interpretation, and adaptation in private contexts of these new actors and this new media. The “modern” image of society as it unfolds in these diverse contexts does not have one author or authority, who successfully manages to safeguard conservative values in an “age of transition.” Rather, it is a fundamental quality of representation itself.

The Modern Dream of Order is divided into four parts. Each part focuses on a specific venue for photography—the carte de visite, the photo album, the drawing room, and the lantern slide show—in which producers and consumers worked out their social position in the constant presence of their queen. Chapters thereby gradually broaden the original viewer’s experience and the current reader’s perspective: from a seven-by-nine-centimeter cardboard card, held in the hand, to the contents of a leather-bound album, flipped through by an individual or small group; to the interior space of the drawing room; and, finally, to the crowd gathered in a hall to enjoy the spectacle of a lantern show. At the same time, each chapter advances the reader, decade by decade, through the second half of the nineteenth century.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter 1, “Queen on a Cardboard Card,” is concerned with how by the mid-1850s commercial photography entered the British market. I delineate the role played by the royal family in this development as patrons of the new image technology. They were the first customers at the photo studio and at the same time the subject of the first photographic products to be commercially distributed in Britain. The initial success of commercial portrait photography was largely due to the public attention it received as a medium of royal representation. The carte de visite portrait became worthy of imitation because it was practiced by royalty. But what kind of royal portraiture is such a photograph? How can it be successful as a photograph *and* as royal portraiture?

The royal photographic portrait is my key case study of the representational status of the photographic image as a natural and simultaneously highly conventional image. For this purpose, I survey the contemporary nineteenth-century discourse on the photographic portrait, its aesthetics, and its functions, and I explore the debate’s many complex references to the eighteenth-century portrait theory of Joshua Reynolds. The eminent eighteenth-century painter’s demands for portraiture’s aesthetic qualities and social functions served as the foil against which photography was defined. According to Reynolds, portraiture, if exercised by the interpretive genius of the artist, could impact on the progress and improvement of society at large. In capturing the true character of an exemplary persona, the portrait would allow the audience to recognize the sitter’s public virtues and thus act as a catalyst for individual and social responsi-

bility. As a mechanically produced image, photographic portraiture was in constant friction with Reynolds's artistic demands, and the royal photographic portrait took center stage in this debate. My analysis of specific image solutions found by commercial photo studios to fuse the conventions of portraiture with portrait photography's contemporary use reveals the fine line of what an "authentic" royal portrait could be at mid-nineteenth century. I show how Victoria's photographs, which quickly entered into virtually every British household, either as a single carte or collected in an album, participated in the larger conversation about how an ideal image of social order could be achieved in a rapidly modernizing society.

In Chapter 2, "Society on an Album Page," I turn to the circulation of photographs among individual consumers. During the early 1860s, the image of the queen was re-contextualized to aid the construction of exclusive social spaces. The design of album pages decorated by female members of the aristocracy and landed gentry feature elaborate collages of carte de visite portraits combined with hand-drawn and watercolor backgrounds. Inserting photographs of their extended families and social circles into handcrafted indoor and outdoor settings, these privileged women articulated their social affiliation and distinction on many levels: they presented their artistic skills and elevated their family above the equalizing interior of the commercial photo studio. Their albums provided a personalized, private space for their self-composed, handmade group portraits. Queen Victoria and other members of the royal family were integrated into these social circles with the help of scissors and glue. For example, Lady Milles seated the queen's cut-out carte portrait on a park bench at her family estate, and Lady Filmer added the Prince of Wales Edward Albert to a group assembled in her watercolor drawing room. What is more, by fashioning their collage designs after the eighteenth-century painterly genre known as the *conversation piece*, these women demonstrated their knowledge of "polite" conventions of representation. To combine these conventions with the novel medium of photography meant to update them according to the ladies' contemporary self-image.⁴⁹ The deliberate juxtaposition of black-and-white photograph and watercolor background, creative page designs inspired by eighteenth-century print-collections and commercial photography alike, or humorous and unlikely

49 The reference to pictorial conventions developed one hundred years earlier is not just an anachronistic remnant, then, but a rather a strategy to integrate photography into a known visual logic of social hierarchy and simultaneously update this visual logic with modern image technology. The tendency of scholarship on nineteenth-century history to dismiss continuities with the past in favor of a narrative framework of progress and change has been highlighted for example by Richard Price, "Historiography, Narrative, and the 19th Century," 220–256. Instead of "artificially detaching" the nineteenth century from the eighteenth century, Price argues for discussing the late seventeenth to the late nineteenth century as constituting a "stage" in the history of modern Britain that can be usefully demarcated and discussed as a unit. *Ibid.*, 240. Though not explicitly defined by Price, this time-frame is delimited by the restoration of the monarchy in 1688 and Queen Victoria's rule until 1901.

combinations of persons pasted into one drawing room, were visual strategies employed and decoded by a narrowly delimited social group. Victoria was quite literally at the center of these visual negotiations, which aimed at maintaining the aristocracy's superior position in modern society at least visually, on the privately decorated album page.

The analytical gaze cast by Chapter 3, "Family in the Drawing Room," provides the broader contemporary context for these activities of upper-class consumers of photography and gives them an urgent edge. Traditionally, the drawing room was an elite space of social interaction. During the 1870s and 1880s, however, it became integrated as an architectural norm into the layout of newly built homes for all social strata. With its growing prevalence, the drawing room's status as an indicator of social distinction—its definition as a space of social interaction reserved for the elite—was in constant need of redefinition and confirmation. The drawing room also became the favored backdrop for commercial photographic portraiture. Depending on their customer circle, the studios' furnishings ranged from fully decorated drawing room to the barest imitation of this representational space, by means of a chair and curtain, or a painted backdrop. All of them advertised the representation of their sitters in a respectable and at the same time authentic surrounding, which adequately reflected the social position they claimed. I draw on contemporary advice literature for the decoration of the drawing room, by authors such as Charles Eastlake, Lucy Orrinsmith, and H.R. Haweis, and for the furnishing of the photo studio. These two spaces anticipated and imitated each other, in order to serve their respective representational functions. Queen Victoria was a constant feature in middle-class drawing rooms as well. Her photographic portraits, which presented her in the same studio surrounding as all other studio customers, regularly graced the first page of family albums, which were displayed and perused in the drawing rooms of their owners. In this context, however, her photographic image served to stabilize middle-class ideals of moral harmony and order. The equalizing studio furnishing did not need to be cut away, as in the aristocratic collages, but was rather welcomed as a visual common ground between the "Queens of the household," as John Ruskin called his female readers, and their contemporary female monarch.

Concluding my study's chronological and spatial progression, Chapter 4, "History in a Slide Set," broadens my investigation and takes into account the importance of the Empire for the imagination of British society. I focus on the medium of the lantern slide show, which allowed the wider public to participate in the communal viewing of photographs and share in the construction of a common, national narrative. Especially in last two decades of the nineteenth century, the then-recent history of Britain was presented via public photographic "documentation," which combined education and amusement for large and diverse audiences, who gathered in city halls, theaters, or newly established educational institutions. In lantern slide sets, photographic portraits of Queen Victoria taken over the past forty years functioned as an ordering device.

Her biography, traced in photographs that had been made over her long life, gave structure and meaning to an otherwise highly disparate and fragmentary image repository for the decades leading up to 1900. Historic events such as the Corn Crisis, the Crimean War, and the Indian Uprising were interspersed with photographs of Victoria as a newlywed, a mother, a widow, a grandmother, and a great-grandmother. This presentation allowed viewers to position their lives, which ran in parallel to their queen's, within a logical, apparently purposeful, and broadly shared sequence of history. To demonstrate the appeal of the queen's photographs as publicly consumed ordering devices, I analyze the popular conceptualization of "history" practiced in lantern slide shows with recourse to contemporary theorists of history, including Thomas Arnold, John Ruskin, and Thomas Carlyle. The queen's own photographic activities, her commissions of photographic documents, as well as her collecting practices, play into my argument as well. The resulting images give evidence of the way photographs were utilized to balance modern Britain with its Empire, rendering them visually interdependent.

The book's conclusion, "Queen in the Mud," positions my book within the theoretical discourse on representation and modernity. It also discusses in what ways the photographic practices of the nineteenth century that involved Queen Victoria relate to today's utilization of images for purposes of self-representation. Due to their broad dissemination as inexpensive paper prints, Victoria's photographs lent themselves to constant recontextualization and willful manipulation, helping different social groups to visually constitute themselves. This relative freedom to utilize the queen for one's own representative purposes resulted in shifts of interpretation: the presence of the photographed queen allowed the aristocracy to frame itself as a modern elite. It let members of the middle-class imagine themselves as the moral examples of contemporary society. It provided the working class with visual access to the monarchy. But contrary to common belief, the fact that people were able to participate in the consumption of images in an unprecedented way did not result in the shared imagination of a future society of equals. The localized and semi-private spaces in which self-representation was negotiated rather helped ameliorate public discontent over class difference, as consumers were free to imagine and construct their own idea of contemporary society. This concurrence between free image consumption and the constant utilization of images for conventional visualizations of social order is a worrying fact, and it is well-known also in today's media culture.

"Modern representation" is commonly defined with reference to the French revolution. John Stuart Mill and Thomas Carlyle, who will be constant companions throughout this book, developed their own theories of modern society under the impression of the French Revolution as well. Despite their different political standpoints, their respective negative assessment of its consequences was strongly influenced by their mentor Edmund Burke and the latter's terrified eyewitness account of the social upheaval on the continent. In nineteenth-century Britain, the broad application of con-

ventions of order, and the belief in the concurrence of a stable image of society and its actual internal stability, need to be gauged from this historical perspective. The photographic practices that I analyze document the search for order as a defining quality of modernity—one that is just as salient as that perceived by Marin, Lefort, and Rancière, that modernity is defined by a structural loss of order. Accordingly, I will examine modern representation as the messy process of finding, agreeing upon, or rejecting temporary and localized images of social affiliation, as the strong urge to employ motifs, genres, and formats of representation that were already in place for this purpose, and as the application of modern image technologies to do so. If the biggest nightmare of modernity is that individuals turn into isolated atoms floating alone in the cold universe, commercial photography is not proof of this inevitably coming true. Rather, photography both facilitates and documents the constant work, of individuals and groups, to weave together the collective (by sharing the queen's photograph) and to assert subjectivity (by holding on to her image).⁵⁰ The quintessentially modern medium of photography shows that modernity should not be seen as determined necessarily by new technologies and their distributive power, but rather by the utilization of these technologies for the visual construction of imaginations of the social.

50 Latour has persuasively argued that technologies aid the constant process of formation, stabilization, or dissolution of social groups. Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 31. Photographs are both instruments in the endless task of configuration and traces left in this process. See also Friedrich Balke and Maria Muhle, "Einführung," in *Räume und Medien des Regierens*, ed. Friedrich Balke and Maria Muhle (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2016), 8–23, here 16.



GROUP OF ROAYL FAMILY.

1 Queen on a Cardboard Card

The carte de visite on the left is an illustrative example of how commercial photography aided the imagination and visualization of social order, and of the role that royal photographic portraiture played in this undertaking (Fig. 9). It also demonstrates that this quality is a consequence of photography's mechanical reproducibility, industrial production, and mass-marketing, rather than an outcome of any clearly defined political agenda.

Portraits of the entire royal family are assembled in a regular pattern of oval vignettes on the card's tiny surface. The print was originally produced by photographer John Jabez Edwin Mayall in the early 1860s. Mayall also was responsible for the individual photographic portraits that served as the source material for this "combined" carte de visite.⁵¹ The photomontage was composed with some care. Positioned in the middle of the card is a double portrait of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert facing each other. It is framed on both sides by single portraits of the couple. Their children surround them, with the Prince of Wales, flanked by his two eldest sisters Victoria and Alice, taking the center top. Prince Alfred, situated beneath his parents, is accompanied by the couple's younger children. Wherever the original portraits allow, the oval vignettes are arranged so that the framing figures turn to those in the center. Due to the photographs' thoughtful orientation, the plaster column, which regularly appears in the individual portrait templates as a place to rest one's arm or elbow, or to orient oneself toward, acts as a structuring device across all images included in the print. As an architectural element it emphasizes the composite's vertical middle axis, while the entire family is enveloped in a delicate flower tendril, which was added to the negative

9. John Jabez Edwin Mayall, *Group of Royal Family*, early 1860s, albumen carte-de-visite photomontage, 8.3 × 5.7 cm. National Portrait Gallery Archive, London (acc. no. NPG x132718)

- 51 The technique of photographic montage behind this combination was first theorized by avantgardists such as Raoul Hausmann and Lázló Moholy-Nagy at the beginning of the twentieth century, and is most regularly discussed as an instrument of social and political critique, in delimitation from earlier photographic practices. See e.g. Matthew Teitelbaum, ed., *Montage and Modern Life. 1919–1942* (Cambridge/London: The MIT Press, 1992); Bernd Stiegler, *Der montierte Mensch. Eine Figur der Moderne* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2016), 226. Clément Chéroux emphasizes the continuity of pictorial strategies between the photo montages of the late nineteenth and those of the early twentieth century. Clément Chéroux, *Avant l'avantgarde. Du jeu en photographie, 1890–1940* (Paris: Les Editions Textuel, 2015).

in post-production. The arrangement of the individual portraits into a family tree confirms the monarchy's position at the apex of society. Victoria's hereditary claim is constructed from inexpensive print cutouts with help of scissors, glue, and repeated exposure.

The producer of this specific anonymous card "lifted," re-photographed, and re-printed Mayall's original montage. The grainy print is mounted on a flimsy cardboard card without a studio stamp. The pre-printed caption reads, "GROUP OF ROAYL FAMILY," a slip of the pen indicating the speed and number in which the mounts were likely produced. Clearly, the card is a product intended for a broad market, aimed at customers who might lack the money to buy an entire suite of portrait photographs of the royal family, and instead make do with a carte de visite that assembles all of its members in stamp-size on its surface. As a ready-made, inexpensive picture card, it enters into diverse contexts of consumption and spaces of reception. The massive distance between what might be considered a representative royal portrait and that tiny, cropped copy of a copy of an already infinitely reproduced photograph of Victoria, staged as a loving middle-class wife in front of a photo studio's plaster column, is what will concern me in this chapter.

The queen's photographic portraits constituted a fundamental shift in the function of royal representation. The court's decision to release photographic portraits for public dissemination was motivated by an interest in communicating the message of royal authority to a modern, democratizing society.⁵² But once the images were in circulation, an increasingly large segment of society was able to utilize the portraits for their own self-fashioning, in order to communicate their individual representational claims. Victoria's photographic portrait was quickly lifted out of its original context to be integrated seamlessly into other image constellations, reaching other audiences. These audiences grew rapidly and by the early 1860s included a majority of the British population. What is more, her photographs did not show an idealized likeness of a timeless monarch, but documented the living woman with help of an image technology that became increasingly accessible to the consumers of her photographic portraits as well. Discussions about the function of her photographic representation were informed by the contemporary discourse on the challenge of producing an ordered image of modern society. At the same time, they were based on historical theories and practices of portraiture, and on ascriptions of the social function of the genre that these formulated. Portraiture had always been regarded as a means to visualize social order. The photographic portrait was necessarily assessed from this vantage point, and often seen as

52 Margaret Homans argues that for this purpose, the gender difference between Victoria and Albert was played up, and Albert installed as the authoritative "lawful husband." Margaret Homans, *Royal Representations: Queen Victoria and Victorian Culture 1837–1876* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 43–57.

symptomatic of modern society's loss of order, its formlessness. The queen's photographic image was at the center of this heated debate.

In what follows I trace the Royal Court's early involvement in the development and success of commercial portrait photography. I examine the impact that commercialization of royal portraiture had on the status of the portrait itself as a means to define and visualize social relations. Late-nineteenth century discussions about the merits as well as the downsides of photographic portraiture often centered on the question concerning the relationship between photographic portraiture and portrait painting, and whether or not a photograph was capable of fulfilling the representational functions conventionally ascribed to the genre. Prominent late eighteenth-century ideas on portraiture by the artist and theorist Joshua Reynolds became a constant reference point. According to Reynolds, portraiture had the function to define and communicate a sitter's elevated social position, and to contribute with each portrait to the construction and presentation of an ideal image of society as a whole. Advocates and critics of the new medium argued about photography's success, or failure, in fulfilling this important function. Their dispute documents commercial photography's participation in the fundamental question of the image of contemporary society.

Disagreement about photography's status and function as portraiture is not just a question of taste, then. It throws into relief the growing uncertainty at mid-nineteenth century about the structural make-up of a society undergoing, as contemporary writers point out, a fundamental crisis of representation, as a more stratified electorate demanded to be seen and heard. The "Great Reform Act" of 1832 had already broadened enfranchisement to include small landowners, tenant farmers, and shopkeepers. Thirty-five years later, in 1867, it was extended again to include workers—though only on sufferance. These constitutional changes reflect the steady transfer of political power to a broadening and economically, socially, politically, and religiously diverse social stratum positioned between the aristocracy and the workers. As the historians Dror Wahrman and Patrick Joyce have shown, its designation as the "middle class" must be understood as a discursive construction to demonstrate a middle course between legitimism on the one hand, and radicalism on the other. What was termed "middle class" during the 1830s and early 1840s, was no distinct and class-conscious social entity, but rather a discursive common denominator for the aims of moral improvement and social stability, which were shared by different social groupings. Since the term "class" increasingly became equated with factions and interests, it is not surprising that it was marginalized after 1840 to allow for a more harmonized and moralized rhetoric in the description of social relations.⁵³ The representative constitutional monarchy was

53 Wahrman, *Imagining the Middle Class: The Political Representation of Class in Britain, c. 1780–1840*; Joyce, *Democratic Subjects*, 161–164. See also Robert Colls, *Identity of England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 80; Simon Gunn, *The Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Class*, 16.

an important element in the subsequent construction and consolidation of “the people” of Britain and the British Empire.

A new “whole” of society needed to be defined and represented, and for this Victoria was key. Her royal portrait played a crucial role in the dispute about representation, which was carried out in uncountable and mostly anonymous journal articles and reviews in contemporary photography journals, as well as on the surface of the photographs themselves. Portrait theories reaching back to the seventeenth century were folded into the visual montages of commercial cartes de visite. Utilizing the medium’s potential for recontextualization, photographers creatively combined these conventions of representation with contemporary views regarding the monarchy and society.

Jennifer Tucker has pointed out that the photographic trade was itself implicated in this dynamic political and social development. As shopkeepers, photographers were members of that newly enfranchised group of the “Great Reform Act.” Throughout the 1850s to 1870s, the social stratum of photographic practitioners and consumers expanded extremely quickly, leading to a perceived crisis within the profession itself. The fact that commercial photography was a trade that was taken up by, and catered to, a socially diverse clientele, led — according to contemporary commentators—to photography produced in bad quality and bad taste, and accordingly to the medium’s moral debasement. The bootlegged photo montage of celebrated court photographer Mayall’s original is a case in point. It exemplifies how anonymous members of the trade based their profit on illegitimately obtained and qualitatively dubious image reproductions. One solution for rhetorically policing the profession was to connect it to the claims of morality and progress that defined the common ground called the “middle class.” All operators were encouraged to overcome differences in social status and to commit themselves to self-improvement to safeguard the respectability of their trade. Crucially, with the appeal to gentlemanly conduct, the new “brotherhood” of photographers was defined by the masculinity of its members.⁵⁴ In this the photographic trade mirrored the broader discourse on social relations. To circumscribe a new “whole” of society, which acknowledged but also effaced changing political and economic power structures by referring to a shared set of moral norms based on progress and independence, meant to exclude women.⁵⁵ To conclude this chapter, I discuss how Victoria’s gender was addressed in commercial cartes de visite. Her royal status, which was fundamental to the construction of society’s “whole,” needed to be reconciled visually with contemporary convictions about the role, position, and function of women in modern society.

54 Tucker, *Nature Exposed*, 33–38, here 49.

55 Like the mentally or morally unfit, the poor and dependent workers, and the inhabitants of the colonies, women were not in full control of themselves, their property, and their labor and thus, according to majority opinion, not independent. Joyce, *Democratic Subjects*, 196.

Victoria and Photography

Victoria played a part in the history of photography from the very beginning. On October 4, 1839, H. L. Bulwer, Secretary at the British Embassy in Paris, wrote a letter to the Foreign Office in London, informing his colleagues that “Mr Daguerre has requested me to ascertain whether Her Majesty would receive a copy of his recent innovations.”⁵⁶ Daguerre’s famed invention, the daguerreotype, had made waves in Britain at that point already, so it was not necessary to further introduce the Frenchman in the letter.⁵⁷ Protocol normally forbade Victoria from accepting any presents from individuals abroad, but noting “the peculiarity of the case,” Bulwer asks in his letter if a daguerreotype might be authorized as an exception to this general rule. The secretary was probably well aware of the magnitude of Daguerre’s invention and did not want to miss an opportunity to receive one of the famed silvered copperplate images. In the end, however, it was decided not to accept the gift. The queen, aware of the conflicting claims with respect to priority of invention between Daguerre and his British opponent Henry Fox Talbot, did not want to get in the middle of this quarrel, which quickly attracted publicity on both sides of the channel.⁵⁸

This little diplomatic fuss confirms that Victoria was well informed about the existence and development of photographic technologies early on. In March 1842, when the Court was in residence at the Royal Pavilion at Brighton, her husband Prince Albert had his daguerreotype taken at the studio of William Constable (Fig. 10). The portrait counts as the first photograph of British royalty. Embedded in a gilded frame and red velvet case, it was a cherished private object, neither meant for, nor technically applicable to, further distribution. Twelve years later, in 1854, Victoria and Albert became patrons of the Royal Photographic Society in London, founded on January 20, 1853.

56 Letter dated October 4, 1839 from H. L. Bulwer, Chargé d’Affaires at the British Embassy in Paris, to W. Fox-Strangways, Under Secretary of State at the Foreign Office, London. See R. Derek Wood, “No Daguerreotype for the Young Queen Victoria: A Case of English Protocol or Perfidy?” *PhotoResearcher* 22 (2014): 22.

57 A first public announcement of Daguerre’s new process had appeared on January 26, 1837 in the Foreign Correspondence Column of *The Athenaeum*. In September an entrepreneurial Frenchman, M. de St. Croix, brought examples of the daguerreotype process, along with the necessary apparatus, chemicals, and plates to London. From early October he regularly demonstrated the process and exhibited his results at the Royal Adelaide Gallery of Practical Science. Alison Gernsheim and Helmut Gernsheim, *L. J. M. Daguerre: The history of the Diorama and the Daguerreotype* (New York: Dover Publications, 1968), 144–145.

58 J. Backhouse, from the Foreign Office, replied accordingly to Bulwer’s inquiry. Letter dated 25 October 1839 from John Backhouse, Under Secretary of State at the Foreign Office, London, to Lord Granville, British Ambassador at Paris. Public Record Office, London: Archives of the British Embassy in Paris (FO 146): FO 146/210. See Wood, “No Daguerreotype for the Young Queen Victoria: A Case of English Protocol or Perfidy?” The conflict of intellectual authorship can be traced through the protocols of the Académie des Sciences from February to May 1839. For a collection of all relevant documents see Steffen Siegel, *Neues Licht. Daguerre, Talbot und die Veröffentlichung der Fotografie im Jahr 1839* (Munich: Fink, 2014), 109–154.

The couple's public engagement coincided with their growing personal interest in the new medium. During the 1850s, the royal family regularly commissioned leading photographers to conduct sittings with Victoria, Albert, and their children, but these photographs also remained for private use only. The photographers surrendered their negatives to the queen. She had complete control over their use, and had prints produced only to distribute them amongst her own extended family.⁵⁹

Prince Albert, regarded by contemporaries and historians alike as somewhat of a visionary of modern technology and its potential applications, is today regularly considered the active advocate of photography in the royal family. His librarian, Dr. Ernst Becker, who joined the Royal Household in May 1851 and was an enthusiastic amateur, is recognized as an important mediator.⁶⁰ In contrast, Victoria's impact on the early development of photography in Britain is measured first and foremost by her role as a model consumer. For example, Victoria's purchase of a stereoscope and accompanying stereo cards upon being introduced to the device during her visit to the Great Exhibition in 1851 is credited for having triggered a fashionable following.⁶¹ As we will see, her wish to have her family portrayed on cartes de visite had a similar effect, and helped the successful commercialization of this standardized format. Still, the gendered differentiation between the man, Albert, who actively attempts to master a new image technology and to tap into its political and economic potential, and the woman, Victoria, who passively consumes it, is misleading in two ways.⁶²

First, it builds on the fundamental misconception of consumption as a mindless, superficial, alienating, and ultimately isolating act, controlled by the external forces of



10. William Constable, *Prince Albert*, March 5, 1842, daguerreotype, 8.7 × 6.3 cm. Royal Collection Trust, London (acc. no. RCIN 29324888)

59 Victoria regularly commissioned William Bambridge, a photographer based in Windsor, to provide prints of negatives by a range of other photographers for her private use. Records of the Royal Bursary reveal that Bambridge executed nearly 2000 such prints between July and September 1857 alone. See Roger Taylor and Frances Dimond, *Crown & Camera: The Royal Family and Photography 1842–1910* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1987), 19–20.

60 See Taylor and Dimond, *Crown & Camera*, 13; Heinz Kurt Henisch and Bridget Ann Henisch, *The Photographic Experience, 1839–1914: Images and attitudes* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), 340. An album at the Royal Collection shows the results of Albert's and Becker's amateur photography (Photographic portraits, Vol.1, 1853–1857 (RCIN 2906500), Photographic Department, Royal Collection, Windsor Castle, UK).

61 Taylor and Dimond, *Crown & Camera*, 14.

62 Narratives of this division of roles abound. See for example Jonathan Marsden, ed., *Victoria & Albert. Art & Love* (London: Royal Collection Publications, 2010); Taylor and Dimond, *Crown & Camera*.



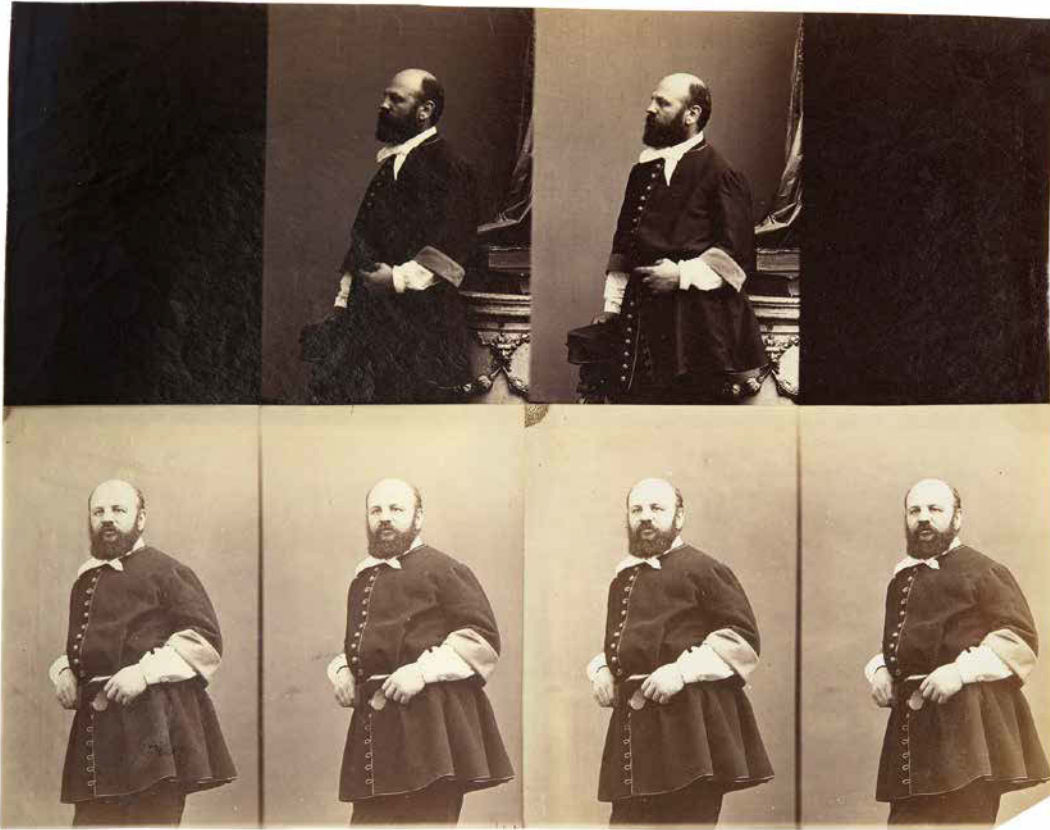
11. After Samuel Begg, after Mary Steen, *The Longest Reign in English History: A Glimpse of the Home Life of the Queen*, from *The Illustrated London News*, September 19, 1896, relief halftone tearsheet. National Portrait Gallery, London (acc. no. NPG D46377)

capitalism.⁶³ But the activity and experience of consumption can also be examined as a means for individuals to construct social identities, meeting their specific cultural needs by providing them with a sense of social connection and community. Victoria's own vast photographic archive attests to the fact that the queen was highly invested in the possibilities of photography to define and create a sense of affiliation. She exchanged cartes de visite with her extended family and international luminaries, collected and maintained a large and ever-growing number of photographic albums dedicated, for example, to "royal children," the "members of the royal household," or "elderly people," surrounded herself with photographs in her living quarters, looked at them on a daily basis, and even wore jewelry containing photographic images. Crucially, her investment in the photographic image became known to her contemporaries. Victoria's bracelet with Albert's miniature portrait photograph was regularly visible in her portraits, and received many comments in the press. The photo-saturated interior of her living quarters graced the *London Illustrated News* in 1896 (Fig. 11). Victoria's consumption of photographs was not just a private indulgence, then. Rather, she made use of them as

means of communication, and she became a highly visible role model for this social application of commercial photography.

Second, the question of whether and to what extent Victoria was herself responsible for her photographic self-fashioning (rather than her husband, or the Court) stops short at examining the dynamic development and diversification of her image by means

63 Frederic Jameson, "Postmodernism and consumer society," in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (Port Townsend, WA: Bay Press, 1982), 111–125; Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991). Ann Bermingham and John Brewer have historicized and contested this narrow view of consumption. Ann Bermingham and John Brewer, *The Consumption of Culture. 1600–1800. Image, Object, Text* (London/New York: Routledge, 1995).



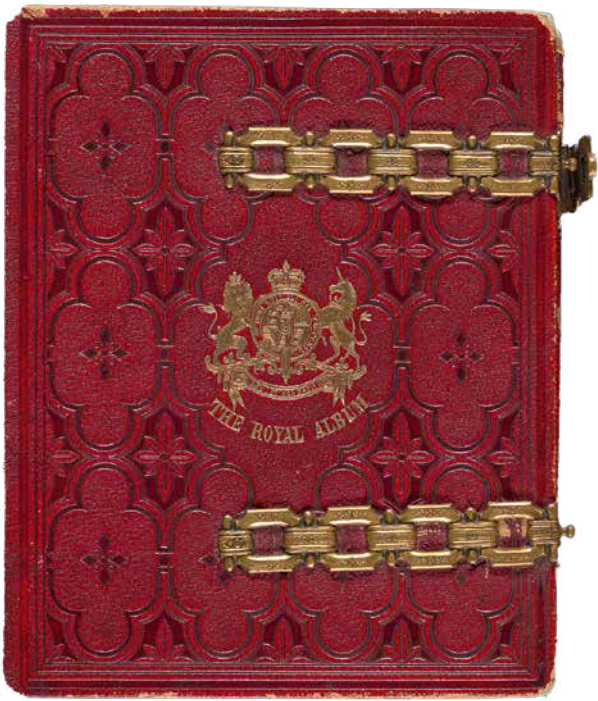
12. André Adolphe-Eugène Disdéri, *Portraits of André Adolphe-Eugène Disdéri / Autoportraits*, c. 1860, positive, contact print, monochrome, non-transparent, c. 18.5 × 23.7 cm. Fotosammlung Ruth und Peter Herzog, Basel (acc. no. L0001_E1_F2)

of other agents.⁶⁴ As the anonymous composite card that opened this chapter illustrates, photographers, studio operators, dealers, consumers, and not least of all the technology of photography itself played an active part in the production and reconfiguration of the queen's photographic image. It was produced by many authors with diverse and sometimes conflicting interests, a result of their combined photographic practices, carried out in different contexts and spaces.

Becoming a Product: Accessibility and Ownership

In March 1851, a decade after Daguerre's and Talbot's public dispute over priority of invention, both the Frenchman's single copperplate images and the Englishman's qualitatively inferior, but readily reproducible prints were eclipsed by the introduction of the collodion wet plate process. The collodion process provided a negative image on a transparent support, from which an infinite number of high-quality prints could be

64 This is an objection also voiced by John Plunkett. Victoria's media figure was, as Plunkett maintains, a direct consequence of the tremendous expansion in the market for newspapers, books, periodicals, and engravings. John Plunkett, *Queen Victoria. First Media Monarch* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 2–3. See also Patricia Anderson, *The Printed Image and the Transformation of Popular Culture 1790–1860* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).



13. Cartes-de-visite album, entitled *The Royal Album*. Portraits of the Royal Family of England Photographed from Life, London: A. Marion and Co., May 1860, album cover, 15 × 12 cm. Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin, Gernsheim Collection, purchase (acc. no. 964:0432:0001-0014)

made. It effectively combined the advantages of the daguerreotype—a sharp and clear image—with those of Talbot’s calotype process—unlimited prints from one single negative. Importantly, it was also unfettered by any patent restrictions and thus constituted an important step in the popularization of the new image technology. From the mid-1850s to the 1890s, this process dominated photography.

Another invention, which took the novel paper collodion print as a basis for the mass production of portraits, turned out to be the true game changer for commercial photography. In 1854 the French photographer André Adolphe-Eugène Disdéri patented a camera with four lenses and a movable cassette for the glass plate. On each half of the glass plate four exposures could be carried out, before the plate was moved and another four exposures were fitted onto it. If desired, it was also possible to uncap the lenses one at a time, change the sitter’s pose, and take eight different images on one plate. Subsequently, eight paper copies of the collodion wet plate negatives were

printed on albumen paper and mounted on cardboard cut to the standardized format of what Disdéri called the *carte de visite*: 10 × 6 cm.⁶⁵ Figure 12 shows an only partially developed and uncut sheet of cartes de visite featuring the proud inventor himself, clad in a historicizing frock, who demonstrates possible portrait poses in full and three-quarter profile respectively (Fig. 12).

A. Marion & Co., a French firm of photographic dealers and publishers based in London, first introduced the *carte de visite* in Britain, initially without much success.⁶⁶ This changed, however, when in 1860 the royal court released an album of portrait photographs. Filled with fourteen cartes de visite of Victoria and her family, it was a luxury item, bound in red leather, with brass clasps, gilt edge, and the royal coat of arms on its cover (Fig. 13). The photographer Mayall was the one responsible for the portraits, which look like a trial run for commercial studio photography. The sitters were positioned against the neutral wall of a portable fold out studio, which had been part of the

65 André Adolphe-Eugène Disdéri, “Brevet d’invention, Paris, Nov. 1854,” in *La Photographie en France. Textes et Controverses: une anthologie 1816–1871*, ed. André Rouilé (Paris: Macula, 1989), 352–356. Elizabeth Anne McCauley, A. A. Disdéri and the *Carte de visite Portrait Photograph* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1983); *ibid.*, *Industrial Madness. Commercial Photography in Paris, 1884–1871* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1994).

66 Alison Gernsheim and Helmut Gernsheim, *The History of Photography: From the earliest use of the camera obscura in the eleventh century up to 1914* (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), 226.



14. John Jabez Edwin Mayall, *The Queen and Prince Consort*, 1860, carte-de-visite on album page, image 8.3 × 5.3 cm, as published in *Cartes-de-visite album, entitled The Royal Album. Portraits of the Royal Family of England Photographed from Life*, London, A. Marion and Co., May 1860, 1. Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin, Gernsheim Collection, purchase (acc. no. 964:0432:0001)



15. John Jabez Edwin Mayall, *The Queen and Princess Beatrice*, 1860, carte-de-visite on album page, image 8.3 × 5.3 cm, as published in *Cartes-de-visite album, entitled The Royal Album. Portraits of the Royal Family of England Photographed from Life*, London, A. Marion and Co., May 1860, 2. Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin, Gernsheim Collection, purchase (acc. no. 964:0432:0002)



16. John Jabez Edwin Mayall, *Princess Alice*, 1860, carte-de-visite on album page, image 8.3 × 5.3 cm, as published in *Cartes-de-visite album, entitled The Royal Album. Portraits of the Royal Family of England Photographed from Life*, London, A. Marion and Co., May 1860, 7. Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin, Gernsheim Collection, purchase (acc. no. 964:0432:0007)



17. John Jabez Edwin Mayall, *The Prince of Wales and Princess Alice*, 1860, carte-de-visite on album page, image 8.3 × 5.3 cm, as published in *Cartes-de-visite album, entitled The Royal Album. Portraits of the Royal Family of England Photographed from Life*, London, A. Marion and Co., May 1860, 5. Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin, Gernsheim Collection, purchase (acc. no. 964:0432:0005)



18. John Jabez Edwin Mayall, *The Prince of Wales*, 1860, carte-de-visite on album page, image 8.3 × 5.3 cm, as published in *Cartes-de-visite album, entitled The Royal Album. Portraits of the Royal Family of England Photographed from Life*, London, A. Marion and Co., May 1860, 6. Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin, Gernsheim Collection, purchase (acc. no. 964:0432:0006)

royal households at Buckingham Palace and Windsor Castle since 1854.⁶⁷ Mayall arranged Victoria, Albert, and eight of their children on a pedestal covered with a carpet, featuring only the barest minimum of studio furnishing.⁶⁸ A lone drawing room chair, a chaise lounge, a little writing table covered with a dark cloth, the stump of a plaster column, a plaster balustrade, and a heavily patterned curtain appear repeatedly in the series. Mayall's decision to place the camera at a greater distance from his sitters and to include props and furniture to add to the "naturalness" of the staged scenes subsequently became the standard look of the carte de visite.⁶⁹

Around these items, the members of the royal family, clad in contemporary upper-middle class attire, are arranged in poses that speak of intimacy and family bonds. In a double portrait of the royal couple, Victoria wears a high-necked and long-sleeved silk dress with a round white collar. Her hair is neatly tied back with a simple black bow (Fig. 14). Albert, for his part, is clad in a black frock coat with a waistcoat over his white shirt, his hair combed into a neat side parting. While Albert sits in the chair, legs comfortably crossed, with an open book on his lap, Victoria stands behind him, attending to her husband with her head slightly bowed.

The series also includes individual portraits of the couple. Albert is shown in frontal view, resting a hand the backrest of the chair, Victoria in three-quarter profile, a pose she would adopt in many of her photographic state portraits to come. In another photograph, Victoria is placed on the chaise lounge with her youngest daughter Beatrice on her lap, offering a picture of motherly affection (Fig. 15). Princess Alice, seated in front of the plaster balustrade, apparently lost in thought over the contents of her book, provides the model pose for future portrait photographs of countless daughters of respectable families (Fig. 16). In a double portrait with Alice, Edward Albert appears

67 As bills reveal, both households included a "large folding and portable photographic portrait room fitted with a patent felt carpet," which could be assembled at will. Taylor and Dimond list a bill for a portable darkroom and portrait room, dated June 1854 in *Crown & Camera*, 14.

68 The royal couple's eldest daughter, Victoria, was by that time already married to the German Emperor Frederick III.

69 Only a few years later, the positioning of a column on top of a carpet—which apparently indicated the thoughtless adoption of signs of social prestige, and the pretension of social rank—would be regarded as one of the most common and most deadly sins of commercial portrait photography. E.g. Anon., "Notices of London Photographic Establishments and Factories," *The British Journal of Photography* 524 (May 20, 1870): 232. See also Lars Blunck, "'The Most Abominable Things Ever Produced in Art'—Aufstieg und Niedergang der Visitenkartenfotografie," in *Kanonisierung, Regelverstoß und Pluralisierung der Kunst des 19. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Stefan Grohé, Ekaterini Kepetzis, and Stefanie Lieb (Bern: Verlag Peter Lang, 2007), 164–181.

as a gentleman with perfect manners and top hat (Fig. 17). Another photograph points to his future role as king and shows him in uniform, with a nonchalant elbow resting on the plaster column (Fig. 18). As Mayall proudly advertises on the introductory carte de visite for his royal album, all of these portraits were “photographed from life.”

Produced for an open market, they were the first cartes de visite in Britain to enter into mass circulation, and their success was immediate. Andrew Wynter reports that sixty thousand sets were marketed in Britain, the colonies, and the United States, and between 1860 and 1862 alone, 3 to 4 million copies of Victoria’s portraits were said to have been sold.⁷⁰ On top of that, uncountable numbers of pirated copies, with Mayall’s name removed, made their way into the world.⁷¹ The images’ success prompted Mayall to follow up quickly with two more series, which offered slight variations of the original theme: Victoria, Albert, and their children as a tight-knit, loving, contemporary family. Other photographers were permitted to follow his example as well (Figs. 19–24).

The court’s decision to allow publication was a significant gesture, as it was immediately understood that now potentially everybody could own at least a single photographic image of members of the royal family.⁷² In a twofold sense, Mayall’s album acted as a sales catalogue. It showed a selection of photographs of the royal family that were on offer for the general public, and it presented potential customers with appropriate poses for their own self-presentation. The royal family modeled for photography, validating it as a contemporary medium of representation. At the same time, they showcased themselves as a model family, approachable in their personification of

70 Andrew Wynter, “Contemporary News. Cartes de Visite,” *British Journal of Photography* 16 (March 12, 1869): 126. Wynter might have exaggerated the number to prove his point, but the great success of Mayall’s royal cartes de visite is beyond doubt. The photographic retailer Charles Asprey advertised the entire album at 4 Pounds 4 s. Individual photographs from the album sold for 1 s. 6d. each. Charles Asprey, *A New and Enlarged Catalogue of Photographic Portraits of the Royal and Imperial Families of Europe, etc.* (London: Charles Asprey, 1861), n.p. At these prices, the complete portfolio was very much a luxury item.

71 The ease with which copy negatives could be made inevitably encouraged piracy of virtually every image with profit potential. Nevertheless, Mayall made a killing with his royal portraits, earning a royalty of 35,000 pounds from his publisher A. Marion. Wynter, “Contemporary News. Cartes de Visite,” 126. See also Plunkett, *Queen Victoria. First Media Monarch*, 152–156. The flood of pirated reproductions of the royal family prompted, in 1862, the “Fine Arts Copyright Act,” which for the first time gave “the authors of Paintings, Drawings, and Photographs ... the sole and exclusive Right of copying, engraving, reproducing, and multiplying such Paintings or Drawings, and the Design thereof” unless the Copyright was “sold or disposed of.” Anon., “Fine Arts Copyright Act, 29 July, 4th session, 18th parliament, Chapter 68,” in *A Collection of the Public General Statutes passed in the Twenty-fifth and Twenty-sixth Years of the Reign of Her Majesty Queen Victoria*, ed. G. Britain (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, Printers to the Queen, 1862): 657–662. See Elizabeth Anne McCauley, “‘Merely Mechanical’: On the Origins of Photographic Copyright in France and Great Britain,” *Art History* 3, no.1 (2008): 57–78; John Tagg, “Eine Rechtsrealität. Die Fotografie als Eigentum vor dem Gesetz,” in *Paradigma Fotografie. Fotokritik am Ende des fotografischen Zeitalters*, Vol.1, ed. Herta Wolf (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 2002), 239–254.

72 In the course of her reign Victoria granted Royal Warrants to fifty-one photographic firms. Henisch and Henisch, *The Photographic Experience*, 4. In 1857 the portraits of the royal family were taken either by Bambridge or another photographer known to the queen or prince through their contact with the Photographic Society. By 1867 this work was exclusively in the hands of the leading commercial studios. See Taylor and Diamond, *Crown & Camera*, 25.



19. John Jabez Edwin Mayall, *Queen Victoria; Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha*, 1861, albumen print, image 8.8 × 5.7 cm. National Portrait Gallery, London (acc. no. NPG Ax128901)



20. John Jabez Edwin Mayall, *Queen Victoria; Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha*, 1861, albumen carte-de-visite, 8.5 × 5.7 cm. National Portrait Gallery, London (acc. no. NPG x26100)



21. John Jabez Edwin Mayall, *Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, Prince Consort*, 1861, albumen print, dimensions unknown. Royal Collection, London (acc. no. RCIN 2931309)

broadly accepted values of respectability and modesty. The monarchy was visualized as a modern institution and in turn advertised photography as an acceptable contemporary medium of representation. It was a win-win situation.

Mayall's royal series jumpstarted a fashion of sitting for and collecting photographic portraits, which caught on quickly throughout Britain. By the early 1860s it was common practice to have one's picture taken, and to own photographs of family members, loved ones, or well-known persons. At prices of between six to eighteen pence per card, which remained relatively stable between the 1860s and 1880s, photography was still a luxury item.⁷³ Still, the notion regularly reiterated in scholarship on early portrait photography, that the production and consumption of cartes de visite remained a phenomenon reserved for the relatively well-off, needs to be laid to rest.⁷⁴ As incomes rose

73 Anon., "Photography as Industry," *London Review*, vol. 7, no. 164 (August 22, 1863): 213–214. Though there was some range in pricing depending on the establishment one chose, its relative stability throughout the mid- to late nineteenth century was probably due to the stable cost of materials, which was internationally uniform. See Darrah, *Cartes de Visite*, 19. A dozen cartes de visite cost about twelve shillings in England—a price accessible to the middle class. Lower-quality images could be made even more cheaply. See Steve Edwards, "A Photographic Atlas: Divisions of the Photographic Field," in *The Making of English Photography: Allegories*, ed. Steve Edwards (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 67–116 for the range of studio settings and prices.

74 For this narrative see for example Timm Starl, *Im Prisma des Fortschritts. Zur Fotografie des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Marburg: Jonas Verlag, 1991), 31. It was recently reiterated by Roland Meyer, *Operative Porträts: eine Bildgeschichte der Identifizierbarkeit von Lavater bis Facebook* (Konstanz: Konstanz University Press, 2019), 69.



22. Frances Sally Day, *Queen Victoria and Prince Albert*, 1859, albumen print mounted on card, image 7.8 × 5.5 cm. Royal Collection Trust, London (acc. no. RCIN 2105655)



23. Frances Sally Day, *Queen Victoria and Prince Albert*, 1859, albumen print mounted on card, image 9.7 × 6.2 cm. Royal Collection Trust, London (acc. no. RCIN 2105654)



24. Frances Sally Day, *Queen Victoria and Prince Albert*, c. 1859, albumen print, image 8.1 × 5.7 cm. Royal Collection Trust, London (acc. no. RCIN 2906409)

steadily throughout the second half of the nineteenth century at least single images quickly became affordable for a broad segment of society. Between 1861 and 1867 alone, three to four million cartes de visite were sold yearly in Britain, and they could be found, as contemporary commentators confirm, in virtually every home.⁷⁵

It is important to let this staggering amount sink in — the multiple millions of portrait photographs and composite cartes that entered into circulation between the late 1850s and early 1870s—in order to grasp just how profoundly their existence transformed the shared experience and application of images. As the photographers' equipment became familiar and their products were set in circulation, the photographic image reached the status of an omnipresent feature of life. It became common practice to see imperfect, monochrome, but still apparently “real” images of the world. Mayall's photographs consequently allowed a large segment of society for the first time to actually “see” their queen and her family, to hold the cardboard card up close, examine her face and demeanor, and to enter, at least virtually, into the private and intimate family scene that was staged by the photographer with help of a carpet and a few items of furniture.

Contemporary commentators regarded the ready availability of the queen's actual likeness as having a powerful uniting and pacifying impact on contemporary society.

75 See G. J. Banner, “The Social Influences of Photography,” 424. Between 1857 and 1865 thousands of photographers established studios throughout the world and produced millions of negatives from which multimillions of prints were published. Darrah, *Cartes de Visite*, 2; Carol Wichard and Richard Wichard, *Victorian Cartes-de-visite* (Buckinghamshire: Shire Publications, 1999), 5. What is more, photographic images traveled to other media, which disseminated them even further.

Writing about “The Social Influences of Photography” (1864), the critic G.J. Banner argued that broad dissemination of her portrait into all social strata greatly contributed to the continued loyalty toward her: “For there is scarcely a drawing room or cottage in the land where that well-known and loved image [of Queen Victoria] has not found its home, and it is, in a great degree, from this intimate and social influence exercised by photography that there has been engendered amongst the people of this country a feeling of loyalty, no longer sentimental or imaginative, but heartfelt and intelligent.”⁷⁶ According to Banner, then, it was not merely the new availability of the portraits that defined their power to cement a traditional social order. Their status as authentic images of reality, which corresponded to “reason and understanding,” integrated the traditional social hierarchy that the monarchy symbolized into the reasonable and pragmatic mind-frame associated with modern society. No more “sentimental” or “phantastic” regard for the queen and her leading role was necessary when her claim was “objectively” documented by photography. According to Banner, then, the conventional understanding of photography as a document of the real—what Peirce would call “pragmatic knowledge” about photography only a few years later—naturalized the image of modern society headed by the monarchy.

Banner’s additional assessment of the royal photographs as exercising an “intimate” influence chimed in with an earlier article from 1861. “These royal *cartes-de-visite* leave far behind all other agencies for enshrining our Sovereign’s person and her family in the homes of her people,” the anonymous author wrote, adding that “[t]hey do for everybody, as much as Winterhalter can do for the Prince Consort himself.”⁷⁷ This sentence, added to the article like an afterthought, rhetorically moves the photographs into a different domain of visual representation. First, it sets Victoria’s little cardboard portrait up against the monumental, representational oil painting by the court painter Franz Xaver Winterhalter. Second, it aligns the consumption of her mass-marketed photographic image with Prince Albert’s private reception of the painted portrait of his wife, hung on the walls of their royal residency at Osborne Castle. The author implies that the purchase of a portrait photograph allows consumers to enter imaginatively into the royal drawing room to privately enjoy the presence of their queen. This superimposition of accessibility and familiarity was subsequently regularly reiterated as the most important quality of the royal photographic portrait.

With his famed group portraits of the 1840s, Winterhalter himself had already offered a modernized version of royal representation. In his *The Royal Family in 1846* (1846) he presented Queen Victoria and the Prince Consort in court dress, equipped with jeweled coronet and ribbon of the garter, but apparently caught in a private mo-

76 Banner, “The Social Influences of Photography,” 424.

77 Anon., “Cartes-de-visite,” *Art Journal* 7, no. 82 (1861): 306. Other critics view the very familiarity introduced by “so intimate an acquaintance with Royal physiognomics” as problematic, even improper. Anon., “Cartes de Visite of Celebrities,” *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art* 14, no. 361 (September 27, 1862): 371–372, here 372.



25. Franz Xaver Winterhalter, *The Royal Family in 1846*, 1846, oil on canvas, 250.5 × 317.3 cm. Royal Collection Trust, London (acc. no. RCIN 405413)

ment (Fig. 25). The group portrait, though set in stately surroundings with luxurious carpet and gilded furniture, is a study in familial affection. While Victoria embraces her eldest son Albert Edward, Albert's right hand, gesturing toward the Prince of Wales, seems to touch ever so gently the left hand of his wife. Princess Victoria and Princess Alice lovingly cuddle with their younger sister Helena, laying her down on the Queen's royal ermine coat, while Alfred tumbles toward them on unsure feet with outstretched arms. Winterhalter managed to combine two divergent ideals of the figure of the queen, by setting Victoria's idealized, timeless face and figure into a contemporary family scene. This painterly superimposition of the conventions of royal portraiture with bourgeois femininity was key to Winterhalter's contemporary success. The painting had been commissioned by Victoria herself, and was ultimately placed in the dining room at Osborne. Beforehand, however, it was exhibited in St. James's Palace, where in 1847 it was seen by more than 100,000 visitors. What is more, in March 1850 it was engraved and published as a print by Samuel Cousins, reaching an even broader audience (Fig. 26).⁷⁸ A decade before the mass marketing of photographic images, Winterhalter's royal portraits already enjoyed broad dissemination.

78 March 20, 1850, Samuel Cousins. NPG D48098.

26. Samuel Cousins after Franz Xaver Winterhalter, published by Thomas Boys and Ernest Gambart & Co, *Queen Victoria, the Prince Consort and family*, republished February 15, 1853 (originally published March 20, 1850), mixed method engraving, 73.8 x 88.9 cm. National Portrait Gallery, London (acc. no. NPG D48098)



Writing ten years later, in 1861, the anonymous commentator could be sure that the court painter's domestic scenes of the royal family were common knowledge for the majority of his readers. He argued that Victoria's photographic portrait managed to simulate the familiarity depicted by the court painter, due to its status as a physical trace of her person, and due to its integration into the private contexts of its owners.⁷⁹ The implied intimacy was regarded by the author as an important basis for a shared imagination of social order, and for the preservation of social peace. The author's swift alignment of the diminutive monochrome photographic portrait with the idealized, life-size, painted likeness of the queen raises questions, however: Were the royal photographs successful as tools of social cohesion despite the fact that they did not correspond to a painterly ideal, or rather because of the fact that they provided an apparently "authentic" likeness of the queen, taken "from life?" In order to get to the heart of the complex relationship between painted and photographed queen, it is necessary first to attend to assumptions about the aesthetics and functions of the genre of por-

79 According to the photography theorist Philippe Dubois, cartes de visite virtually stage this indissoluble referential weight of the photographic image, its acceptance as a physical trace of the subject it depicts. Philippe Dubois, *Der fotografische Akt. Versuch über ein theoretisches Dispositiv* (Dresden: Philo Verlagsgesellschaft, 1990).

traiture onto which the nineteenth-century photographic discourse was grafted, and subsequently to take a closer look at their implications for the specific case of the royal portrait.

The Social Function of Portraiture: Joshua Reynolds in Photographic Discourse

In the mid-nineteenth century, statements about the status of photography as a medium of portraiture made regular, though often latent, reference to Joshua Reynolds's portrait theory, formulated by the painter himself in lectures and writings at the end of the eighteenth century. Two elements of Reynolds's influential theory are of specific relevance for the discussion of photographic portraiture, and they come up constantly. One is Reynolds's differentiation between the inspired portraitist and the mere copyist, which builds on the Aristotelian distinction of *artes liberales* and *artes mechanicae*. The other is his conviction that the genre of portraiture, if exercised by the interpretive genius of the artist, can have an impact on the progress and improvement of society at large. In capturing the "wholeness" of an exemplary persona, portraiture takes on the most dignified function to which painting can aspire, a function traditionally reserved for the genre of history painting: it promotes public virtues. If the painter manages to approach his respective subject in "Historical Style," and the audience is able to recognize in the painting a general form of human nature, the portrait can act as catalyst for individual and social responsibility.⁸⁰ Importantly, only men, with sufficient financial means to secure their independence, were capable of becoming such virtuous role models for society.

Reynolds's reevaluation of portraiture conveys the difficulty of adapting the civic humanist ideal of painting as an agent of social and political stability and moral superiority to an increasingly stratified clientele and audience. On the one hand, Reynolds was committed to the elevation of the genre of portraiture, which was central to the English painterly tradition, and he referred to classic arguments and idealizing themes of both Italian and French portrait theories of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to achieve his aim. On the other hand, acknowledging the changed social stratum of his patrons, he participated in a shift toward a more authentic rendition of the respective sitters.⁸¹ An important historical model for such hybrid portraiture, which managed to combine idealization and iconographic complexity with individual resemblance and contemporary dress, was the work of Anthony van Dyck, the industrious painter

80 Sir Joshua Reynolds, "Discourse V (1772)," in *Discourses on Art*, ed. Robert R. Wark (London/New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 75–90.

81 Artist-theorists of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century like Reynolds or William Hazlitt adapted the civic humanist ideal of painting formulated by authors such as the 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury, Jonathan Richardson, or George Turnbull. See Martin Postle, *Sir Joshua Reynolds. The Subject Pictures* (London/New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

of the seventeenth-century Stuart Court. In the eighteenth century, van Dyck's portraits could be found on virtually every aristocratic estate in Britain, and his style made a comeback during Reynolds's lifetime.⁸² In turn, van Dyck also became a reference point for nineteenth-century commentators on photographic portraiture, who often lumped the portrait painter together with Reynolds, as either a laudable or an obsolete model for portraiture.

In his writings and lectures, Reynolds understood painterly resemblance as a synthetic category, rather than as the mere documentation of a person's transient, physical appearance.⁸³ Not only did such portraiture do justice to the true character of its sitter, but the "witty" pictorial negotiation between the traditional, classical role and the contemporary individual also initiated a complex process of recognition and interpretation.⁸⁴ The audience was motivated to contemplate the place and function of a prominent member of a model society, as depicted in the painting. In this way the portrait could contribute to the promotion of public virtues, personified by the respective sitter. According to Reynolds, successful portraiture shaped the intellectual taste of an educated viewer, prompting a mental habit to subordinate personal interests and concerns to some larger whole, to take comprehensive views from a wider perspective, and to disregard details and particulars for that sake.

The function of art was to create and confirm such taste, by presenting ideal representations of civic virtue. Reynolds contrasted this moral use of painting with its immoral abuse as a mechanical tool, to produce and reproduce objects for possession and consumption. His differentiation between painting as a "liberal profession" on the one hand, and a "mechanic trade" on the other, ran in parallel with his differentiation between the intellectual task to interpret and the mechanical task to imitate, both in a

82 Werner Busch speaks of a van Dyck mania, which was furthered by the time's addiction to masquerade. Countless ladies would attend fashionable masquerade balls in the costume of van Dyck portraits that they had inherited. Werner Busch, *Das sentimentalische Bild: die Krise der Kunst im 18. Jahrhundert und die Geburt der Moderne* (Munich: Beck, 1993), 387. See also Aileen Ribeiro, *The Dress Worn at Masquerades in England, 1730 to 1790, and its Relation to Fancy Dress in Portraiture* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1984).

83 Here he finds himself in agreement with the civic humanist theory of Shaftesbury, whose *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (1711) was of immense influence for him. See specifically Anthony Ashley Cooper Earl of Shaftesbury, "Sensus communis, an essay on the freedom of wit and humour in a letter to a friend," in *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (1711), ed. Lawrence E. Klein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 29–69. Especially Reynolds's conception of the wholeness of a person's representation and the necessary orientation toward the recipient is closely aligned with Shaftesbury. See Busch, *Das sentimentalische Bild*, 389–391.

84 Reynolds also made recourse to Horace Walpole's well-known comments on "wit" for his portrait theory. Horace Walpole, *Anecdotes of Painting*, 3 vols., vol.1 (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1888), VXII, footnote 1. See Werner Busch, *Nachahmung als bürgerliches Kunstprinzip. Ikonographische Zitate bei Hogarth und in seiner Nachfolge*, Studien zur Kunstgeschichte, vol.7 (Hildesheim/New York: Olms Weidmann, 1977), 30–37; Renate Prochno-Schinkel, *Joshua Reynolds* (Weinheim: VCH, Acta Humaniora, 1990) 42–48. See also Iris Wien, *Joshua Reynolds: Mythos und Metapher* (Munich: Fink, 2009).

painting's production and in its reception.⁸⁵ No wonder, then, that seventy years later, in the mid-nineteenth century, this influential portrait theory served as the foil from which photography's aesthetic and social role was discussed.

By that time, Reynolds himself, who had died 1792, had become a celebrated and authoritative historical figure. The National Portrait Gallery, opened in 1858, furthered the idea of portraiture as a genuinely British genre. Home to a great number of Reynolds's own portraits, this institution was at least partly responsible for a surge in contemporary interest in his accomplishments as a painter and theorist of portraiture.⁸⁶ What is more, in 1865, the journalist and biographer Tom Taylor published what would become the first standard biography of Reynolds, introducing the artist and his aesthetic theory to the general public.⁸⁷

Contemporary authorities in matters of art and its social functions brought Reynolds's theories to the public in their own writings as well. Most prominent among them was the painter, writer, and art historian John Ruskin. Ruskin was himself a popular persona to be collected in photo albums. In 1862, he posed stiffly in the London studio of the photographer Leonida Caldesi (Fig. 27). With bent hip, the great public intellectual placed his elbow on the uncomfortably low tasseled backrest of a mass-produced, height-adjustable studio chair, his right hand awkwardly arrested in mid-gesture. The bright sunlight filtering in from the painted window on the left does not correspond with the studio light thrown on his face from the right. As a portrait, the photograph was flawed in more than one way. But this did not affect its commercial success. A carte de visite portrait that lifted Ruskin's head from Caldesi's studio surroundings can be found in a sample book from the studio Elliot & Fry (Fig. 28). Interested customers could choose between a frontal view (Serial Number 374) and a profile of the celebrated writer (Serial Number 375).



27. Leonida Caldesi, *John Ruskin*, 1862, albumen carte-de-visite, image 8.5 × 5.5 cm. National Portrait Gallery, London (acc. no. NPG Ax7533)

85 Reynolds used the differentiation between liberal and mechanical arts as the basis for his speech on the occasion of the opening of the Royal Academy on October 16, 1780. See Joshua Reynolds, "Discourse IX (1780)," in *Discourses on Art*, ed. Robert R. Wark (London/New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 169–171.

86 See Charles Saumarez Smith, *The National Portrait Gallery*, (London: National Portrait Gallery, 1997).

87 Taylor finished the manuscript of the painter and academician Charles Robert Leslie, who had worked on the book from the 1850s but died in 1859. This biography was by no means the first to be published. Already in 1813 James Northcote had published his "Memoirs of Sir Joshua Reynolds." Joseph Farington wrote "Memoirs of the Life of Sir Joshua Reynolds" in 1819. Allan Cunningham included Reynolds in his compendium "Lives of the most Eminent British Painters" of 1829. For an account of the reception of Reynolds from immediately after his death in 1792 until the 1830s see Postle, *Sir Joshua Reynolds*, 273–311.



28. Elliot & Fry, *Various writers, historians, and philanthropists*, 1890s, bromide print, 19.8 × 13.7 cm. National Portrait Gallery, London (acc. no. NPG Ax139908)

Though critical of Reynolds’s “Grand Style,” Ruskin emulated the painter’s theoretical discussion of “liberal” versus “mechanical” art as a framework for his own attack on modern industry and its adverse impact on public taste and morality. He drew a clear distinction between truly imaginative art and the work of a skillful but uninspired copyist.⁸⁸ Furthermore, he dismissed industrially produced objects, like photographs, as inauthentic and, though marketable, lacking inherent value. In contrast to art, he maintained, such products do not add to the furthering of public intellect and morality. As mechanically produced objects of consumption, photographic portraits are doubly implicated. In his *Essay on the Relative Dignity of the Studies of Painting and Music, and the Advantages to be Derived from Their Pursuit* (1838), Ruskin also echoed Reynolds’s conviction that the enjoyment of painting was dependent on “formed taste.” Painting’s limited access for a knowledgeable audience was proof of its nobility.

In reaction to commercial photography’s meteoric rise and broad success during the 1860s, contemporary commentary shifted the established differentiation between “liberal” and “mechanical” painting to demarcate “liberal painting” from “mechanical photography.” This distinction was taken up and endlessly repeated in countless articles in photographic journals, for the most part published anonymously.⁸⁹ The effort to safeguard the genre of portraiture from

88 For Ruskin’s reception of Reynolds see Edward Tyas Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, *The Works of John Ruskin*, vol.1 (London: George Allen, 1903), 267–268. Daniel Brown, *Representing Realists in Victorian Literature and Criticism* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 33. Ruskin’s distinction of culture versus consumption must sound familiar, as its general thrust recurs prominently in twentieth-century modernist theories and critiques of late-capitalist consumer culture, for example by Walter Benjamin.

89 The subject of photography’s inferiority in depicting a model’s individuality and character was a topic of discussion as early as 1853, when John Leighton set up the dichotomy between the painterly beauty of temperament and expression and the photographic portrait, which lacks “liveliness, individuality, and beauty,” and is thus not capable of a truthful representation of the sitter. See John Leighton, “On Photography as a Means or an End,” *Journal of the Photographic Society of London*, vol.1, no.6 (June 21,

the new, broadly available technology of photography can be understood as an attempt to safeguard the privilege of taste, and in this way to retain, at least rhetorically, the conventional social order imaged by and visualized in the traditional practice of portraiture.

Adopting Reynolds's and Ruskin's vocabulary, critics of photography highlighted painting's apparent ability to produce a true likeness of a sitter, beyond the surface of the person's outer appearance. This quality, they maintained, could only be achieved by a fellow human being equipped with intellect, sensibility, and artistic talent. Consequently, they dismissed photography as the mere documentation of surface phenomena. In 1863, for example, an anonymous reviewer of the Royal Society's annual exhibition demonstrated painting's apparent superiority by comparing a photograph of the celebrated poet of the Crimean War Alfred Tennyson, taken by William Jeffrey, with a painting of the same man by George Frederick Watts (Figs. 29–30). "In the photograph we have all that can be given to us of the outward man ...; but we must go to Watts's portrait if we want to see the author of 'In Memoriam' and note how a kindred soul, through intense sympathy, can portray in immortal lines and colours the inner life of the man."⁹⁰ According to the critic, only a painter, whose artistic skills and intellect matched that of the poet, could reveal the inner character of Tennyson. Formulated in Reynolds's terms, the photograph could not reinforce the virtue of the poet, since it only documented his outer appearance. It is worth noting that this fundamental critique in no way interfered with the popular success of Tennyson's cartes de visite, which were in high demand at the time of the Crimean War (1854–1856) and throughout the 1860s. The sample book of the studio Elliott & Fry that had Ruskin in its selection also offered two versions of the poet, and his photograph can be found regularly in Victorian photo albums.⁹¹



29. William Jeffrey, *Alfred, Lord Tennyson*, c. 1862, albumen carte-de-visite, 8.9 × 5.4 cm. National Portrait Gallery, London (acc. no. NPG x26793)

1853): 74–75. The articles reiterating this judgment were usually quite casual and uncrafted, endlessly repeating commonly shared views and valuations. "Neither a Baudelaire nor a Ruskin emerges here," writes Steve Edwards, *The Making of English Photography: Allegories* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 10. See also Jan von Brevern, "Resemblance after Photography," *Representations* 123 (2013): 1–22.

90 Anon., "The Photographic Exhibition," *The Reader* 1 (January 24, 1863): 99. The anonymous author maintains that photography may reveal the truth of the material world, "but does not, and never will raise us to the contemplation of any spiritual truth." For an in-depth discussion of this review see Joanne Lukitsh, "Reminders of Titian and Van Dyke: The 'Reader' Reviews the Portrait Photographs of David Wilkie Wynfield, 1863," *Victorian Periodicals Review* 24, no. 2 (Summer 1991): 56–63.

91 S. B. Beal, *Beal's List of Carte de Visite Portraits* (January 12, 1866), Victoria & Albert Library, London.



30. George Frederick Watts, *Alfred, Lord Tennyson*, 1864, oil on canvas, 61.3 × 51.4 cm. National Portrait Gallery, London (acc. no. NPG 1015)

As we learn from contemporary photographic discourse, the most forceful way to safeguard social distinctions traditionally demarcated by the practice of portraiture was to flatly deny commercial photography the ability to capture a portrait. Photography, its detractors maintained, aspired neither to aesthetic nor to moral ideals; its production was not an intellectual activity but a mechanical procedure; it did not represent liberal ideals or virtues, but was meant first and foremost for private consumption. Consequently, photographic portraiture did not partake in the effort of the genre of portraiture to further individual and social integrity and morality. Much to the contrary: if the photographic image passed as a portrait, it subverted the genre's traditional and laudable functions, namely the promotion of prominent individuals as exemplary members of a model society. Instead of order, it produced disorder. Instead of social affiliation, it provoked disorientation and confusion. The reason for this

confusion was that in photographs everybody looked similar. Society documented by photography was visually homogeneous to a shocking degree. An anonymous critic of David Wilkie Wynfield's photographs declared that "we must all be struck by the vulgarity, monotony and poverty of resource exhibited by common carte de visite portraiture. The distinctions so patent between a lady and her maid, between a statesman and a prize-fighter, between a poet and a performer on the tightrope are unknown to photography."⁹²

92 Anon., "Mr. Wynfield's Photographs," *The Reader* 3 (January 30, 1864): 144–145. The celebrated photographer Hughes, who regularly had Victoria in front of his camera, attempted to salvage photography from this blanket critique by differentiating, in truly Reynoldian fashion, between "Mechanical photography," which aims at "simple representations" of things depicted exactly as they are, and "Art-Photography," in which the photographer infuses the image with his mind. C. Jabez Hughes, "Art-Photography: Its Scope and Characteristics," *The Photographic News* 5, no. 122 (January 4, 1861): 2–3. Hughes's differentiation between "labour" for monetary gain and "work" for one's own fulfillment and society's good goes back to the civic humanist foundations of Reynolds's portrait theory, and also plays prominently into Thomas Carlyle's contemporary social critique that will be discussed later in this chapter. Thomas Carlyle, "Labour," in *Collected Works, Past and Present*, ed. Thomas Carlyle, vol. 13 (London: Chapman and Hill, 1843), 244–249.

Another anonymous critic explicitly referred to Titian and van Dyck, portraitists that Reynolds had singled out as exemplary, to clarify how photographs visually equalized in problematic ways the individuals they are supposed to represent.⁹³ The camera, he wrote, treated everything in front of its lens with equal diligence. It did not differentiate between the head of a sitter and the pattern of his coat, and likewise it failed to register the difference between a “Lord of the Realm and a commoner, a liberal and an unfranchised citizen.”⁹⁴ It thus threatened to demolish those social hierarchies, which had been cemented in the production of portraits by celebrated painters, whose clientele, of course, had been made up of an elite spectrum of society. Equally, it failed to register the differences between the progressive, independent “liberal citizen” of modern Britain, and his unfranchised counterparts.

Supporters of the new image technology argued, on the other hand, that photographic portraits, as genuine “pictures from life” apparently taken by the camera alone, with no intermediate third party acting as a mediator, gave their owners a new sense of access to the person depicted. These authors also referred to Reynolds, albeit negatively, in order to illustrate the photographic portrait’s novel possibilities of representation. The critic Andrew Wynter, for example, referred dismissively to Reynolds’s portraiture, when he pitted the documentary status of the photographic image against the idealized likeness of traditional painting. “[I]f we believed his [Reynolds’s] brush without any reserve, we should fancy that the English race of the latter part of the last century were the noblest looking beings that ever trod on earth. ... The result is that all our knowledge of the faces of the last century is purely conventional. But it is far different with the *carte de visite*. Here we have the very lines that nature has engraven on



31. Hyacinthe Rigaud, *Louis XIV., Roi de France*, 1701, oil on canvas, 277 × 194 cm. Louvre, Paris (INV 7492)

93 “[T]here is nothing in common between these portraits and the portraits of Titian and Van Dyke [sic].” Anon., “The Photographic Exhibition,” 99.

94 Anon., “The Photographic Exhibition,” 99.



32. Studio of Allan Ramsay, *George III*, c. 1762–1800, oil on canvas, 246 × 161 cm. Royal Collection, London (acc. no. RCIN 407409)

our faces, and it can be said of them that no two are alike.”⁹⁵ For Wynter, then, the camera’s apparent ability to record each sitter’s individual likeness outweighed the worrisome similarity of the photographic product, the *carte de visite*.

In their assessment of photography’s representational functions, the medium’s critics and supporters referred to conventionality in different ways. Critics of the new medium maintained that it failed to register accepted social hierarchies. Its supporters argued that due to the exclusion of painterly conventions it overturned outdated norms of representation and allowed all those photographed to be captured as individuals. A much larger question than aesthetic preference was at the base of this contemporary dispute about photography’s functionality as portraiture. It was the question about the possibilities of the contemporary individual, and contemporary society, to represent themselves, and the justification to utilize historically sanctioned norms of representation in conjunction with new image technologies to do so. And it was the question of how these self-representations played into the contemporary social imagination. To be sure, royal photographic portraiture complicates this matter even further.

An Authentic Queen: Royal Portraiture and Photography

At the turn of the seventeenth century, the French painter and art critic Roger de Piles and his fellow countryman Hyazinthe Rigaud, who applied de Piles’s ideas in his paintings, had authoritatively defined how a royal portrait should look. Though the genre of portraiture did not play a particularly prominent role in de Piles’s theory, he did comment on what he considered the most important task of the portrait painter, namely to add “grace and dignity” to the person he painted. In order to achieve this aim, de Piles maintained, painters needed to differentiate their sitters according to their respective social position. To each rank he ascribed distinct visual qualities, separating, for

95 Andrew Wynter, “Cartes de Visite,” *Once a Week* 6 (January 25, 1862): 135.



33. William Wynne Ryland, after Allan Ramsay, *King George III*, published 1767, line engraving, 65 × 43.7 cm. National Portrait Gallery, London (acc. no. NPG D9649)



34. William Wynne Ryland, after Allan Ramsay, *King George III*, published 1762, line engraving, 65 × 43.7 cm. National Portrait Gallery, London (acc. no. NPG D33149)

example, king, military commander, or minister.⁹⁶ In his countless portraits of European royalty and dignitaries, the celebrated painter Rigaud fulfilled de Piles's requirements for depicting sitters according to their rank, in combination with painterly expression.

Over the course of the eighteenth century, Rigaud's portraits would become something of a gold standard for the genre of portraiture (Fig. 31). His 1701 portrait of Louis XIV was broadly perceived as the quintessential royal portrait. In 1761/62, Allan Ramsay, court painter for George III, produced a portrait on the occasion of the king's coronation that was deeply indebted to Rigaud's model, which was well known in Britain (Fig. 32).⁹⁷ In Ramsay's painting, George III, clad in a golden brocade suit and

96 Roger de Piles, "Sur la manière de faire les Portraits," in *Cours de Peinture par Principes*, ed. Roger de Piles (Paris: J. Estienne, 1708), 260–301. In 1862 Disdéri, the inventor of the carte de visite, would write a theory of photographic portraiture that reiterated Roger de Piles's ideas of organizing portraiture according to rank. André Adolphe-Eugène Disdéri, "Essai sur l'Art de la Photographie—Esthétique photographique," in *l'Art de la Photographie* (Paris: Chez l'auteur, 8, Boulevard des Italiens, et chez les principaux libraires de France et de l'étranger, 1862), 247–325. It was subsequently strongly criticized, specifically by British critics, who argued that Disdéri's focus on technical and pictorial parameters failed to highlight photography's possibilities of characterization.

97 Rigaud's painting was transformed into a print by Pierre Drevet, an engraver who was a friend of the painter. See Peter Fuhring et al., *A Kingdom of Images. French Prints in the Age of Louis XIV, 1660–1715*



35. Charles Clifford, published by Cundall, Downes & Co, Queen Victoria, taken by the order of the Queen of Spain at Windsor Castle, November 14, 1861, albumen carte-de-visite, image 9 × 5.7cm. National Portrait Gallery Archive, London (acc. no. NPG x32969)

effortlessly carrying the luxurious ermine coat on his shoulders, presents himself with self-assured casualness, with hand on hip and legs resting in a relaxed contrapposto. Ramsay's nod to Rigaud's 1701 portrait of the French Sun King was not lost on contemporary engravers, who took the liberty to align George III's foot position to the famous dance steps of Louis XIV (Figs. 33–34).

For Reynolds, however, who formulated his own theory of portraiture eighty years after de Piles, Rigaud's portrait of the sun king served as an illustrative example of the "vulgar" and "common" staging of a person's social position, with complete disregard for their inherent character. Though Reynolds otherwise held de Piles in high esteem, he strongly rejected the Frenchman's conviction that social rank needed to be unambiguously ascribed to a sitter by means of pose, gesture, costume, and furnishing. As applied in the portraiture of Rigaud, Reynolds maintained, this lesson's negative impact on the genre as a whole became obvious. He wrote that "[t]he portraits of Rigaud are perfect examples of an implicit observance of these rules of De Piles, so that though he was a painter of great merit in many respects, yet, that merit is entirely overpowered by a total absence of simplicity in any sense."⁹⁸ While ensuring an immediate recognition of the sitter's status, Rigaud's ostentatious allocation of social rank,

demonstrated so forcefully in his portrait of Louis XIV, came at the cost of both the "wholeness" of the sitter's inner self and the aesthetic integrity of the painting.⁹⁹ Obviously the necessarily representational character of royal portraiture was at odds with Reynolds's demand to convey in a portrait the complex character of the sitter. Reynolds's method in showcasing the discrepancy between a sitter's official role and their individual qualities, in order to achieve what he understood as a true resemblance, actually undermined the traditional function of the royal portrait, namely to act as a virtual stand-in for the king's body politic.¹⁰⁰

How do Queen Victoria's photographic portraits, produced almost a century later, respond to this traditional function of royal portraiture: the unambiguous communica-

(Los Angeles: The Getty Research Institute 2015), 60.

98 Joshua Reynolds, "Discourse VIII (1778)," in *Discourses on Art*, ed. Robert R. Wark (London/New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 143–165, here 150. It will be further discussed in Chapter 5.

99 For an in-depth analysis of Reynolds's critique see Wien, *Joshua Reynolds*, 132–135.

100 The differentiation between the "body natural" and the "body politic" of the king, the latter prominently defined through artistic representation, was first systematized by Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies. A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957).

tion of the monarchy's claims and the corresponding necessity to invoke conventions of royal representation by means of pose, gesture, and furnishings? The general acceptance of photography as a document of reality seems incompatible both with the idealizing conventions that are traditionally at the base of royal portraiture and with the concept of true portrayal that Reynolds proclaimed. What is more, as a woman, Victoria could not enter into the illustrious circle of model individuals whom Reynolds sought to capture in his portraits. She needed to be contextualized in both the visual history of the monarchy and the social structure of marriage and family.

A portrait of Victoria taken by Charles Clifford is an illustrative example of how the problem played out in commercial photography (Fig. 35). Taken on November 14, 1861, it was of the same year as Mayall's series, and was equally successful as a *carte de visite*.¹⁰¹ While Mayall showed Victoria and her family in contemporary dress, apparently engaged in private family scenes, Clifford's image was the first photograph produced for public distribution that presented her as queen. Clifford made full use of the conventions of royal representation. Dressed in royal regalia, Victoria stands alone, erect and self-assured within the artificial enclosure of the studio walls. She wears an opulent gown made of silk brocade, with a large train floating down her back. The short sleeves of her dress are decorated with soft tassels, her shoulders are bare, a sash is draped across her shoulder. She wears magnificent jewelry, and her head is adorned with the crown. The queen's profile is slightly turned to the viewer. A curtain draped lavishly alongside the photograph's left-hand border and decorative molding on the back wall—details that were added to the photograph's negative after the actual sitting—act as further markers of an official state portrait. Clifford also substantially retouched Victoria's head. The skin of her face and shoulders was significantly brightened to transmit an even glow, her lips and eyebrows were enhanced, and highlights were added to her hair. Since hardly any portrait ever went to the printer without retouching, the practice was not regarded by contemporaries as impinging on the documentary status of the photographic portrait.¹⁰² Despite thorough reworking, viewers accepted the photograph as an unmistakable documentation of the actual queen, the same person captured by Mayall in contemporary clothing and the demure pose of a loving wife and mother.

The fact that Mayall's scene of familial bliss as well as Clifford's stately portrait were regarded as documenting one and the same person underlines Victoria's situated-

101 The image was published by Cundall, Downes & Co. Darrah, *Cartes de Visite*, 44. Because of the extent of piracy, Clifford had the photograph's publication delayed until the Copyright Act had been passed. It was not released until it was registered for copyright on February 9, 1863. Anon., "Her Majesty the Queen. Photographed from Life by the late Mr. C. Clifford of Madrid," *Photographic News* 7, April 17, 1863, 183.

102 Mayall's photograph was retouched as well. Retouching had been a standard practice since the late 1850s, and considered a necessary step in the production of photographic representation. At first applied to the positive print, retouching the negative became standardized by 1870, though it had begun earlier. See e.g. George Hana, "Concerning Retouching," *The Photogram*, II, no. 13 (January 1895): 7–8; Arthur Jules Debenham, "Hints on Retouching," *The Photogram*, IV, no. 38 (January 1897): 17–20.

ness in the reality of the mid-nineteenth century. She was relatable as a model wife and mother, while simultaneously representing the age-old institution of the monarchy in her stately gown. Her photographically documented face substantiated the “reality effect” of both images and confirmed the contemporaneity of a queen for modern Britain. The critic G. J. Banner claimed that these photographs could, by the early 1860s, be found in every home, ranging from “simple farmhouse to stately palace.”¹⁰³ With this phrase he described not just the factual circulation of Victoria’s photographs. In juxtaposing the stately castle with the humble cottage of the villager, the author also made recourse to an important trope in the era’s discourse on representation. Though in the mid-nineteenth century, cottage-dwellers were not part of the newly enfranchised citizenship, they were rhetorically included in the “whole” of modern society. In 1858 the politician John Bright had used a formulation very similar to that of Banner, when he stated that “[t]he nation in every country dwells in the cottage,” since “palaces, baronial castles, great halls, stately mansions” do not make a nation.¹⁰⁴ In photographic discourse, loyalty to the queen as the symbolic head of the constitutional monarchy was seen to be demonstrated by the consumption of her photographic image by non-enfranchised cottage-dwellers and aristocratic land owners alike. As John Stuart Mill pointed out in 1857, the key to the legitimacy of a state lay in having a “sufficiently popular constitution.” This constitution did not necessarily have to be democratic.¹⁰⁵

Victoria’s photographically sanctioned similarity to her subjects simultaneously effaced and affirmed the reality of social distinctions and political inequality. She was collected and bought as a contemporary, but unmistakably recognizable as the queen. Commercial photographers found interesting image solutions in order to highlight the important difference between relatability and similarity. In this composite *carte de visite*, produced in 1862 by the photographer Henry Hering, for example, the queen’s claim to the throne is anchored in the ancient history of the British monarchy (Fig. 36). As its title promises, the card gathers *The Kings and Queens of England: From the Conquest to Queen Victoria* on its narrow upright format and integrates Victoria into a genealogical logic spanning 800 years. Though the card’s historical scope imitates popular history lessons, the selection and arrangement of the individual figures diverges from conventional narratives. Victoria is positioned at the center of the photomontage, surrounded by queens of the past, while the portraits of the kings are relegated to the margins. The ordered application of the tiny rectangular cut-outs of their photographically reproduced portraits along the outer edges of the print serves as a

103 G. J. Banner, “The Social Influences of Photography,” 424.

104 John Bright, “Speech at Birmingham, 29 October 1858,” in *The Liberal Tradition. From Fox to Keynes*, ed. Alan Bullock and Maurice Shock (London, 1956), 87–92, here 90. On Bright’s influential rhetoric of the “common people,” which was based on commonalities of moral norms and conduct, rather than economic and social status, see Joyce, *Democratizing subjects*, 85–146.

105 John Stuart Mill, *The Principles of Political Economy with Some Applications to Social Philosophy*, Vol. II (London: John W. Parker and Son, 1857), 534–535.



THE KINGS AND QUEENS OF ENGLAND,

From the Conquest to Queen Victoria.

H. Hering, Photographer, 137 Regent St., London.

(Copyright secured.)

36. Henry Hering, *The Kings and Queens of England: From the Conquest to Queen*, 1862, albumen carte-de-visite photomontage, image 7.2 × 5.5 cm. National Portrait Gallery, London (acc. no. NPG Ax131392)



37. Studio of Allan Ramsay, *George III*, c. 1762-1800, oil on canvas, 246 × 161 cm. Royal Collection, London (acc. no. RCIN 407409)



38. Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger, *Queen Elizabeth I ("The Ditchley portrait")*, c. 1592, oil on canvas, 241.3 × 152.4 cm. National Portrait Gallery, London (acc. no. NPG 2561)



39. Hans Holbein, *Portrait of Henry VIII*, 1540, oil on canvas, 88.5 × 74.5 cm. National Gallery of Ancient Art, Rome (acc. no. 878)

frame for the larger female figures, who were removed from their original surroundings and arranged so as to appear to be turning toward Victoria in their midst. This arrangement results in a spatial effect, with the figures of Victoria and her surrounding queens protruding forward from the checkerboard pattern of kings in the background. Due to the separation of the respective royal couples the visual logic of genealogy is weakened in favor of showcasing Victoria as the central figure among the composite of female rulers.

Many of the queens surrounding Victoria passed into history as devoted wives and mothers. To Victoria's immediate right, for example, we find the portrait of Catherine Parr, the sixth and last wife of Henry VIII. She stepped in as regent during Henry's military campaign in France in 1544, and later cared for the ailing and often dangerously moody king and his children. In the lower left-hand corner is a portrait of Queen Anne, whose life was shaped by her duties as a mother, counting seventeen pregnancies. The conspicuous spatial distance between Victoria and Elizabeth I, the two British queens with imperial ambitions, might attest to the ambivalence of the nineteenth century toward Elizabeth I. At that time, her unmarried status and her childlessness made her a suspect model for Victorians.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ See Michael Dobson and Nicola J. Watson, *England's Elizabeth. An Afterlife in Fame and Fantasy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022); Nicola J. Watson, "Gloriana Victoriana: Victoria and the cultural memory of Elizabeth I," in *Remaking Queen Victoria*, Cambridge Studies in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture 10, ed. Margaret Homans and Adrienne Munich (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 79–104.

On the back of the composite, it is asserted that the assembled characters of the British monarchy are shown in their most “authentic” representations.¹⁰⁷ George III is presented in a photographic reproduction of the celebrated coronation portrait of Ramsay discussed above. George III’s “quintessential royal portrait” is utilized in this context as the most well-known and easily identifiable image of the former king. Its authenticity hinges on its recognition factor. Likewise, Henry VIII is represented by an inverted copy of Hans Holbein’s magnificent portrait from 1538–1547. Elizabeth I is featured in a reproduction of the famous Ditchley Portrait of Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger (c. 1592) (Figs. 37–39). These illustrious paintings were in line with the traditional claim of royal portraiture to unambiguously display the prominent position of the monarch.

Since one of the first commodified applications of commercial photography was the reproduction of artworks, the card’s intermediality came as no surprise to contemporary viewers.¹⁰⁸ But in this photographic collage the complex interplay between painting and photography destabilized the concept and value of “authenticity.” The painted portraits of Victoria’s royal ancestors were selected as templates by the carte’s producer, because they represented, apparently in exemplary fashion, the historical kings and queens. By 1861, the obvious “authentic” portrait of Victoria had to be her photographic likeness, a medium that had not been available for her ancestors. The inclusion of a photographic portrait would have placed the queen at an awkward visual distance from the painted likenesses of her royal peers. However, in keeping with the idealizing demands of royal portraiture carried out in the earlier oil paintings, Hering thus chose to integrate into his composite a reproduction of an oil painting of Victoria from the hands of none other than her trusted court painter Winterhalter.

Hering cropped the queen’s head and upper body out of a reproduction of Winterhalter’s *The First of May, 1851* (1851) (Fig. 40). In this monumental oil painting, commissioned by Victoria herself, the queen holds her third son Prince Arthur on her lap. The Duke of Wellington, the prince’s godfather, presents Arthur with a jewel casket. In return the child hands over a nosegay of lilies of the valley, a flower traditionally given as a good luck charm on the first of May, to mark the arrival of spring. Prince Albert stands behind the scene and gazes at the Crystal Palace in the distance. Its composition resembles an adoration scene. The Duke’s kneeling pose and devotional gesture mimic those of the Magi, Arthur is draped in white linen, and the queen’s sun-

107 The back of the card reads that the images were “grouped and photographed from authentic and celebrated portraits.” It also states on the front that copyright was secured.

108 In his list of potential applications of photography, Henry Fox Talbot prominently discusses its usefulness for the reproduction of art. See Henry Fox Talbot, *Pencil of Nature* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, & Longmans, 1844), Plates V, XI, XII, XXIII. Prince Albert played an important role in the popularization of photography for the reproduction of art, due to the large-scale research project on Raphael that he initiated in the attempt to build up a complete collection of illustrations of the Raphael’s work. See Ernst Becker and Carl Ruland, “The ‘Raphael Collection’ of H.R.H. the Prince Consort.” *The Fine Arts Quarterly Review*, 1 (1863): 27–39; Jennifer Montagu, “The Ruland/Raphael Collection.” *Visual Resources*, Vol. III (1986): 167–183.



40. Franz Xaver Winterhalter, *The First of May 1851*, 1851, oil on canvas, 106.7 × 129.5 cm. Royal collection, London (acc. no. RCIN 406995)

burst diadem is suggestive of a halo. At the demand of Prince Albert, Winterhalter further validated the visual parallels between the family scene and Christian iconography by replacing the Duke's actual gift, a gold cup and toys, with a jewel casket.¹⁰⁹

Ten years later, at the height of the *carte de visite* frenzy, Hering chose to isolate Victoria's idealized portrait from this painting and integrate it into his tiny visual history of the British monarchy.¹¹⁰ Surely it is no coincidence that the photographer chose Winterhalter's contemporary idealization of the queen as the equivalent of the earlier royal portraits of her ancestors. Due to the popular engravings of Winterhalter's paintings, his depiction of Victoria must have been as familiar to the public as her photographic portraits. Hering cut away all narrative and contemporary context—the kneel-

109 Victoria later regretted the confusion caused by this switch. In response to a letter from Prince Arthur of 1871 in which he inquired about a rumour that the jewel casket was a birthday present intended to be opened on his twenty-first birthday, she commented on the documentary responsibility of images, when she replied "it is utterly without any foundation...Dear Papa & Winterhalter wished to represent an Event, like Rubens - & Paul Veronese did, "periods" of History, - 'without any exact fact' ... it only shows how wrong it is not to paint things as they really are." See Jonathan Marsden, ed., *Victoria & Albert: art & love*, 88.

110 At that point, the Queen's photographic image served as a point of reference for all other portraits, even if they had been produced before photography's broad application. See Richard Shiff, "Phototropism (Figuring the Proper)," *Studies in the History of Art* 20 (1989): 161–179.

ing Duke in the foreground, the Crystal Palace in the distance, and the Prince Consort situated behind the queen—to arrive exclusively at the double portrait of Victoria and Arthur, her well-balanced features corresponding to the idealizing demands of the royal portrait, even in Hering’s diminutive monochrome paper copy.

Besides the question of authentic likeness, the photographer’s pictorial solution addresses Victoria’s historically rare position as a female monarch as well. Her place at the top of the social hierarchy is communicated by means of integrating her into the long history of the British monarchy, and the photographically reproduced image from the Winterhalter canvas seamlessly integrates her into the painted royal history of Britain assembled on the card. Again, the commercial card’s relation to the contemporary discourse on representation needs to be stressed. As the historian Robert Colls has pointed out, in the mid-nineteenth century, the long history of the monarchy was regularly played up, alongside the long history of the British parliament, in order to support the idea that in combination they embodied nothing less than the historic nature of the English people.¹¹¹ Hering’s affordable, pocket-size history lesson of the British monarchy provided an accessible version of this ideal of British society under the rule of a constitutional monarchy.

The fact that Victoria is framed to correspond to the contemporary ideal of womanhood, which highlights the role of wife and mother, plays into this interpretation of the monarchy as well. The concept of the queen as a model woman is captured by Winterhalter’s presentation of her as the Virgin Mary with the infant Christ, and further validated by the historical queens surrounding her. Her historically sanctioned role as the head of state is conflated with her gendered role as a wife and mother. As a woman Victoria could conveniently be seen to embody the role of the constitutional monarch. Just like a wife, whose role was to advise and support her husband, the constitutional monarch advised and supported parliament, which held executive power.¹¹²

The photographer’s rather clumsy integration of a photographic portrait of Prince Albert apparently also followed the aim of cushioning Victoria’s royal claim by means



41. John Jabez Edwin Mayall, *Prince Albert Of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha*, May 1860, albumen carte-de-visite, 8.4 × 5.8 cm. National Portrait Gallery, London (acc. no. NPG Ax24147)

111 Colls, *Identity of England*, 21–23.

112 Walter Bagehot, *The English Constitution* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1867), 110–117.

of a gendered representation. By adding Albert's studio portrait to this collage—a heavily retouched and massively reduced portrait from Mayall's popular first series of 1861—Hering roughly reproduced the scene depicted in Winterhalter's painting, thereby re-uniting the royal couple on the composite's surface, and emphasizing their own, ongoing family genealogy (Fig. 41). However, the confrontation of Victoria's idealized portrait with the photographic image of Albert illustrates how "authenticity" becomes a relational matter in the context of the card's design. The photographic print of Victoria's idealized portrait, removed from its original context with help of Hering's scissors and glue, relates her in aesthetics and medium to the royal portraiture of the surrounding queens. At the same time, she is in spatial and familial relation to Albert, represented by Mayall's well-known photograph, which momentarily lifts her out of the assembled history of the monarchy. The contemporary royal family became relatable to contemporary viewers, the potential owners of the little cardboard card. The two interpretations were combined on the surface of the card with the help of scale variation and monochrome aesthetics. These photographic qualities allowed Hering to fold centuries-old conventions of royal representation into his contemporary image, thereby recontextualizing and reinterpreting them.

Such pictorial solutions, which contributed in thoughtful and clever ways to the contemporary discourse on representation, are reflective of the fundamental social changes that were underway in British society during the second half of the nineteenth century. This is not to say that photographic practices simply mirror or illustrate the social dynamics of the time. On the contrary, photographic images reveal how individuals and groups reacted to these changes. People applied commercial photographic products to dream their own dreams of social order in the shared desire to counteract the broad sentiment of increasing complexity, disorder, and even chaos.

The Dream of Social Order: Imagination and Visual Construction

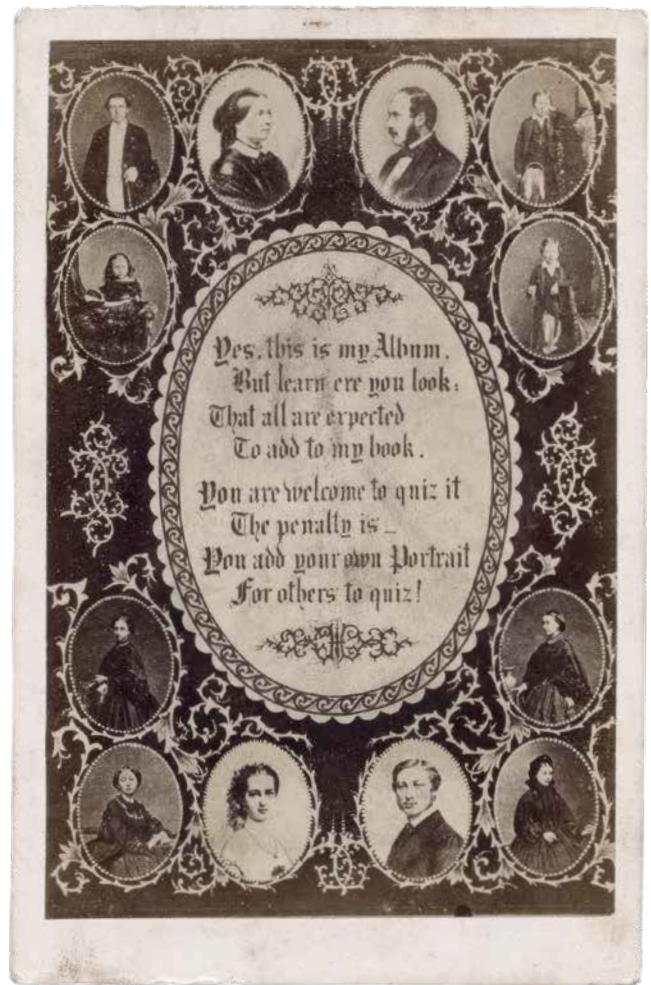
Hering's composite functions as a picture puzzle. In miniature size, the photographer compiled the visual history of the British monarchy on its 9×5 cm surface, and provided the entertaining challenge of recognizing and confirming Britain's royal genealogy across the centuries. A key on the card's back lists the names of all kings and queens assembled on it. Hering's card placed the monarchy in the midst of contemporary media consumption, and offered it as enjoyable content. But the appeal of scrutinizing photographic portraits in order to recognize their respective sitters was not as harmless a pastime as one might think. It illustrates the fundamental function of *carte de visite* photographs as visual constructions and confirmations of social affiliation and order.¹¹³

113 One should keep in mind that looking at photographs was still a relative novelty in the early 1860s and it was by no means clear that people would actually recognize themselves or their family members in their photographs. A lack of visual literacy was the topic of a range of contemporary anecdotes,

This introductory *carte de visite* is a case in point (Fig. 42). Its existence demonstrates that by the early 1860s, a sufficiently broad segment of society had adopted the habit of maintaining a photo album, which would call for an introductory card to be placed on the first page. What is more, it is a commodification of the convention of beginning or ending one's personal album with photographs of the royal family.¹¹⁴ Picking up on this fashion, the card provides its readers with a light-hearted introduction to the album at hand, all the while framing this activity with the presence and authority of the royal family. The card's playful rhyme invites viewers to "quiz" the photographs collected in the respective album, and to include their own photograph in the book. The card features reproductions of heavily trimmed and retouched photographic portraits of Victoria and Albert at the top, the Prince of Wales and his wife Princess Alexandra at the bottom, and all other children of the royal couple distributed around the oval text box at its center. Like the composite *carte* discussed at the chapter's opening, most of these portraits were sourced, or rather "lifted," from Mayall's famous first series of 1861.

The rhyme's focus on individual interaction with *cartes de visite* is instructive. Readers were invited to recognize the individuals assembled in the respective album and by doing this, to confirm their mutual acquaintance. They could further validate their affiliation by adding their own photographic image. Collected between two book covers, the persons assembled in the respective album become members of a somehow definitive, clearly circumscribed group, whose make-up was sanctioned by the royal family present on page one.

The format of the *carte de visite* corresponded to the ordering structures provided in commercially manufactured products such as frames, concertina foldouts, and al-



42. Various photographers, *Album introductory carte-de-visite with members of the Royal Family*, c. 1862, albumen *carte-de-visite*, 9.7 × 6.3 cm. National Portrait Gallery, London (acc. no. NPG x197214)

where authors commented on the ways savvy photographers made a profit from people's cluelessness, selling them photographs of other people as their own portrait. See Henry Mayhew, *London Labor and the London Poor*, 4 vols. (London: Griffin, Bohn and Co., 1861–1862), III, 209. Victoria's photograph, however, was probably the best-known and most readily recognized photographic portrait that existed.

114 Many examples of this convention can be found in the holdings of the Harry Ransom Center, Austin Texas. See e.g. albums No. 964_0657_0001–0002; 964_1045_0003–0004; 964_0462_0001–0002.

bums. Identically sized images, taken in neutral studio surroundings equipped with standard furniture, were filed into punched-out cardboard slips of two or four per album page and brought into the linear, imperative logic of a book: read from left to right, from top to bottom, from beginning to end.

Each group assembled in such an album was validated by the presence of the royal family. The well-known portraits of Victoria and her family on the introductory card illustrated the given task of recognition and demonstrated two different templates of order simultaneously. Clad in contemporary dress and documented by the contemporary medium of photography, they mirrored the broadly accepted ideals of familial bonds and moral respectability. Ordered in an ornamental pattern of royal genealogy, they visualized the monarchy's continued claim to the top of the social hierarchy.

It is important to remember that products like the introductory card or Hering's history lesson, which were presented as devices to order society and history respectively, were the outcomes of market demand. They were not commissioned by the court or other political entities. Rather, they were the result of photography's technological possibilities on the one hand, and a broad, and thus marketable, yearning for social order on the other. Historically sanctioned and widely known pictures and pictorial conventions served as visual ordering devices.

This yearning for order, or fear of disorder, becomes comprehensible in the context of the fundamental economic and demographic changes that defined mid-nineteenth-century British society: the movement away from land, for example, which led to the gradual decline in economic and political power of the landed elite; the gradual rise of social mobility by means of wealth, education, or professionalization; as well as incremental changes in suffrage by means of the Reform Acts of 1832, 1876, and 1884 respectively and the subsequent adjustments of representation in the political sphere. The dynamics of urbanization also fundamentally transformed peoples' abilities to develop, contain, and represent diverse forms of social affiliation, strengthening the ideal of familial bonds while devaluing more paternalistic concepts of allegiance.¹¹⁵ Visual constructions of society through the production and consumption of photographic portraiture provide insight into contemporary interpretations of and reactions to these changes, as well as the effort of allocating oneself within an increasingly unstable and complex social make-up.

115 Victoria's long reign between 1837 and 1901 has regularly been described as a period of rapid industrial and economic growth, expansion, and development, and of social and political reform. Contrasting views have painted the so-called "Victorian Age" as fundamentally conservative, since political and social views were largely defined by a rising middle class with strict religious and moral convictions. Though such generalizing statements are not wrong, they fail to capture the many distortions of these broad and contrasting dynamics in the daily activities and lives of "the Victorians." See K. Theodore Hoppen, *The Mid-Victorian Generation. 1846–1886* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998); and David Cannadine's differentiated analysis of "class" in David Cannadine, *Class in Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

On the one hand, commercial photography seemed to confirm dynamics of modernization, social mobility, and democratization, due to the novel aesthetics and ready availability of photographic representation. On the other hand, photography provided the technological and commercial means to update, reconfigure, reiterate, and thus retain, in endless versions, accepted pictorial conventions of social hierarchy. Composites like Hering's carte managed to consolidate these two vectors on their tiny surface by visually superimposing the monarchy and the family as two contemporary ideals of social order. As the following chapters will show, photographs were utilized — produced, bought, collected, exchanged, displayed, and consumed—to visualize diverse contexts of life. Commercial photography is thus not a straightforward illustration, but rather a powerful participant in the larger mid-nineteenth century discourse on contemporary social dynamics.

In his writings of the 1840s the influential philosopher and historian Thomas Carlyle described these dynamics as a “crisis of representation.” Carlyle was widely read throughout the nineteenth century. An authoritative conservative voice, his carte de visite was readily collected and regularly integrated into private photo albums.¹¹⁶ This popular card of Carlyle at seventy years of age, a close-up of the writer in thoughtful pose, with a white beard and piercing eyes, was published by the photo studio Elliot & Fry in 1865 (Fig. 43). It can be found on an order sheet just above the portraits of Ruskin, who shared many of the older writer's views.

In a collection of essays published in 1843 as *Past and Present*, Carlyle voiced his desperation with the state of the British nation. He feared that society, having broken away from traditional anchors of meaning, had lost all hierarchical, centralized, and ordered structures.¹¹⁷ In Carlyle's eyes it was the combination of democracy and capitalism that had led Britain into the current “crisis of representation.” Society no longer



43. Elliot & Fry, *Thomas Carlyle*, ca 1865, albumen carte-de-visite, 8.5 × 5.9 cm. National Portrait Gallery, London (acc. no. NPG x5656)

116 See e.g. albums of the holdings of the Harry Ransom Center: Brown Morocco Album 964_0463_0057; 980_0155_0109; 964_1045_0037 (here Carlyle is paired up with Ruskin).

117 Carlyle was an adamant advocate of the monarchy and the aristocracy as institutions symbolizing the historical laws and traditions of British society. Here he was in agreement with his mentor Edmund Burke, who sixty years earlier had maintained that a society which disdains its traditional hierarchy, and dismisses the function of the monarchy, is in danger of going adrift. See Edmund Burke, *The Works of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke*, 8 vols., vol. II (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1877–1881), 357–363. Carlyle's definition of “The English” is also very much in keeping with Burke's earlier

provided an understandable and agreeable order, and individuals were therefore unable to position themselves securely within a meaningful social structure. Instead, social position was increasingly determined by economic success. In a discussion with the Romantic poet and radical-turned-conservative Robert Southey c. 1838, Carlyle already introduced the terms he would subsequently use to describe this crisis: “[S]teady approach of democracy, with revolution (probably explosive) and a finis incomputable to man; steady decay of all morality, political, social, individual; this once noble England getting more and more ignoble and untrue in every fibre of it, till the gold ... would all be eaten out, and noble England would have to collapse in shapeless ruin, whether for ever or not none of us could know.”¹¹⁸ The characteristics of modern society that Carlyle bemoaned—chaos, falsity, and shapelessness—exemplified a broadly felt sentiment regarding contemporary society’s lack of structure, one which was discussed in the contexts of political theory, history writing, and contemporary guides to good taste and moral behavior alike.¹¹⁹

Twenty years later, commercial portrait photography seemed to illustrate and reproduce the contemporary reality of social “disorder” that Carlyle had conjured. The medium allowed a broad spectrum of society to join the practice of representation. While the consumption of photographs was regularly considered to have democratizing effects, critics also warned that the images’ economic success might blur the crucial difference between being exemplary and being famous. In 1862, the critic Andrew Wynter noted that “[t]he commercial value of the human face was never tested to such an extent as it is at the present moment in these handy photographs.... No man, no woman either, knows but that some accident may elevate them to the position of the hero of the hour and send up the value of their countenance to a degree they never dreamed of.” In commercial photography the difference between the sitters of portraiture and their audience was no longer one of social standing, but rather one of commercial value, Wynter maintained. This market-driven order, dependent as it was on public interest and concomitant commercial value, was dynamic and uncontrollable. It was employed by its users according to heterogeneous, contingent, dispersed, and unstable ideals of representation.¹²⁰

description of the English character and its “natural” connection to social traditions. Thomas Carlyle, “The English,” in *Collected Works, Past and Present*, 197–207.

118 Thomas Carlyle, “Thomas Carlyle’s Reminiscences of Southey (1867),” from the appendix of Thomas Carlyle, *Reminiscences*, ed. James Anthony Froude, 2 Vols., 1881, in *Robert Southey: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Lionel Madden (London: Routledge, 1972), 459–473. See also Seamus Deane, *The French Revolution and Enlightenment in England, 1789–1832* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 41–42.

119 This sentiment was shared by conservatives and radical reformers. See e.g. James Hole, *Lectures on Social Science and the Organization of Labour* (1851); Friedrich Engels, “Die Lage Englands. ‘Past and Present’ by Thomas Carlyle, London 1843,” in: *Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels—Werke*, Vol. 1 (Berlin/GDR: Karl Dietz Verlag, 1981), 525–549. See also Michael Levin, *The Condition of England Question: Carlyle, Mill, Engels* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998).

120 Wynter, “Cartes de Visite,” 135. Joanne Lukitsh fittingly writes about the phenomenon: “Heroism is transformed from a transcendent value to a transitory event, achieved by accident and even available to women.” Lukitsh, “Reminders of Titian and Van Dyke,” 57. See also Tagg, “The Discontinuous

Wynter's reference to the hero in his critique of commercial photography may well be a reaction to Carlyle's earlier idealization of this figure of civic virtue. Carlyle had presented the hero as a role model to which his contemporary audience could aspire in the search for order.¹²¹ He had introduced the hero as a figure who embodied the moral principles of his time and actively and responsibly committed himself to the progress of society. In parallel with contemporary ideas, Carlyle's hero was not necessarily a traditional gentleman. He was exceptional due to his model character rather than his social position. Carlyle's hero apparently transcended social differences by calling on different social groupings to find a common ground based on shared principles of value.

Everybody who aspired to it, this rhetoric implied, could become a hero, a moral leader, in his own social and economic environment. Wynter did not buy into this hopeful prose. In his critique, he described contemporary hero-worship in relation to the arbitrary market value of photographic representation. Anyone could become "the hero of the hour," he maintained, based on the selling power of their image.¹²² The photographer's trade was implicated in this problematic leveling, despite the attempt to reframe it as a gentlemanly profession.¹²³

Carlyle's influential diagnosis of a contemporary society in disarray, as well as his search for a new order built on time-honored traditions and simultaneously sensitive to the fundamental social dynamics of his time, mirrored a widespread sentiment. The search for order in a seemingly disjointed social fabric and the attempt to integrate "common" values, such as industriousness, morality, and praise of family, into this

City," 95–96. Queen Victoria, I should note, was regularly listed at the very top of the sales catalogues of London's photography studios as their most marketable item, thereby combining both representational and commercial representation. See e.g. S. B. Beal, *Beal's List of Carte de Visite Portraits* (January 12, 1866), Victoria & Albert Library, London.

121 Thomas Carlyle, "An Aristocracy of Talent," in *Collected Works. Past and Present*, 34–40; Thomas Carlyle, "Labour," *Collected Works. Past and Present*, Vol. XIII, (London: Chapman and Hall 1843), 244–249, here 244. Carlyle's debt to civic humanist ideals is apparent in his application of the term "hero" and "hero worship." In civic humanist thought, heroes are those men who completely subordinate their own interests to the public good. They are the ideal to which citizens should aspire in their pursuit of public virtues and their quest to transcend individual advancement for the interests of society. See Anthony Ashley Cooper Shaftesbury, "Soliloquy, or Advice to an Author (1711)," in *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions and Times*, ed. Lawrence E. Klein and Anthony Ashley Cooper Shaftesbury (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 70–162, here 98–99. Originally, the opportunity to act as a citizen in this ideal republic guided by public virtues was only open to "liberal men," whose independence was primarily guaranteed by the ownership of land. Citizenship, and thus the aspiration to heroism, was limited to the aristocracy. From the early seventeenth century, however, an alternative version of the humanist tradition was developed by the advocates of the newly emergent bourgeois society. Stephen Copely, *Literature and Social Order* (London: Cromm Helm, 1984), 6–7. This alternative form became increasingly influential in the writings of Shaftesbury and Richardson, and ultimately replaced the original concept. John Barrell, *The Political Theory of Painting from Reynolds to Hazlitt: "the body of the public."* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 8–10. Reynolds also tapped into this line of thought when in his Discourse VII he equated arts and morals, reminding his students that "a man must do more than his duty, to be a hero." Joshua Reynolds, "Discourse VIII (1778)," 151.

122 Wynter, "Cartes de Visite," 135.

123 Tucker, *Nature Exposed*, 46–47.

structure, only gained in relevance throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, as any definitive affiliation with a social group by birthright became increasingly unrealistic, and economic power gained ground as a crucial parameter for social mobility.¹²⁴ In the following chapters I will discuss how practices and products of commercial photography can be understood as reactions to this deeply unsettling sense of disorder, and as attempts to compensate for it visually.

As if in answer to Carlyle's demands for a combination of time-honored traditions and current values, the royal court was photographically presented—and perceived—not as an obsolete institution that might threaten the dynamics of progress, but rather as a model of order and structure for an increasingly complex and dynamic society. To serve as a stabilizing symbol for modern society, the monarchy's moral integrity needed to be beyond doubt, however. Victoria's gender, her role as queen, proved a challenge as well as a chance for this purpose. Her royal position at the top of a "natural" social hierarchy, sanctioned by time-honored tradition, and her equally "natural" position as a woman in the social fabric of her family, needed to be consolidated.

Queens at Home: Female Positions, Spaces, and Practices

Mayall set the tone in his first *carte de visite* for the Royal Album of 1861, when he aligned the royal family to the contemporary ideal of familial domesticity. In another composite, which the photographer also sourced from this first series, Mayall cut the royal family members from their original fold-out studio backgrounds and rearranged them in one shared pictorial space (Fig. 44). The paper figures of Victoria and Albert are positioned at the center of the horizontally oriented card. Plaster balustrades, which originally belonged to the individual portraits, were combined into one architectural enclosure that distances the royal couple from their children surrounding them. With the help of the different sizes of the respective photographic templates Mayall achieved a suggestive pictorial hierarchy. In the strictly triangular composition, Albert takes center stage and towers over his wife and children, who turn toward him in respectful deference. The Prince Consort's role as head of the family was achieved in post-production, by reassembling the paper cut-outs according to a contemporary ideal of familial order.

Initially, Victoria's and Albert's marriage had raised doubts among the British public. Critical voices publicly worried about Albert's influence on his wife and by default on the monarchy as well as on British society at large. Albert only gained in popularity throughout the 1850s due to his commitment to Britain's progress in matters of

124 K. Theodore Hoppen, who helpfully unravels the vastly different parameters put forth by scholarship to define and quantify the British middle-class of the nineteenth century—yearly income, privacy, servants, choice of profession—notes that one discursive and mostly dismissive parameter was the "taint of trade," the involvement in commerce. K. Theodore Hoppen, *The Mid-Victorian Generation, 1846–1886*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 44.



44. After John Jabez Edwin Mayall, *Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, Queen Victoria and their children*, c. 1861, albumen carte-de-visite, 5.6 × 8.7 cm. National Portrait Gallery, London (acc. no. NPG Ax9571)

education and industry. After his sudden death in 1861, the queen's self-representation as a mourning widow helped to incorporate the popular distinction of male and female spheres of influence into her royal image. Albert's photograph remained an important element in her self-representation. His portrait served as focal point of commemorative scenes with the queen and their children; Victoria's bracelet, which held a miniature portrait of the deceased, was a well-known detail in many of her portraits; her black attire, which she wore until the end of her life, unambiguously pointed to her status as a widow in mourning. Victoria's wifely deferral to the wishes of her husband even after his death became a metaphor for the modern monarch's deferral to the wishes of Parliament. The queen represented the government just as other women, when out in society, would represent their husband. Her gender, which allowed this symbolic translation of the constitutional monarchy into the image of the family, was instrumental in the continuation of the British monarchy.¹²⁵

The combination of royal presence and female demeanor in Victoria's photographic portraiture answered to the gendered understanding of social authority in the mid-nineteenth century. For Carlyle, as for Ruskin (and Reynolds before them), the fate of

¹²⁵ Margaret Homans, *Royal Representations*. Victoria's mourning is also discussed by Adrienne Munich, who argues that Victoria made a strategy of not appearing in public in her body anymore but only as a representation. Adrienne Munich, *Queen Victoria's Secrets* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); Elizabeth Longford, *Victoria R.I* (London and Sydney: Pan Books, 1983). On the expression of widowhood in Victoria's photographic self-fashioning see Helen Trompeteler, "Queen Victoria and the Photographic Expression of Widowhood," *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century* 33 (2022).

contemporary society was in the hands of men. To act as model citizens for a society in bitter need of new “heroes,” men needed to reflect on their activities and adjust them for the public good. However, the space that the authors regularly highlighted as the model for successful communal living, where such male reflection could take place, was the well-run household of the woman. The nuclear family, with the husband acting as *pater familias* and the wife providing a home for him and their children, was regarded as an ideal concept of community, set against the tough, money-driven, disorderly reality of contemporary society.

Commercial photo studios of the 1860s and 1870s simulated this space of the home. The drawing room was the favored backdrop for photographic portraiture. Depending on a studio’s target audience, either a fully decorated salon was arranged before the camera, or customers had to make due with a curtain, carpet, and chair, or even just with a painted backdrop crudely depicting these essentials of respectable living. In the monochrome photograph and the standardized format of the *carte de visite*, this shorthand for “home” became a marketable asset, as did the gendered division of social responsibility that this domestic ideal entailed.

It is important to keep in mind that the photographic mass production and mass consumption of the concept of domesticity paralleled its application to an increasingly broad social sphere. Like “progress,” domesticity proved to be a productive concept for the imagination and construction of a “whole” society, as diverse social groupings embraced it and tied concrete economic and political demands to its realization. Social reformers of the early to mid-nineteenth century promoted domesticity as a moral ideal that was reserved for the propertied householder-citizen, who added, with his own industry and his model home, to the progress and improvement of society as a whole. Radical reformers capitalized on their constituencies’ aspirations to this ideal, by connecting it with their political agenda. In order for non-propertied men to inter into the realm of householders, and to provide in their home a private sphere for their wives and family, they needed better wages. In order to fight for these wages, the radical argument went, they needed the vote.¹²⁶ The basis for domesticity as a broadly shared concept of social progress and improvement was thus male “citizenship,” a status given only to persons in full control of their self, their property, and their labor. In providing all their customers with an easily recognizable shorthand for the home, commercial photo studios contributed to the representational and rhetorical inclusion of “the people” into a newly forming whole of society, while effacing their actual exclusion due to economic and political barriers.

Domesticity and progress went hand in hand, and both concepts necessarily confined women to the important, but limited space of the home as an—imagined and idealized—counterpoint to contemporary society. Of course, homes did not exist as

126 Anna Clark, *The Struggle for the Breeches. Gender and the Making of the British Working Class* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 175–263.

transcendent spaces outside of economic and political structures. Nevertheless, the Victorian cult of domesticity very much determined women's roles in the shaping of society. It was their task to provide a model home and to present it to the world.¹²⁷

In the following two chapters, I will discuss different ways in which the figure and image of the queen served mostly female album keepers in imagining and constructing an ordered and peaceful image of their social sphere, all the while confirming and securing their own position in this endeavor.¹²⁸ For aristocratic women, visual references to the royal court helped validate aristocratic leadership, which traditionally was decided by the royal court. While the "naturalness" of aristocratic authority was increasingly questioned at mid-century, aristocratic ladies put their aesthetic skills to work to visually confirm their time-honored social prominence in their photo albums.¹²⁹ They regularly removed images of themselves, their family members, and the queen from their respective studio surroundings to integrate these paper figures into the elite spaces of their hand-painted watercolor collages. Album owners of a less elite social context, on the other hand, seem to have been specifically interested in the visual similarity between their own photographs and those of Victoria and her family. Without denying the distance between themselves and their queen, visual connections were drawn by means of spatial correspondence between photographs. The equalizing studio furnishings did not need to be cut away. Rather, they were welcomed as a visual common ground between the "Queens of the household," as Ruskin called his female readers, and their actual female monarch. Again, color played an important role. From the 1860s on, the coloring of photographs in post-production was considered both a pastime for leisured women and a respectable occupation for women in need of earning money to support their household. The activity of coloring photographs thus demarcates the fuzzy and highly flexible line between the domestic wife of a prosperous, home-owning citizen and a working woman. This "occupation" could be done in the home, and its products were often sold in the semi-official commercial contexts of charity bazaars, which further obscured its definition as either "pastime" or "work."

127 See John Ruskin, *Of Queen's Gardens* (1865). London: G. Allen, 1902. Thad Logan, *The Victorian Parlour*, Cambridge Studies in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture 30 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

128 Margaret Homans and Adrienne Munich also have persuasive arguments for how the queen's multiple images served to address different social groups, who all felt that they were doing the queen's work. Margaret Homans and Adrienne Munich, *Remaking Queen Victoria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 5; See also Margaret Homans, *Royal Representations*.

129 Thomas Carlyle, "Unworking Aristocracy," *Collected Works, Past and Present*, Vol. XIII, (London: Chapman and Hall, 1843), 218–227. Contemporary authors regularly alluded to the aristocratic woman as the model female—see for example Alfred Tennyson's poem "The Princess" (1847), Ruskin's "Queen's Gardens" (1865), and (in a heavenly parallel) Coventry Patmore's *The Angel in the House* (London: John W. Parker and Son, 1858). K.D. Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women and Political Society in Victorian Britain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 20.

Though Victoria's photographs were utilized for the visualization of social stability and order, how this order was interpreted, and how one's own role in it appeared, changed substantially depending on the social context of the respective consumers. Structures of appropriation and circulation specific to the medium of photography, and its commercial processing and consumption, allowed for an appropriation of Victoria's figure and image for widely stratified efforts of social positioning. Ownership changed perception as well. As consumer goods, the queen's photographic portraits were integrated into the larger infrastructure of self-representation that was the Victorian home. The portrait of the queen acted as a virtual signpost, a structuring device, that helped order one's own, apparently private, imagination of society by providing an updated and broadly shared image, informed by traditional conventions of visual order as well as contemporary ideals of propriety and moral integrity.



Prince & Princess of Wales

The Princess of Wales

Queen Victoria with the children
of the Prince & Princess of Wales

2 Society on an Album Page

Mass-produced cartes de visite of Victoria served professional photographers well—they formed the basis for countless new, composite images, which presented a broad consumer base with creative visual solutions for the paradox of a contemporary queen. However, the same photographs were also used by members of the aristocracy and landed gentry as source material in designing their private photo albums. Integrated into elaborately decorated album pages, the photographic representation of the royal family underwent manifold aesthetic and semantic transformations in order to assist the self-representation of an aristocracy whose status of moral and political leadership was increasingly under scrutiny.

This image is one of a few surviving sheets of an album belonging to Lady Charlotte Milles, born in 1835 as the daughter of Sir Henry Stacey and Charlotte Denne (Fig. 45). Lady Charlotte married George Milles in 1859 and lived with her family at Lees Court, a country house near Sheldwich, Kent, designed by Inigo Jones around 1640.¹³⁰ Lady Milles likely put together her photo album between 1860 and 1870. For her page designs, she carefully removed albumen prints of popular cartes de visite with members of the royal family from their cardboard mounts, cut them out of their studio surroundings, and placed them into her handmade watercolor painting. We see Queen Victoria and her four eldest grandchildren sitting on a bench beside a little pathway that crosses a delicately painted park landscape, with the distinctive chalk cliff coastline of Kent visible in the far background. In the center of the scene, Victoria's daughter-in-law, Princess Alexandra, attends to a blooming rosebush. To the left, the same Alexandra in a different costume is awkwardly positioned at a little fold-out coffee table together with her husband, Crown Prince Edward Albert. To transform her posture from sitting to standing, Milles lengthened Alexandra's photographed dress. This light-hearted, sunny outdoor scene carries an important, and conservative, political

130 A sketchy biography of Lady Charlotte Milles can be found in Michael Charlesworth, "The group portraits of Charlotte Milles: Staging by photocollage," *History of Photography* 23, no. 3 (1999): 254–259 and Lindsay Smith, *The Politics of Focus. Women, Children and Nineteenth-century Photography* (Manchester/New York: Manchester University Press, 1998), 58–59.

message. Like every depiction of a gathering with the Queen, the Crown prince, and their children on one shared pictorial surface, it necessarily implies hereditary succession of the monarchy and therefore an inherent, “natural,” order.

The royal figures’ transplantation from photo studio to coastal landscape remains evident in the finished collage. Accessories like the little writing table to Victoria’s left, or the indoor attire of Edward Albert and his wife, reveal the studio as the original place of production (Fig. 46). The photographs’ black and white aesthetics, the distribution of light and shadow on the sitters’ faces and bodies, and the minute, mechanical reproduction of their features are in stark contrast with the soft green foliage and diffuse hues of Lady Milles’s watercolor landscape. What is more, the “doubled” Alexandra cancels out the illusion of an actual scene of domestic life on the Milles’s estate.

Other pages of Lady Milles’s album show similarly designed collages, which feature her family and friends in the park of Lees Court (Fig. 47). On this page, for example, the cut-out photographs present the genteel pastimes of aristocratic country life. Gentlemen are shown with hunting dogs at their feet, while Lady Hastings poses on horseback in the middle ground. In the background, the family’s country house is minutely depicted in watercolor. In another collage, the mansion receives pride of place at the center of the page, its architecture not painted but rather cut out of a photograph (Fig. 48). It is collaged into the painted landscape like its owners and inhabitants, who are assembled in the foreground.¹³¹ Building and owners now share an evidential status that is all the more persuasive because of the visual contrast to the painted clouds above, and the watercolor greenery surrounding them. Photographically documented family members and estate are integrated in one shared pictorial space with the help of scissors and paste.

The spatial conflation of human photographic likenesses and real estate is one visual strategy Lady Milles employed to confirm her prominent social position as a member of the landed gentry. With it, she apparently followed the advice on how to “prevent imitation by the masses,” given by the satirical magazine *Punch* in 1861, the same year that Mayall’s commercial cartes de visite of the royal family started the “cartomania” in



46. W. & D. Downey, *Queen Victoria with four of her grandchildren*, November 1871 [in *Portraits of Royal Children Vol. 16 1871-1872*], 1871, albumen print, 8.9 × 5.8 cm. Royal Collection, London (acc. no. RCIN 2902480)

131 The photograph of the building was likely made privately, possibly by a family member who had mastered the new, technologically challenging, and expensive pastime of photography. The nonchalance to peel the albumen print off its cardboard mount and cut and paste it into an individually designed scene also points to the family’s wealth, as in the decade 1860–1870, commercial photographs were still quite expensive.



Lady Hastings. Hon. H. Harbord. Hon. G. Milles.
Mrs. Pemberton. Hon. Mrs. Milles.

47. Lady Charlotte Milles, Lady Hastings, Hon. H. Harbord, Mrs. Pemberton, Hon. G. Milles, Hon. Mrs. Milles, 1860-1870, albumen, prints, watercolor, ink, page 39.5 x 31.7 cm, from *Disbound album of photomontages by the Hon. Mrs. Milles*. Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin, Gernsheim Collection, purchase (acc. no. 964:0354:0021)

Britain. An anonymous writer recommended that the “swells” should no longer hand out their carte de visite portraits, but rather distribute a photograph of their estate: “The portrait system has become low, for everybody has a face, or what by a stretch of courtesy may be called one,” the author writes. “But few people, comparatively, have country seats. So here is an invention for the exclusives.”¹³²

132 Anon., “This Is No Mine Ain House,” *Punch* 41 (November 2, 1861): 173.



Hon. Mrs. Milles. Lady Sandes. Lord Sandes.
 Hon. G. Milles. Mary Milles.

48. Lady Charlotte Milles, Hon. Mrs. Milles[,] Lady Sandes[,] Lord Sandes[,] Hon. G. Milles[,] Mary Milles, 1860-1870, albumen, prints, watercolor, ink, page 39.6 x 32.3 cm, from *Disbound album of photomontages by the Hon. Mrs. Milles*. Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin, Gernsheim Collection, purchase (acc. no. 5035528)

For members of the aristocracy and landed gentry, the magazine's humorous recommendation rang true. By the early 1860s, growing access to photography—and with it the opportunity of self-representation for a much larger segment of society—threatened to undermine earlier forms of representation and social distinction. The medium of photography transformed the portrait into a commodity that potentially everyone could afford. What is more, all who participated became visually comparable. Simultaneously, other markers of gentility, which conventionally had been reserved for spaces in which the self-representation of the elite took place, became accessible to a broader social sphere as well. As I will discuss in Chapter 3, a rapidly growing number

of homeowners sought to furnish and decorate their homes, and practice social activities within them, according to lessons in taste that were inspired by an abstract, ahistorical, and ideal aristocratic model. Markers of aristocratic gentility were co-opted—and in that process transformed—to serve the representational demands of the so-called “middling ranks.” The conventional means of visualizing the self-evident, “natural” status of the aristocratic elite, their portraits as well as their exclusive spaces for social interaction, were placed increasingly under pressure by popular and economically successful forms of commercialized gentility.

Under these circumstances, the country estate in its architectural specificity and remote physical location could still serve, at least symbolically, as a space of withdrawal. While the broader public had to make do with the formalized space of the photo studio, or with equally formalized home interiors in row houses and flats, estates were reserved for aristocratic circles as a privileged space for their self-representation. Accordingly, Lady Milles’s photocollages demarcate Lees Court as a space accessible only to a select few, those whose social distinction was acknowledged and verified by the royal court. Though there is a bit of geographical wishful thinking involved in depicting Lees Court on a visual axis with the coastline of Kent, we can safely assume that Milles positioned Queen Victoria and her offspring in the park of her family’s estate. Even if Milles reserved one page exclusively for the members of the royal family, the similar landscape in her collages, which were bound together in one album, suggest a spatial continuum between her family and that of Victoria.

Lady Milles made use of photography to construct narratives of social affiliation. Examining individual album pages and their respective pictorial logic, this chapter is dedicated to the different visual strategies employed to achieve this aim. Necessarily, the album pages I discuss are not representative of the majority of albums of the second half of the nineteenth century. Archival holdings discriminate in favor of upper-class and upper-middle-class albums, which have been kept more regularly as family heritage and have entered into collections unscathed. What is more, the creative disassembling and re-organization of photographic imagery remained for the most part a pastime of this particular social segment, as it continued conventions of collecting and self-representation that had been practiced by the aristocracy in the previous century. However, since I am interested in how the practices of photography were harnessed for the visual construction of social order and hierarchy, albums of persons who considered themselves part of a naturally sanctioned social elite, a self-positioning that was increasingly under strain by the mid-nineteenth century, are especially instructive for my purposes.

I analyze how aristocratic album owners referred in their collages to eighteenth-century genres of self-representation and concepts of social order such as the conversation piece and the grangerized history, which their social community recognized as part of a longstanding and ongoing tradition for the visual construction of gentility and refinement. Photography modernized these time-honored genres and formats, aiding their integration into the contemporary discourse of taste, which in the mid-nineteenth century was an important platform for social distinction.

Simultaneously, photography became validated as part of a modern genteel practice of amateur art. In Lady Milles's collages, three amateur practices overlap: the pastime of keeping an album, the art of watercolor, and the new, expensive, and complex practice of photography, which in the 1860s was, outside of commercial studios, still reserved for leisured ladies and gentlemen. In her photocollages, Charlotte Milles harnesses her full aesthetic education—her art historical knowledge as well as her artistic skills—to visualize social distinction.¹³³ In aristocratic albums, then, photography was employed to cement social hierarchy in the face of modern image-making. Various strategies of integrating photographic images of the royal family into individual page designs supported this aim, as the monarchy's physical presence was traditionally understood to validate the aristocracy's elite position. The page designs and their multiple, complex and often quite humorous borrowings from both painterly and social conventions, reveal the creative work dedicated to defining one's place within a larger social community.

Politics of Design: The Aesthetic Work of Aristocratic Women

With her pastime of assembling photo albums Lady Milles was in illustrious company. During the 1860s, Princess Alexandra, who we see admiring the blooming rose bush in Milles's garden, also kept two lovingly designed photo albums as well. Her hobby surely served aristocratic ladies as an example (Fig. 49). Alexandra's collaged representation of her Danish family in a grand drawing room—with her husband, the Prince of Wales, joining the group in a relaxed pose and a fashionable, double-breasted suit to the left, and her parents, the King and Queen of Denmark, added to the gathering as portraits hung on the back walls—closely resembles the album designs of her contemporary aristocratic peers.¹³⁴ The fashion of assembling photo albums helped these female members of the upper class to visualize themselves as a close-knit community with shared interests and private jokes.¹³⁵

133 Writing about amateur drawings or watercolors in eighteenth-century albums, Ann Higonnet makes the important argument that such work made by women does not necessarily represent their lives but rather their definition of themselves as structured by gender conventions, which were also specific to class. Anne Higonnet, "Secluded Vision: Images of Feminine Experience in Nineteenth-Century Europe," *Radical History Review* 38 (April 1987): 17–36. This is also true for the integration of photography in their albums. For the legacy of the Victorian photograph album in the earlier sentiment album see also Smith, *The Politics of Focus*, 59–60. On the fashion to apply the new medium to album-collages see Grace Seiberling, *Amateurs, Photography and the Mid-Victorian Imagination* (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 1986); Patricia di Bello, "The 'Eyes of Affection' and Fashionable Femininity: Representations of Photography in Nineteenth-Century Magazines and Victorian 'Society' Albums," in *Phototextualities. Intersections of Photography and Narratives*, ed. Alex Hughes and Andrea Noble (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2003), 254–270; Patrizia di Bello, *Women's Albums and Photography in Victorian England: Ladies, mothers and flirts* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

134 One of the albums is in the Royal Collection (RCIN 2300089). The other, which was unfinished, is in the collection of the Nationalhistorisk Museum, Frederiksborg, Denmark (Fb 39).

135 The fashion ceased around 1870, the moment when the market for photo albums caught on and offered affordable albums with pre-fabricated, mechanically produced decorative borders to a broad consumer

49. Queen Alexandra, Collage design by Alexandra, Princess of Wales with photographs, c. 1866–1869, albumen photographic prints pasted within watercolor design on card, 26.5 × 33.5 cm. Royal Collection, London (acc. no. RCIN 2300104)



As apparently private activities of leisured ladies, the albums have not been part of the general literature on the history of photography. They gained scholarly attention only recently, which has focused mostly on valorizing them as aesthetically advanced designs.¹³⁶ Elizabeth Siegel has described them as private, feminine precursors of modernist photcollage. With this genealogy she ascribes the subversive potential of the juxtaposition of visual material of different sources and registers, which during the early twentieth century made photcollage attractive as an avant-garde form of expression, to the aristocratic watercolor designs of the nineteenth century.¹³⁷

base. Chromolithography was used to make the album pages look as if they had been painted by hand, and different styles of illustrations catered to different tastes. Di Bello, *Women's Albums*, 75.

136 See Elizabeth Siegel, *Playing with Pictures. The Art of Victorian Photocollage*, exh. cat. The Art Institute of Chicago (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2009). The exhibition includes fifteen such albums. The publication by Françoise Heilbrun and Michael Pantazzi, *Album de Collages de L'Angleterre Victorienne* (Paris: Éditions Du Regard, 1997), featuring 51 of the 108 album pages of an album by Lady Georgiana Berkeley, today at the Musée d'Orsay, Paris, was published on the occasion of the exhibition *Collages et Photomontages de L'Angleterre Victorienne*, Musée d'Orsay, 1998. Di Bello, *Women's Albums*.

137 Elizabeth Siegel, "Society Cutups," in Siegel, *Playing with Pictures*, 13–15. Di Bello, *Women's Albums*, 5.

My focus is somewhat different. I am interested in the aesthetic choices that album owners made in their designs, which are informed by pictorial conventions such as the conversation piece or the grangerized history as markers of social distinction. While this does not take away from the argument that the collages are of high aesthetic quality and should be taken seriously in this regard, I am interested in the function of their design for the self-representation of their specific social community. Though I do not deny that ironic and subversive hints are built into the collages, I plan to show that the playful ambiguity of their semantics ultimately serves the visual stabilization of the respective user's social position and is not a prefiguration of the avant-garde. In my opinion, these photocollages are evidence of the quintessential ambivalence of modernity: modern image technologies, media, and means of collecting and assembling are utilized to stabilize traditional, and increasingly questionable, social hierarchies.

In order to understand what kind of socio-cultural conflict was carried out on these apparently harmless private album pages, it is necessary to contextualize the self-image of the aristocracy in the contemporaneous discourse on social hierarchy and order. Cultural authorities such as Thomas Carlyle, John Ruskin, and John Stuart Mill participated in this discussion, which was popularized in broadly circulating magazines and journals throughout the following decades, by designers and advisors in taste such as Charles Eastlake, Lucy Orrinsmith, H. R. Haweis, as well as countless other, often anonymous, writers.

In the mid-nineteenth century the aristocracy in Britain remained a powerful social and political force, but it was becoming increasingly necessary to define and patrol the borders of its specific playing field. These borders had been permeable to a certain degree already in the preceding century and allowed persons of inferior rank to be raised to peerage or to gain political influence by means of wealth or education.¹³⁸ Merchants and professionals, who often were or became connected to the gentry, could accrue enough money, culture, and time to socialize with the aristocracy, pursue political ambitions, and even hope for a title.¹³⁹ The exclusivity of aristocratic culture was thus increasingly under pressure, and by the mid-nineteenth century its members were at pains to demonstrate their elite status, as they witnessed the constant, commercially aided onslaught on their social and political privileges.

Simultaneously, a rather abstract, ahistorical, and quite ambivalent concept of the aristocracy served contemporary cultural critics as a template from which to define and differentiate an ideal of modern life based on popular values of industriousness

138 Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women*, 19.

139 In his study *Class in Britain* David Cannadine has shown that in the nineteenth century, group distinctions by class (upper, middle, and lower or working class) did not replace individual distinctions by rank, but rather one model overlaid the other. David Cannadine, *Class in Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998). As Patrizia di Bello argues, rank and status were not abstract socio-economic categories, but part of a range of rituals—with attendant satisfactions and humiliations—some of which were performed daily, for example in the work on, display, and communal leafing through photo albums. Di Bello, *Women's Albums*, 32.

and independence as motors of social and moral progress. Thomas Carlyle's influential writings give an impression of this ambivalence. In *Past and Present* (1843), the conservative philosopher sought to combine traditional norms with contemporary values in order to recalibrate the coordinates that traditionally anchored society. Crucially, Carlyle proposed "work" as the new symbol that had the power to re-center the nation's social body and secure its "natural" order. The author attempted to salvage a hierarchical structure of society by basing it on the contemporary appreciation of industriousness. This necessitated, as Carlyle made clear, a changed attitude toward the "unworking" or "idle" aristocracy. Their existence as "unproductive" members of society, living off of historically assigned privileges, was "unnatural," Carlyle maintained, and would necessarily come to an end.¹⁴⁰ The aristocracy could only secure its traditional social and political authority if its members recognized their responsibility to the whole of society and fulfilled their role as moral leaders.

Carlyle's ambivalence toward the aristocratic model of life — his unwavering belief in its fundamental exemplary function and his simultaneous concern about its current moral corruption—can be traced in popular guidebooks on genteel behavior and taste written for a broad segment of society throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. Since the vast majority of men needed to work for a living, it was women whose leisure was a major status marker. On the one hand, the idea of the "leisured lady," prominently promoted by popular publications as an aspirational aim, was taken from the model of the aristocracy. To enter, at least symbolically, into a state of leisure meant to have escaped the constant pressure of social competition that was the reality of most British families. On the other hand, authors constantly felt the need to remind their female readers of the fact that they were indeed *not* aristocratic, lest they bought fully into the imagination of gentility and became, like many contemporary "unworking" aristocrats, unproductive, self-centered, and morally corrupt individuals, whose presence threatened to destroy the social fabric of Britain.¹⁴¹

140 Thomas Carlyle, "Unworking Aristocracy," 222: "[A] class of men entitled to live sumptuously on the marrow of the earth; permitted simply, nay entreated, and as yet entreated in vain, to do nothing at all in return, was never heretofore seen on the face of the Planet... [I]t will have to find its duties and do them; or else that it must and will cease to be seen on the face of this Planet, which is a Working one, not an Idle one." Carlyle wrote *Past and Present* at the climax of the political crisis surrounding the Corn Laws. These laws were originally meant to protect the landed gentry from imported grain by charging customs duties on international imports. Since the laws led to higher prices of bread and flour that weighed heavily on the wider citizenship, they became extremely controversial. In Carlyle's eyes they constituted a significant threat to the already brittle social structure, since the aristocracy—as the strongest political force and in their apparent exercise of personal advantage—had undermined its position of moral leadership.

141 As K.D. Reynolds has noted, a consequence of this gendered ascription of social status was that amongst contemporary critics, the aristocratic male was frequently identified with femininity. They ascribed to the class the least desirable qualities of the female gender—frivolity and lack of application, corruptibility, frailty, interest in the trivial, especially clothes, and sexual weakness. Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women*, 20.

As I will discuss in more depth in Chapter 3, the battlefield for this dispute was the contemporary drawing room. It demonstrated a family's social and moral integrity. Its furnishing and decoration illustrated a woman's taste in the making of her "home." Her sensibility for the fine gradations of social hierarchies was mirrored in her application of furniture, textiles, and visual media. Fashioned after the model of the eighteenth-century aristocratic drawing room, its function oscillated between providing an "authentic" surrounding for the respective family and at the same time serving their aspirational aims. Cultural authorities of the mid-nineteenth century constantly addressed the widespread worry that middle-class consumers might forget their "authentic" or "natural" position in the fabric of contemporary society, furnish presumptuous and tasteless homes, and thereby add to society's general state of disarray.

One illustrative outlet of this worry was the differentiation between laudable decorative "work" for the home and the morally reprehensible, unproductive dabbling in conventional artistic media. For example, authors across the board ridiculed women's attempts to become amateur artists by turning to popular drawing manuals or taking drawing lessons in newly-founded design schools that sprang up across the country.¹⁴² In his *Hints on Household Taste*, Charles Eastlake cautioned his readers against adopting the idea of a genteel aesthetic education. He warned them that art lessons would not teach them how to furnish their houses in taste.¹⁴³ A decade later, the writer Lucy Orrinsmith agreed with Eastlake, insisting that her female readers should not waste their artistic talents on "the production of weak and unsuccessful, because too ambitious, sketches and paintings," but rather employ them for the decoration of their homes.¹⁴⁴ Another popular author, Mrs. Hugh Reginald Haweis, writing in the 1880s, contrasted the laudable skills women might develop in beautifying their homes as "[a]mateur blacksmiths, goldsmiths, carpenters, weavers, [or] inlayers," with the leisured pastime of sketching of landscapes and portraits. Significantly, Haweis used the term "amateur" to designate these laudable, industrious activities as genteel, whereas she dismissed conventional media of artistic expression as unproductive and pretentious. With the rhetorical appropriation of the term, the author superimposed gentility with industriousness. She set the worrisome idleness of aristocratic leisure, exemplified by endless and pointless landscape-sketching, against the skillful and morally acceptable

142 Ann Bermingham, *Learning to Draw. Studies in the Cultural History of a Polite and Useful Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 165–181, 226–227.

143 Charles L. Eastlake, *Hints on household taste in furniture, upholstery, and other details* (London: Longman, 1872), 8, 15.

144 According to Orrinsmith, women waste their aesthetic talents, their "accuracy of perception" and "refined judgment" on "the production of weak and unsuccessful, because too ambitious, sketches and paintings." Lucy Orrinsmith, *The Drawing-Room: its Decorations and Furniture* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1878), 9. About decorative work on the home she writes, "[C]ertainly there could be nothing degrading to the daintiest hands in such a worthy use of art-knowledge, far more serviceable to society than amateur sketches and copies which modesty fortunately saves from exhibition, and which find a suitable sarcophagus in portfolios, as lasting examples of killed time." Orrinsmith, *The Drawing Room*, 37.

50. Lady Charlotte Milles, Henry Pepys, Viscountess Malden, Mrs. W. Stracey, Viscount Malden, Miss A. Astley, Jack Stracey, Rev. W. Stracey, 1860-1870, albumen, prints, watercolor, ink, page 40.1 x 32.3 cm, from *Disbound album of photomontages by the Hon. Mrs. Milles*. Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin, Gernsheim Collection, purchase (acc. no. 964:0354:0003)



task for housewives of decorating their houses and transforming them into model homes. For a broader segment of society, to be a “leisured lady” meant to be free to do “work” for the improvement of oneself, one’s home, and ultimately for society as a whole.¹⁴⁵ In the prominent discourse on social order as it played out in the contempo-

145 [Mary Eliza, Mrs.] H. R. Haweis, *The Art of Decoration* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1881), 399–400. Haweis makes specific mention of the fact that female amateurs of these crafts regularly outdid their professional male counterparts. *Ibid.*, 400.

rary literature on taste, aristocratic women had an important, though not necessarily flattering, role to play. Due to their genteel upbringing, they were harbingers of taste on the one hand, but bad examples of self-centered idleness on the other.

With her collages in watercolor, Lady Milles participated in this contemporary discourse that defined taste as a marker of social distinction. On this page, she virtually showcases her amateur artistic skills to present her own social circle in a splendidly furnished drawing room (Fig. 50). Members of different aristocratic families, whose names have been noted underneath the collage, are assembled in a high-ceilinged and luxuriously decorated reception room. Their gathering most likely documents the ritual of paying morning calls to one another.

Since the second half of the eighteenth century, the social practice of “visiting” had involved slim calling cards printed with visitors’ names to announce themselves at their hosts’ visiting hours—their so-called “at homes.” Those who wished to pay a call would announce themselves with their card. They were officially welcome only after the gesture had been reciprocated. If no card arrived in return, or if it came in an envelope, this signaled that a visit was not desired. As early as the eighteenth century, then, social contact could be negotiated in a virtual space, taking place solely in the context of calling cards changing hands or lying next to each other in a basket on a table in a hallway.¹⁴⁶ Both in name and in format the *carte de visite* portrait derived from the eighteenth-century visiting card. The photographs’ use value for the construction of social affiliation was surely based on the broad recognition of its textual card-board predecessor.

Lady Milles’s transformation of her social circle’s single photographs into a lively social gathering turned the contents of her hallway calling card basket into a corresponding image, a self-made conversation piece. The floor of her watercolor drawing room is covered with a richly patterned carpet, and a delicate cabinet on the back wall holds crystal and vases. Above it, landscape paintings, portraits, and a mirror are presented in golden frames. The most prominent painting shows a view of the chalk cliffs of the Kent coastline situated not far from the estate. This relates the painted indoor scene to the specific geographical position of Lees Court. The drawing room that Milles depicts here is a drawing room by the book. It presents carefully selected art and a collection of precious crystal, and it shows the tasteful touch of its female decorator in the little flower arrangement on the table, which corresponds to the well-kept garden beyond. The names of persons assembled and the room’s geographical correspondence to the family estate point to the fact that this drawing room community actually exists. Lady Milles’s own drawing room might not actually have been deco-

146 To communicate social affiliations, subtle differentiations were at play. For example, when paying a call in person, rather than having a servant deliver a card, a visitor would turn up one of the corners. See Markus Krajewski, “Spiel, Visite, Wissen. Die Macht der kleinen Karten,” in *Paperworks: literarische und kulturelle Praktiken mit Schere, Leim, Papier*, ed. Irmgard Wirtz and Magnus Wieland (Göttingen/Wallstein/Zurich: Chronos, 2017), 83–105.

rated exactly this way. It might have been differently proportioned, have had different paintings on the wall, or a different view from its windows. But she shows with her collage that it was a place where her own social circle met and, in so doing, constituted itself as an elite community.

Due to her aesthetic skills, Lady Milles is able to represent this community in its “natural” surroundings. She cuts her friends and family out of their formalized photo studio drawing room contexts and integrates them into her own, personally designed interior, which reveals her prowess in drawing and painting. At the same time, the photographic portraits lend credibility to the painted room, confirming, as photographs do, its apparently documentary status.¹⁴⁷ With scissors, glue, and paint brush, Milles positions her aristocratic circle on her family estate, severing it from society at large both spatially and aesthetically, and integrating it instead into genres and forms of representation defined more than one hundred years earlier.

The room where this self-representation plays out is conceptually the very same room that the aspiring middle-class is taught to decorate and to socialize in. For the aristocracy, however, the drawing room has different implications, which are activated in this collage to draw a clear distinction between contemporary home and aristocratic estate. Milles connects her drawing room to the original designation of this term, which up until the eighteenth century had defined the space between the royal bedchamber and the representative state rooms, where privileged members of the English royal court assembled in the morning to attend the king’s first formal appearance of the day. Originally called the “withdrawing room,” it described the possibility of retiring to a defined and differentiated space that broke away from the common hall. The term designated not only the room itself, but also the social event occurring there. The expression “to have a drawing room”—in the sense of entertaining guests in one’s parlor—described social performance among aristocrats, as they were the only visitors who were granted access to this privileged space. To remind herself and the viewers of her album of this performance of social distinction in the act of socializing, Lady Milles, as many of her aristocratic peers, referred in her collage to the painterly genre of the conversation piece. In the guise of private, familial genre scenes, this genre had already served as a marker of social distinction throughout the eighteenth century.

The Conversation Piece: Group Portraiture for “Polite Society”

From its conception in the early eighteenth century, the conversation piece was a highly ambivalent pictorial form. During the following decades its application and reception

147 For Lindsay Smith, this is the reason why Milles refrained from overpainting the photographs, whose black and white realism is in stark contrast to their watercolor surroundings. Smith, *Politics of Focus*, 61.

underwent profound changes.¹⁴⁸ Gaining popularity in Britain during the 1720s and 1730s as a new form of group portraiture, its success was based on the demand for novel ways to depict social interaction and community. The paintings can be understood first and foremost as statements of membership in what was called “polite society,” whose members distinguished themselves by their willingness to refine themselves and their respective circles through sociable behavior and their moral commitment to contribute to the public good.¹⁴⁹

During the eighteenth century, politeness and refinement increasingly came to be understood as a matter of achievement and representation rather than inborn qualities. As a result of careful breeding, life in refined spaces, and engagement in the right company, these character traits became accessible for a broader segment of society.¹⁵⁰ For those who did not have the lineage and property to “naturally” claim the title of gentleman, commercial success played an enormously important, but complicated role. On the one hand, patrons needed to demonstrate their refinement by means of their tastefully furnished homes and the sociable activities they offered their guests. On the other hand, these markers of refinement were in constant danger of being interpreted as excessive consumption, the very opposite of gentility. Wealth allowed for a leisured life surrounded by refined objects and events, which was regarded as the necessary basis for polite behavior. But the blatant display of wealth was simultaneously frowned upon as a potential threat to the moral integrity of the individual, and to the social order these same object and events promoted. The genre of the conversation piece was an answer to this challenge to visualize social position and affiliation. It presented social gatherings as events where shared values of refinement and gentility were enacted by the members of the respective group, and social affiliation was demonstrated and determined by means of common standards of taste, reflected both in behavior and consumption.

William Hogarth was the first who managed to integrate into a pictorial scheme the anxiety of his contemporary patrons and audiences about the representational ambiguities of marketable luxury. In *The Wollaston Family* (1730) Hogarth placed family and friends of the banker William Wollaston in a magnificently furnished drawing room (Fig. 51). The group on the right-hand side shares a cup of tea, while the group on the left plays a game of cards. Two couples to the side and in the background are deep in

148 David Solkin, *Painting for Money. The Visual Arts and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1993); Marcia Pointon, *Hanging the Head: Portraiture and Social Formation in Eighteenth-Century England*, The Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1993); Desmond Shawe-Taylor, *The Conversation Piece: Scenes of fashionable life* (London: Royal Collections Publications, 2009); Kate Retford, *The Conversation Piece. Making Modern Art in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017).

149 Retford, *The Conversation Piece*, 296; Solkin, *Painting for Money*.

150 Solkin, *Painting for Money*, 28, 96. Lawrence Klein also argues that “[w]hat made eighteenth-century Britain a polite society was not its horizontal divide between polite and non-polite persons but rather the wide access of a range of persons to activities and competencies that contemporaries considered ‘polite.’” Lawrence Klein, “Politeness and the Interpretation of the British Eighteenth Century,” *The Historical Journal* 45, no. 4 (2002): 869–898.

51. William Hogarth,
The Wollaston Family,
1730, oil on canvas,
99 × 124.5 cm. Leicester
Museum & Art Gallery,
Leicester (acc.
no. Y.F7.2019.0.0)



private conversation, while the host himself, positioned at the center, acts as an inviting hinge between these diverse scenes of socializing. All of the activities allow, or even necessitate, the art of genteel conversation.

Three elements in the painting exemplify how Hogarth addressed and neutralized contemporary anxieties that the ambition of refinement might lead to misdirected self-indulgence. The activity of drinking tea, an increasingly popular commodity, was frowned upon as a pretentious luxury product by its detractors, while its defenders argued that tea was immeasurably more fitting for a gathering of polite society than any alcoholic beverages could ever be.¹⁵¹ The same argument was made with regard to card playing. Moralists regarded it as a dangerous pastime which, like all other gambling activities, would lead its players astray. As David Solkin has pointed out, however, the game played in Wollaston's drawing room is that of whist. It is played in partnership with another person, and consists first and foremost in one's capacity to project oneself into the minds and hands of the other players.¹⁵² Whist teaches its

151 For the depiction of the ritual of drinking tea see Erin Lisa Isikoff, *The Culture of Gentility and the Politics of the Open Elite: An Aesthetic Ideology of Manners and Taste in the Eighteenth-Century English Painting and Literature* (PhD diss., Columbia University, New York, 1995), 58–119.

152 “Whist,” Solkin writes, “commits its players to behave rationally and predictably, and to consider the viewpoints of those other than themselves.” Solkin, *Painting for Money*, 89.

participants to act according to rules in order to further their shared enjoyment of the game, which also can include interested bystanders. The Wollaston's reformed card table was far removed from vulgar gambling scenes. Lastly, the pug dog in the foreground invokes disorder and chaos that has been successfully domesticated. Standing upright on the creased carpet with paws on the crimson velvet of a footrest, a harmless reminder of its past misconduct, the dog charmingly imitates the refined gestures of his master. The pet's existence and demeanor humorously illustrate how polite company and the adherence to genteel etiquette can positively impact every member of society, even the non-human ones. With these pictorial reminders of the possible pitfalls of indulgence, Hogarth addressed contemporary anxiety about the accumulation of wealth as a foundation for refined behavior, and made luxury acceptable as a tool for polite hospitality. After all, it was Wollaston's success as a banker in the city of London that allowed him to welcome his family and friends into his splendid drawing room as well as to commission Hogarth's portrait.

Before I turn my attention back to the photocollages that Lady Milles and her peers designed one and a half centuries later, let me first trace the changing social stratum of the patrons of conversation pieces throughout the eighteenth century. This dynamic will clarify why it was attractive for the female members of the aristocracy and landed gentry of the mid-nineteenth century to take up this painterly genre in their album collages to negotiate their self-representation.

Kate Retford has argued against the common assessment of the conversation piece as a form of middle-class portraiture. In the course of the eighteenth century its popularity caught on with the uppermost echelons of society as well.¹⁵³ While Hogarth had portrayed the entire spectrum of the "class of the polite," including professional men, barristers, solicitors, merchants, and bankers, by mid-eighteenth century the landed gentry, aristocracy, and later even the royal family caught on to the fashion.¹⁵⁴ These patrons favored other painters, such as Charles Philips or Arthur Devis, who drew on Hogarth's example for the basic arrangement and iconography of their conversation pieces, but returned to the original idea of politeness as the birthright of a social elite.

Philips's *Tea Party at Lord Harrington's House* (1730) is exemplary for this conceptual difference (Fig. 52).¹⁵⁵ Lord Harrington's elegant drawing room is furnished with a

153 See Retford, *The Conversation Piece*, 11. See Also Kate Retford, "From the Interior to Interiority: The Conversation Piece in Georgian England," *Journal of Design History* 20, no. 4 (Winter 2007): 291–307. With this Retford contradicts conventional understandings of the conversation piece as a middle-class fashion, formulated for example by Mario Praz and reiterated, with constraints, by Ellen G. D'Oench. Mario Praz, *Conversation Pieces. A Survey of the Informal Group Portrait in Europe & America* (San Francisco: Alan Wofsy Fine Arts, 1971); Ellen G. D'Oench, *The Conversation Piece: Arthur Devis & His Contemporaries* (New Haven: Yale Center for British Art, 1980).

154 Most of Hogarth's patrons came from the powerful and prosperous middle class. Susan Staves, "Pope's Refinement," *The Eighteenth Century* 29, no. 2 (Spring 1988): 151.

155 Solkin, *Painting for Money*, 98.

52. Charles Philips, *Tea Party at Lord Harrington's House*, 1730, oil on canvas, 102.2 x 126.4 cm. Yale Center for British Art, New Haven (acc. no. B1981.25.503)



central fireplace carved out of white marble, a landscape painting hung above it, and two floral still lifes placed symmetrically over the closed doors on either side. A richly patterned carpet, large damask panels decorating the walls, and two golden chandeliers hanging from the ceiling demonstrate the luxurious furnishing of this interior. Lord Harrington's guests are organized in groups of three or four, and engaged in the typical activities of "polite conversation," while the host towers over the party in red-and-gold livery, casually leaning on the back of a chair. The women wear lavish, richly embroidered silk gowns in radiant colors. The men are clad in a selection of representative outfits, from black morning coat to brocaded jacket to crimson livery of the royal order.¹⁵⁶ Philips did not give much attention to the faces of the respective individuals, yet rendered their dress and jewelry, as well as the interior, with minute particularity. Lord Harrington's party is engaged in the same activities as Hogarth's Wollaston company—drinking tea and playing cards. But in contrast to the banker's social gathering, the guests' gestures and postures display their awareness of an external spectator, to whom they turn in order to present their politeness. Philips depicts refinement as a state of being, a function of birth and rank rather than a process of

¹⁵⁶ Philips was also patronized by Frederick, Prince of Wales, of whom he produced a portrait in 1731 (YCBA/lido-TMS-988).

becoming, assisted by polite conversation in genteel surroundings. A good century onwards, Lady Milles and her aristocratic peers put to use the full-length vertical pose and frontal orientation common in photographic studio portraiture, in order to achieve a similar pictorial construction in their album collages. They assembled portraits of members of their social circle to construct scenes of politeness, which were set in their own stage-like watercolor drawing rooms.¹⁵⁷

The shift from Hogarth's comparatively inclusive "polite society" toward the confirmation of gentility as an essentially inborn quality of the traditional elite can also be discerned in the conversation pieces of Arthur Devis, who in the mid-eighteenth century was the favored group portraitist of the landed gentry.¹⁵⁸ His paintings show in an exemplary manner how markers of genealogy and property were integrated into the pictorial format of the conversation piece, to define and confirm a social order built on these traditional privileges of the aristocracy.¹⁵⁹ Devis's portrait of Sir John Orde and his family (1754–1756), for example, features all the necessary elements of a genteel drawing room: a collection of china on the mantle, a landscape painting above, a tripod mahogany table, and reading material and needle-point implements on the table (Fig. 53). The social group meeting here, however, has been reduced to the nuclear family of father, mother, and heir. The son, William, dressed in a hunting outfit, presents his mother with a partridge. The hunting trophy points to the family's ownership of a country estate, which is also underscored by the



53. Arthur Devis, *John Orde, His Wife, Anne Orde (née Marr), His Eldest Son, William, and an Unnamed Servant*, 1754–1756, oil on canvas, 94 × 96.2 cm. Yale Center for British Art, New Haven (acc. no. B2001.2.65)

157 The set-up of the interior as a stage, which underscores the painting's representational function, is discussed by Solkin, *Painting for Money*, 105; Retford, *The Conversation Piece*, 86. Marta Weiss discusses it for the nineteenth-century collages in Marta Weiss, "The Page as a Stage," in Siegel (ed.), *Playing with Pictures*, 41–42.

158 Devis received his training from the Flemish painter Peter Tillemans, who had executed numerous commissions for Lord Derby in the late 1720s, and whose knowledge of the conversation piece, attention to costume and furnishing, and integration of the country house view into his paintings were guiding principles for Devis. D'Oench, *The Conversation Piece*, 7–10.

159 The importance of property and patronage for eighteenth century society cannot be overestimated. Not only did they determine the social elite, but also its political power. After property, and emanating from it, the second most important factor in determining status was patronage. Friendship, as displayed in the drawing room gatherings, meant more than mutual sympathy—it was a currency for political and social influence.

landscape painting located centrally above the mantelpiece. A standard feature in Devis's conversation pieces, the pastoral scene distinguishes his sitters as landholders. Retford points out that it was common practice to have paintings of one's own country estate hung in the drawing rooms of urban homes, to underline the important economic ties between the two properties.¹⁶⁰

The genealogical impetus of Devis's group portrait is further underscored by the two bust portraits of the family's ancestors hung in decorative oval frames on the back walls. Painted in the same register as the living figures of Orde and his wife, and mirroring their status as a married couple, the portraits are a demonstration of the genealogical continuity and the social and political power that comes with the preservation of family property. One hundred years later, Princess Alexandra replicated this pictorial strategy in her drawing room collage, where she integrated the photographic portraits of her father and mother as paintings on the back wall. In her collage, the identical pictorial register of framed portraits on the wall and living persons assembled in the room is even more pronounced, due to the visual continuity of the black and white photographic portraits.

The depiction of gentility as a "natural" quality of the aristocracy was further underscored in Devis's outdoor conversation pieces, in which he portrays his patrons in the spatial context of their respective estates. The painting *Members of the Maynard Family in the Park at Waltons* (c. 1755–1762) shows again a family scene, featuring Lady Charlotte, the wife of Sir William Maynard, together with the couple's two eldest children (Fig. 54).¹⁶¹ The family's country seat is set prominently in the background of the scene, signaling the longevity of the family's name through title and property. The minute depiction features details of the building's classic façade and entrance, and provides a portrait of the architecture that is no less accurate than those of the sitters in the foreground. Located in the painting's center, it is — like Lady Milles's photograph of the Lees Court in her mid-nineteenth century photocollage—of the same pictorial register as the Maynard family.

Milles's photocollage was probably fashioned after scenes like these. In a different medium and format, it carried the same implication of genealogy and property as the necessary foundations for a genteel life. It also addressed a similar audience. Devis's conversation pieces were regularly hung above the mantelpiece in the representative drawing rooms of those who commissioned them, to become a topic of conversation for the select crowd that gathered there. Aristocratic photo albums were displayed in

160 Retford, *The Conversation Piece*, 130.

161 See John Hayes, *British Paintings of the Sixteenth through Nineteenth Centuries. The Collections of the National Gallery of Art. Systematic Catalogue* (Washington DC: National Art Gallery, 1992), 57–60. Lady Charlotte is most likely the motherly figure seated on the right, but there are different identifications of the person seated centrally on the Windsor bench, playing the guitar. See John Harris, *The Artist and the Country House: A History of Country House and Garden View Painting in Britain 1540–1870* (London: Sotheby's Publications, rev. edition, 1985), 218.



54. Arthur Devis, *Members of the Maynard Family in the Park at Waltons*, c. 1755–1762, oil on canvas, 138.5 × 195.6 cm. National Gallery of Art, Washington, Paul Mellon Collection (acc. no. 1964.2.4.65)

the same rooms one hundred years later, and they served a similar function. It is significant that this appropriation of the painterly genre for the design of photo albums demonstrates a change of gender in the self-imaging of the aristocracy and landed gentry. Women very deliberately referred with their page designs to the conventional register of the group portrait in oil. Their collages could be understood in this context as an informed, playful, slightly subversive commentary on such conventions, which confirmed and simultaneously effaced the continued valuation of these norms amongst the social community that was invited to join the circle and see the photo albums.

In the last third of the eighteenth century, the genre of the conversation piece received another boost, when the painter Johann Zoffany for the first time managed to secure royal patronage. As Marcia Pointon has discussed, Zoffany referred to the conversation piece as a genre that communicates affective and familial ties in order to present the monarchy's hereditary claims within a contemporary, domestic setting.¹⁶²

¹⁶² Marcia Pointon, *Hanging the Head*, 161–162. Zoffany's royal conversation pieces were almost contemporary with Joshua Reynolds's portrait theory, and provided a highly popular counterpart to the latter's idealized ideas of portraiture. See Shawe-Taylor, *The Conversation Piece*, 100–105; Retford, *The Conversation Piece*, 96. In focusing on familial intimacy and domestic affection, Zoffany did follow the trend of suggesting interior character, but his interest in internal virtues circled around sentimental feelings of motherly love and fatherly responsibility, rather than public virtues, and these he integrated into the genealogical presentation of the royal family. On the representative function of Zoffany's

55. Sir Edwin Landseer, *Windsor Castle in modern times; Queen Victoria, Prince Albert and Victoria, Princess Royal*, 1841-1843, oil on canvas, 113.4 × 144.3 cm. Royal Collection, London (acc. no. RCIN 406903)



Zoffany packaged this message in contemporary norms by focusing on the nuclear family and its main purpose, the production of children, and by presenting an interior that combined contemporary fashion with time-honored possessions of historical relevance.¹⁶³ The painter successfully used the genre of the conversation piece to actualize and simultaneously naturalize royal self-representation.

During the nineteenth century, the court painters Franz Xaver Winterhalter and Edwin Landseer followed Zoffany's example and presented the royal family as a nuclear family, integrating the monarchy's hereditary claim into the scenes and spaces of Victoria's private life. Between 1841 and 1843, Landseer painted this commissioned portrait of the queen and her husband together with their eldest daughter Victoria in the White Drawing Room at Windsor Castle (Fig. 55). A comparison with a photograph by Dísdéri from 1867 reveals that Landseer deliberately shrank the representative state room at Windsor to middle-class proportions in order to assist the scene's

conversation pieces see Christine Lerche, *Painted Politeness. Private und öffentliche Selbstdarstellung im Conversation Piece des Johann Zoffany* (Weimar: VDG, 2006).

¹⁶³ Retford argues that this combination is what makes the conversation piece a quintessentially modern, innovative, and complex mode of portraiture. Retford, *The Conversation Piece*, 9.



56. André Adolphe-Eugène Disdéri, *The White Drawing Room*, 1867, albumen silver print, 22 × 27.9 cm, from *Windsor Castle. Thirty Photographic Views of the Interior of Windsor Castle*, London; Paris, pl.21. The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles (acc. no. 84.XO.1304.21)

intimate, personal atmosphere (Fig. 56).¹⁶⁴ Prince Albert, returned from a day of hunting, rests on a couch, his prey proudly spread out on the carpet and chair cushion. The contrast between manly outdoor activity and female purity, a popular trope in Victorian visual and literary culture, plays out in the presentation of bloody prey on the luxurious interior, a juxtaposition that is repeated in Victoria's spotless silk and lace dress and her husband's hunting gear, and in little Victoria holding a dead kingfisher in her delicate hands. The family's dogs surround the scene, playfully trying to catch the attention of child, mother, and father respectively. A window to the left opens on the view of the East Terrace of Windsor Castle and to the larger park area beyond.

Initially introduced by Hogarth to visualize a newly developing "polite society," the genre had come a long way. In Landseer's painting, it presents itself as fully ennobled and fully domesticated at the same time. In the early 1860s, when aristocratic women

¹⁶⁴ Joseph Nash, *The Queen's Sitting Room in the Victoria Tower*, c. 1850, watercolor (Royal Collection, RCIN 919788).

such as Lady Milles took up their scissors and paintbrushes to design their album pages, the conversation piece was arguably an attractive source of inspiration precisely because of its complex and dynamic history as a means of self-representation and due to the important role it had played in the visual negotiation of politeness throughout the previous 150 years. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the genre had been employed as a novel way to visually balance complex attributions of birthright and wealth. Its subsequent adoption and adaptation by the landed gentry, aristocracy, and lastly even the monarchy allowed elite social circles to relate to these contemporary changes in social and moral values, while at the same time visually cementing their hereditary claims.

Lady Milles's photcollages of her extended family in the representative drawing room and on the grounds of Lees Court conjure up not only the aesthetics of the conversation piece, but also its message of social distinction. Her designs relate to Philips's or Devis's earlier group portraits, many of which depicted the ancestors, and graced the walls of the country seats, of nineteenth-century aristocratic photo album owners. Aesthetically, the stiff conventionality of commercial studio portraiture evoked the earlier artists' specific painterly idiom, which had been reserved, for the most part, for the self-representation of a social elite during the eighteenth century. The select, knowledgeable audience of the aristocratic photo album surely was able to interpret the resemblance of the photographic cut-outs and Devis's or Philips's clearly outlined, immobile figures as a reference to the painters' deliberately conservative style.¹⁶⁵ Similarly, the common orientation of the sitters toward the camera was utilized in the collages to imitate the stage-like setup of the eighteenth-century paintings, and the gestures and poses of the photo studio were reassembled into the visual vocabulary of polite conduct. Lady Milles showed her family and friends as they were hunting and horse-riding in the parkland surrounding Lees Court, or engaged in polite conversation in the drawing room of her estate. The album owners countered the worrisome comparability of photographic portraiture by integrating these portraits into a genre of self-representation traditionally employed to represent the social elite. In their photographic practice of collecting and collaging, aristocratic women attended to the contested position of the aristocracy of the mid-nineteenth century by employing their own polite skills—their knowledge of the history of painting and their abilities in sketching, drawing, and watercolor—to the task of visual differentiation. Through the creative and playful handling of photographs, they confirmed to each other their historically defined but increasingly challenged, exemplary position in contemporary society.

165 Ellen G. D'Oench argues that Devis's rigid compositions, which were in contrast to the lively work of artists such as Hogarth, Allan Ramsay, and Francis Hayman, can be understood as a conscious reflection of archaisms of earlier periods of Elizabethan and Jacobean portraiture. D'Oench, *The Conversation Piece*.

Drawing Room Collages: Updating Gentility in the Photo Album

A collage made by Lady Mary Georgina Filmer illustrates the multi-layered and humorous ways in which members of the aristocracy visually responded to contemporary criticism aimed against them, while simultaneously demarcating their elite social circle (Fig. 57).¹⁶⁶ The setting, a high-ceilinged, windowless, and carpeted room, the walls hung with framed portraits, closely resembles the stage-like construction of a traditional conversation piece. Lady Filmer's watercolor drawing room is decorated in a highly fashionable color scheme of cyan and magenta, synthetic hues that by 1870 had just reached marketability.¹⁶⁷ Flower bouquets on the table and mantelpiece, a little jardinière in the back, as well as the embroidered fire screen and table cover, all point to the female skills of decoration that are at work to make this room an inviting space for social interaction.

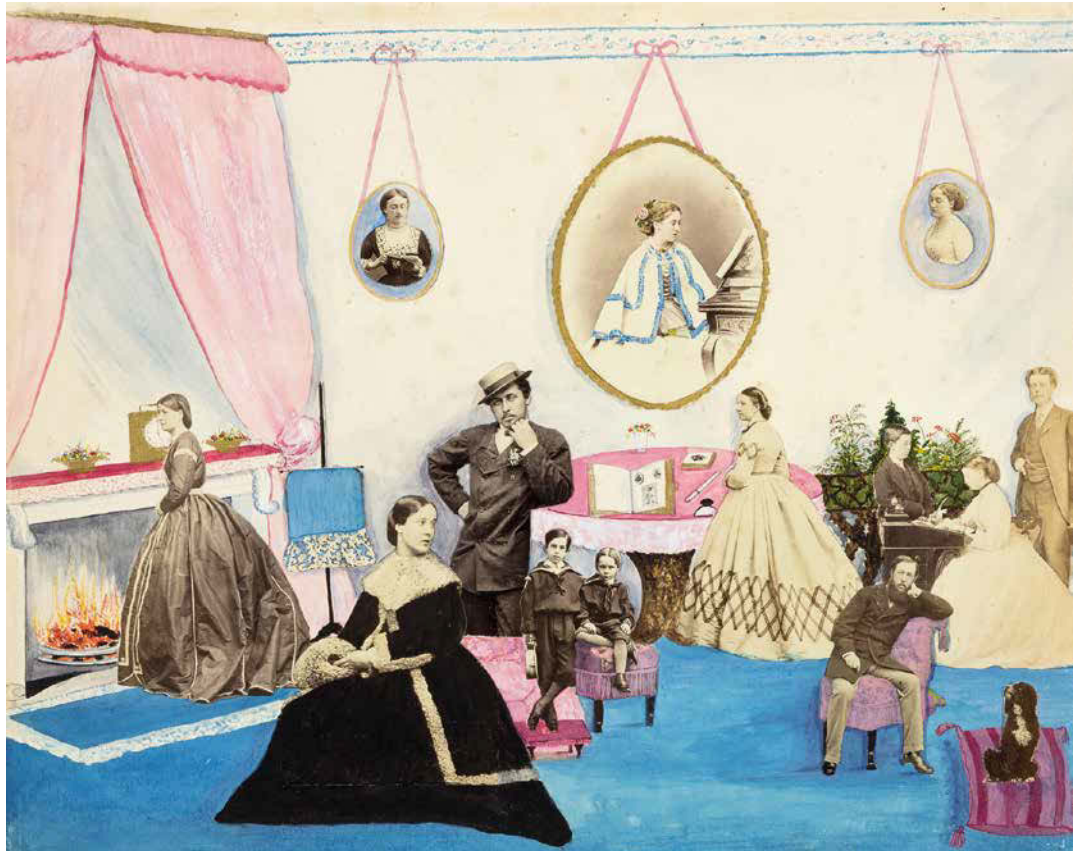
Lady Filmer's cut-out family members and guests are assembled around a white marble fireplace to the left, a table in the center, and a little writing desk to the right. A dog—an emblematic element of the conversation piece, as we have learned—is part of the collaged scene. Sitting on a painted pillow to the righthand side, the well-behaved pet shows the same successful domestication that the Wollaston family's pug displayed in Hogarth's painting of 1730. In pose and demeanor, it apparently imitates its master, Lady Filmer's husband Sir Edmund Filmer, who sits beside the dog on a wing chair, apparently lost in thought, with an elbow supporting his melancholic head.

Lady Filmer organized her cut-out figures into scenes of polite conversation by combining their readymade poses and gestures into shared activities. The woman in winter dress in the foreground turns her head, apparently to keep an eye on the two little boys in sailor suits that Lady Filmer positioned to her left. The woman at the writing table is framed by a collaged-in boy and man, who seem to take an interest in her work. One such artificially constructed interaction takes center stage: at the large drawing room table, the paper figure of Lady Filmer herself is at work on a photocollage, her open album, cutting knife, inkwell, and a stack of *carte de visite* photographs spread out on the tabletop. By presenting her work on her photo album as an activity that belongs in the drawing room, Lady Filmer underlines the gentility of this brand-

166 Filmer's album is discussed in Constance Sullivan, *Women Photographers* (New York: Abrams, 1990); Naomi Rosenblum, *A History of Women Photographers*, (New York: Abbeville, 1994), 50; Di Bello, *Women's Albums*, 113–137. Little is known of her except her family background. Originally Mary Georgiana Caroline Cecil, eldest daughter of Arthur Marcus Cecil, third Lord Sandys, she was married to Sir Edmund Filmer—ninth baronet of East Sutton, a member of Parliament from Kent, and a captain in Grenadier Guards—in 1858.

167 While indicating Filmer's interest in fashion, her choice of colors probably would have been seen by Eastlake and his followers as a case in point for his assessment that financial resources alone do not suffice in yielding a tasteful interior. On the production, application, and marketing of aniline dyes see Ralph Dutton, *The Victorian Home: Some aspects of nineteenth-century taste and manners* (London: Batsford, 1954), 83–86.

57. Lady Mary Georgina Filmer, *Lady Filmer in her Drawing Room*, 1863-1868, albumen prints, collage and watercolor, page 35.6 × 42.7 cm. Art Institute Chicago (Ref. Nr. 2018.1)



new pastime, and of the contemporary medium of photography. In the scene she re-contextualized her standard studio pose, a glance over the left shoulder with the body turned away from the camera, so that her body now turns toward the table and her gaze is directed at the person positioned *vis-à-vis* across the tabletop. The man who has joined her to enjoy and assess her creative skills is none other than Crown Prince Edward Albert, who leans casually on the table's edge. The prince's double-breasted jacket and sporting hat demonstrate his own fashionable tastes, and correspond to the cutting-edge decoration of Lady Filmer's drawing room.¹⁶⁸ Edward Albert is presented as a regular guest, comfortable and at ease in Lady Filmer's social circle.

During the 1860s and 1870s, following Albert's death, the crown prince was a highly sought-after guest amongst aristocratic circles. Since the queen was in mourning and had left the public sphere, the Prince of Wales constituted the highest rank within aristocratic culture. In a society still marked by deferential behavior, members of the aristocracy deferred to him as the first representative of the monarchy and as a stand-in for the queen.¹⁶⁹ He unofficially acted as the authority that sanctioned social affiliation,

168 Lady Filmer has accommodated her royal guest in post-production by slimming down his already expanding waistline with her cutting knife. See Di Bello, *Women's Albums*, 114.

169 Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women*, 23. By 1863, Victoria still refused to hold levees and drawing rooms, important events in the process of legitimizing the status of the aristocratic and political elite, and was very reluctant to appear in public. The prolonged absence of Victoria from the public sphere

and led and legitimized the hierarchy enacted in aristocratic drawing rooms. As the wife of a baronet, Lady Filmer did not hold a prominent position in this social structure. But her presentation of the prince in her photocollage gives evidence of her privileged, personal relationship with him.¹⁷⁰

As we have seen in the conversation pieces of Hogarth, Philips, Devis, and Zoffany, the family patriarch occupies a central position, standing upright where others are sitting down, and often appearing slightly larger than any of the other persons assembled in the drawing room. To achieve a similar status perspective, Lady Filmer used differently sized portrait photographs of her drawing room guests. Strikingly, she swapped out her husband, granting pride of place to the Crown Prince as the most important person in the room.

Patrizia Di Bello has verified that Lady Filmer and Edward Albert shared what amounted to a serious flirtation, manifesting itself in meetings at social events, private correspondence, and the regular exchange of photographs, sometimes on a daily basis.¹⁷¹ The fact that Lady Filmer could make use of a private portrait of the prince for her album design, a portrait which was not in commercial circulation, documents their personal relationship, which in turn granted her access to the highest social circles. In her collage, she placed Edward Albert not only opposite herself at the table, but also in close proximity to the photo album she worked on. With this she indicated the importance of his portrait for her page design. What is more, she hinted at him as the intended viewer of the page, and anticipated his approval of the playful, slightly scandalous implications of his portrait's placement.¹⁷² She put her intimate relationship with the prince on display, and at the same time showcased the medium in which this relationship took place: the exclusive exchange of photographs.

By integrating the honored persona of the Prince of Wales and emphasizing their personal ties, Lady Filmer moved her watercolor drawing room well beyond the contemporary nineteenth-century ideal of domesticity. She presented her house as a powerful space of social interaction reserved for "polite society," where wealthy and titled families and political decision-makers met and acted according to elaborate, re-

throughout the 1860s was increasingly regarded as problematic. See Homans, *Royal Representations*, 58–67.

170 During the 1860s, Lady Filmer's drawing room was a space in which the fashionable upper-class society assembled. Ralph Dutton maintains that the socially mixed circle in which the Prince of Wales moved provided an outstanding precedent for the toleration of social newcomers. Dutton, *The Victorian Home*, 123.

171 The flirtation between the prince and Lady Filmer was certainly carried out in the open. The correspondence was conducted via her husband; notes addressed personally to her were enclosed in letters to him. Their behavior still bordered on the scandalous, as both were married. Di Bello, *Women's Albums*, 134.

172 The prince was known to hand out his photographs to social acquaintances. As a young Maid of Honor at Queen Victoria's court, Eleanor Stanley, upon receiving a carte de visite from the Prince of Wales, contemplated "setting up a photograph book on the strength of it." Eleanor Stanley, *Twenty Years at Court. From the Correspondence of the Hon. Eleanor Stanley, Maid of Honour to Her Late Majesty Queen Victoria. 1842–1862* (London: James Nisbet and Company, 1916), 320.

fined rules.¹⁷³ Superficially, the aristocratic woman's work of decorating and furnishing her house in a manner that facilitated her family's comfort and displayed its wealth, status, and taste might seem to resemble a contemporary housewife's aspirations. In reality, the maintenance of an estate served other purposes. It was the physical basis of aristocratic society, where ties of dependency and patronage were cultivated, and of the economic security that underpinned the edifice of aristocratic culture. It facilitated the upkeep of a traditional concept of social hierarchy.¹⁷⁴

In the photocollages of aristocratic ladies like Milles and Filmer, reference to the conversation piece served as a visual reminder of this elite social circle. As I have discussed, the painterly genre had been used by the aristocracy as a visual strategy to integrate its own conservative claims into a contemporary visual format during the mid- to late eighteenth century. The maintenance of a hierarchical, paternalistic society was visualized by genealogies in picture galleries placed on the walls; the government of the country was integrated in the drawing room scene as a landscape painting over the mantelpiece; the exercise of patronage was hinted at by the assembly of different aristocratic families and circles of friends. When Lady Filmer took up scissors and paste a century later, she recognized these claims, and took it upon herself, as a female aristocrat, to visualize and reconfirm them.¹⁷⁵

At the same time, her collage utilized the "modernity" of the conversation piece, another eighteenth-century model. Painters like Philips and Devis, or later Zoffany and Winterhalter, had updated the genre continuously, by integrating fashionable decoration, dress, and drawing room activities—and Lady Filmer did the same in her collage. She showed her guests in the contemporary attire they wore to the photo studio, and had them engage in contemporary pastimes such as the maintenance of a *jardinière* or the decoration of a photo album, in a drawing room that featured the latest trends in interior design. Her agency in the realization of this updated paper conversation piece attests to her self-confident understanding of her own role in the definition and delimitation of social order. In conventional conversation pieces, drawing room activities were presented by painters commissioned to illustrate a family's social standing. In their photo albums, aristocratic women themselves reflect, often humorously, on their gentility. Their drawing room activities were carried out on card-, tea-, and writing tables, which the women acknowledged as powerful sites for the negotiation of social belonging and distinction. Perspectives often change in these collages from the stage-like views of drawing room scenes to the actual table-

173 Siegel, "Society Cutups," 15.

174 Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women*, 66–70.

175 Reynolds argues that in the maintenance of these claims aristocratic women participated not on terms of equality with men, but in active partnership with them. Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women*, 25. Their work on their photo albums, though seemingly in compliance with a bourgeois ideal of the domestic woman, can count as one of these activities. See Seiberling, *Amateurs, Photography, and the Mid-Victorian Imagination*.



58. Eva Macdonald after Maull & Polyblank, Southwell Brothers, and Unknown, *What are Trumps?* 1868, albumen prints, collage and watercolor, 28.1 x 22.8 cm, from *The Westmorland Album*, compiled by Victoria Alexandrina Anderson-Pelham, c. 1859-1881. The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles (acc. no. 84.XD.1283.34)



59. Queen Alexandra, *Collage design by Alexandra, Princess of Wales with photographs*, c. 1866-1869, albumen photographic prints pasted onto a design on card, 22 x 29.5 cm. Royal Collection, London (acc. no. RCIN 2300097)

tops on which cards were dealt, letters were written, tea was poured, and albums were decorated (Figs. 58–60). The women dealt the cards, wrote the letters, and filled the teacups. They decided who entered into their drawing room circle, and they decided again, when putting their photo albums together, whose portrait received which position on the page.

In their collages, the ladies also flirted with the idea of giving themselves and their friends an impossible advancement in rank, inserting their photographic portraits directly onto a playing card or a stamp. In reality, these objects were solely graced by the image of a queen. The abstract figure of the queen defined the card's value, the living persona of Victoria set the postage.¹⁷⁶ By playfully assigning themselves or their friends this prominent role, the ladies acknowledged that the attribution of value was based on conventions verified by their broad acceptance. In the rel-

176 Siegel, "Society Cutups," 25, 27. Postage stamps were introduced to Britain in 1840 to standardize and modernize the postal system. The first stamp bore the head of Queen Victoria, and she would remain the only face on stamps throughout her reign. See also Asa Briggs, *Victorian Things* (1988), repr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 328–345. Even the transfer of Milles's sister Fanny Stacey onto a teacup marks this imaginary ascension to royalty. Technology had existed to transfer images onto china and other ceramics since the 1850s, but it was only practiced for celebrities, and most often for royalty. Smith, *Politics of Focus*, 62–63. Briggs, *Victorian Things*, 147–148, 157–160.



60. Lady Charlotte Milles, *Fanny Stracey on teacup*, 1860–1870, albumen prints, watercolor, ink, page 40 × 31.7 cm, from *Disbound album of photomontages by the Hon. Mrs. Milles*. Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin, Gernsheim Collection, purchase (acc. no.5035522)

ative privacy of their photo albums, they re-imagined their relations to one another with constant reference to the monarchy. They could make their peers queens of their own card table, or emboss the knob of their paper parasol with a portrait of the Prince of Wales, as long as their social interactions confirmed and stabilized the “natural” hierarchy of British society. Their albums, which served as conversation material in aristocratic drawing rooms, visually replicated the dynamics of social distinction that defined the social gatherings held in these spaces. The photo album was one format in which the continued stability of the aristocracy’s social position was successfully imaged.¹⁷⁷

Diamond, Grid, and Honeycomb: The Collage as an Ordering Device

If we look closely at the open album and the loose album pages stacked on Lady Filmer’s watercolor drawing room table, we can discern another method that was used to arrange photographs in order to illustrate communal ties and

social order (Fig. 61). The design is not modeled after the pictorial conventions of the conversation piece, with its stage-like scenes of social interaction in drawing rooms or on estate lawns. Instead, Lady Filmer cut out carte-de-visite portraits, ordered them into geometric patterns, and integrated them into geometric grid, diamond, or honeycomb arrangements.

By the early 1860s the combination of numerous portraits into composite cartes de visite had become a profitable way for photo studios to re-market popular commercial photographs. Not only could an entire group of portraits be assembled on the surface of one little card, but the technologically simple change of scale and context also gave producers the opportunity to construct alternative narratives of genealogy, community, and history. Mayall’s composite of his first series of the royal family or Hering’s little history lesson are examples of such adaptations. Album owners like Filmer imitated this popular composite technique and utilized it for the representation of their own extended circles, in order to visualize an aristocratic understanding of family. Such composite designs can be found in virtually every photo album of the aristocracy or landed gentry, alongside photocollaged conversation pieces. Many of the design decisions that I discussed in my analysis of the commercial Mayall composite make their appearance again in the hand-made collages of the aristocratic ladies: oval cut-outs to

¹⁷⁷ Logan, *The Victorian Parlour*, 95.

suggest precious miniature paintings or jewelry, the ornamental distribution of portraits on the rectangular album page, or delicately painted flower tendrils used as framing devices.

The album of Cecilia Mary Jocelyn (née Elliott) contains contrasting designs of such self-made composites. While the album pages look radically different, they are all visualizations of Jocelyn's localization of herself and her family in her specific social circle. Jocelyn dedicated her first album page to the royal family (Fig. 62). The rhombic constellation of four commercial cartes de visite narrates the family tragedy of Albert's death in 1861 and simultaneously confirms the uninterrupted genealogical continuity of the monarchy. From left to right a double-portrait of the royal couple from Mayall's popular 1861 series is followed by a juxtaposition of a portrait of Albert and a photograph of Victoria and her children kneeling beside Albert's marble bust to mourn his recent death. On the right-hand side a photograph of the Prince of Wales and his wife Princess Alexandra announces the bright future of the royal family despite this recent loss. The young couple's double portrait corresponds to that of the royal couple on the left. In both photographs the wives turn lovingly to their husbands. They frame, by means of their mirrored posture, the entire composition of the four carefully arranged cards. The page can be interpreted from top to bottom as well, with Albert's carte as the exclusive single portrait of the page taking the top and central position.¹⁷⁸

Lady Jocelyn adopted the rhombic structure introduced on the album's opening page for a photocollage placed on one of the following album pages (Fig. 63). It includes the portrait photographs of nine friends and family members. Cut in oval form, the photographs are sorted into square pockets, which evenly divide the basic geometric outline. Though today it is impossible fully to discern the visual logic of this arrangement, as most of the persons included can no longer be identified, it is clear that Lady Jocelyn carefully assembled these photographs to illustrate personal connections between the



61. Lady Mary Georgina Filmer, *Lady Filmer in her Drawing Room* (detail), 1863-1868, albumen prints, collage, and watercolor. Art Institute Chicago (Ref. Nr. 2018.1)

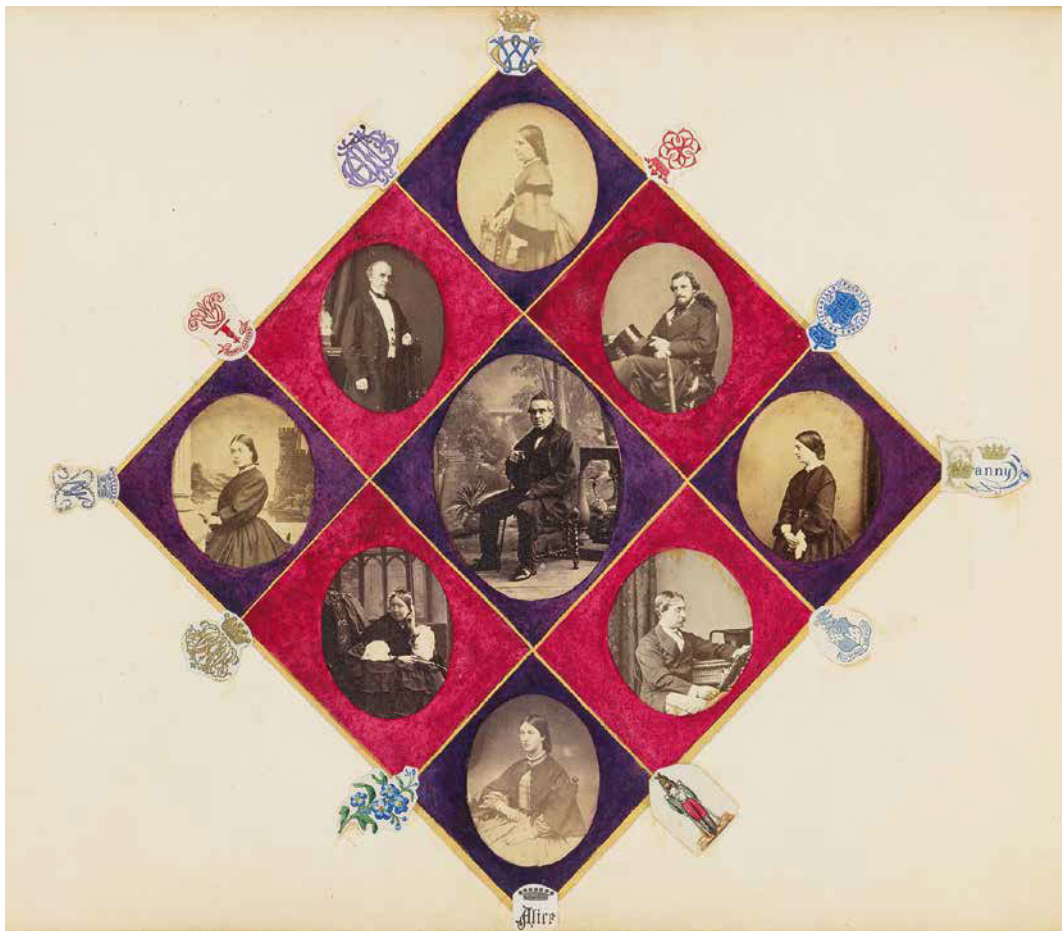
¹⁷⁸ It is from this photograph that Albert's profile was subsequently isolated and used for innumerable forms of memorabilia—most prominently the bracelet that Victoria wore in her state portraits. Hering also made use of this portrait for his composite history lesson. *The Kings and Queens of England: From the Conquest to Queen Victoria* (1862).



62. Cecilia Mary Jocelyn (née Elliot), after John Jabez Edwin Mayall, William Bambridge, and Ghémar Frères, *Album page*, 1860s, 26 × 35 cm, from *The Jocelyn album: Photographs compiled by Cecilia Mary Jocelyn*, 1. National Portrait Gallery Archive, London, Album 59

members of the group, and to narrate the story of a shared life.¹⁷⁹ Each of the rhombus's peaks is occupied by a young woman, peers of Lady Jocelyn, who shared the pastime of collecting and arranging photographs. Her own interest in photographic collages was probably prompted by her sister-in-law, Frances Elizabeth Jocelyn, Viscountess Jocelyn (née Cowper, 1820–1880). It is quite possible that the photograph on the righthand side is Viscountess Jocelyn's portrait, labeled with her nickname, "Fanny." Viscountess Jocelyn was a talented amateur photographer in her own right, who integrated photographs of her own into her album collages. Her interest in photography was closely aligned to that of the royal couple. She had served as one of the trainbearers at the coronation of Queen Victoria, and as a bridesmaid at the royal wedding in 1840. After marrying Robert Jocelyn in 1841, she became a Lady of the Bedchamber to the queen later that year and held that honorific position until 1867. In 1861, Viscountess Jocelyn

179 The focus on narrative by means of grids and geometrical figures as structuring devices is underscored by Geoffrey Batchen. Batchen, "Vernacular photographies," 265. Batchen refers specifically to the symmetrically organized pages in the album of Lady Filmer, which I have neglected in favor of her conversation piece collages. *Ibid.*, 266.



63. Cecilia Mary Jocelyn (née Elliot) after various photographers, collage of watercolor and albumen silver prints, 1860s, 26 × 35 cm, from *The Jocelyn album: Photographs compiled by Cecilia Mary Jocelyn*, 6. National Portrait Gallery Archive, London, Album 59

joined the Photographic Society of London, and accompanied the Queen and Albert in viewing a Society exhibition. The making of photography, its enjoyment, and its collection all point to these personal ties to the monarchy.¹⁸⁰

In imitation of the velvet casing for early daguerreotypes Lady Jocelyn set some of the portraits atop a crimson background. Prince Albert's first photographic portrait of 1842 was placed in such a box, which was reminiscent of a jewelry case to underscore the silver plate's singularity and uniqueness. By invoking earlier photographic technology, Lady Jocelyn aesthetically transformed the easily reproducible paper prints she used in her collage into precious originals. What is more, she decorated the outer frame of the collage with family crests cut out from the letterheads of correspondence she had received from her social set. If we assume that the respective coats of arms correspond with the persons captured in the photographic portraits, Lady Jocelyn underscored with

180 See Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women*, 200. In common with other aristocratic amateur women photographers, Jocelyn assembled photographic albums with her own as well as commercially bought photographs. Isobel Crombie, "Jocelyn, Lady Frances," in *Encyclopedia of Nineteenth-Century Photography*, Vol. II, ed. John Hannavy (New York: Routledge, 2008), 775–777; Isobel Crombie, "The Work and Life of Viscountess Frances Jocelyn: Private Lives," 40–51.



64. Richard Bull (collector), *Coins and medals from the reign of Philip and Mary (1553-1558), 1769-1774*, cut out of one or more previous intaglio prints, from *Extra-illustrated Biographical history of England, from Egbert the Great to the Revolution*, Vol. 2, London?, publisher not identified, between 1769 and 1774, 174. The Huntington Library, San Marino, California (acc. no. 283000:2:147)

this detail her personal and intimate relationship with each of the women included in the page. Jocelyn's design emphasizes the prolonged activity of selecting, assembling, and decorating photographic arrangements, which are meant to be viewed together in the drawing room. It invokes precious, small-scale objects that are meant to be held, touched, and closely scrutinized. What is more, such objects mediate the physical closeness between senders and receivers. The letter was written by one person and read by another, the album was put together by one woman to be looked at by a circle of friends, and of course the *carte-de-visite* photograph, which "took" the physical likeness of a person, could be held and handled by someone else. The shared social space that was circumscribed by these activities might be virtual, but was reified in every instance of physical involvement with the album by each person interacting with it.¹⁸¹

I have pointed out that the album makers' continued reference to the painterly genre of the conversation piece referenced both visual contemporaneity and traditional pictorial hierarchies. In this vein, Lady Jocelyn's imitation of the composite format can be interpreted in two directions as well. On the one hand, she was knowingly and humorously referring to the aesthetics of contemporary

composite *cartes de visite*. These cards were often at the low end of the quality spectrum of commercial photography, offering entertaining and frequently far-fetched compilations of mass-produced, readily available photographic images. On the other, the strictly geometrical and carefully constructed handmade page designs ennobled this humble format by invoking, in the context of the private album, earlier and highly acceptable practices of collecting and arranging paper prints.

The pastime of "grangerizing" or "extra-illustration," for example, counted among the "polite accomplishments" of the eighteenth century (Fig. 64). This practice, of add-

181 Various authors have emphasized the many visual allusions to touch and physical handling in these collages. See e.g. Crombie, "The Work and Life of Viscountess Frances Jocelyn," 40–51; Di Bello, *Women's Albums*; Batchen, *Vernacular Photographies*. I disagree, however, with the gendered bias of their assessment.

ing to a written account of historical events the appropriate visual sources in the form of cut-out prints, received its name from the British biographer and print collector James Granger, who published his *A Biographical History of England* in 1767. It is a history of England from Egbert the Great (802–839) to the Glorious Revolution (1640–1660), and features portraits and biographical data of important personas. Granger was the first to propose an encyclopedic system for the organization and systematization of English history in epochs, and of English society according to classes.¹⁸² The transformation of history from biography to “system” inscribed disparate parts of society into a hegemonic order. This order was enacted and verified by everyone who participated in the pastime of “grangerizing.” By creating an illustrated history through informed selection and acquisition, collectors entered into an informed dialogue and exchange. Participation in this discourse was only possible, of course, with the appropriate level of education and substantial financial means.¹⁸³ Like any other form of collecting, such as numismatics or print collecting, grangerizing was thus also a form of self-expression and representation. During the 1860s female members of the aristocracy referred back to this culture of visual ordering, which had been at the core of gentlemen’s pastimes.¹⁸⁴

A century earlier, both the conversation piece and the grangerized history had been utilized to formalize, codify, and strengthen a conservative social order. In their attempt to provide completeness and regularity, both illustrated the growing anxiety and uncertainty of their patrons in the face of dynamically changing social developments.¹⁸⁵ The fact that aristocratic photo album designs reference painterly genres as well as modes of collecting indicates that this anxiety was far from resolved by the mid-nineteenth century. Informed by such conventions of representation, the communal practice of collecting photographs and viewing albums played an important part in the visual confirmation of a social order that could no longer be taken for granted.

182 See Luc Pelz, “Engraved Portrait Heads and the Rise of Extra-Illustration: The Eton Correspondence of the Revd James Granger and Richard Bull, 1769–1774,” *The Volume of the Walpole Society* 66 (2004): 1–161; Robert R. Wark, “The Gentle Pastime of Extra-Illustrating Books,” *The Huntington Library Quarterly* 56, no. 2 (Spring 1993): 151–165; Iain Pears, *The Discovery of Painting: The Growth of Interest in the Arts in England, 1680–1768* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1988); John Brewer, “Cultural Production, Consumption and the Place of the Artist in Eighteenth Century England,” in: *Towards a Modern Art World*, ed. Brian Allen (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1995), 7–25.

183 The pastime of extra-illustration had considerable economic impact. Print-sellers began to produce prints specifically for extra-illustrated works. Robert A. Shaddy, “Grangerizing: One of the Unfortunate Stages of Bibliomania,” *The Book Collector* 49, No. 4 (Winter 2000): 535–546. Critics lamented that extra-illustrators dismembered books to re-contextualize engravings bound into them.

184 This also explains why the keeping and decoration of a photo album is not, as many authors have determined, solely a female pastime in aristocratic circles. Albums of male aristocrats with equally delicately painted frames and backgrounds seem to answer to these traditions of collecting. See for example the albums of Edward Charles Blount (HRC, 964:0043:0001) or Henry Augustus Brudenell-Bruce, 5th Marquis of Ailesburg (HRC, 964:0546:0001–0088). Douglas R. Nickel, “From the Manor House to the Asylum: The George Cowper Album,” *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies* 31, no. 1 (2005): 56–67, 93–94.

185 Marcia Pointon, *Hanging the Head*, 53–78, 159–175.



65. Cecilia Mary Jocelyn (née Elliot), after Disdéri, John Jabez Edwin Mayall, Camille Silvy, and Unknown, *Collage of 101 figures*, 1860s, collage photographs, 33.9 × 26.2 cm, from *The Jocelyn album: Photographs compiled by Cecilia Mary Jocelyn*. National Portrait Gallery Archive, London, Album 59 (acc. no. Ax129160)

The potential, if unintended, subversiveness in this game of visual references becomes apparent in another of Cecilia Mary Jocelyn's photocollages (Fig. 65). In this case she apparently dismissed all strictures of design and organization embedded in traditional forms of collecting. The collage fills an entire album page. It contains cut-out figures and faces of Jocelyn's social circle in a visual totality. To achieve a rectangular

shape, which imitates both the format of the album page and that of a single *carte de visite* photograph, Jocelyn filled in the background with dark green watercolor.

Clearly the crowded page is inspired by the commercial composite *cartes de visite* of the mid-nineteenth century, rather than by the learned lessons of eighteenth-century print collecting. As Henry Hering's *The Kings and Queens of England: From the Conquest to Queen Victoria* (1862) illustrates, producers of commercial composites marketed such cards as encyclopedic picture puzzles. The cards challenged their viewers to recognize, with a magnifying glass in hand, the faces assembled, and the historical or social narratives offered, on their surface.¹⁸⁶ They generated attraction by assembling a spectacular number of individual portraits on their tiny surface, and by providing apparently complete visual documentation of the respective groups they presented. The staggering number of tiny heads combined on one card showcased photography's technological possibilities as well as the novel opportunities for representation that came with them.

A composite *carte de visite* produced in 1863 by the Irish photographer Frederick Holland Mares shows how this aim could go awry when technological advancement canceled out content (Fig. 66). The image's caption advertises the card as a collection of "upwards of five hundred photographic portraits of the most celebrated personages of the age" advising that with help of a magnifying glass "every portrait will be seen perfect [*sic*]." Mares was at pains to construct a comprehensible internal structure for his carpet of tiny black and white heads assembled on the card. The portraits of the royal family presented at its center are visually separated from the surrounding figures by means of a decorative frame. Victoria's and Albert's heads, again reprints of Mayall's



66. Various photographers, published by Ashford Brothers & Co, *Upwards of five hundred photographic portraits of the most celebrated personages of the age*, 1863, albumen *carte-de-visite*, 9.8 × 6.2 cm. National Portrait Gallery, London (acc. no. NPG x139661)

186 As a side note, Bull's extra-illuminated version of Granger's *History* consists of an unwieldy 35 volumes, covering c. 800 years, a much shorter timeframe than Hering's little card.

original 1861 series, turn toward each other. The Crown Prince and Alexandra mirror Victoria and Albert, while the royal couple's other children surround the two couples. Group portraits included in regular order in the upper and lower segment of the card also stand out due to their white borders.

These internal structuring devices are thwarted, however, by the overall impression of visual similarity. Some of the heads included in the composite come to the foreground because of their respective size or contrasting hue, but this formal hierarchy does not correspond to an overarching pictorial logic. The presence of the royal family apparently confirms the integrity of the group assembled on the card. But its members were celebrated for very different reasons — scientific brilliance, a position in politics, social engagement, outstanding talent as a musician or actor, or just exceeding beauty—and the “limitation” of their number to a staggering five hundred demonstrates the relative uncertainty and instability of their shared status.

Mares's “celebrated personages of the age” illustrates exactly the elite that the historian Carlyle had feared, and that the critic Andrew Wynter saw realized in the *carte de visite*: an elite defined first and foremost by the commercial success of their visual representations.¹⁸⁷ Nonetheless, the commercial success of such a card seems to be based on a general interest in images that provide orientation by visually determining who is centrally important for contemporary society. Hering and Mares made use of the option to reproduce and recontextualize paper-based photographic prints in order to offer their customers different versions of that social order. They included Victoria and her family in their composites to visualize a history of the British monarchy on the one hand and to compile a brand new, contemporary elite on the other. In both cases Victoria was the necessary center of the group; she determined its contemporary entitlement. But the photographers' recontextualization of the royal portraits put their original, representational function to the test. In Hering's case, Victoria's historically confirmed royal position was integrated into the contemporary ideal of femininity and domesticity. In Mares's case, the royal couple was positioned at the center of a group of celebrities whose common denominator was the marketing success of their commercial photographic portraits.¹⁸⁸ In these commercial composites, then, the general wish for social order becomes palpable in the guise of a marketable asset.

In contrast, Lady Jocelyn's adaptation of the format of the composite betrays her personal point of view. Her collage of no less than 101 figures combines photographs of different print hues and paper quality, and portraits of varying sizes. Many of these photographs were not mass-produced items for sale, but rather self-made. They demon-

187 Wynter, “*Cartes de Visite*,” 135. See Chapter 1.

188 See also John Plunkett, “Celebrity and Community: The poetics of the *carte-de-visite*,” *Journal of Victorian Culture* 8, no.1 (2003): 77. Di Bello maintains, that as “[T]he monarchy's relationship to its subjects was becoming more and more mediated through mass-produced images, ... the role of Royalty was in the process of being simultaneously reduced and elevated to that of official national celebrity.” Di Bello, *Women's Albums*, 134.

strate Jocelyn's own and her social circle's photographic skills. Jocelyn combined these personal photographs of her family and friends with those of famous actors, artists, and writers, political figures, as well as European and British aristocracy.¹⁸⁹ Her collage offers no internal structure and no formal correspondence between two photographs. No image is centrally located and there is certainly no status perspective.

The difference in scale is of importance as well. In order to fit all images onto the standard 10 × 6 cm format of the readymade cards, Hering and Mares had to shrink them to miniature size. The basis for Jocelyn's collage were the diverse original formats of the photographs she owned. As a result, the mass-produced carte de visite portraits of Victoria and Albert that she included in her design, sourced again from Mayall's royal series, were comparatively minuscule (Figs. 67–68). Wedged between contemporary celebrities and anonymous family members, they are easily overlooked amongst the larger, self-made photographs of Jocelyn's own social circle.

On the first page of her album Jocelyn introduced the royal family as the necessary framework for the existence of the social group assembled in her album. With this she visually reiterated the necessary confirmation of the aristocracy's status by means of its acknowledgment through the monarchy. In the composite, which is bound into the same album, the royal couple was given the role of material and semantic filler, a necessary background for Jocelyn's own social circle. Even though the two album pages feature radically different designs, then, the role awarded to the monarchy remained quintessentially the same. The queen and her family personified the conventional social hierarchy that awarded Jocelyn her own elite position. They were framework on the one hand, background on the other, as their presence marked and confirmed the space designated for the aristocracy. The impression of a personal construction of this social order is further substantiated by the fact that Jocelyn's collages were permanently glued to an album page and not meant for any further distribution. In stark contrast to Hering's and Mares's portable pocket-sized photomontages, her audience was limited to family and friends, with whom she shared the pastime of collecting and viewing photo albums.

Jocelyn's adaptation of the composite format demonstrates how proposals for social order, as marketed in commercial photography, were digested by the aristocracy in their



67. Unknown photographer, *Queen Victoria*, 1860s, albumen carte-de-visite, 8.5 × 5.5 cm. National Portrait Gallery, London (acc. no. NPG x36266)

189 The actress Adelaide Ristori (1822–1906) is among those displayed, as are, for example, the actor and playwright Horace Wigan (1815/16–1885), Giuseppe Garibaldi (1807–1882), and Napoleon III, Emperor of France (1808–1873) with his wife Eugénie (1826–1920).



68. John Jabez Edwin Mayall, *Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha*, May 1860, albumen carte-de-visite, 8.2 × 5.6 cm. National Portrait Gallery, London (acc. no. NPG Ax24143)

own conceptions of social order. The album pages of Lady Milles, Lady Filmer, and Lady Jocelyn give evidence of how these women visually constructed their respective proximity to the royal court, no matter if their family was actually part of the royal household as in Jocelyn's case, if they enjoyed personal connections to individual members of the royal family like Lady Filmer, or if they could boast no relationship to the monarchy other than their title, such as Lady Milles. The women integrated photographs of themselves and the royal family into skillfully crafted collages. They invoked the historical genres of the conversation piece and grangerized history, and simultaneously acknowledged contemporary adaptations of these time-honored genres of portraiture by commercial photography. With this, they playfully, offhandedly, but nonetheless forcefully confirmed to each other, as members of the same social circles and viewers of the same photo albums, their prominent social position—a position which, as Carlyle's broadside against the "non-working" aristocracy attests to, had become increasingly contentious by the mid-nineteenth century.

In their albums, the aristocratic women framed their lives as screened off and fundamentally different from the reality of

the broad majority. They bracketed the actual dynamics of society that they were exposed to, dynamics that became apparent in commercial composite cartes like Mares's, where celebrity status evidently trumped hereditary title. In their page designs, their spaces of socializing—the album, the drawing room, and estate—were presented as devoid of any conflict. The photo albums illustrate the aristocratic community's work to delimit themselves as a class, unofficially warranted and appointed by the monarchy. At the same time, these spaces were updated and presented, by means of the photographic medium, as influential platforms of contemporary life. When viewed together, the aristocratic photo albums show a remarkable commonality of motifs and subjects. Recurring cartes de visite of members of their social group, assembled on hand-drawn estate lawns and in watercolor drawing rooms, evoke a virtual space of interaction spanning geographic distances to include and confirm a common social circle. The women's shared playing field was demarcated by their photographic practices, their making, handling, keeping, and sharing of photographs. Lady Milles's, Lady Filmer's, and Lady Jocelyn's photocollages were no isolated acts of personal expression, but rather a shared practice, adding up, as Kathy Siegel put it, to a "collective self-portrait" of aristocratic women in Victorian England.¹⁹⁰

190 Siegel, "Society Cutups," 14. Higonnet also understands album-making as an act of self-fashioning verified by mutual scrutiny. Higonnet, "Secluded Vision," 25.

From my examination of individual album page designs, two observations are of particular importance. First, the social group defined in the photo album was not only represented by means of their respective portraits, but also by the skills of their owners in the decoration of their album, and the forms, spaces, and media of representation invoked. As an object of “polite conversation” in the aristocratic drawing room, the album displayed its maker’s awareness of conventions of collecting, her knowledge of formats of portraiture, and her skills in drawing and watercolor. All of these activities were acceptable pastimes for leisured ladies and confirmed the shared social space of the elite community assembled on the album pages and in the drawing rooms of country estates. Second, the album’s semantics of social distinction were regularly underscored by the integration of the royal family. Due to the photographic medium’s paper base, different spaces could be folded into one another quite literally—the portable photo studio at Buckingham Castle was integrated into Lady Milles’s parkland at Lees Court; a private image of the Prince of Wales was cut out to illustrate his regular presence in Lady Filmer’s drawing room; Lady Jocelyn’s social circle was materially and semantically completed with the help of Victoria’s and Albert’s mass-produced likenesses. The recontextualization of royal portraiture suggested the physical presence of royal authority amongst these respective circles, and visually confirmed the prominent social status of the aristocracy and landed gentry. The pictorial narratives produced on the pages of the aristocratic albums thus presented Britain’s social hierarchy as self-evident and natural, when in fact it was actually under intense scrutiny and restructuring.

The dissemination of royal photographic portraits did not stop short at the threshold of the manor houses of this social elite, however. Victoria’s photographic image was just as present in the drawing-rooms and photo albums of a constantly broadening consumer base. In the following chapter I will examine what role the queen’s photograph played in the self-representation of those British citizens whose life was at an undeniable and unbridgeable distance from the royal court, and in what ways her commercial photographic portrait was utilized, as I will argue, to define and confirm shared values of that fuzzy and ever-widening social group that, by the mid-nineteenth century, came to be called “the people.”



THE QUEEN AND PRINCE CONSORT.

3 Family in the Drawing Room

Carte de visite consumption skyrocketed during the 1860s, as the fashion quickly caught on amongst an ever-widening spectrum of society. This card is one of many thousand copies of a popular double portrait produced by the photographer Mayall, who captured Victoria and Albert as a respectable upper-middle-class couple (Fig. 69). During the late 1860s and the 1870s, photographs that placed Victoria and Albert in the same visual register as other consumers of photography, by presenting them in contemporary dress in a studio setting invoking their private home, were among the most successfully marketed images in Britain. Today, various versions of Mayall's double portrait can be found in Victorian photo albums, or as single cards, in archives the world over. Another print of this image was placed on the last page of the family album of a Mrs. Lewis Percival, of whom we now know little more than her name (Fig. 70). Here, Victoria and Albert are positioned at the center of a collection of contemporary celebrities. An equally popular photograph of the same series shows Albert still wearing his top hat and walking stick, attributes that designate him as a drawing-room guest (Fig. 71).¹⁹¹ We previously encountered this version in the anonymous, mass-produced composite carte *The Roayl Family* discussed in Chapter 1. The double portrait was also stuck into a pocket on the first page of an anonymous family photo album that is in the collection of the Harry Ransom Center in Austin, Texas. In contrast to the aristocratic albums discussed in the last chapter, albums like this, with one, two, or four prefabricated image-pockets on each page, were readymade products created for the broadening consumer base of photography. As soon as these mass-produced albums entered the market, aristocratic interest in the photographic album as a medium of self-representation declined rapidly. As cartes de visite, Victoria and Albert now could be integrated into any group gathered on the respective album pages, and into the social contexts in which these albums were presented.

69. John Jabez Edwin Mayall, *Queen Victoria; Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha*, February 1861, hand-colored albumen carte-de-visite, 6.6 × 5.3 cm. National Portrait Gallery, London (acc. no. NPG Ax46717)

191. Asa Briggs writes of the top hat: "If you were a real gentleman, therefore, you knew precisely when and to whom to doff it and when to place it by your side... You had to carry it to the drawing room, of course, when you were visiting, for the caller, as books on manner put it, had to demonstrate that he was privileged in being able to pay his respects." Briggs, *Victorian Things*, 266.

The novel opportunity to include a photographic likeness of the queen into one's own private space enhanced public interest in the royal "home," a demand that commercial photography was quick to satisfy. This composite card assembles the representative interiors of Buckingham Palace and Windsor Castle on its surface (Fig.72). The rooms are arranged in a regular grid-like structure. Each corner is decorated with tiny photographic portraits of the room's royal inhabitants, whom you might imagine sitting on a sofa in the "Gold Drawing Room" or gathering around the marble mantelpiece in the "Reception Saloon." Owners of the little card got a glimpse of the home of the royal family, a space generally inaccessible to them but made available visually by means of photography. The superimposition of representative rooms and royal persons imaginatively opened up this distant sphere of life.

Mayall's double portrait demonstrates another way to enhance the novel proximity to the royal family offered by photography. The image has been colored by hand. Due to this embellishment in post-production, both the Queen and Prince Consort sport a rosy complexion, and Victoria's lips are dyed a crimson red. Her checkerboard crinoline dress has received a purple bodice and stripes, and underneath Albert's waistcoat we catch a glimpse of the blue shoulder strap of the Order of the Garter. In living color, the royal couple seems ready to step out of their black and white studio background, to pay a visit to a friend's home and join the social circle assembled there.

Stock albums were commonly used either to display the extended family of their respective owners, or to collect photographs of the most prominent persons of the time. While this differentiation is not very tidy and the two functions were often combined in one album, the royal family plays an important role for the constitution of both groups. Members of the royal family regularly graced the first or last page of these albums, serving as veritable bookends for and confirmation of the assembly of persons on the pages between. The elaborate task of coloration was usually reserved for the



70. Mrs. Lewis Percival (née Isabella Agnes Draper Elliott) after various photographers, Album page with individual prints of royalty and society notables, c. 1850-c. 1899, albumen prints on album page, 43 × 33 cm, from *Photograph albums of Mrs. Lewis Percival*. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Special Collections (acc. no. 96.R.84, v. 1)

71. Unknown compiler after Southwell Brothers and John Jabez Edwin Mayall, *Album page with cartes-de-visite of Her Majesty The Queen and The Queen & Prince Consort*, c. 1858–1873, 14.6 × 21.8 cm, from *Oblong Brown Album: containing cartes from the 1860s of famous personalities*, 1. Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin (acc. no. 964:0462:0001-0002)

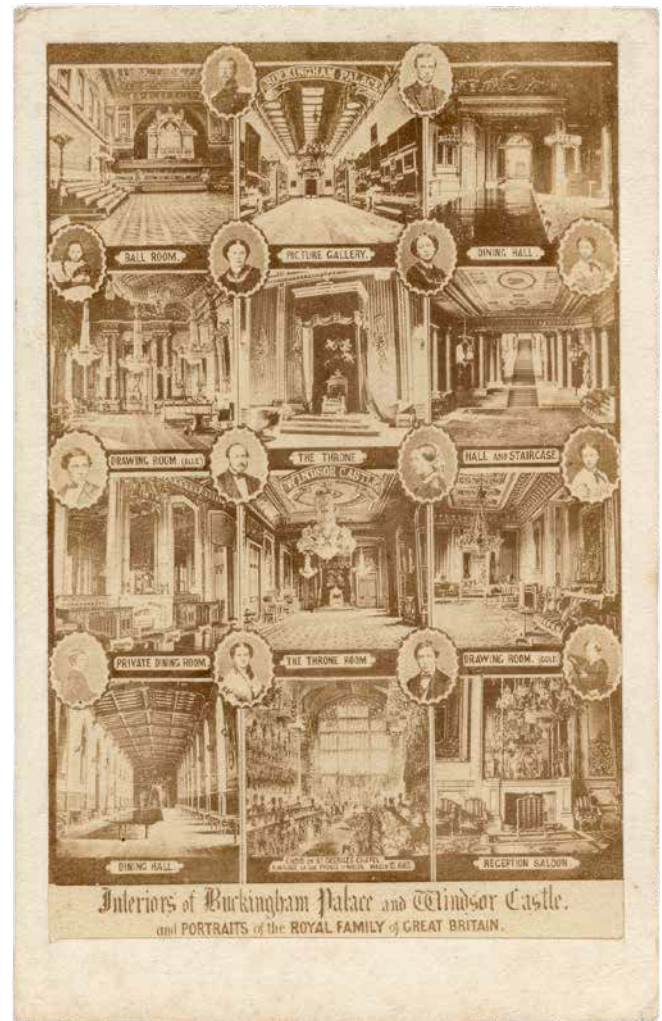


cartes de visite of the royal family. Often, Victoria, Albert, and their children were the only figures who received this additional attention (Figs. 73–76). This visual differentiation confirms the monarchy’s prominent social position, of course. Thanks to the added attention of a skilled retoucher, their images stand out against the uniformity of the conventional cards. The royals’ colorful likenesses among the mass of black and white portraits surrounding them can again be interpreted in two ways. On the one hand, the addition of color moves the little cards toward the register of portrait painting and invokes the genre’s traditional idealizing qualities and representational functions. On the other hand, the practice of coloring addresses what, from its outset, was perceived as the greatest short-coming of the medium of photography as a document of reality: its lack of color.¹⁹² Set off by their contrast to the surrounding black and white cartes de visite, the colored portraits of the royal family move prominently into the

192 E. g. Oliver Wendell Holmes, “The Stereoscope and the Stereograph,” *Atlantic Monthly*, vol.3, no.20 (1859): 747. Léon Vidal, Director of the Ateliers Photochromiques du Moniteur Universel, Paris, remarks in an article from 1877 that “the solution of the problem of the reproduction directly in the camera, or by contact of the exact colours of the object, has, however, made not the slightest advance.” Léon Vidal, “The Present State of the Question of the Reproduction of Colours by Means of Photography,” *The British Journal Photographic Almanac and Photographer’s Daily Companion for 1877* (London 1877): 126–127. On the representational power of color in photography see also my article “Social Theater. Photographic Portraits in Albums and Drawing Rooms,” exh. cat. *Exposure Time. Photographs from the collection Ruth and Peter Herzog*, eds. Paul Mellenthin and Olga Osadtschy (Basel: Christoph Merian Verlag, 2020), 256–267.

sphere of life, which they share with their audience. The irresolvable layering of these two interpretations—the royals' representational inaccessibility *and* their enhanced vividness—surely added to the attraction of such hand-colored photographic portraits.

It is unclear whether the colored double portrait of Victoria and Albert from Mayall's series was bought ready-made or lovingly embellished by its anonymous owner. During the 1860s and 1870s, both the labor of coloring popular cartes de visite for an upscale market and the pastime of embellishing one's privately owned photographs with colorful details were considered acceptable tasks for women.¹⁹³ Photo studios engaged women to do this work, just as they sought women laborers for the task of preparing and laminating albumen paper. But outside the sphere of photographic commerce, the coloring of photographs also gave women of different social backgrounds opportunities to demonstrate their industriousness and, if necessary, to earn a living. This illustration of the correct posture for the retouching and coloring of photographs is sourced from *The British Journal Photographic Almanac*, one of the many contemporary photography journals which began to emerge in the 1860s and 1870s (Fig. 77). These journals also advertised for the necessary equipment to do this work, for example the "The Professional Retouching Knife" or "The Talbot Retouching Colours."¹⁹⁴ The juxtaposition of "healthy" and "unhealthy" work inserts the task of retouching photographs into the larger mid-century debate on how new professions and activities might have adverse effects on the laboring body. Contemporary studies concerned with the biomechanics of back pain are illustrated with similar illustrations, which express both a moral lesson and a commercial cure. The texts' advice puts the onus for pathology on the indi-



72. Ashford Brothers & Co, after John Jabez Edwin Mayall, John & Charles Watkins, and Georg Emil Hansen, *Interiors of Buckingham Palace and Windsor Castle and Portraits of the Royal Family of Great Britain*, 1860s, albumen carte-de-visite, image 8.7 × 5.6 cm. National Portrait Gallery, London (acc. no. NPG x134741)

193 Women found advice on how to do this in the many ladies' journals and magazines that sprang up during the 1870s. See anon., "Colouring Photographs. No. I," *Lady's Newspaper and Pictorial Times*, no. 840 (January 31, 1863): 244. "A very profitable and pleasing occupation [for which the] delicate handling and more refined manipulation of the female hand has been found to be pre-eminently suited."

194 Advertisements, *Photography Annual* (1893): 474–475.

73. John Jabez Edwin Mayall, *Queen Victoria with her family*, 1863, hand-colored albumen carte-de-visite, image 7.2 x 5.7 cm. National Portrait Gallery, London (acc. no. NPG Ax46726)



74. Cornelius Jabez Hughes, *Prince Albert Victor, Duke of Clarence and Avondale; Queen Victoria*, 1864, hand-colored albumen carte-de-visite, image 8.6 x 5.8 cm. National Portrait Gallery, London (acc. no. NPG Ax46727)

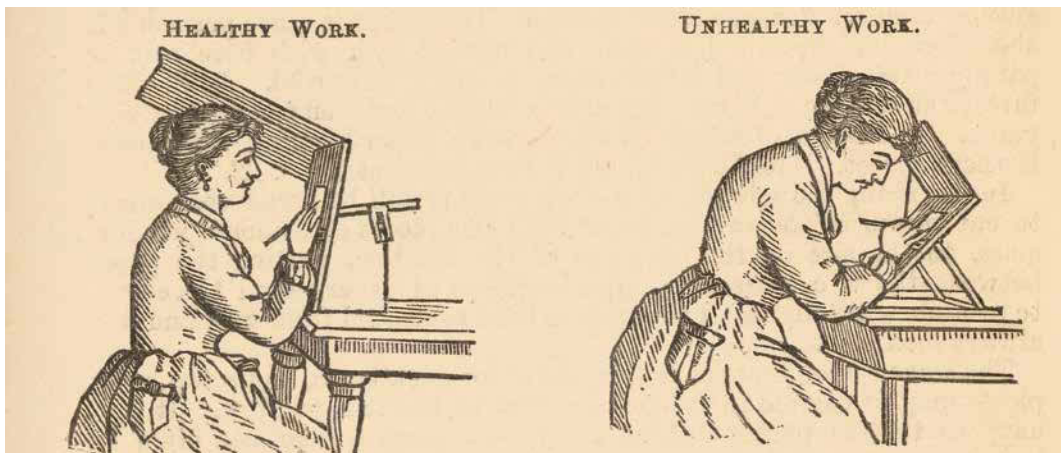


75. Charles Clifford, published by Cundall, Downes & Co, *Queen Victoria*, 1861, hand-colored albumen, carte-de-visite, 8.9 x 5.8 cm. National Portrait Gallery, London (acc. no. NPG x36265)





76. Unknown compiler after William Henry Mason, *Album page with cartes-de-visite of The Late Prince Consort and The Queen*, c. 1860–1863, 14.6 × 21.8 cm, from *Red morocco album: 100 cartes-de-visite of famous people*, 3. Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin, Gernsheim Collection, purchase (acc. no. 964:0657:0091 & 964:0657:0092)



77. *Healthy Work, Unhealthy Work*, n.d., from *The British Journal Photographic Almanac*, London: Henry Greenwood & C, 1877, 185. Kunst- und Museumsbibliothek der Stadt Köln (KMB/+ZB BRITIS.01: 1877)

vidual, defining pain or deformation as a consequence of a “bad habit.” They advertise a device or machine such as the retouching screen to straighten and align the working body, whether engaged in an activity of leisure or in making a living.¹⁹⁵

Decorative objects that came from the creative utilization of commercial photographs, such as fans or frames, were offered for sale at charity bazaars, in a similar vein as other “fancywork,” such as embroidery or crochet (Fig. 78). The first chapter of the book *Artistic Amusements*, from 1879, gives a detailed introduction to the coloring of

195 Vybarr Cregan-Reid, “Ecologies of Labour: The Anthropocene Body as a Body of Work,” 19: *Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, no. 26 (2018), 1–15, here 9–11.

HOUSEHOLD DECORATIVE ART.

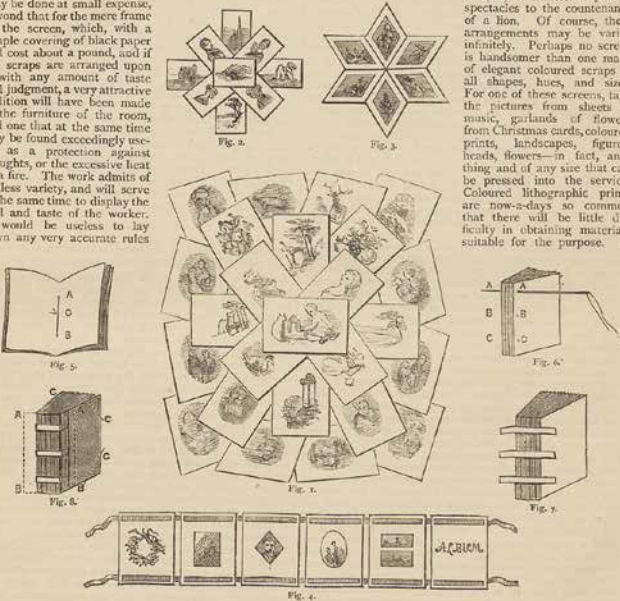
IV.—RECREATIONS FOR LONG EVENINGS.

MANY useful and amusing occupations can be recommended for long evenings, and among such occupations we reckon especially those which result in the production of something at once permanent and ornamental. It is our intention to describe several for the benefit of our readers.

Screen-making.—Preparing scraps to cover a screen is an employment that fills up a good deal of spare time, and entails no mental exertion, and may be done at small expense, beyond that for the mere frame of the screen, which, with a simple covering of black paper will cost about a pound, and if the scraps are arranged upon it with any amount of taste and judgment, a very attractive addition will have been made to the furniture of the room, and one that at the same time may be found exceedingly useful, as a protection against draughts, or the excessive heat of a fire. The work admits of endless variety, and will serve at the same time to display the skill and taste of the worker. It would be useless to lay down any very accurate rules

landscapes. All the corners and angles left uncovered by this arrangement, must be filled in with portions of pictures, for which purpose torn and damaged ones will come in useful. Another way of covering a screen is by cutting out the outlines of prints and sticking them on. Conic arrangements may be got in this way, as, for instance, by putting into a landscape small figures grouped in a valley as a picnic party, or climbing a mountain, or walking about the features of other figures much larger. One may cut out an umbrella, and place it as if held by

a duck, or transfer a pair of spectacles to the commencement of a lion. Of course, these arrangements may be varied infinitely. Perhaps no screen is handsomer than one made of elegant coloured scraps of all shapes, hues, and sizes. For one of these screens, take the pictures from sheets of music, garlands of flowers from Christmas cards, coloured prints, landscapes, figures, heads, flowers—in fact, anything and of any size that can be pressed into the service. Coloured lithographic prints are now-a-days so common that there will be little difficulty in obtaining materials suitable for the purpose. It



where so much must be left to taste, but the general instructions in this paper will, with ordinary good taste and a little practice, enable the reader to become quite proficient. There are different ways of covering a screen. The first and simplest, as regards preparation, is the sticking on of prints from which the margins have been removed. Pictures for such purposes may be collected from various friends and laid on according to taste. Sometimes all kinds of pictures, of all shapes and sizes, are arranged as if were pell-mell upon a screen, every cranny and nook being filled up. At other times they are arranged in studied confusion, as in Fig. 1. This requires materials all of one size, and is most fitted for

will be found desirable not to choose too many pictures representing the same class of subjects; there should be a judicious assortment of figure subjects, landscapes, animals, fruit, and flowers. Cut these all in outline with a sharp pair of scissors, but avoid touching the finer portions at first, such as the features of the face, or the rigging of a vessel; and only at the last moment cut out the minute details with a penknife. After the last fine cutting is done, you must not handle them more than is absolutely necessary, as they are very liable to tear. First arrange the coloured scraps, according to your taste, on a table, and afterwards gum every one of them slightly by one point, and then hang them temporarily on the screen to see the

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78. Household Decorative Art. IV.—Recreations for long evenings, 1869, woodcut, from Cassell's household guide: being a complete encyclopædia of domestic and social economy, and forming a guide to every department of practical life, London: Cassell, Petter, and Galpin, 1869, 129. Schlesinger Library, Harvard Radcliffe Institute, Cambridge, Mass. (HD 640 C344c, v.1)

photographs, advising that “[c]oloured photos of celebrated royal personages ... and other ‘lions’ of the day sell well at fancy bazaars if not too highly priced.”¹⁹⁶ Bazaars were established to fundraise for communal, social, and philanthropic institutions. Situated outside the political sphere and run for the most part by women, they constituted an influential semi-public space, in which values of industriousness, progress, and moral integrity were negotiated and presented as a model for society at large. The objects sold at charity bazaars allowed middle-class women to display their leisure as a civic duty, and to engage in a market that was socially and morally acceptable. They could present themselves as both leisured and industrious, productively applying their skills to the furthering of society’s social and moral evolution. At the same time, bazaars offered a source of income for the less well-to-do. Though remuneration for the objects entered into sale was handled discreetly, lower middle-class women regularly received payment for their products from the well-to-do women who managed the stalls.¹⁹⁷

The dual assessment of coloring as a leisured pastime on the one hand, and as a “profitable occupation” on the other points to the economic spectrum that the emerging middle class occupied. As one’s social position upon that dynamically developing

196 Anon., *Artistic amusements: being instructions for a variety of art work for home employment and suggestions for a number of novel and saleable articles for fancy bazaars* (London: The “Bazaar Office,” 1879), 8.

197 See Kathleen McCarthy ed. *Women, Philanthropy, and Civil Society* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001) and Andrea Geddes Poole, *Philanthropy and the Construction of Victorian Women’s Citizenship: Lady Frederick Cavendish and Miss Emma Cons* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014). The charity bazaar as a nineteenth-century institution that allowed middle-class women to exercise their creative and organizational skills outside the domestic sphere and to successfully raise revenue for their respective community has not yet received much scholarly attention outside the realm of literary studies.

spectrum was opaque, uncertain, and prone to change, it needed to be reconfirmed regularly and visibly. Photographs and their handling complemented and extended other signifying practices that were applied to this task. Dress, pastimes, or the decoration of the home, all made visible through photography, helped negotiate social affiliation and distinction, and imagine social order.

Designers and decorators such as Charles Eastlake, Lucy Orrinsmith, and H.R. Haweis differentiated in their writings between the more serious artistic skills of drawing and painting, which remained reserved for the elite circles of the aristocracy and gentry, and the decoration of the drawing room, a task they also deemed appropriate for members of the middle class. This differentiation demonstrates how creative agency was understood as a marker of social status, which needed to be recalibrated constantly in the face of increased social mobility.

The carte de visite replicated and at the same time revealed these signifying efforts. Different drawing rooms are conflated on its surface: the actual, three-dimensional drawing room as the prized asset of a newly built middle-class home; the ideal of a drawing room tastefully decorated to harmonize with the social standing of its respective owners; and the adaptation of both, reality and ideal, in the contemporary commercial photo studio. This photographed version was subsequently looked at and addressed as an item of distinction and decoration in the very drawing room of its owners.

In the following, the writings of Eastlake, Orrinsmith, and Haweis will serve as the basis for my examination of how ideas of social belonging were produced and debated through the furnishing and decoration of the contemporary drawing room. Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century this specific interior became an essential space of social interaction for a constantly growing segment of society. It acted as a stage for self-representation, a lesson in aesthetic education, and a guide to moral betterment. But if out of ignorance or carelessness home owners failed to master the drawing room's sophisticated vocabulary of taste, it could also turn into an embarrassing site of empty consumerism, tastelessness, and moral degradation. Homeowners had to tread a fine line between pursuing their respective social aspirations and at the same time projecting an image appropriate to their actual position. Contemporary critics regularly detected and bemoaned a broad gap between ambition and reality, as conflicting values of aristocratic gentility converged with middle-class respectability.

Declarations of taste, gentility, and adequate representation, as formulated in popular guides for the decoration of the drawing room, were perpetuated and reinforced in contemporary discourses on photography. Studios were furnished and their furnishing was judged according to the same "hints" and "lessons" offered for the embellishment of their customers' drawing-rooms in their own homes. What is more, studio photographs were displayed in the very space that they sought to represent. Organized in albums or frames, the portraits were supposed to further communal ties by providing an acceptable and satisfactory image of the family members and their relations gathering there.

Building on Eastlake's, Orrin Smith's, and H. R. Haweis's guides in taste, I will examine how the increased availability of the drawing room and its usage complicated the space's conventional function as a model environment for genteel sociability. The decoration of the drawing room was defined as a visible measure of a family's social standing. However, increased commercialization ran counter to this codification of gentility. This complication also became palpable in the contemporary photo studio. Due to photography's conventional reception as a document of the "real," studio owners were pressed to provide a convincing surrounding of genteel taste, in order to succeed in producing "truthful images" of respectability and distinction. However, critics maintained that this production of "truth" was seldom successful. On the contrary, the contrast between good taste and its supposedly "tasteless commercialization" became painfully obvious in the commercial *carte de visite*.¹⁹⁸

I will also shed light on the role ascribed to women in the mastering of the drawing-room's aesthetic codes. Nineteenth-century cultural authorities, some of whom will have their say in the coming pages, regularly asserted and elaborated on the confluence of the feminine and the domestic. The concept of the "home" provided an important framework for middle-class identity and experience. It allowed the illusion of a space apart from the contemporary world of commerce and its troubling impact on society's established order.¹⁹⁹ In the awarding to women of the questionable title "queens of the household," their confinement to the home as their sphere of influence was rhetorically recast as a prominent and powerful position.²⁰⁰

According to this prominent opinion, in making their home, women provided a model environment for respectable and moral living, which would have a positive impact on their family and guests alike. If they had "learned their lessons well," women would succeed in providing a comfortable environment that breathed individuality while still adhering to the inherent code, the "common sense," of social hierarchies.²⁰¹ Their drawing rooms functioned as spaces where the "truth" of social order was suc-

198 John Tagg has rightly pointed out that the camera played an enormously important part in the struggle around the production of the real and the true during the nineteenth century. It did not resolve that struggle, but rather participated in it, as photography's status as a documentation of reality, coupled with the multiple and at times opposing interpretations connected to photographs, added to and revealed truth to be a product of negotiations. Tagg, *The Disciplinary Frame*, 211.

199 Logan, *The Victorian Parlour*, 27.

200 Ruskin speaks of the queen of the household. Hermann Muthesius, whose treatise on English domestic culture of the nineteenth century is heavily indebted to Ruskin, describes the drawing room as "the mistress' throne room." Hermann Muthesius, *The English House* (1904–1905) (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 1979), 83. For Muthesius's discussion of Ruskin see also Hermann Muthesius, "Ruskin in deutscher Übersetzung," *Centralblatt der Bauverwaltung* 21, no. 35 (May 4, 1901): 219–221.

201 This term was used both affirmatively, by Orrin Smith, and dismissively, by Mill. See also Judith Flanders, *The Victorian House. Domestic Life from Childbirth to Deathbed* (London: Harper Perennial, 2003), 131–176.

cessfully negotiated.²⁰² The worrisome instability of contemporary society, diagnosed by Carlyle in *Past and Present* (1843), could be countered by the model of the home. However, precisely because a cornerstone of social order rested on the idea that “women’s place was in the home,” failure to fulfill this role was regarded as a potential threat to all of society. Women who created pretentious, tasteless, or “false” environments, or who outright refused to accept their role in the making of social order, could be dangerous. Women’s activities, from choosing a tasteful curtain to providing a beautifully decorated home or thoughtfully assembled photo album, were thus in need of constant guidance, monitoring and, if necessary, redirection. The position of the household queens as disciplined providers of exemplary order in their homes was embodied and symbolized by their actual queen, Victoria, who was newly available to them in living color.

The Paradox of the Drawing Room

In the context of the British court, the conventional understanding of the drawing room as the privileged space of a social elite was still accepted during the second half of the nineteenth century. Laurits Regner Tuxen’s large-scale painting of a drawing room organized by Queen Victoria upon the fiftieth anniversary of her coronation in 1887 shows the entire European aristocracy assembled in the Green Drawing Room at Windsor Castle (Fig. 79). Surrounded by her grandchildren, the queen, seated on a sofa, receives her illustrious guests. The furniture’s gilded mahogany frame and green silk damask upholstery match the room’s tapestries and golden wall stucco. Behind the sofa and in the center of both the painting and the depicted room stands Crown Prince Albert Edward. He has already symbolically taken his place as future king. It is the same room that served as the backdrop for Landseer’s intimate and domestic reinterpretation of the conversation piece in his painting *Windsor Castle in Modern Times: Queen Victoria, Prince Albert, Princess Royal* (1841–1843). In contrast to Landseer, however, Tuxen underscored the monumental size and splendid magnificence of the high-ceilinged representative space.

Tuxen fashioned Victoria’s profile after a popular and broadly disseminated photograph by W. & D. Downey (1886), which in turn was reminiscent of a representative state portrait painted by De Angeli in 1875 (Fig. 80). De Angeli’s portrait, a favorite of Victoria, graced the walls of Windsor Castle as well. Within a bit more than a decade, a painted portrait of the queen had informed a portrait photograph, which in turn

202 Whereas John Tagg, in his discussion of photography, focuses on novel institutions of truth-building as they were made possible by the medium of photography, such as the documentation of criminals or the definition of illnesses, the same work toward an agreed upon understanding of truth was being carried out on a much more local and private level, in the drawing rooms and photo albums of middle-class society. It addressed smaller groups, had no universal claim, but referred to the “common sense” agreed upon by so-called “majority opinion.”

79. Laurits Regner Tuxen, *The family of Queen Victoria in 1887*, 1887, oil on canvas, 165.7 × 226.1cm. Royal Collection, London (acc. no. RCIN 400500)



served as the model for a large-scale representative painting. This constant and reciprocal referencing of painting and photography solidified both media's claims as contemporary forms of royal representation.

Tuxen rendered the drawing room's sumptuous décor in vivid colors. The ladies present themselves in dazzling robes that stand out in yellow and red against the precious Persian carpet. Both the room and the guests, whom Tuxen portrayed on the basis of photographs as well, convey the exclusivity of this social event. But by the time Tuxen finished his painting, the term "drawing room" had long been used to designate quite different kinds of spaces as well. It had come to signify any space in the home where guests were entertained, notwithstanding the wide range of different homes depending on the financial means of their owners. The broad application of the term implied, at least in name, a parallel between the social ceremonies at court and those in a newly-built London row house.

The number of homeowners in Britain grew rapidly throughout the nineteenth century.²⁰³ By the end of the century a vast majority of the British population lived in neatly ordered terraced houses, which quickly had become the norm for urban dwell-

203 Home building increased more than sixfold between the middle and the end of the nineteenth century. Roderick Floud, *The People and the British Economy, 1830–1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 59–60. Floud estimates the total expenditure on housing in 1856 at 6 million pounds; by 1899, that figure had reached 38 million pounds. For more detailed information of the cost of living throughout the nineteenth century see Hoppen, *The Mid-Victorian Generation*, 336–337.

ings.²⁰⁴ From one neighborhood to another, these homes tended to be very similar to each other in layout, though they differed in the number and size of rooms, quality and quantity of architectural ornament, and orientation to the public street. Stylistic uniformity within a given development articulated and preserved social distinction by neighborhood, which was a significant feature of English patterns of urban life. Here again we see the broad spectrum of social groups that is regularly summed up with the term “middle class.” Though these homeowners did distinguish themselves by means of ownership, the most important common denominator was not a shared scale of wealth but rather the valuation of the home as the venue to put into practice the domestic ideal. Each terraced house constituted half of a symmetrical, double-pile Georgian house. A front door led into a hall running the length of the house, from which doors opened along one side, giving access to the various rooms.²⁰⁵ The terraced house included a drawing room as a rule. The architectural historian Hermann Muthesius noted in 1904–1905 that it “occurs in the smallest, as well as in the largest houses, and its function is the same at every level of society” (Fig. 81).²⁰⁶ The drawing room was first and foremost a representative space. It staged, by means of decoration and the social circles it hosted, the social position of its respective owners.²⁰⁷

As the success of the conversation piece throughout the eighteenth century illustrates, the concept of the drawing room originally had been associated with gentility: a set of personal attributes connoting elegance, good breeding, and social superiority,



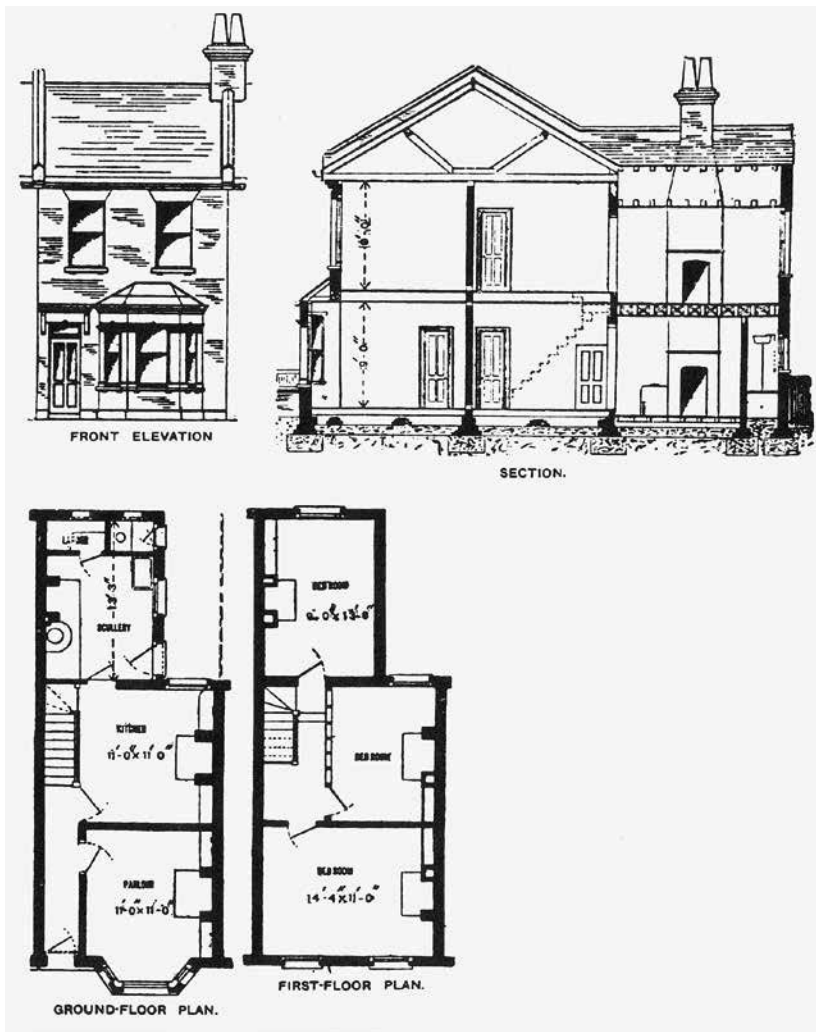
80. Alexander Bassano, *Queen Victoria*, 1887 (1882), carbon cabinet card, 13.7 × 9.7 cm. National Portrait Gallery, London (acc. no. NPG x38284)

204 For a history of the domestic architecture of the terraced house in England see Stefan Muthesius, *The English Terraced House* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1982). Architectural advice books published in the mid- to late nineteenth century reveal that these spaces were an important model for room-use planning even for modest housing structures aimed at middle- and lower-class families. See Katherine C. Grier, *Culture & Comfort: Parlor Making and Middle-Class Identity, 1850–1930* (Washington/London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997), 71.

205 Grier, *Culture & Comfort*, 71.

206 Muthesius, *The English House*, 83–84.

207 Judith Flanders, *The Victorian House*, 131. See also Elizabeth Langland, *Nobody's Angels. Middle-Class Women and Domestic Ideology in Victorian Culture* (Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press, 1995), 24–45.



81. £ 150 House at Plaistow, London, E., c. 1908, carbon print, from *Cheap dwellings*, comprising over two hundred plans, sections, elevations, details, and specifications of dwellings actually built at costs ranging from £ 75 to £ 300 each and upwards. Selected from "Building world", by Paul N. Hasluck, London: Cassell and Company, Limited, 1908, 21, reproduced in Stefan Muthesius, *The English Terraced House*, New Haven/London, 1982, 94

by definition beyond the reach of commerce. These qualities were communicated by means of a codified vocabulary of taste, which was spelled out in the decoration of the rooms and the social rituals performed in them. During the nineteenth century, as "Society" shifted from describing an exclusive circle of noble families to become a descriptive term for the entirety of the social stratum—dropping the capital "S" along the way—the drawing-room increasingly served as a stage for social mobility and self-representation.²⁰⁸ A growing share of society became able to invest in the mastering of the drawing room vocabulary. But as it became affordable to a growing consumer base, the drawing room's functionality as a social code suffered to some extent.²⁰⁹

An illustrative example of this dynamic is the matching suite. It references the concept of *regularité*, as it had been adopted in absolutist France from Renaissance precepts regarding the design and furnishing

of interiors, and was preserved as an aesthetic convention amongst the social and economic elite in Britain.²¹⁰ Queen Victoria's matching suite in the Green Drawing Room at Windsor Castle, immortalized by Tuxen and Landseer, followed this model.

208 Hoppen sees as one indicator of the dissolution of the elite circle of "Society" Queen Victoria's own "drawing rooms." The numbers of her guests increased by a factor of two-and-a-half between the 1840s and the 1880s, and their social composition hints at a slowly growing tolerance for members of the middle class who made their living in the professional and business worlds. Hoppen, *The Mid-Victorian Generation*, 319. See also Leonore Davidoff, *The Best Circles. Women and Society in Victorian England* (New Jersey: Rowman and Littlefield, 1973), 24–26.

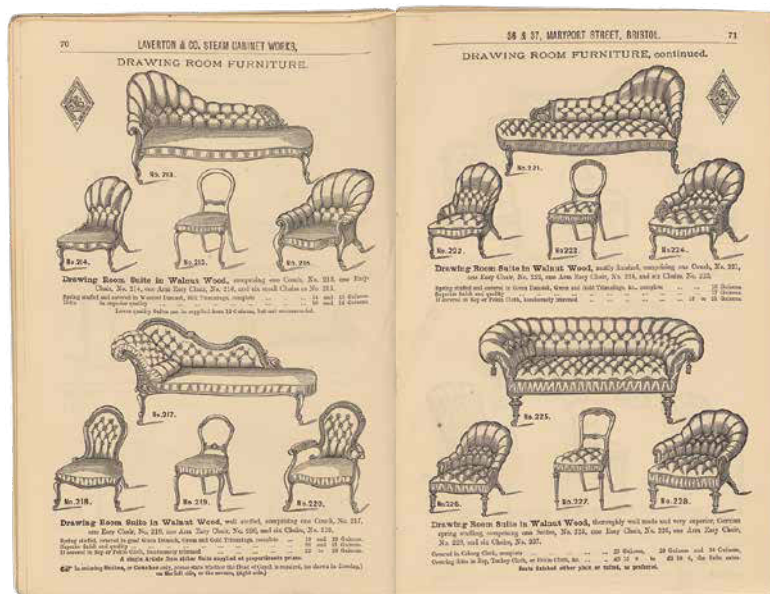
209 Drawing room decoration is often described as a language that needs to be mastered. Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York/London: The Macmillan Company, 1899); Grier, *Culture & Comfort*; See also Logan, *The Victorian Parlour*, 7.

210 Peter Thornton, *Seventeenth-Century Interior Decoration in England, France, and Holland* (1978) (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 103–104.

Originally commissioned by her father George V, the room's décor featured the finest furnishings and fittings of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century French origin.

During the nineteenth century, the matching suite went into mass production. It was sold to a broad segment of consumers as a marker of "good taste" and "genteel living." The standardized seven- or five-piece suite became a codified unit. In furniture manufacturing it constituted the foundation for the commercially available drawing room, generally including a tete (sofa), an upholstered armchair (a gentleman's chair), and four chairs with "brace" or "stuffed" backs and upholstered seats. These items were presented as basic requirements for the respectable home, available in a range of qualities and materials to fit different budgets.²¹¹

Contemporary sales catalogues of furniture factories, such as the Bristol-based Laverton & Co., or Benham & Sons and Silber and Fleming, both London manufacturers, provide insight into the growing market for such standardized drawing-room interiors.²¹² Laverton & Co., for example, advertised readymade drawing-room furniture ranging from 4-piece to 7-piece suites to accommodate the different room sizes of its customers (Fig. 82). The price list also provided estimates for the furnishing of homes ranging from four-room to twelve-room houses, at a cost of between 24 and 752 pounds.²¹³ The manufacturing firm Wallace Brothers illustrated its catalogue with model interiors (Figs. 83–84). A stately drawing room served as the model for more modest interiors for three-roomed or four-roomed houses. Though the distinction between the luxuriously furnished drawing room and its sparse middle-class counter-



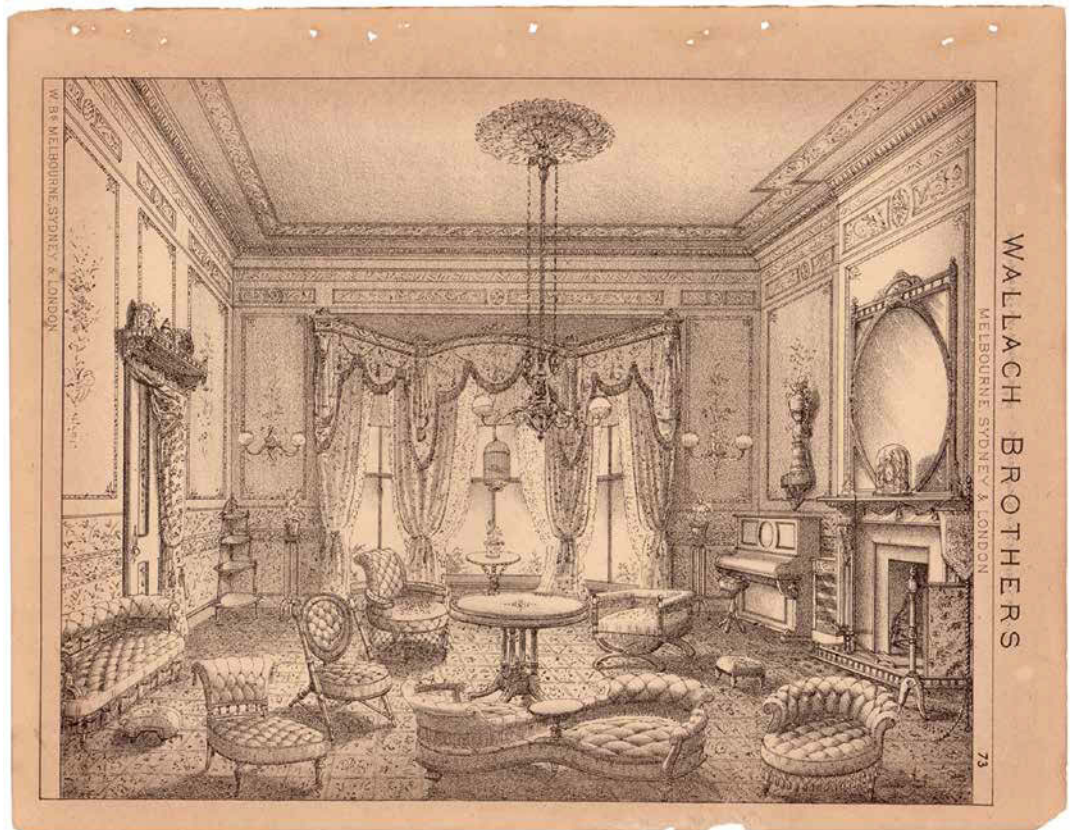
82. Laverton & Co., *Drawing Room Furniture*, 1875, engraving, page 27 × 35.5 cm, from *New illustrated catalogue of furniture and general price list*, Bristol: Laverton & Co., 1875, 70–71. Winterthur Library, Winterthur, Delaware (acc. no. NK2265 L39 TC)

211 During the 1870s, the majority of trade catalogues offered seven-piece suites. By the 1880s, the number of pieces in suites was commonly reduced to five, which reflects smaller houses of less prosperous consumers. See Kelly Graham, *Gone to the Shops: Shopping in Victorian England* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2008), 75–87. Pressure to conform often put struggling middle class families under financial strain. Contemporary magazines comment on the fact that aspiring families tended to live in sparsely furnished homes because all means were exhausted on the drawing room.

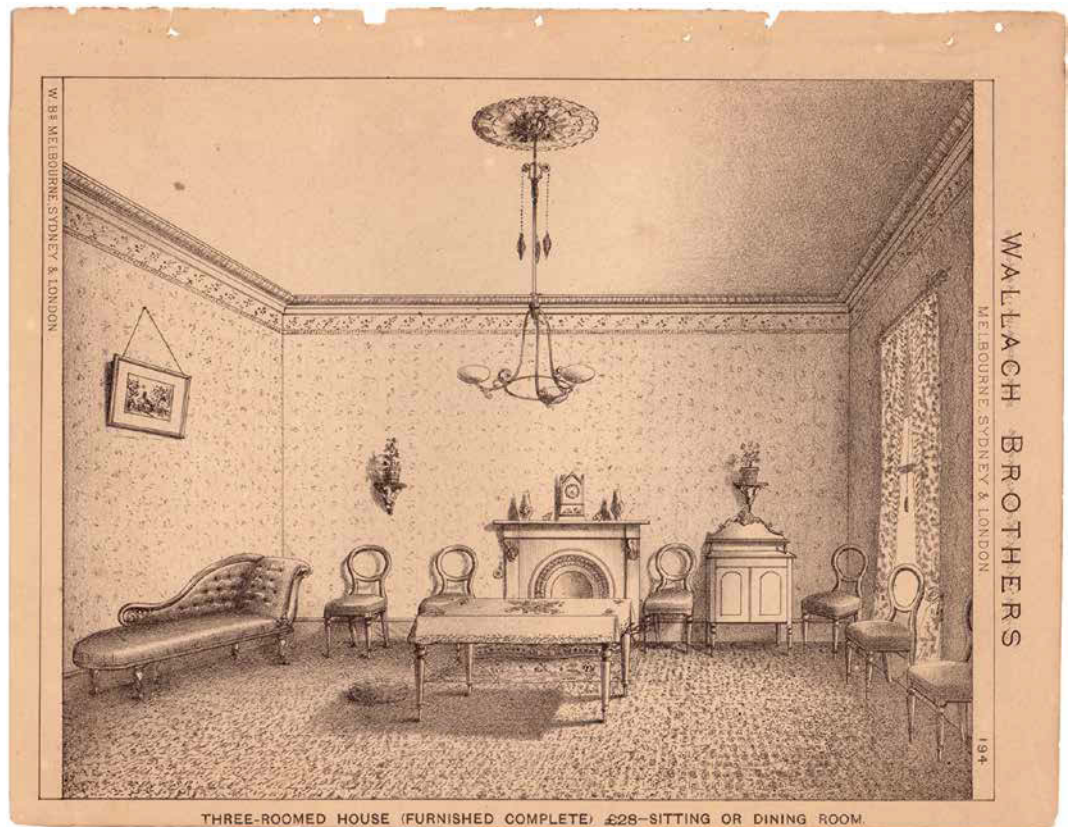
212 E.g. Laverton & Co., *New Illustrated Catalogue of Furniture and General Price List* (Bristol: Laverton & Co., 1875); Benham & Sons, *Manufacturing and Furnishing Ironmongers, Hot Water & Gas Engineers, Stove, Range & Bath Makers, Illustrated Catalogue* (London: Benham & Sons, c. 1868); Silber & Fleming, *Manufacturers, Importers, Warehousemen and Agents, Illustrated Catalogue* (London: Silber & Fleming, 1880).

213 Laverton & Co., *New Illustrated Catalogue*, 158–169.

83. Wallach Brothers, *Drawing Room Furniture*, 1884-1888, engraving, page 21.5 x 28 cm, from *Wallach Bros. design book: for every description of modern furniture of the styles in general demand*, Melbourne, Sydney, London: Wallach Bros, 1884-1888, 73. Caroline Simpson Library & Research Collection, Sydney (Stack TC 749.2048 WAL)



84. Wallach Brothers, *Three-Roomed House (Furnished Complete)* £28-Sitting or Dining Room, 1884-1888, engraving, page 21.5 x 27.8 cm, from *Wallach Bros. design book: for every description of modern furniture of the styles in general demand*, Melbourne, Sydney, London: Wallach Bros, 1884-1888, 194. Caroline Simpson Library & Research Collection, Sydney (Stack TC 749.2048 WAL)



parts is obvious, the differentiated advertisement still implied that an approximation of genteel living was possible by investing in a standardized suite along with fitting wallpaper, carpet, and curtains. Simultaneously, the matching suite showcased middle-class values such as economic stability, as owners demonstrated that they could afford to decorate their home as one unit, and did not have to assemble pieces of furniture over time.

In the mid-nineteenth century, then, not only the overarching concept of *régularité*, but also the aesthetics of French upholstery from the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries were widely imitated by British furniture manufacturers. Particularly in the middle ranges of the furniture trade, curved, ornamented, polished, and sometimes gilded chairs and lounges proved highly popular throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. A precise discrimination between the periods of Louis XIV, Louis XV, and Louis XVI did not seem particularly important, as the symbolic value of aristocratic opulence sufficed.²¹⁴ Detractors were quick to ridicule these designs as “tous le Louis,” pinpointing the stylistic ignorance of their adaptations.²¹⁵ Critics also pointed out the inferior manufacture and material quality of mass-produced furniture.²¹⁶ Veneers were used instead of hardwoods, and nails and glue, rather than dove-tailing, for construction. As a consequence, contemporary advice books for home decoration quickly dismissed both the matching suite and ornamental chair as signs of “bad taste.” What is more, in its worrisome visual similarity, mass-produced furniture, assembled in commercially marketed suites to furnish brand new row houses, was seen to undermine any effort to determine and represent social order.²¹⁷ Photography perpetuated the problem, as contemporary studio furnishing replicated these missteps,

214 Logan, *The Victorian Parlour*, 38–43. The same observation can be made in carpet design, where eighteenth-century French design (Aubusson/Savonnerie carpets originally made for the aristocracy) was reinterpreted for the British middle class.

215 See Haweis’s dismissive remarks about the “outrageous vulgarity” of the British version of the fashion of Louis XIV. Haweis, *The Art of Decoration*, 5; Orrinsmith, *The Drawing-Room*, 4–5. Similar criticism was voiced in contemporary design journals. In *The Furniture Gazette*, an anonymous author laments: “The furniture of an ordinary middle-class house is almost invariably a clumsy copy of the very worst period of French art in the reign of Louis XV, in which, as in all mere imitations, the best features of the style are caricatured and the defects exaggerated.” Anon., “Furnishing as a Fine Art,” *The Furniture Gazette* 2, no. 1 (April 19, 1873): 19–20, here 20. This sentiment is reiterated regularly throughout the 1870s and 1880s. See Anon., “Furniture Ornament,” *The Furniture Gazette* 6 (August 26, 1876): 120–121; R. Brook, “V.—Elements of Style in Furniture. Louis XIV.—No. XIV.,” *The Furniture Gazette* 23 (December 1, 1885): 500.

216 At the beginning of the nineteenth century, most new furniture was still bought from a cabinet-maker’s shop. Customers could order their furniture to be made according to drawings in a catalogue, or they could select from the ready-made pieces on display in the shop. By mid-century, furniture making, like tailoring, had turned into a partially sweated trade. Wholesalers took over the role as middlemen between worker and customer, supplying furniture stores with products at cheaper costs.

217 In the mid-1870s authors instead began to advocate “harmonious” rather than matching décor. Nonetheless, as trade catalogues, historical photographs, and surviving furniture verify, for middle-class customers the purchase of a matching suite never became unfashionable, a fact that was bemoaned by contemporary critics. E.g. Eastlake, *Hints on household taste*, 172; Haweis, *The Art of Decoration*, 4; Orrinsmith, *The Drawing-Room*, 93. See also Grier, *Culture & Comfort*, 188–189.



85. Leonida Caldesi, Sir Charles Lock Eastlake, early 1860s, albumen carte-de-visite, 8.8 × 5.7 cm. National Portrait Gallery, London (acc. no. NPG Ax11913)

which were then documented in each of the countless cartes de visite produced every day. The “falseness” and the “loss of truth” in home decoration that critics lamented brings to mind Carlyle’s earlier diagnosis of contemporary British society. Carlyle had argued that due to the two evils, democracy and capitalism, any clearly determined social structure based on traditional norms and values had given way to a superficial and morally corrupt social sphere. A few decades later, authorities in taste such as Eastlake, Orrinsmith, and Haweis set out to educate their audience in the art of making a home that, in adhering to the “common sense” of norms and values would mirror its owners’ best and “true” self, and in doing so stabilize society’s “natural” order.

Hints and Lessons

Eastlake’s, Orrinsmith’s, and Haweis’s writings, published in chronological succession between the mid-1860s and early 1880s, illustrate in an exemplary manner how the paradoxical and dynamically changing relationship between individual décor and mass production, and between personal aspiration

toward good taste versus its popular and apparently quite tasteless commercialization, was understood to reflect the make-up of contemporary society as a whole.²¹⁸ Eastlake published his *Hints on Household Taste* as a series of articles in the women’s magazine *The Queen* in 1865 (Fig. 85). Following their immense success, he had them assembled in a book by 1868.²¹⁹ Eastlake criticized mass-produced design, which he contrasted

218 Women were guided by the canons of behavior, taste, and style generated by cultural authorities of the early nineteenth century, such as Sarah Stickney Ellis, Hannah More, John Ruskin, John Eastlake, and William Morris. These author’s claims were readily adopted and reiterated by countless journals and magazines geared toward a female readership, whose number and reach grew most rapidly during the 1870s and 1880s, coinciding with the time when the cartes de visite reached a high point in popularity as well. *The Magazine of Domestic Economy*, first published in 1835, was later joined by publications such as *The Englishwoman’s Magazine* (1852) or Mrs. Peel’s *Book of Household Management* (1861). Rhoda and Agnes Garrett’s *House Decoration*, published first in 1875, had gone through six editions by 1879. Weekly publications such as *Queen: The Lady’s Newspaper* and *The Lady’s Own Paper* presented themselves as general-interest papers for upper-class women or women with upper-class aspirations. Magazines such as the *Englishwoman’s Domestic Magazine* were aimed at women from a lower income bracket. Articles in broadly read publications like *Cassell’s Household Guide* also adhered to the lessons formulated by Eastlake. See for example the article series “Principles of Good Taste in Household Furniture and Decoration.” Anon., *Cassell’s Household Guide, being a complete Encyclopedia of Domestic and Social Economy, Vol. 2* (London: Cassell, Petter, and Galpin, 1869), 9. W.J. Loftie’s series, “Art at Home,” was indebted to Orrinsmith’s advice as well.

219 The original articles were not illustrated, and Eastlake conceived the idea of recasting them with others he had contributed to the “London Review” so that they could appear in book form with his own drawings. The book was accepted and published with great success in 1868 by Longmans, Green and Company, London under the title *Hints on Household Taste, in Furniture, Upholstery and Other*

with the good taste and moral integrity of custom-made furniture and decoration. Orrinsmith, who during the 1870s worked as a tile painter, engraver, and embroiderer for the company *Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co.*, was a fervent advocate of Eastlake's concepts. Her book *The Drawing-Room: Its Decorations and Furniture* (1878) built on his study, but aimed at a socially more stratified audience. She provided advice on how to implement Eastlake's high aesthetic standards in households with more limited financial means.²²⁰ H.R. Haweis's *The Art of Decoration* was published in 1881. She spoke out against the rampant use of mass-produced furniture as well as against tasteless industrial adaptations of the "Aesthetic Movement," which had been championed earlier by Eastlake and Orrinsmith.²²¹

All three authors shared the conviction that decorating a home was of singular importance. For them it not only represented its inhabitants, but also impacted their character. As every-day surroundings, a home shaped its owners' perception of the world. The contemporary reality of uniform, mass-produced consumer objects consequently had detrimental effects on both personal involvement and general taste.²²² By giving the necessary "hints" or "lessons," the authors hoped to reorient the perception and self-identification of the contemporary individual, who was apparently misdirected by consumption, and to thereby support the aesthetic and moral integrity of society as a whole.²²³

The fact that the "middle class" was financially thriving in the mid-1860s, and that industrially manufactured furniture could be readily and relatively inexpensively purchased, gave Eastlake's *Hints* an urgent edge.²²⁴ He feared that many consumers could not distinguish the rare well-made and well-proportioned piece of furniture of modern manufacture from the many eyesores produced in countless numbers. Broadening his aesthetic assessment toward a moral statement, the author lamented that the uncomfortable and unaesthetic agglomerations of domestic furniture compiled in contemporary drawing rooms curtailed their owner's individual development as moral citizens and, what is more, provided a bad example for society at large.

Details. In the preface the author states that his object is "to suggest some fixed principles of taste for the popular guidance of those who are not accustomed to hear such principles defined."

220 Orrinsmith, *The Drawing-Room*. The book appeared in the *Art at Home Series*, which also included titles such as *The Dining-Room* by Mrs. Loftie; *The Bedroom* by Lady Barker; *Dress* by Mrs. Oliphant; *Domestic Architecture* by J.J. Stephenson; *Drawing and Painting* by H. Stacey Marks.

221 Haweis, *The Art of Decoration*.

222 Walter Benjamin would later take up this conflation of the modern environment filled with mass-produced items and the modern subject trained to perceive and judge the world accordingly in his fundamental critique of industrialized capitalist society. Benjamin, "Kleine Geschichte der Fotografie," 300–316. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction (1935)," in *Illuminations. Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968), 219–253.

223 Eastlake, *Hints on Household Taste*, 15.

224 The book was specifically aimed at the "large majority of the public who cannot afford to buy furniture of the best class, but who are obliged to take whatever articles may be 'in fashion' at ordinary shops." Eastlake, *Hints on Household Taste*, 157.

To Eastlake, machine-made design and mass-produced furniture were indicators of a frightening “condition” of contemporary British society. Their dishonest make, “corrupt” material, superficial elegance, and pretentious design mirrored all that was wrong with the social pretensions acted out by unknowing homeowners in their senseless accumulation of consumer products.²²⁵ Eastlake’s comparison of contemporary furniture trade and modern society brings to mind Carlyle’s earlier lamentation in *Past and Present* (1843) about the sorry state of British society. As discussed, Carlyle diagnosed a crisis of representation due to the exceeding corruption of traditional moral authorities and contemporary leaders of society by commercial interests. In Eastlake’s *Hints*, this crisis of representation was materialized in furniture-makers’ fraudulent adoption of high-end design for qualitatively deficient objects, and in the marketing of these fakes to an uninformed public. Equipped with essential lessons on taste, he argued, his readers would learn to strive for the best design they could afford. It would accurately reflect their social standing and at the same time further their aesthetic education as well as that of their respective social community.²²⁶

Eastlake’s book is structured as a journey from the house’s architecture to its rooms, and lastly to its inhabitants and their physical appearance. The same underlying rules that guide the author’s assessment of the lived environment become manifest in his discussion of dress. Both, he argued, should be of good material, well-made, comfortable, functional, and appropriate to social standing and occasion.²²⁷ For Eastlake, the décor of a home envelops a house’s inhabitants like a second garment, simultaneously expressing and shaping their character and social status. The personal experience of living in a well-designed environment is a prerequisite for the formation of good taste and, by extension, good character.

In 1878, Lucy Orrinsmith aligned her advice to Eastlake’s rules of good taste, but she was more concerned with the challenges of implementing them on the lean budget of an aspiring middle-class household.²²⁸ Writing like Eastlake for a female audience, Orrinsmith did not seek only to educate her readers in taste. She also reminded them of their manual capacities, which could be put to use for the embellishment of their homes. The merits of applying one’s own aesthetic skills were twofold. They resulted in lower decorating costs and were morally acceptable occupations. It was in this con-

225 Eastlake, *Hints on Household Taste*, 177. See also Orrinsmith, *The Drawing-Room*, 43.

226 In reality, Eastlake’s hints were readily absorbed back into the popular taste they were meant to change, or at least redirect. *Cassell’s Household Guide*, for example, though insisting on the “Principles” of taste formulated by Eastlake, who had heartily condemned all kinds of imitations, throughout the 1870s and 1880s still gave uncountable lessons on how to imitate ebony, ivory, or Japanese surface decoration, how to gild surfaces without gold, or how to substitute toile indienne for rare and expensive china. Such advice literature thus did not depict the actual state of home decoration, but rather responded to the aspirational hopes of its readers.

227 Eastlake, *Hints on Household Taste*, 258–281.

228 Orrinsmith’s publication grew out of her intimate knowledge of the demand for modern design aesthetics by a growing consumer market through her work at the design company Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co.

text that Orrinsmith contrasted the “good decorative household work” in service of the moral uplift of self and society to the production of “weak and unsuccessful, because too ambitious, sketches and paintings.”²²⁹

Essentially an early DIY guide, her book was deeply informed by valuations of manual work and craft in contrast to industrial production, as formulated by John Ruskin and William Morris.²³⁰ Applying this assessment to the home, she argued that a skilled woman’s “fancy work” could act as a counterforce to mass-produced goods, which flooded market and homes alike. Orrinsmith referred back to the ideal of “work” put forth by Carlyle in the early 1840s, in order to situate her appreciation of handicraft within the larger discourse on social order. In *Past and Present* Carlyle had proposed the purposeful and appropriate occupation of an individual according to their status and skills as a necessary foundation for the progress of contemporary society. Only on this basis would Britain regain its lost moral compass and structure. Thirty years later, Orrinsmith integrated the woman’s task to make the home beautiful into Carlyle’s grand scheme of an ordered society of working citizens. She directly quoted Carlyle, whom she called “our greatest living writer,” when she stated that “[a]ll true work is sacred: in all true work, where it is true hand-labour, there is something of Divineness.”²³¹

In defining the female work of embellishing the home as a moral duty, a service to society, Orrinsmith managed to bridge the gap between the middle-class imperative to be productive and the traditional rule that genteel women did not enter into the sphere of production. Women’s honorable work was necessary in order to ameliorate the horrors of the “ordinary lower middle-class drawing-room of the Victorian era.” Only then could this home serve its function as a model home and further the ideal of domesticity and moral integrity. Orrinsmith’s description of this abominable space reads like a veritable inventory of the advertisements we saw earlier for contemporary furniture manufacturers. It also mirrored, as we will see, the aesthetics of the contemporary photo studio. According to Orrinsmith “the very headquarters of commonplace,” it featured strictly symmetrical adornment, fashionable but uncomfortable furniture, an oversized mantlepiece, poor designs of carpet, wallpaper, and curtains, and was characterized first and foremost by its “pretentious uselessness.”²³² Insightfully, Orrinsmith situated this sorry

229 Orrinsmith, *The Drawing-Room*, 9.

230 John Ruskin’s *Unto this Last: Four Essays on the First Principles of Political Economy* (1862) was originally a series of essays for *Cornhill Magazine* that were heavily influenced and highly praised by Carlyle, whom Ruskin regarded as a mentor (see E. T. Cook, *The Life of John Ruskin*, 2 vols., 2nd ed. George Allen 1912, vol. 2, 2); William Morris, “Useful Work versus Useless Toil (1884)”, in *William Morris. News from Nowhere and Other Writings*, ed. Clive Wilmer (London: Penguin Books, 1993), 285–306.

231 Orrinsmith, *The Drawing-Room*, 78–79. See Carlyle, “Labour.” With a focus on embroidery, Rozsika Parker highlights the economic, socio-political, and ideological implications of the Victorian reinterpretation of female craft as respectable middle-class “work”: as a service for others, rather than aristocratic “leisure” in the service of social aspirations. See *ibid.*, *The Subversive Stitch. Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine* (London: The Women’s Press Unlimited, 1984), 147–188.

232 Orrinsmith, *The Drawing-Room*, 1–2. Orrinsmith’s dismissal of ornamental carpet design is a trope of aesthetic criticism of her time, and it will come up in the contemporary advice on the decoration of

space in the suburban terraced houses built throughout the past twenty-five years. “Most of us live in a ‘row,’ either of houses in a street or of villas in a suburb,” she writes.²³³

The overarching, commercially-determined straightjacket of consumption—mass-produced architecture, design, furniture, and dress—can be thrown off by means of education in taste. Taste, Orrinsmith argued, is the precondition for a deliberate and personal reinterpretation of socially accepted and industrially reproduced aesthetic standards, in order to express one’s own character. “As regards our outward walls,” the author maintained, “the livery of sameness is donned by all, but there is scope of originality within doors, and surely our rooms should be made to suit our individual tastes and characters.”²³⁴ With her book she provided her readers with the tools to “impress [their] individuality, in order, beauty and grace, on [their] abiding places.”²³⁵ What is more, the informed and educated activity of decorating the drawing room is to work on one’s own personal “evovement.” Neglecting this duty meant neglecting the moral obligation to personal and communal betterment.²³⁶

Haweis, writing twenty years after Eastlake and a decade after Orrinsmith, lamented the ready appropriation of the earlier authors’ lessons of taste by contemporary furniture manufacturers and design companies. By the early 1880s, these firms produced inexpensive knock-offs of products by firms such as Morris and Co., “equally ill-proportioned, vulgar, and machine-begotten, perhaps *more* depressing” than earlier mass-produced furnishings.²³⁷ Inferior material was used, forms were adapted to mass production, colors faded, and designs displayed mechanical monotony. The industrialized adaptation of design for a broader market thus led, again, to a loss in quality, which consumers needed to be educated to acknowledge.

Like her predecessors, Haweis urged her female readers to develop taste and sensibility for their surroundings and to acknowledge the crucial role of these spaces for their own and their family’s well-being and moral uplift. Ignorance in these matters would result in “the stereotyped house of the stereotyped art-decorator,” which reflected negatively on the inhabitants, whose individuality was lost not only on their visitors, but also to themselves.²³⁸ “Furniture,” wrote Haweis, “is a kind of dress, dress is a kind

photo studios as well. See anon., “Backgrounds and Accessories for the Glass Room. III,” *The Illustrated Photographer* 3 (April 29, 1870): 138–139.

233 Orrinsmith, *The Drawing-Room*, 51, 143. Logan, *The Victorian Parlour*, 18.

234 Orrinsmith, *The Drawing-Room*, 143–144. In the description of the drawing room’s relation to its owner, the difference between Benjamin’s negative assessment of capitalist consumerism and the more ambivalent mid-nineteenth-century discourse becomes palpable.

235 Orrinsmith, *The Drawing-Room*, 3. In contrast, “bad taste” is “perverted taste, depraved by long habituation to evil models.” The best education, then, is by “recourse to approved examples of decoration, and constant familiarity with fine qualities as to which there cannot be two opinions.” *Ibid.*, 6, 7.

236 Orrinsmith, *The Drawing-Room*, 8. “Has it not been written that the advantage derived from the study of objects of beauty is akin to the contemplation of virtue, in its ennobling effect on the mind?”

237 Haweis, *The Art of Decoration*, 5. *Ibid.*, 9.

238 Haweis, *The Art of Decoration*, 21, 24.

of furniture, which both mirror the mind of their owner, and the temper of the age; which both minister to our comfort and culture, and they ought to be considered together.”²³⁹ All three authors agreed, then, that furniture had the power to shape one’s mind. If the environment was mass-produced, its rationalized form and aesthetics also became an integral part of one’s persona, one’s self-perception, and self-representation.

Published within the space of twenty years, these guidebooks reveal the paradoxical nature of the nineteenth-century drawing-room debate. They were addressed to a growing middle class, who in its aspiration to become part of a genteel drawing-room community regularly fell back on factory-made products of furnishing and design. These products not only led to an unwanted similarity in the appearance of drawing rooms, a “stereotyped” style apparently bare of individual taste. Since the interior was understood as the equivalent of a dress, representing and shaping the person living in it, the novel products’ machine-made aesthetics, their inferiority in form and design, their general “falseness” and “pretension” were also seen to have a negative impact on the “evolution” of the inhabitants’ character, and on society as a whole.

The drawing room, Haweis wrote, should be understood as an “image,” with the inhabitants acting as the subject matter. Their appearance and demeanor should fit into the interior as if a painter had constructed the scene.²⁴⁰ It could produce a “false” or “untrue” image if it was in itself “untrue.” Mass-produced photographic portraiture, taken in commercial studio settings, reiterated and confirmed this representational challenge. As a photograph, it was an apparently “truthful” image, but its production of the “true likenesses” of its sitters was dangerously ambiguous. The ambiguity was multiplied when the photographed drawing room, as the standard background of photographic portraits, entered again into the home on the pages of a stock photo album.

The Photo Studio: Truthful Likeness in a Public Drawing Room

In the middle of the nineteenth century, commercial photography studios were new kinds of places.²⁴¹ There existed no real precedent for what they were to look like.

239 Like Eastlake, Haweis associates interior with dress. Haweis, *The Art of Decoration*, 17. “A man’s house, whilst he is in it, is a part of himself.” *Ibid.*, 30, 362. Her first book, *The Art of Beauty* (1878) was followed by *The Art of Dress* (1879), which preceded *The Art of Decoration* by two years.

240 “A room is like a picture; it must be composed with equal skill and forethought; but unlike a picture, the arrangement must revolve around to a point which is never stationary, always in motion; ... The main point of interest to which the decorations should work up, is the inhabitants; but as they can never be reckoned upon, the picture must be composed as it were without the subject, like a poem without a point or a story without an end.” Haweis, *The Art of Decoration*, 10.

241 Other such places were, for example, new hotels in urban areas or compartments in trains or on steamships. See e.g. David Bowie, “Innovation and 19th Century Hotel Industry Evolution,” *Tourism Management* 64 (2018): 314–323. In Britain, the profession of photographer gained in attraction during the second half of the nineteenth century as well. At the census of 1851, 51 photographers declared themselves, certainly an under-estimate, for there was no designated category yet. In 1861 there were 2534. By 1881, the census counted 7614 (1606 of them women); at the end of 1891 12,397 and by 1901, 17,268 (4933 of them women). Briggs, *Victorian Things*, 130, 136.

extensively employed, and various methods have been prepared for cleaning the articles made for it. Among the liquids that have been employed for this purpose may be mentioned a solution of permanganate of potash, also cyanide of potassium, hot hydrochloric acid, borax, and potash. The so-called silver beads and pearls for eulohedry are made of tumbac metal, which is rubbed with silver amalgam and freed from mercury by heat. Brass can also be plated with imitation silver by rubbing it with a preparation composed of equal parts of mercury, tin, and lincath, and one and a half parts prepared chalk—a trifling amount of silver makes the colour and appearance of silver more enduring.—*Scientific American.*

BACKGROUNDS AND ACCESSORIES FOR THE GLASS ROOM.

III.

(Continued from page 116.)

We have already spoken of wall-papers as forming excellent backgrounds when they are selected with good taste and properly used. A writer on the subject says in the current part of *Cassell's Household Guide*, "The wall-paper should bear the same relation to the furniture and persons in the room as the background of a picture bears to the figure and principal objects represented. Unimportant as the background to a picture may appear, it is by no means the least important part, or the easiest to manage, but often occasions the artist much trouble and anxiety before he is able to produce a satisfactory result. And it is neither an unimportant nor a simple matter to choose a wall-paper which shall be exactly suitable as a background to the contents of an apartment." Now wall-papers manufactured in



Fig. 1.

accordance with this principle cannot but serve the purpose of the photographer, inasmuch as they are made to act as backgrounds to living figures, and real objects; and such papers—thanks to South Kensington teachings, and the consequent spread of artistic taste—are much more common than they used to be. The photographer can therefore procure them if he knows what to select; and to aid the novice in art, we here give a few laid directions with three illustrations. Our object is to show the kind of thing that is suitable, and that which is unsuitable. In the first place, with reference to the design. Any thing which is antagonistic to the idea of flatness, and indicates either depth and relief or objects upon different planes is regarded as a wall-paper, in bad taste; although, if we use it as a pictorial background, not intending it to represent a mere wall, but as-

sealing it with out-door accessories, this objection is no longer important. If however, we wish to convey an idea of the wall of an apartment, the rule of flatness in the ornament, and conventional instead of naturalistic treatment should be strictly observed. The reader who has the *ILLUSTRATED PHOTOGRAPHIC ALMANAC* for 1870 will find reasons given for this conclusion in a paper which it contained, on decorating the studio, &c. In the next place there should be a quiet harmonious blending of the parts and tones of the



Fig. 2.

design, so that when you retire a short distance from it, the whole is blended into a softened suggestion of enrichment and decoration, without any part standing out with undue prominence. Fig. 1 shows a wall-paper in which all these rules are vigilantly looked. Here little bunches of flowers, made to look as real as possible by light and shade, are floating with a marvellous regard for uniformity of position and arrange-



Fig. 3.

ment according to size, in what appears to be air, and the leaves stand out as little dark patches upon a grey-white ground. The flowers are treated naturalistically, although their relative positions as groups are comically unnatural, and the consequence is a discordant jumble of ideas offensive to the eye of taste. We need hardly add that such a paper

Consequently, studios imitated, sometimes with the barest minimum of resources, representative drawing rooms of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. In a world that provided few models for interior décor, commercial studios introduced their visitors to the essential artifact vocabulary of respectable living spaces—the appropriate furniture, carpets, draperies, and wall decoration—in three dimensions and in glowing color. Studios sold the illusion that gentility was accessible to their customers. As temporary inhabitants of the room, they could picture themselves as “drawing room people,” comfortable with the room’s social ceremony and at home in its specific milieu.²⁴² What is more, by presenting the medium of photography in this public drawing room, photographers were able to sell their own product as “genteel.” With photographic prints on the walls, carte de visite albums on the tables, and framed portrait photographs on top of a piano, studio owners designated the new pictures as an appropriate piece of drawing room décor. There was a reciprocal relationship, then, between the drawing room at home, presumably decorated according to individual taste, means, and needs, and the drawing room in the photo studio, which catered to a constantly broadening social stratum.

The “sales pitch” of photo studios was the production of portraits that would document customers’ apparent affiliation with a genteel community gathered in a well-decorated drawing room. “Realness” consequently became a decisive parameter in the instructions regarding the decoration of this space. According to contemporary commentators, real furniture and decoration, rather than plaster balustrades and fake studio props, were a necessary precondition for the production of “real” portraits. In contemporary trade journals an abundance of articles taught photographers the same lessons in taste that Eastlake, Orrin Smith, and Haweis had offered newly-minted homeowners. An article in *The Illustrated Photographer* for example, published in 1870, recommended well-designed wallpaper as the background for the studio wall (Fig. 86). The article dismissed the naturalistic, three-dimensional rendering of flowers in wallpaper, while praising simple, harmonious, and flat designs. Crucially, this argument was not

242 See Grier, *Culture & Comfort*, 22–23.

made for the sake of the photograph's pictorial quality in anticipation of the wallpaper's photographic reproduction in black and white. Instead, the author referred to the dismissal of naturalistic wallpaper by authors like Morris and Eastlake. He argued that photographers needed to adhere to the aesthetic rules of the time in order to provide a realistic stage for the photograph. "If you wish to convey the idea of an apartment," he wrote, "the rule of flatness in the ornament, and conventional instead of naturalistic treatment should be strictly observed."²⁴³ Crucially, the author added that "tasteless" naturalistic wallpaper would be unsuitable not only for a living room, or in a photograph, but also as background in a painting.²⁴⁴ The portrait photograph's representational aspirations became evident in parallel. Room, photograph, and painting were all regarded as visual representations of their owners and inhabitants.

Recommendations concerning studio furniture regularly discussed the necessity of "realness" as well. Authors agreed that for the resulting photograph to convey a truthful likeness of the respective sitter, the studio's mock-up drawing room needed to be as realistic as possible. In 1883, the photographer C. Brangwin Barnes wrote for *The Photographic News*:

*It has often been a source of perplexity and wonderment to me, as to how and why photographers in general have been led away from the realism of domesticity and homeliness in the interior fittings and furniture of their studios.... Our aim, I take it, is to represent our sitter as at home; and, to do this correctly, why not use furniture of a description that is in everyday use? I should like to see the studio furnished like an ordinary drawing or sitting room.*²⁴⁵

Notably, Barnes also pointed out that a female assistant was essential to achieve this aim: "If the place is to look homely, natural, and nice, a woman's hand is required."²⁴⁶ In order to relieve the studio of its problematic commerciality, female authority in the making of the home was needed. Once again women were in a fuzzy position in the photographic trade, on the threshold between leisure and commercialism. Due to their confinement to the domestic sphere, they were regarded as experts in making a space genteel. This expertise could be an "occupation"—which, like the coloring of photo-

243 Anon., "Backgrounds and Accessories for the Glass Room. III," 138–139.

244 "We need hardly add," writes the author, "that such a paper would be must [sic!] unsuitable to the requirements of either an artist's taste, the wall of a room, or a photographer's background." Anon., "Backgrounds and Accessories for the Glass Room. III," 139. He or she also quotes directly from *Cassell's Household Guide*, to emphasize the importance of the background for the decoration of a room. Authorities in taste generally agreed that the wallpaper "made" the drawing room. See Briggs, *Victorian Things*, 248.

245 C. Brangwin Barnes, "Inside the Studio," *The Photographic News* (July 27, 1888): 476–477, here 476. See also Norval H. Busey, "Posing and Lighting," *The British Journal of Photography* 17, no. 553 (December 9, 1870): 582–583.

246 Barnes, "Inside the Studio," 476. Busey, "Posing and Lighting," 467. The magic of the "lady's touch," which manages to personalize a space and cleanse it of its alienating relationships engendered by the factory and the marketplace, is discussed in Di Bello, "Seductions and Flirtations," 149.

graphs in post-production, could be a leisured pastime or paid work, depending on the social standing of the respective woman.

The studios' customers reflected the same broad social spectrum. Barnes addressed the difficulty of catering to a large range of customers with different economic backgrounds and diverse expectations of what their representative drawing room should look like, and commentators also acknowledged this challenge. Their advice was a compromise: avoid cheapness on the one hand, ostentation on the other, and see to it that everything is in "good taste" and looks "natural."²⁴⁷ Authors agreed that as an apparently naturalistic documentation the photograph should match the real furnishing of the studio. The "natural" depiction of the given scene should in turn allow for the "truthful" representation of each sitter. In this recurrent argument, the photographic medium's specific visual qualities are combined with a claim to moral integrity. Charles Sanders Peirce's application of photography as an example for the production of "truth" on the basis of "collateral" social knowledge comes to mind. Writing in the late 1870s, Peirce defined "truth" as something we agree upon by comparing experiences with each other with help of a shared system of signs.²⁴⁸ Contemporary critics asserted that studio photographers and their customers apparently agreed to accept a photograph's "realness" as an indicator of the reality of its motif. However, the need to stabilize this interpretation by means of "real" furniture in the studio points to the latent anxiety that this relationship might be questioned and subsequently break down.

In his advice book for photographers, *Photographic Studios of Europe* (1882) H. Baden Pritchard wrote about the studio of the brothers W. & D. Downey, who had become famous for their popular commercial portraits of Queen Victoria and her family. Pritchard noted with appreciation that the studio did not work with painted backgrounds that depicted the desired interior, but was furnished like a representative drawing room.²⁴⁹ He made a similar observation in a number of other well-established studios, noting that their appearance as "well-appointed drawing rooms," elegantly furnished and thickly carpeted, set them apart from ordinary studios. In his description of the studio of Alexander Bassano, for example, he noted: "Another point that struck us in the studio was the presence of nought but real furniture. The tables, chairs, and bookcases were real, the piano was real, the Persian carpet was real."²⁵⁰ After a visit to Cornelius Jabez Hughes's studio he wrote: "The studio furniture is in every case real. Tables and chairs are of solid oak, while couch and settee, with their mouse-coloured velvet coverings, are worthy of notice, if only because of the excellent carving on them. In a picture they appear handsome, for the simple reason that they

247 Anon., "Notes," *The Photographic News* 31, no. 1526 (December 2, 1887): 761.

248 Charles Sanders Peirce, "How to Make Our Ideas Clear," *Popular Science Monthly* 12 (January 1878): 286–302. See Introduction.

249 H. Baden Pritchard, *Photographic Studios of Europe* (London: Piper & Carter, Castle Street, Holborn, E.C., 1882), 20.

250 Pritchard, *Photographic Studios of Europe*, 81.

are handsome.”²⁵¹ At this point, Pritchard added another layer to the quality of realness. The author argued that these studio drawing rooms put customers at ease because of the authenticity of their furnishing. In a studio set up like an actual drawing room, visitors could spend a comfortable hour at leisure, look at art on the walls or albums on the tables, enjoy the tasteful decoration and conversation with friends and other customers, and not fret about their imminent session in front of the camera. Natural surroundings led to natural behavior and thus to a true portrait. If commercial studios mirrored genteel establishments, they could shape their customers’ self-perception, at least for the time of their sitting, as belonging to the genteel realm of the “best people.”²⁵² As Eastlake, Orrin Smith, and Haweis would agree, the space shaped its inhabitants. This self-perception would be reflected in their portraits as well. Since they could act out gentility in the adequate surroundings of the photo studios, they did not have to simulate it. Accordingly, even if the customers’ own drawing-rooms at home did not live up to the standards of taste defined by authorities like Eastlake, their photographic portrait, captured while they were enveloped in the dress of gentility, could still be regarded as a “truthful likeness.” For the advocates of photography, then, gentility could be afforded by means of a commercial, mechanically produced portrait, as long as the setting for this portrait lived up to these standards. They squared the circle of matching gentility with commerce by referring to photography’s conventional status as a document of reality on the one hand, and to the drawing-room’s conventionally accepted power to shape its respective inhabitants on the other.

Of course, these high aspirations were not necessarily achieved in contemporary photographic practices. Just as most middle-class homeowners were unable or unwilling to follow Eastlake’s furnishing advice, most photo studios were far from realizing the ideal of the “real” drawing room.²⁵³ Much more common than Downey’s or Bassano’s exquisitely decorated public drawing rooms were spaces that featured the

251 Pritchard, *Photographic Studios of Europe*, 136 (emphasis mine). Twenty years earlier John Bockett made a similar observation regarding Hughes’s studio. John Bockett, “The Holidays of a London Photographer,” *The British Journal of Photography* 11, no. 234 (October 28, 1864): 425.

252 This sentiment can be found in many contemporary articles. See e.g. George Croughton, “Expression in Portraiture,” *The British Journal of Photography* 19, no. 628 (May 17, 1872): 229: “It is to be expected that all persons entering a strange place, and particularly for the purpose of having their portraits taken, should feel nervous and ill at ease; and if they are allowed to remain so this feeling will show itself in the expression. It is, therefore, the policy of the photographer to inspire his sitters with confidence, and, to use a homely phrase, to make them feel at home.... Then, to make any one feel at home, the place they are in should be like home; that is, the studio should be furnished and arranged as much like an ordinary room as possible.” See also my article “Trying on the Drawing Room. Realness and Truth in and out of Photographs,” in *Truth in Serial Form*, ed. Malika Maskarinec (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2023), 173–195.

253 Authors of photographic magazines often recognize this discrepancy, and differentiate between the good studios and the common ones. See e.g. Pritchard, *Photographic Studios of Europe*, 123: “Perhaps in no other profession except those of literature and art do we find so vast a gulf as between the highest and the lowest photography.... In photography we have those who, by earnest study and thorough education, have elevated their art to the level of the great professions, and the man—to be found in every town—who manufacturers cartes at a few shillings per dozen.”

bare minimum of the drawing-room code: a chair, a carpet, and a curtain. Photographers also made do with furniture drawn on backgrounds hung up behind the sitters.²⁵⁴ Standard props, such as a height-adjustable chair, could be ordered by mail and delivered anywhere, and appeared again and again in studio portraits taken at different times in different places. Such reappearing, standardized studio furniture underlined what actually defined commercial portrait photography and what Orrinsmith had bemoaned in modern living more generally: its mass-produced aesthetics, production, and consumption.²⁵⁵

Circulating the Drawing Room

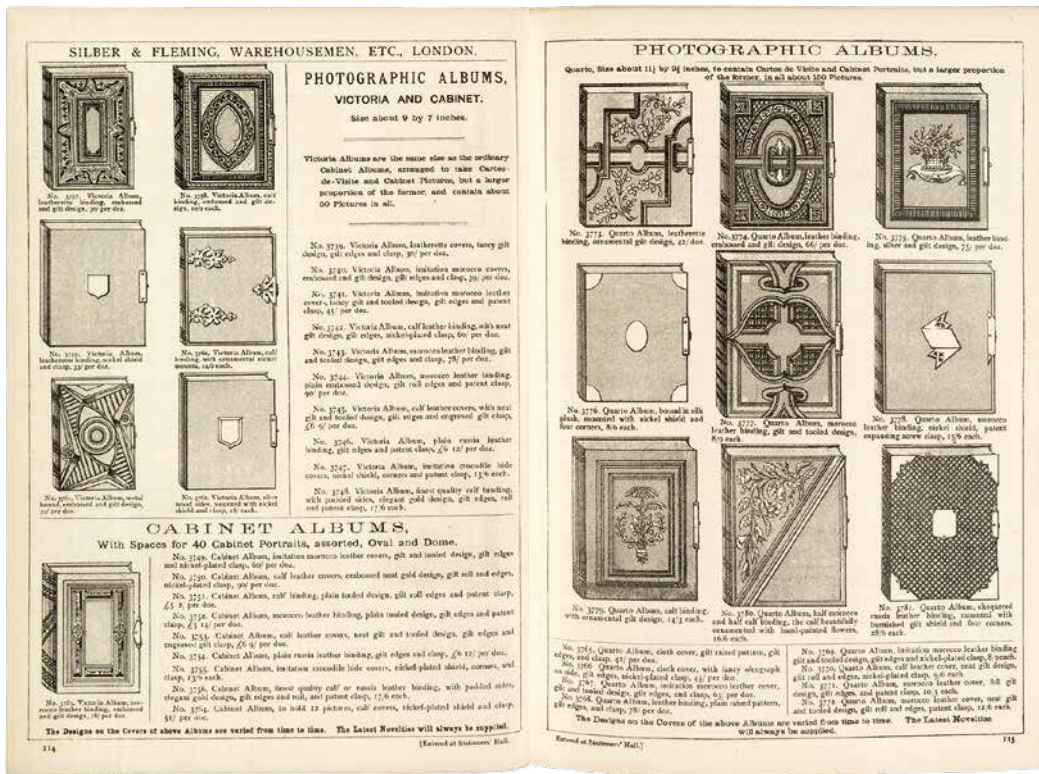
Carte de visite portraits entered the homes of their middle-class owners, featuring endless replicas of the standard furnishing of the commercial studio. They were fit into prefabricated frames, albums, or concertina frames, and put on display in mass-produced drawing-room suites, which furnished identical rows of newly developed terraced houses.²⁵⁶ By the 1880s both the furnishings for drawing rooms and the holders for photographs could be ordered from the same wholesaler. Silber and Fleming, for example, offered photographic albums in standardized sizes and cover colors as well as standard drawing room suites in one single catalogue, thereby integrating the two consumer items within one publication (Figs. 87–88).

The sweeping commercial success of photography put pressure on the truth-building capabilities that Pritchard or Barnes had ascribed to the medium of photographic portraits. Writing in 1870, the critic James Mackay ended his dismissive remarks about other people's photo albums with the observation that, due to the interchangeable furnishing of the portraits' backgrounds, every photograph looked very much like the other:

254 In photographic journals of the 1870s articles abound that outline the construction of such cardboard architectures and vistas. E.g., J.L. Lane, "A Photographic Studio," *The Illustrated Photographer* 2 (April 2, 1869): 155–156; Buzz Bumble, "The Studio," *The British Journal of Photography* 17, no. 530 (July 1, 1870): 300–302, here 301: "The chief objection is that the painting being itself only a copy on a flat surface, its reproduction in conjunction with that which is solid and stands in relief but ill accords therewith, giving to the thoughtful mind the impression that the photograph is that of a solid reality round which the light could play, and a painted surface on which the light could only fall, and with most such backgrounds it is that of a living truth and a dead falsehood side by side."

255 Henisch and Henisch, *The Photographic Experience*, 24.

256 By the end of the 1860s, authors commented on the ubiquity of photo albums in middle-class households. See e.g. George W. Simpson, "Photography: Its History and Applications," *British Quarterly Review* 44, no. 88 (October 1866): 346–390, here 372. *Cassell's Household Guide*, Vol. 2, 380–382. The author also encouraged his readers to take up the pastime of photography itself. Noting the significant costs of photographic equipment, he provided instructions on how to build one's own camera. Anon., *Cassell's Household Guide, being a complete Encyclopedia of Domestic and Social Economy*, Vol. 3 (London: Cassell, Petter, and Galpin, 1869), 105.

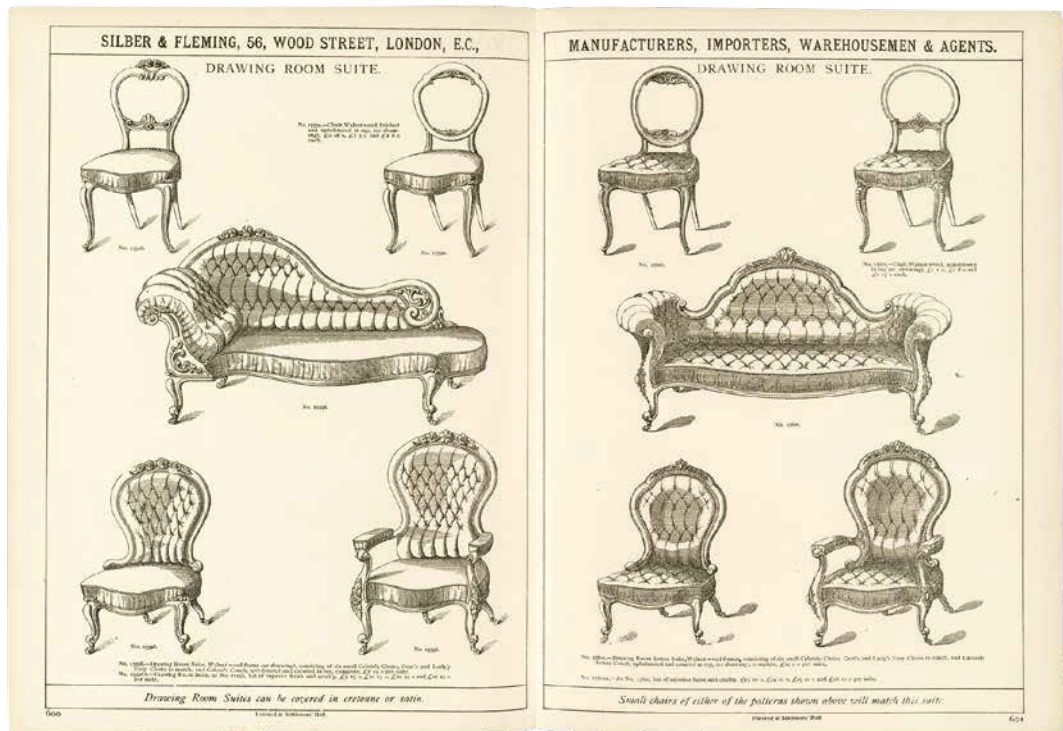


87. Silber & Fleming, *Photographic Albums*, 1880, black and white lineblock, page (each) 25.3 × 18 cm, from *Illustrated Catalogue—Photographic Albums*, London: Silber & Fleming Ltd, 1880, 114–115. National Art Library, Victoria and Albert Museum, London (acc. no. 38041800577298)

*No visitor can remain long in a friend's house before the album is produced; and, in looking over the pages intended to interest and edify him, good taste is often shocked at the ridiculous sameness of one photograph to another. The first thing sure to catch the eye is the curtain and pillar, graced with an elegant Elizabethan chair, and this is repeated ad nauseam until it becomes so hackneyed as to be positively painful to bear.*²⁵⁷

What is more, the space depicted in the photographs corresponded with the space in which the photograph was being viewed. The commercialized drawing room in the photo studio served as the background for portrait photographs, and at the same time as the template for the furnishing of the sitters' own drawing room at home. Finished photographs collected in representative photo albums were displayed within that very room. They were a source of conversation and arguably shaped the taste of all members of the respective social group gathered there. David Summers's argument that images of spaces not only represent them, but reconstruct and confirm them, is persuasive in

257 James Mackay, "A Few Remarks on Backgrounds," *The British Journal of Photography* 17, no. 545 (October 14, 1870): 484. Di Bello writes, "albums and picture books could also be associated with a commercialized feminine culture, of an uncertain status between gentility and vulgarity, and the use of visual culture to climb up the social scale, rather than demonstrate rank." Di Bello, *Women's Albums*, 47.



88. Silber & Fleming, *Drawing Room Suite*, 1880, black and white lineblock, page (each) 25.3 × 18 cm, from *Illustrated Catalogue—Photographic Albums*, London: Silber & Fleming Ltd, 1880, 600–601. National Art Library, Victoria and Albert Museum, London (acc. no. 38041800577298)

this context. The space of the drawing room circulates in the shared cultural territory of row houses and cartes de visite. It affirms, through repetition, the familiar ideal of domesticity.²⁵⁸ However, with the acknowledgment of both spaces’ mass production came the worry that the work of social distinction conventionally carried out in this environment was nullified by visual similarity. Contemporary criticism of both commercial photography and standardized furnishing honed in on this point. If the surrounding shaped its inhabitants, modern individuals were in danger of being shaped into mass-produced similarity, and consequently society was condemned to shapelessness. A “real” setting, on the other hand, situated the inhabitant of the drawing room, or the visitor of the photo studio, at least temporarily in a clearly demarcated, visually comprehensible social space. From this perspective, “truth” could be produced by means of the repetitive experience of seeing oneself, and of being seen, in a visually convincing context.

258 The powerful textual, visual, political, and personal “machinery” that installed a clichéd ideal of the home by means of constant repetition is discussed in Karen Chase and Michael Levenson, “Introduction: The Trouble with Families,” in *The Spectacle of Intimacy. A Public Life for the Victorian Family*, ed. Karen Chase and Michael Levenson (Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000), 3–17.

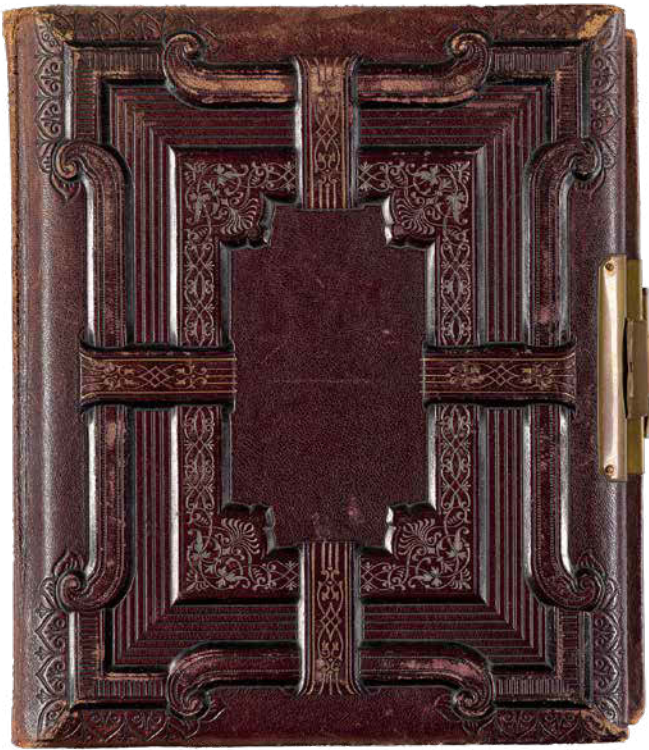
Contemporary guides on taste promoted the artful arrangement of photographs between the album's book covers as a laudable pastime for respectable middle-class women. Album-keeping was advertised as morally uplifting, similar to other domestic activities of decoration such as tapestry-making, painting on glass, modeling in gutta-percha or leather, or wood-staining. The delicate coloring of photographs or the thoughtful arrangements of images on album pages apparently replicated the woman's loving care and cultivation of her home. With reference to aristocratic photo albums, household guides of the 1870s and 1880s also discussed the art of collage as a worthy skill to be applied to all kinds of decorative objects in the drawing room.²⁵⁹ Interior design and album design were in the same hands, then. The albums' material make-up underscored this spatial correspondence between drawing room and photo album. The albums' embossed or stamped leather binding mirrored wooden wall-paneling, chests, or doors. Shiny black or green leather covers aligned with lacquered sideboards or coffee tables. Green or red velvet bindings evoked cushions or drapery. Textile lining on the inside covers called to mind fashionable wallpaper (Figs. 89–90).

Replicating the aesthetics of the drawing room, albums also claimed a prominent place within them. Orrinsmith advised her readers to present them "at arm's length, or lying about on one of the tables in a drawing room." She maintained that albums, in addition to making "a rich bit of decoration," "suggest conversation."²⁶⁰ Orrinsmith's description of entertaining and uplifting conversations between drawing room guests was a remnant of the eighteenth-century ideal of "polite conversation" as well, which contemporary aristocratic women had imaginatively reclaimed in their elaborate photographic drawing room collages just a decade earlier. The continued allusion to aristocratic practices of photography showed that by the 1870s, the earnest play of social belonging and exclusion enacted in the access (or its denial) to the drawing room had been taken up by a broader spectrum of society, who began to define their own social circles by opening their homes to one another.²⁶¹ In consequence, "leisure" received a distinctly middle-class connotation. The fact that a woman was free to spend her time paying calls marked the economic stability of her family. It defined her as a "leisured lady," who did not need to enter into a profession and add to her household's income.

259 In Cassell's *Household Guide*, the craft of collage for the decoration of fire screens is discussed back-to-back with its application to the photo album. The author alludes to the albums of aristocratic women discussed in Chapter 3 when he writes, "beautiful photograph albums have been made, by taking a number of cards of one size and mounting various sized photographs of fancy subjects upon them, and then designing borders appropriate with a pen and Indian ink." Anon., *Cassell's Household Guide, being a complete Encyclopedia of Domestic and Social Economy, Vol. 1* (London: Cassell, Petter, and Galpin, 1869), 129–130.

260 Orrinsmith, *The Drawing-Room*, 129, 132.

261 Cassell's *Household Guide* maintained in an article with the title "Society. Etiquette of visiting, etc." that "some knowledge of the social code of ceremonious rules and forms is indispensable to everyone who desires to pass through the world respectfully and respected." Anon., *Cassell's Household Guide, Vol. 3*, 110. On the power of rituals for the definition of rank and status, sometimes performed daily, see Cannadine, *Class in Britain*.



89. *Carte-de-visite album with music box*, c. 1865, album (cover), 25.5 × 21 × 1 cm. Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin, Gernsheim Collection, purchase (acc. no. 964:0467:0001-0067)



90. *Black calf album of famous politicians, artists, authors, and society women*, c. 1848-1882, album (lining), inside cover open 32.3 × 49 cm, left side 30 × 23.3 cm, right 31 × 23.5 cm. Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin, Gernsheim Collection, purchase (acc. no. 964:0465:0001-0136)

While middle-class men worked by definition, their wives' leisure indicated their economic and social success. Women spent large parts of their days making and receiving calls in their respective drawing rooms, and looking at each other's albums.²⁶² Both spaces can be understood not as evidence of their owners' actual economic independence, but rather as consciously employed signals of their leisure as a social marker.

The advice of an anonymous author for the magazine *All Year Round* illustrates this reinterpretation of leisured life. In reference to the practice of exchanging calling cards, he humorously pointed out that for middle-class consumers the photo album may serve an even more productive "advertisement of your claims to gentility" than the traditional

262 "Morning calls" were actually paid in the afternoon, as "morning" referred to the daylight hours. More formal, shorter calls, of fifteen- to twenty-minute duration, would generally take place earlier in the afternoon. Logan, *The Victorian Parlour*, 2001, 31. For Florence Nightingale, who will figure prominently in the following chapter, the obligation to spend her days on ritualized visits for the sole purpose of demonstrating her family's "leisured" status was an affront. In her opinion, it stole from women their time, depriving them of any opportunity to do something worthwhile with their lives. She dismisses the ritual of calling as "conventional frivolities," which are part of the reason that women "cannot live in the light of intellect," as their time is wasted on these "duties." Florence Nightingale, *Cassandra. An essay. With an introduction by Myra Stark and an epilogue by Cynthia Macdonald* (1852) (New York: The Feminist Press, 1979), 32, 37.

card basket in the hallway. In the card basket, the author maintained, “[t]he card of Mrs. Brown of Packham would well to the surface at times from the depths to which you had consigned it, and overlay that of your favourite countess or millionaire. Besides, you could not in so many words call attention to your card basket as you can to the album. You place it in your friend’s hands saying, ‘This only contains my special favourites, mind’ and there is her ladyship staring them in the face the next moment.... Delicious moment.”²⁶³ The photograph of the queen and prince consort as a contemporary couple served this purpose as well. Placed prominently on page one and carefully colored by a professional or amateur, they were available at home, for one’s own purposes of self-representation.

Aristocratic modes of living were referenced in multiple ways in the middle-class drawing room and its double in the photograph studio. The room’s prominent position in the floor plan of a home, the social event of “having a drawing room,” the polite activities conducted in this space, and the display of taste as a marker of social distinction were all lessons learned from an aristocratic model of gentility. These references were no simple acts of emulation, however.²⁶⁴ Rather, they were employed and reimagined to communicate the shared values of individual industriousness and social progress whose basis was Victorian domestic ideology. Taste was reframed from a marker of gentility to a tool for moral uplift, and the genteel society of the aristocratic drawing room was redefined as the respectable social circle of the extended family at home. The work to arrive at this appropriate surrounding was the work of women.

Queens at Home: Authorities of Order

Authors agreed that women had a limited but central role to play in the stabilization of social order for contemporary society. Conservative opinion makers such as Ruskin or Carlyle defined the woman’s role as indispensable for the well-being of the family and society, while the man’s position as master of the household remained unquestioned.²⁶⁵ Along with many of his contemporaries, Ruskin utilized the figure of the

263 Anon., “The Carte-de-Visite-experience,” *All The Year Round* 7, no.157 (April 26, 1862): 166.

264 In his influential book *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899) the sociologist Thorstein Veblen had introduced the term “emulation” to describe the wish to meet an aesthetic standard in order to communicate gentility. Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*; For a critique see Grier, *Culture & Comfort*, 17; Bermingham and Brewer, *The Consumption of Culture*.

265 Just as Carlyle’s contemporaneous social commentary has been read as both conservative and revolutionary, subsequent research has interpreted Ruskin’s texts as both misogynist and feminist. For a summary of these contrasting interpretations, which should be read together, see: Sharon Aronofsky Weltman, “‘Be no more housewives, but queens’: Queen Victoria and Ruskin’s domestic mythology,” in *Remaking Queen Victoria*, ed. Margaret Homans and Adrienne Munich (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 108. See also Flanders, *The Victorian House*; Vanessa Dickerson, ed., *Keeping the Victorian House. A Collection of Essays* (New York/London: Garland Publishing, 1995). For a critique of the concept of divided spheres see Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, eds., *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780–1850* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press,

queen to describe the woman's role as he imagined it. His lecture "Of Queen's Gardens" was first held before Manchester housewives on December 14, 1864, and subsequently published as a chapter in his popular book *Sesame and Lilies* (1865). In it, Ruskin vigorously supported the strict separation of spheres for the sexes. He agreed with other writers—and with Queen Victoria herself—that a woman's place was in the home. Here she had the "queenly power" to guide and raise the moral state of her household.²⁶⁶ According to Ruskin, women were responsible for order in their private surroundings: "(T)he woman's power is for rule, not for battle—and her intellect is not for invention or creation, but for sweet ordering, arrangement, and decision. She sees the qualities of things, their claims, and their places."²⁶⁷ Women were able to discriminate, to judge, to admire if appropriate, or to criticize if necessary. They "ruled" their households by enforcing, with their organizational skills, aesthetic choices, as well as moral superiority, social norms, and values amongst their family members and—in shaping the conduct of their respective private circle—amongst society at large. Building on Carlyle's idea that work served as a defining structural device for contemporary society, Ruskin positioned women as the authority to morally direct this fundamental activity. Their task was to build a home that was a model of moral and aesthetic order and could act as a counterforce to the rampant capitalism and looming disorder in society at large. Successfully imposed, the ordered home would appear as "natural," even inevitable.²⁶⁸

Not surprisingly, then, a major theme in the literature of the home and the guidebooks on homemaking was how to manage "order in the home." In this context, the decoration of the drawing room, the liminal space between home and public, emerged as a critical female task. Women were given the moral and aesthetic authority to set up a space that mediated between these spheres. What is more, in accordance with the parallelization of dress and home that I discussed earlier, the woman's sphere of influence was not confined to her home. She took her exemplary sphere with her wherever she went, and her tasteful authority had a positive impact on all those entering her realm of influence. As the authorities of order, women took on social responsibility.²⁶⁹

1987); Dorothy O. Helly and Susan M. Reverby, eds., *Gendered Domains. Rethinking Public and Private in Women's History* (Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press, 1992).

266 Ruskin, *Of Queens' Gardens*, 2–3.

267 Ruskin, *Of Queens' Gardens*, 21. Ruskin does not side with proponents of women's rights such as John Stuart Mill, nor is his "queenship" comparable to the reactionary brand of "women worship" of contemporaries like the poet and critic Coventry Patmore, who turned women into passive objects whose childlike innocence inspired men to achievements for their good. Patmore, *The Angel in the House*; see Weltman, "Be no more housewives, but queens': Queen Victoria and Ruskin's domestic mythology," 109.

268 The word "order" is pivotal to Ruskin's argument. The establishment of such order marks the proper application of women's power. An important early source for this moral valorization of order is Sarah Stickney Ellis on women's roles in society: *The Women of England* (1839), *The Wives of England* (1843), *The Mothers of England* (1843/1844), *The Daughters of England* (c. 1845).

269 Ruskin, *Of Queens' Gardens*, 22: "And wherever a true wife comes, this home is always round her. ... [B]ut home is yet wherever she is; and for a noble woman it stretches far around her."

Their ability to discriminate, arrange, and judge was seen as an important skill in all social events in which they participated.

However, contemporary authors did not trust them with this great responsibility. The female disposition for the temptations of excessive consumption and misguided pretension needed to be constantly guided and steered in the right direction. To fail at making a respectable home due to a lack of education, missing skills, or simple neglect, was not just a sign of domestic distress or incompetence. It had far-reaching consequences for the respective home's inhabitants and their social community.²⁷⁰ With this in mind, it is also clear why Ruskin, Eastlake, Orrinsmith, Haweis, and many others in their wake aimed to educate their female readers in taste. The necessary foundation for women to fulfill their task of discrimination, valuation, and order was their knowledge of agreed-upon moral and aesthetic values. From the background of this knowledge they were "free" to develop their "individual" taste, as long as it was consistent with and illustrative of their respective social position.

Repeated reference to the figure of the queen is an indication that the concept of the "authority of order" went well beyond the moral and aesthetic realm. As a symbolic figure, the term "queen" denoted women as ahistorical and as situated outside of the realities of contemporary society, which was increasingly defined by the destabilizing dynamics of democratization, industrialization, and capitalism. Additionally, the description of the female role as one of judgment and discrimination, of ruling by encouragement and moral direction, dovetailed directly with the task of a modern, constitutional monarch. As Walter Bagehot concluded in 1867, Queen Victoria's own legal powers were nothing more and nothing less than the right to be consulted, to encourage, and to warn.²⁷¹ Victoria thus provided a fitting contemporary example upon which authors could model their household queens. While embodying a timeless ideal detached from the realities of modern society, Victoria acted out a decidedly contemporary set of social norms and behavior, which was so persuasively represented in the popular cartes de visite of herself and Albert as a happily married couple. Her female identity made her the "natural" constitutional monarch. As female monarch, in turn, she provided a broadly visible template for contemporary women.

This constituted a form of identification with the photographed queen which was quite different from the integration of her portrait into the photcollaged conversation pieces of the aristocracy and landed gentry. The aristocratic ladies had engaged their aesthetic education and skills to visually construct a space they shared with the royal

270 This worry is formulated by Ruskin and reiterated by Veblen in his "The Theory of the Leisure Class." Though Veblen distances himself from Ruskin, he still participates in the anxiety toward the imagined feminine that appeared in the discourse of the nineteenth century.

271 Bagehot, *The English Constitution*, 110–117. Again, Sarah Stickney Ellis provides an important earlier source. In 1839, she writes that a new modern England can be based on the moral authority of the example of a "female sovereign." The parallel between Victoria's accession to the throne and the construction of the image of the queenly bourgeois woman is addressed in Langland, *Nobody's Angels*, 62–79.

family. They made use of the truth-building value of photography for an updated representation of royal patronage, upon which their prominent social position had traditionally been based. Middle-class women, on the other hand, were well aware of their distance from the royal court. Still, Victoria was not just an inaccessible contemporary celebrity. She was also the personification of their own and their community's ideal of social and moral order. As queens of the home, Victorian housewives were seen to provide for their immediate social circle a counterforce to the destructive power of modern capitalism, just as the monarch Queen Victoria could counter, through her example and position, the looming disorder within society as a whole. In aligning contemporary women with their queen, the restriction of their sphere of influence was in no way cancelled, but rationalized and valorized. Let me emphasize again that this alignment of the domestic female role with the demands of moral integrity in the face of massive social change was not restricted to a specific spectrum of society. As Anna Clark has pointed out, working women aspired to the ideal of domesticity as well, and sought the "privilege" of withdrawing into the private sphere in order to fulfill their "natural" duties as wives and mothers.²⁷² The narrative of domesticity was thus shared by a broad and varied social spectrum, who connected different political aims with it.

The parallel of wife and queen fed into an imagination of society as ordered by the loving relationship between a married couple. The relationship between wife and husband that Ruskin envisioned in *Of Queen's Gardens* betrays a chivalrous ideal. He required men to obey their wives, whose queenly authority gave them the right to direct the opposite sex.

*In all Christian ages which have been remarkable for their purity or progress, there has been absolute yielding of obedient devotion, by the lover, to his mistress. I say obedient;—not merely enthusiastic and worshipping in imagination, but entirely subject, receiving from the beloved woman ... not only the encouragement, the praise, the reward of all toil, but, so far as any choice is open, or any question of decision, the direction of all toil.*²⁷³

If their wives adhered to the standards of "queenship," then, free, working men were "entirely subject" to their women, just as they were loyal subjects of their monarch, Queen Victoria.

Note, though, that the authority that Ruskin ascribed to women was based entirely upon their readiness to take on this role of "queenship" and to act as a moral authority. If they failed to fulfill this task, there were potentially devastating consequences, which

272 Clark argues that women who participated in the Chartist movement during 1837 and 1838 did not demand female suffrage. Rather, they fashioned a political identity for themselves as wives and mothers, and justified their activism as a necessary contribution to their husbands' fight for political representation and for the breadwinner wage. Clark calls this a form of "militant domesticity." Anna Clark, *The Struggle for the Breeches*, 220, 227–228.

273 Ruskin, *Of Queen's Gardens*, 17.

went beyond the mere disorder of the private home. Deviant female behavior shook the very foundations of social interaction.

If misunderstood, the female claim to “queenship” could get horribly out of hand, as illustrated by my opening example of Diamond’s patient A.D., who suffered from the mental delusion of being a queen. Her imagined queenship fundamentally placed in doubt the ordering capacities of the domestic ideal. On the one hand, she claimed the privilege of leisure for herself despite the fact that her social position did not allow her to retreat into the private sphere. On the other, she equated leisure with the freedom to refuse to work. This went against the contemporary ideal of domestic industriousness, and calls to mind Carlyle’s dismissal of the “non-working” aristocracy in the public sphere, or Haweis’s negative assessment of the unproductive leisured ladies, who honed their drawing skills instead of taking on the moral and aesthetic improvement of their home. Diamond’s patient needed to be made aware of her delusion not only for her own good, but also to safeguard society. Photography played a decisive, but ambivalent, role in the effort to reign in such constantly looming disruption of the collective dream of social order.

Over the course of treatment, Diamond usually took four photographs of his patients to document their respective progress, measured in four consecutive emotional stages: “melancholy, excited, convalescent, well” (Fig. 91). While the first photograph of each series showed the women with open, uncombed hair and dressed in coarse, unadorned, sometimes untidy asylum clothing, the last photograph regularly presented them as “healed.” Made up in collar, cap, and shawl, they breathed middle-class respectability, which indicated their readiness to reenter society and fulfill their intended role.²⁷⁴ Diamond’s trust in the photograph as the unfailing documentation of a patient’s



91. John Conolly (from a photograph by Hugh Welch Diamond), *The Physiognomy of Insanity*, No. 8: Puerperal Mania in four stages, from *The Medical Times & Gazette* 16, June 19, 1858, 633, lithograph. Wellcome Collection, London (acc. no. L0028550)

274 Sharrona Pearl, “Through a Mediated Mirror: The Photographic Physiognomy of Dr. Hugh Welch Diamond,” *History of Photography* 33, no. 3 (2009): 288–305. This series was used as an illustration by Diamond’s colleague John Conolly in his article John Conolly, “The Physiognomy of Insanity, No. 8: Puerperal Mania,” *Medical Times & Gazette* 16 (June 19, 1858): 623–625.



92. Hugh Welch Diamond, *Religious Melancholy*, 1848-1858, photograph, dimensions unknown. Royal Society of Medicine, London

mental status as reflected in their physiognomy had its limits, then. He felt the need to visually patrol the unnervingly permeable boundary between madness and normality by supplementing their photographic likeness with other visual information in order to mark their recovery.

Diamond's photographic records imitate the conventional studio portrait—the seated posture, three-quarter profile, and sometimes even the studio furnishing, which is implied with help of a blanket thrown over the makeshift background in resemblance of a curtain (Fig. 92). Clearly, the doctor's rough approximation of the standard of respectable self-presentation served his own medical aims. Following the assumption that a mind gone wrong could be righted, his photographic analyses traced behavior rather than personality.²⁷⁵ But his reference to commercial portrait photography also throws into relief the uneasy relationship of his patients to “normality.” In photography theory, the structural similarity between photography of surveillance and photography that serves the aim of self-representation has been a regular topic.²⁷⁶ John Tagg has discussed the

deep-set worry in photographic discourse that pathologies might overrun the social body. Modern society's “paranoia,” as he calls it, motivated the constant definition, monitoring, and interpretation of the boundaries of that body by means of photography.²⁷⁷ However, photography's “reality principle,” the medium's usage for the construction, access, and assessment of reality, turns out to be a false friend to this desire for reason and order. On the one hand, the photographic record apparently allocates each person clearly and distinctly within an all-encompassing structure of society, thus making him or her transparent, visible, and controllable. On the other, this “fantasy of knowledge,” as Tagg calls it, is based on a shared belief in the objectivity of the documenting medium, whose visual evidence turns out to be anything but unambiguous.

275 Pearl, “Through a Mediated Mirror,” 290.

276 Alan Sekula, “The Body and the Archive,” *October*, 39 (Winter 1986): 3–64; More recently, Meyer, *Operative Porträts*.

277 John Tagg, “The Discontinuous City,” 88–89. Tagg refers to Michel Foucault, who described the “clinical gaze” as a defining quality of modernity: by means of new quantifying methods such as statistics (or photography) it defines a norm, from which anything anomalous is differentiated. Foucault, *Naissance de la Clinique*. See also Blümle, “Aus dem Dunkel ans Licht. Michel Foucaults Bildgeschichte des Wahnsinns,” 67–96.

As I have demonstrated in this chapter, photography's role in the visual construction and confirmation of social distinction becomes comprehensible in the practices and rituals of the drawing room and its decoration, which were conducted by women. Women's adherence to social conventions and moral norms, as they were displayed in photography as well as in drawing room decoration, were fundamental for the imagination of a securely ordered society. To distance oneself from this assigned place meant to generally call into question society's accepted order. To be photographed in this set-up, even if it was only suggested with the barest minimum of decorative means, meant to be placed again into this scheme.

Florence Nightingale, who herself was born into a well-to-do family and would become a celebrated social reformer in the 1860s, criticized women's role in this symbolic construction and confirmation of social order. In an unpublished autobiographical sketch titled *Cassandra* (1852), she bemoaned the wasted lives of middle- and upper-class women who were resigned to tending the "domestic hearth." Nightingale's harsh criticism was directed not only at women's confinement to the home, but also at their own confirmation, by means of educating and advising their peers and daughters, of their conventional role in society.²⁷⁸ Popular publications like Orrin Smith's and Haweis's lessons in taste were examples of this female self-curtailment. In Nightingale's opinion, it wasted women's talents and deprived them of a worthy life, and, what is more, it could lead to psychological instability, even insanity.²⁷⁹ As in Diamond's portrait of patient A.D., queen and asylum inmate are here conflated again, this time in the figure of the respectable, middle-class "Queen of the Home."

Diamond's photographic treatment of his working-class female patients, as well as Eastlake's, Orrin Smith's, and Haweis's later advice for their middle-class female readers, illustrate the broad conviction that women have an important role to play in safeguarding the social order. Their activities need to be monitored and controlled closely to ensure that they contribute to the confirmation of social norms and values. The images of society produced in their homes and albums need to reflect and confirm the "truth" that society has agreed upon.

Commercial portrait photography helped construct and confirm such latent agreements about an ideal framework for a renewed social order. It became most effective within the private social settings of its customers, where it was accepted by its respec-

278 "Men are afraid that their houses will not be so comfortable, that their wives will make themselves 'remarkable'—women, that they will make themselves distasteful to men; they write books (and very wisely) to teach themselves to dramatize 'little things,' to persuade themselves that 'domestic life is their sphere' and to idealize the 'sacred hearth.'" Nightingale, *Cassandra*, 51–52.

279 Nightingale, *Cassandra*, 43. Logan, in reference to Nightingale's text, likens women to "inmates." Logan, *The Victorian Parlour*, 2001, 26. Interestingly, Nightingale's photographic portrait can be found in the album of George Cowper, alongside images of country houses and society types, as well as an unnamed psychiatric patient at Dr. Diamond's Surrey County Lunatic Asylum. Douglas R. Nickel has tried to make sense of this unlikely combination. See Nickel, "From the Manor House to the Asylum," 65–67.

tive viewers as a “true picture.” This truth-building activity was aided by the possibility of circulating markers of gentility with the help of the photographic image. The space of the drawing room, its furnishings, the social group it attracted, their shared interests and activities, were all illustrated and replicated in the carte de visite portrait. Later, that very portrait again entered into the context of the middle-class drawing room. It was integrated into a family album and served as a source of conversation for the group assembled in the home. This neat circularity apparently confirmed an underlying “common sense,” which projected values of respectability and moral integrity onto existing ideas of social hierarchy and class distinction.²⁸⁰ It threatened to break down, however, in the face of photography’s incredible commercial success and its accessibility to increasingly broad segments of society. As contemporary critics pointed out, the medium documented with mechanical exactness the standardized and low-quality furnishing of the majority of photo studios, and that tasteless similarity accentuated the actual formlessness and loss of structure that defined contemporary British society.

Visual stabilization was a labor that all consumers of photography contributed to. As has become apparent, the narrative of the domestic, visualized in photography, was flexible enough to address a broad social spectrum. It contributed to a “middle opinion” rather than designate a “middle class” defined by a clearly delimited economic background. Other such narratives also proved powerful rhetorical tools in the construction of a “common people,” defined by a shared set of norms and values. Another popular concept that was applied to the stabilizing of social order was that of “history.” British history, as it was constructed during the nineteenth century, extended the idea of the “common people” both in time and in space, to encompass the global community of the British Empire. The time-honored symbol uniting this virtual community was the Queen and Empress, Victoria. The medium in which this symbol was both disseminated and made contemporary was again photography.

280 Lara Perry, “The Carte de Visite in the 1860s and the Serial Dynamic of Photographic Likeness.” *Art History* 35, no.4 (September 2012): 740. Historians of the upper classes and of nineteenth-century politics have increasingly recognized that there are much stronger ties of continuity with the eighteenth century, at least until the 1880s, than has previously been acknowledged. Rather than viewing the Reform Act of 1832 as an irrevocable break with the past, ushering in an age of political modernization, bureaucracy, and, ultimately and inexorably, democracy, cogent arguments have been made for viewing the first forty years of Victoria’s reign as belonging to a tradition with its roots in the Glorious Revolution of 1688, rather than as a precursor of the twentieth century. See e.g. Price, “Historiography, Narrative and the Nineteenth Century,” 220–256. K.D. Reynolds builds her study on aristocratic women of the nineteenth century on this reconceptualization. See Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women*.



93. Glass slide of lantern slide show "The Life of Queen Victoria", 1897, glass slide, 8.25 x 8.25 cm. Collection of Jeremy Brooker, London

4 History in a Slide Set

The photographic portrait that opens this chapter is part of a set of lantern slides titled *The Life of Queen Victoria* (1897) (Fig. 93).²⁸¹ It is based on a well-known photograph of the queen in three-quarter profile, clad in widow's dress and white cap, that had been taken by Alexander Bassano on the occasion of her Diamond Jubilee in 1897—arguably the defining moment of British imperialism.²⁸² Upon its transfer onto the glass slide, the portrait was cropped, colored, and equipped with a sky blue background. The caption, awkwardly placed in red handwriting alongside the queen's profile, reads “Long May She Live.” Though Victoria's retouched face is wrinkle-free, no further effort was made to conceal her age of seventy-eight years. Grey hair is visible underneath her cap, and her posture is bent. The slide set is an illustrated biography of the queen made up of photographs and photographed paintings, sculpture, drawings, and etchings. In its 120 images, it features reproductions of popular images that had been available as photographic reproductions since the 1860s.

From the 1880s until the end of the century, lantern slide shows were spectacular visual entertainment for a broad and socially diverse audience.²⁸³ Education reformists

281 All major slide producers and distributors offered lantern lectures devoted to Victoria's life and reign. For a preliminary list see “Person: VICTORIA, Queen (1819–1901),” Lucerna. The Magic Lantern Web Resource, accessed September 8, 2020, <http://lucerna.exeter.ac.uk/person/index.php?language=EN&id=6002540>. Jeremy Brooker, Bryony Dixon, John Plunkett, “Queen Victoria at the Pictures,” in 19: *Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century* 33 (2022): 1–18.

282 James R. Andrews, “The imperial style: Rhetorical depiction and queen Victoria's diamond jubilee,” *Western Journal of Communication* 64, no. 1 (2000): 56 f.

283 Lantern slide shows already existed much earlier, of course, but the integration of photographic sources and the accompanying business of the traveling slide show gained traction specifically during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. For an account of the increased commercialization of lantern slide shows in the 1870s, when apparatus manufacturers, image producers, and operators formed a business network of their own, see Martin Loiperdinger, “The Social Impact of Screen Culture,” in *Screen Culture and the Social Question. 1880–1914*, ed. Ludwig Vogl-Bienek and Richard Crangle (New Barnet: John Libbey Publishing Ltd, 2014), 9–18; Richard Crangle, “What do these old slides mean? Or why the magic lantern is not an important part of cinema history,” in *Visual Delights. Essays on the Popular and Projected Image in the 19th Century*, ed. Simon Popple and Vanessa Toulmin (Trowbridge: Flicks Books, 2000), 16–24. Emphasizing the rapidly growing number of lecturers and amateurs during the 1880s, Joe Kember speaks of a “magic lantern culture.” Joe Kember, *Marketing Modernity. Victorian Popular Shows and Early Cinema*. Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2009, 62.

praised the projection of photographic images as a means to focus attention in a large group. The general fascination of an enlarged and illuminated image could be harnessed to transport knowledge and information. Colored lantern slides, which were often combined with sound effects and music, added further to the immersive experience and emotional identification of the audience. Commentators maintained that with the help of color, the projected image became the best surrogate for an unmediated experience. The “truth” of the photographic image was paired with the light of the lantern apparatus to produce a specific form of educational amusement. The supposed objectivity of the photographic medium, combined with the monumental luminosity of its projection, transformed apparently factual information into a compelling storyline.²⁸⁴ The rhythmic, compulsory progression of slides was seen to provide a comprehensible and enjoyable shared narrative that could be re-lived as the slides passed before the audience’s eyes.

By the 1880s there was virtually no area of the visible that had not yet been photographically recorded, thereby enabling it to become part of a lantern slide projection. While the existing visual repertoire made the application of this technology to any topic of public interest commercially attractive, this also meant that the content of the slide shows was determined to a large degree by the photographic archive already in place. As a medium of re-use, the lantern show organized this given material into meaningful sequences of visual information. Due to the constant re-negotiation of existing images, the lantern slide show formed a hybrid space of both popular and professional reception. When it came to the applications of slide shows, the conception of history was often discussed.²⁸⁵ The inclusion of photographic images helped to establish the idea of a “historical record.” The medium’s documentary status contributed to nineteenth-century negotiations about “truthful history,” since the existing archive confirmed images, top-

284 Contemporary sources show a clear preference for colored, rather than plain black-and-white slides: Howard Stubbs, “A Plea for more ‘Charm’ in Lantern Work,” *The optical magic lantern journal and photographic enlarger* 10, no. 123 (August 1899): 98. Cecil M. Hepworth, “The Rise and Fall of the Optical Lantern,” *The British Journal of Photography* 43, Supplement (January 3, 1896): 6–7. Samuel Highley, “Photography and the Magic Lantern applied to Teaching History,” *Journal of Society of Arts and of the Institutions in Union* 17, no. 844 (January 22, 1869): 139–143; Samuel Highley, “How to Employ Photography and the Lantern as Educational Aids,” *The British Journal of Photography* 25, no. 922, (January 4, 1878): 6–7; Samuel Highley, “How to Employ Photography and the Lantern as Educational Aids. No. II,” *The British Journal of Photography* 25, no. 923, (January 11, 1878): 17; Samuel Highley, “How to Employ Photography and the Lantern as Educational Aids. No. III,” *The British Journal of Photography* 25, no. 926, (February 1, 1878): 52–53; Samuel Highley, “How to Employ Photography and the Lantern as Educational Aids. No. IV,” *The British Journal of Photography* 25, no. 930, (March 1, 1878): 102–103. See also Steve Humphries, *Victorian Britain through the Magic Lantern* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1989), 109–118. For a general history of the medium see Jens Ruchatz, “The magic lantern in connection with photography. Rationalization and technology,” in *Visual Delights. Essays on the Popular and Projected Image in the 19th century*, ed. Simon Pople and Vanessa Toulmin (Trowbridge: Flicks Books, 2000), 38–49. Jens Ruchatz, *Licht und Wahrheit. Eine Mediumgeschichte der fotografischen Projektion* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2003), 213; Kember, *Marketing Modernity*.

285 John Tagg calls it a new “Historical Section,” spanning the realms of evidence and spectacle. He sees it as governed by a social democratic political project of managing consent through the new means of communication, in the context of modernizing, rationalizing, and professionalizing the social domain. Tagg, “The Discontinuous City,” 89.



94. Glass slide of lantern slide show "The Life of Queen Victoria," 1897, glass slide, 8.25 × 8.25 cm. Collection of Jeremy Brooker, London



95. Glass slide of lantern slide show "The Life of Queen Victoria," 1897, glass slide, 8.25 × 8.25 cm. Collection of Jeremy Brooker, London



96. Glass slide of lantern slide show "The Life of Queen Victoria," 1897, glass slide, 8.25 × 8.25 cm. Collection of Jeremy Brooker, London

ics, and persons as decisive historical events and agents.²⁸⁶

Products such as the set *The Life of Queen Victoria* provided entertaining and easily digestible "history lessons" for their audience. Many of the images discussed in the preceding chapters were utilized in lantern slide shows to tell the seductively simple and powerful story of a queen whose life symbolized the recent history of Britain. Photographic reproductions of paintings of Victoria as a child and young woman by painters such as Martin Archer Shee, William Folwer, or Thomas Sully, cropped and overpainted to such a degree that it is hard to recognize them, were included and at times even animated. Popular representative paintings of the court painter Franz Xaver Winterhalter can be found in the set as

well, along with photographic reproductions of widely disseminated etchings and photographic portraits of the queen (Figs. 94–96). Their portraits alternate with im-

286 The standardized format of the slide is 8.25 cm. Originally, manufacturers of stereoscopic transparencies produced lantern slides as a side business, selling halves of broken stereographs for the purpose. See Ruchatz "The magic lantern in connection with photography," 41. Günzel and Mersch, *Bild*, 116.

ages that narrate the fate and progress of the British nation throughout the nineteenth century.

The surviving slide list of a similar set, *The glorious reign of Queen Victoria: its events, inventions, and progress*, also produced on the occasion of Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, lists titles that illustrate the queen's biography (birth, childhood, coronation, marriage, motherhood, widowhood) and private life (the royal family at Balmoral, the queen sketching in the Highlands, her favorite dog, her personal drawing room) interspersed with slides illustrating important technological inventions (the spinning wheel and sewing machine, electric light, steamboat, railway, motor car) and decisive domestic and external political events of the era (the Corn Laws, unrest in Ireland, the war in Crimea, the Indian Uprising, the Queen's Jubilee).

When these sets were produced, Victoria had been upon the throne for over half a century. The majority of British citizens had known no other monarch. Her advanced age lent both gravity and urgency to the construction of the immediate past as an "epoch" that was bound to come to an end. During the last decades of the nineteenth century the queen enjoyed more popularity than at any other point of her life. Her life served as a virtual metronome for the passing of time. It was applied as a device to bring together disparate historical events that had had complex socio-political consequences for Britain, as well as far-reaching consequences abroad. Her diamond jubilee in 1897 was staged and perceived as a culminating point of British history at the time. From here the nation's future was projected upon the ideal of the British Empire: the popular observation that the "sun never set on the British Empire" implied an immortality that had traditionally been attributed to the absolutist monarch, whose body politic remains intact, even if his (or her) body natural dies. Despite the fact that Britain had a constitutional monarchy, then, this symbolic power played an important role in British imperial rhetoric.²⁸⁷

In this chapter I examine the complex relationship between the original production of photographic records and their subsequent integration into the popular and broadly accepted narrative called "history." I analyze how photographs took on different meanings as they were integrated into a broader narrative, and how their originally provisional and uncertain interpretation was streamlined in the public and commercial outlets of the late nineteenth century.

Two political events of the mid-nineteenth century and their subsequent mediation through images will serve as my case studies: the Crimean War of 1854–1856, which was regarded as a massive threat to domestic stability in Britain, and the Indian Uprising in 1857, which led to Queen Victoria's claim of the title of Empress of India

287 "As there is no dusk in the perpetual imperial sunlight there is no death: the empire is immortal, beyond the bounds of time that a span of life imposes." Andrews, "The Imperial Style," 61. For the theory of the "King's Two Bodies" see Chapter 5.

in 1877. Both events subsequently became decisive tools to justify the continued existence of the British Empire.

In the mid-1850s, British news outlets pioneered the vigorous use of new image technologies to cover the war on the one hand, and the civil unrest on the other, both in far-flung areas of the world. The resulting visual documents played a crucial role in the reception of these events by the British public. Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, both incidents were swiftly integrated into written and visual accounts that offered a publicly sanctioned narrative of the recent past. I discuss what kinds of visual documents were made of these events, what their function was at the time of their production, and how they were subsequently streamlined by their integration into new formats of entertainment and education, such as the lantern slide show. As will become apparent, contemporary discourse on history was deeply informed by the commercial use and distribution of photographic images.

The Victorian understanding of history pinpoints the anxiety about social disorder that we encountered in the preceding chapters. On the one hand, the writing of history had to do justice to the facts and assert the authority of the real. On the other hand, it needed to reign in complexity, circumstance, and distracting detail, in order to confirm an underlying logic of meaningful progress. Victorian writing of history aimed to provide a common reality and define a place and purpose for both individual and society in the flux of time.²⁸⁸ But this search for an authoritative historical narrative based on facts ran in parallel with an underlying doubt about historical truth itself. Authors increasingly questioned the possibilities of extracting such truth from the sources they could lay their hands on. As Christopher Herbert notes, this “epistemological pessimism” was addressed in the writings on the Crimean War and, even more intensely, in accounts of the Indian Uprising.²⁸⁹ The questions of what “history” was, by what laws it was governed, upon whose authority it was based, and what its relationship might be to contemporary society, were discussed by the same intellectuals who also voiced their opinion on matters such as the relation between individual and society, and the role of class and gender, for the functioning of contemporary society. Just like “progress,” “history” was understood as a shared narrative of “the people.” Thomas Carlyle, John Ruskin, and John Stuart Mill were prominent theoreticians, practitioners, and proponents of a history that was constructed first and foremost to make sense of the complex present.

288 This nostalgia for an older, apparently simpler form of society is also the source of Victorian medievalism. Authors such as Cobbett, Carlyle, Pugin, and Ruskin all formulated a critique of their contemporary society in light of an ideal, set in the historic past. Whether or not it was strictly “medieval” did not seem to matter. What was important was that this “old order” was chivalric in manners and sentiment, feudal in social structure, agrarian in economy, and unspoiled in the natural scene. Culler, *The Victorian Mirror of History*, 152–153, 159.

289 Christopher Herbert, *War of No Pity. The Indian Mutiny and Victorian Trauma* (Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008), 138.

Throughout the nineteenth century, the interaction with visual media that provided accounts of history increasingly became the norm. Such broad dissemination played an important part in both the definition and democratization of national and imperial culture and identity.²⁹⁰ Engravings, cartes de visite, magazine illustrations, history books, stereo cards, and slide sets were consumed in public and private contexts by an increasingly broad consumer base. Photography again played an important role in these localized negotiations of a common British history. By providing a shared repository of images, photography helped create a visual commonality of lived experience. Victoria's photographic representation is not only a compelling example of these constructions of history. In her own engagement with photography, she reflected on her symbolic value as the instantiation of British history. Her personal reaction to the two historical events that will be discussed in this chapter, and the production of photographic images it entailed, demonstrates that she shared the dream of a common history with her subjects, both in Britain and in the British Empire.

A Blow to the National Self-Confidence: The War in Crimea

The War in Crimea was no high point in British military history. In 1854, Western forces entered into armed conflict against Russia, to curtail the expansion of Russian influence in the Crimean region.²⁹¹ With a small expedition army of 58,000 men, they had planned a short military campaign to attack the Russian war port of Sevastopol and destroy the docks, before withdrawing again from Crimea, which, due to its exposed geographical position, was considered to be ultimately indefensible. In this first modern war, technological innovations such as railroad, steamship, and telegraph, as well as industrial potential and advanced infrastructure, became decisive factors of warfare. Arms, transport, and communication technologies were revolutionized continuously throughout the two-and-a-half-year duration of the conflict. This necessitated a constant strategic realignment on the part of the warring parties. Britain did not cut a particularly good figure in this challenge, mostly due to the incomplete modernization of the army's administration in London. At the mid-nineteenth century, the British military was still under aristocratic leadership, which was not yet ready to undertake a rapid structural and technological conversion of the army, as this would have entailed a thorough redistribution of power. In turn, a defiant, democratically elected parliament tightened the thumbscrews on this aristocratic elite. The army's financing was impeded by the insertion of additional bureaucratic hurdles. The result of this domestic power

290 Billie Melman, *The Culture of History: English Uses of the Past 1800–1953* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Peter Mandler, *History and National Life* (London: Profile Books, 2002).

291 On a global scale, Britain also regarded Russia's expansion as a potential threat to its authority in India. Hoppen, *The Mid-Victorian Generation*, 183.

97. Jules Worms, *Exposition du plan en relief du siège de Sébastopol, par M. Wylde, dans les salons de M. Hamilton, boulevard des Italiens*, from *L'illustration* 25, March 24, 1855, 180, copper-plate engraving? Universitätsbibliothek Köln (AP6460-25.1855)



struggle between the traditional military hierarchy and modern bureaucracy was the so-called “winter troubles,” a euphemism for the dramatic losses of the British army at Sevastopol.²⁹² During the winter months of 1854/55, some 27,000 soldiers died of hunger, cold, and cholera—not from enemy fire. Only with the return of warmer weather, and after the French army had been bolstered with 130,000 additional soldiers, did the tide turn in favor of the Western forces. In the end it took over a year and cost the lives of more than 300,000 men to reach and occupy Sevastopol on September 8, 1855.

The Crimean War was also a modern media event and emerged as a lucrative cultural production. A dense network of new, technologically defined channels, media, and genres of communication produced their own images of the war, tailored to the consumption of paying customers of image journalism, lithography, and the urban entertainment industry: panoramas, walk-in models of battle fields, open-air theaters, and publicly presented history paintings (Fig. 97). To an unprecedented degree, the British experience of the war was filtered through print and the printed image, which seemed to document and interpret the events not after the fact, but in real time.²⁹³

292 For an account of the antiquity and insufficiency of the British army in terms of strategy, personnel, and equipment upon entering the Crimean War see Hobben, *The Mid-Victorian Generation*, 174–178.

293 See Ulrich Keller, *The Ultimate Spectacle. A Visual History of the Crimean War* (Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach Publishers, 2001).

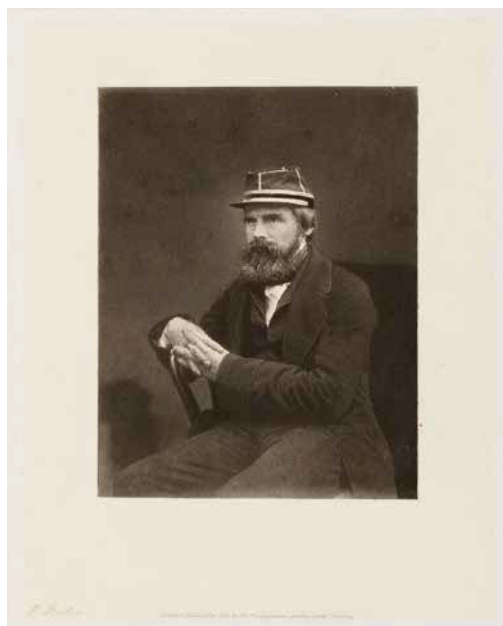
Additionally, diverse visual sources provided the basis for a range of different, and sometimes conflicting, assessments and narratives. For the British authorities, this many-voiced and multifaceted representation of the war proved problematic, since the course of the war needed to be approved by the electorate.²⁹⁴

The British public first learned about their army's "winter troubles" in the articles of the *Times* journalists William Howard Russell and Thomas Chenery, who reported directly from the trenches at Sevastopol and the hospital barracks at Balaclava and Scutari (Fig. 98). Just two years later, Russell would also be one of the first and most prominent on-site reporters to cover the Indian Uprising. Russell's investigative reporting shone a harsh light on the senseless deaths of British soldiers, whose fate the journalist documented with detailed descriptions of first-person experiences from the front. Eye-witness accounts of privates and sergeants brought his readers into a quasi-encounter with the horrible conditions in the trenches. Russell's articles fueled public outrage and undermined the authority and credibility of the two governing elites of British society, the aristocracy and the liberal government.²⁹⁵

At that time, photography was not yet any competition for Russell's dramatic eye-witness accounts. Photographers like Roger Fenton or those who were part of the team of James Robertson and Felice Beato arrived at battle scenes in the spring of 1855, well after the gruesome and decisive winter months of 1854–1855. Photography was technologically not yet advanced enough to document any immediate action, and the process was too complex and fragile to be applied directly on the battlefield. Fenton for his part was no investigative journalist, but a talented amateur photographer (Fig. 99). He was responsible for the founding of the Photographic Society in 1853, and won the patronage of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. This portrait of him was taken a number of years later by the psychiatrist, fellow amateur photographer, and co-founder of the society, Hugh Welch Diamond, whose photo-



98. Roger Fenton, *Sir William Howard Russell*, June 1855, albumen print, 18.1 × 15.3 cm. Royal Collection, London (acc. no. RCIN 2500306)



99. Hugh Welch Diamond, *Roger Fenton*, 1868, photogalvanograph, 20.3 × 15.2 cm. National Portrait Gallery, London (acc. no. NPG P226)

294 The public outrage at the military disaster in Crimea caused the fall of the Aberdeen government at the end of January 1855. After protracted negotiations Aberdeen was replaced by Palmerston.

295 Stefanie Markovits, "The Crimean War in the British Imagination," in *Cambridge Studies in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture*, ed. Gillian Beer (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 12–62.



100. Roger Fenton, *Francis William Henry Fane, 12th Earl of Westmorland*, April 1855 (published 1856), salt print, 18.9 × 15.8 cm. National Portrait Gallery, London (acc. no. NPG Ax24907)



101. Roger Fenton, *General Bosquet and Captain Dampierre*, 1855, salted paper print, 19.4 × 15.1 cm. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa (acc. no. 30835.42)

graphic activities I discussed earlier. Before the Crimean War, Fenton's most prominent assignment had been to photograph the royal family in the fold-out studios at Buckingham Palace and Windsor Castle.

His mission in Crimea was vastly different from that of Russell's.²⁹⁶ Appointed by the art dealer and print publisher Thomas Agnew & Sons, and under the patronage of the royal court, he sought to produce a photographic gallery of the "Heroes of Crimea." Both clients pursued their own interests with this commission. The commercial publishing house Agnew & Sons expected monetary returns from Fenton's officer portraits.²⁹⁷ For the royal court, the photographic gallery of heroes was intended to confirm the traditional hierarchical organization of the army, updated in the brand-new visual medium (Figs. 100–101). Fenton's photographic documentation was focused

296 Sophie Gordon, *Shadows of War. Roger Fenton's Photographs of the Crimea, 1855* (London: Royal Collection Trust, 2017).

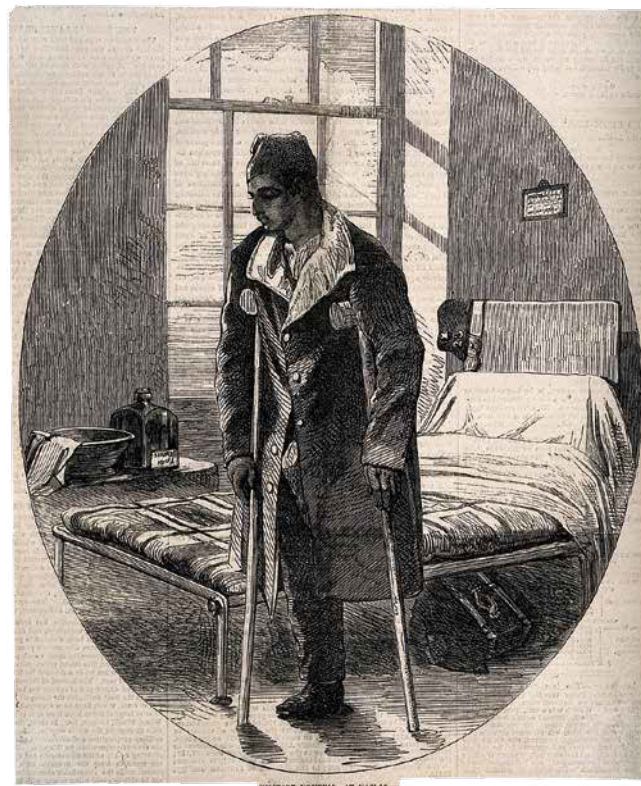
297 337 of Fenton's portraits were offered by subscription, and additionally a selection of 160 prints was published, made up of four portfolios. Too expensive to attract a broad audience, the prints sold poorly. See Matthew Paul Lalumia, *Realism and Politics in Victorian Art of the Crimean War* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1984), 122. It was not until six months after Fenton's return to Britain, on the occasion of the victorious return of the British army, that a small collection of his portraits was transferred into woodcut and published in the *London Illustrated News*, thereby reaching a broader audience.

entirely on the officers' corps. Images from the trenches and the battlefields featuring the army itself were not part of his repertoire. Among the high-ranking officers, only one private can be found in his portrait gallery. That nameless soldier was only added to illustrate the British uniform.²⁹⁸ Fenton's photographs were therefore not meant to document the actual proceedings of the war, but rather served a representational function. Queen Victoria herself owned an album dedicated exclusively to Fenton's officer portraits.

After Russell's and Chenery's articles about the horrors in the trenches had been published in the *Times*, picture-heavy outlets such as the *London Illustrated News* joined the public outcry against the negligence of government and military leadership. For want of photographs from the front, the magazine's first critical report was illustrated with a portrait of a war invalid from a London military hospital—a woodcut fashioned after a photograph (Fig. 102). The image's prominent placement in a high-circulation illustrated newspaper quickly established the war invalid as an iconic image of the Crimean War.

Though it was introduced to criticize the British army's and government's failure to adequately organize and plan the war, the figure of the wounded soldier was quickly repurposed, and his wounds interpreted as a symbol of his unwavering service to his country. The death and suffering of the British soldiers in Crimea thereby inspired a common cause. Contemporary coverage of the activities of the British nurse Florence Nightingale in Crimea was part of this effort to reorient the narrative as well. We already met Nightingale in the previous chapter, as an outspoken advocate of women's rights. In the mid-eighteen-fifties, Nightingale entered the public scene as a qualified nurse with executive experience in the running of a care facility. After having read Russell's dispatches in the *Times*, she persuaded the Secretary of War to send British nurses to Crimea under her leadership.

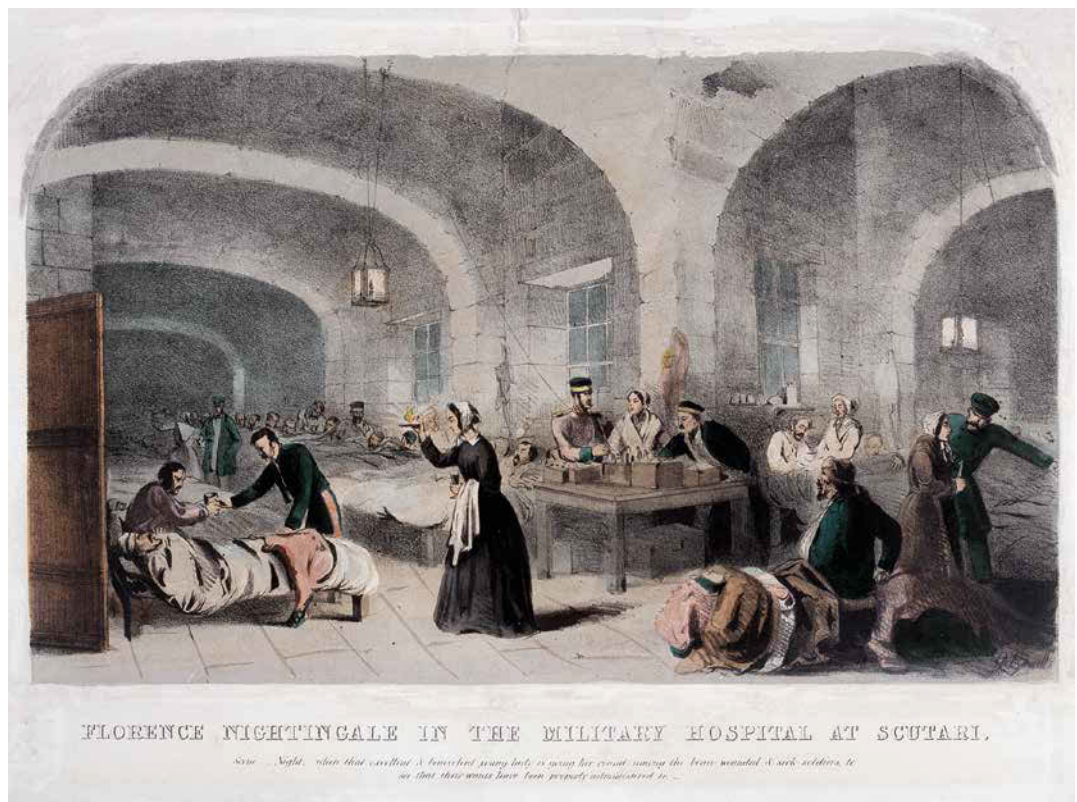
In Britain, Nightingale's engagement was met with public admiration. Due to her background



102. Royal Hospital Haslar: a soldier on crutches with an amputated leg, wounded after the Battle of the Alma, from *The illustrated London news*, February 3, 1855, n. p., wood engraving. Wellcome Library, London (acc. no. 23113i)

298 Lulumia, *Realism and Politics*, 115–127. For the subsequent increase in popularity of the image of the working-class soldier in the reporting on the Crimean War, and its political and moral implications, see Rachel Teukolsky, *Picture World. Image, Aesthetics, and Victorian New Media* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 113–129.

103. Joseph Austin Benwell, *Florence Nightingale in the Military Hospital at Scutari*, c. 1855, colored lithograph, 30 × 43.7 cm. National Army Museum, London (acc. no. NAM. 1978-10-57-1)



from a well-to-do family and her social profession, she held great appeal for news consumers as a contemporary female role model (Fig. 103). The nurse's charitable industriousness embodied the highest values of mid-Victorian society. Her image, as she devotedly cared for injured men at the front, served as a welcome proxy for their wives, sisters, and daughters and helped define the latter's own role in the war effort. In addition, her neat figure in starched nurse's uniform provided a welcome visual antithesis to the shockingly mutilated veterans, who returned to Britain in growing numbers. Nightingale's portrait was readily reproduced in *The London Illustrated News* and other media outlets, and repeated in endless prints and mass-produced cartes de visite, and in many anonymous middle-class stock albums of the time (Fig. 104). Representing the gentle side of civilized society, Nightingale personified the reason to fight this war.²⁹⁹

The visual combination of male soldier and female caretaker, and the superimposition of their respective war efforts as a concerted service to the British nation, was recognized as a successful image by Queen Victoria as well. In December 1854, the queen wrote a letter to the head of the war office, Sidney Herbert, who was also a close

²⁹⁹ Helen Rappaport, *No Place for Ladies—The Untold Story of the Crimean War* (London: Aurum Press, 2007); Mar Bostbridge, *Florence Nightingale* (London: Penguin, 2009). Of course, this simplified, feminized image did not adequately represent Nightingale's highly professional and powerful engagement, but it helped give the nurse a place in the Victorian imagination. Chase and Levenson, *The Spectacle of Intimacy*, 15.



104. Henry Hering, published by Alfred William Bennett, *Florence Nightingale*, late 1856–1857, albumen carte-de-visite, 8.8 × 5.5cm. National Portrait Gallery, London (acc. no. NPG x16139)



105. Jerry Barrett, *Queen Victoria's First Visit to Her Wounded Soldiers*, 1856, oil on canvas, 148 × 219.3 cm. National Portrait Gallery, London (acc. no. NPG 6203)

friend and avid supporter of Nightingale. The letter was meant to be read aloud to the injured soldiers at Nightingale's hospital at Scutari and was printed in the newspapers on the home front. In it, she entreated "Miss Nightingale and the ladies" to "tell the poor noble wounded and sick men that no-one takes a warmer interest or feels more for their sufferings or admires their courage and heroism more than their Queen."³⁰⁰ With her public letter Victoria turned Nightingale into her mouthpiece, rhetorically aligning her own "warm interest" with the nurse's broadly admired care work.³⁰¹

During the winter and spring of 1855, when news about the terrible state of the British army started to reach the public, and war invalids became a familiar sight, Victoria began to meet with veterans at hospitals in and around London. The soldiers who met Victoria during her visits were carefully selected and prepared to meet the royal gaze. Still, that the military service of ordinary soldiers received royal attention at all was a complete novelty. Documented by journalists and artists in all available visual media, these visits resulted in an onslaught of images of the queen at the bedside of her soldiers, a motif that leaned heavily on the popular representation of Nightingale

300 Letter from Queen Victoria to Sidney Herbert, December 6, 1854.

301 Nightingale, in turn, identified with the queen. According to Asa Briggs, her favorite Victorian thing was a brooch presented to her by Queen Victoria in 1856. It bore the words "Blessed are the Merciful." Briggs, *Victorian Things*, 161. See accompanying letter from January 1856 in Christopher Hibbert, ed., *Queen Victoria in Her Letters & Journals* (London: John Murray Publishers, 1984), 135.

at work in Scutari (Fig. 105).³⁰² Generating enormous publicity, the visits provided an ideal visual arena for Victoria. She could act symbolically in the role of the loving and caring woman and at the same time claim her position at the apex of society, as the embodiment of everything that the war effort was meant to defend. As a contemporary woman accompanied by her family, she represented the domestic ideal that she shared with the broader public. As queen, her healthy, young, and unscathed royal body, a counterpart to the mutilated soldiers surrounding her, was symbolic confirmation of the significance of their sacrifice.³⁰³ In the visual representation of the Crimean War, Queen Victoria functioned as a decisive part of an image-generating machine that served the politically crucial aim of attaching meaning and purpose to a brutal war thousands of miles away.

Change of Perspective: Victoria as Eyewitness

Victoria was herself an enthusiastic consumer of photographs. Through her commissions, she actively influenced the kinds of images that were produced to document the war in Crimea. The royal household's support of Fenton's laudatory photographic gallery of Crimean War heroes is not surprising. Fenton's collection of officers confirmed the traditional, though increasingly dubious, concept of an aristocratic military elite. However, another royal commission, which did not receive much contemporary publicity, apparently sent an entirely different message. After Victoria's visits to the London military hospitals, the photo studio Cundall & Howlett was instructed to produce group portraits of the injured privates who had met the queen.³⁰⁴ This constitutes a remarkable change in perspective. Instead of focusing on the queen visiting her soldiers to publicly recognize their service for Britain, the photographs taken by Cundall and Howlett replicated Victoria's own perception upon meeting the injured men. The camera's focus was not on the unlikely interaction between queen and soldier, but rather on the brutal physical consequences of the war that the veterans had to endure.

Clad in simple hospital garb with nightcaps on their heads, they were stripped of their original army rank and photographed in artless frontal views in front of the hos-

302 Matthew Paul Lalumia gives an account of the large visual output dedicated to these meetings between sovereign and soldiers. He also mentions the regular juxtaposition of Queen Victoria and Florence Nightingale in paintings by contemporary artists. See Lalumia, *Realism and Politics*, 75–91.

303 Elaine Scarry has explored the ways in which, above all in the practices of torture and war, human pain is enlisted as a source of verification and substantiation of the symbolic authority of institutions and the social facts they sponsor. Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 31.

304 Victoria owned both an album of Fenton's gallery, containing 122 officers of the British army and its allied forces, and an album containing 105 groups of privates who had served in the British army during the Crimean War and had returned to England as disabled veterans. Today the albums are part of the Royal Photographic Collection.

pital barracks (Fig. 106). Their mutilated bodies, amputated arms and legs, or destroyed faces were relentlessly documented.

Notes from the queen's diary confirm that Victoria demanded unembellished information about the individual soldiers' injuries. She asked the names of each man she met, and wanted to be informed about the progress of their recovery.³⁰⁵ These facts, diligently recorded by her secretary Colonel Phipps, were later added to the photographs assembled in her private album.³⁰⁶ Phipps noted, for example, that Thomas Walker, soldier of the 95th Battalion, suffered a severe head injury during the battle of Inkerman: "Top of Head shot through."

Joseph Conolly, member of the 41st Battalion, lost his left leg in the same battle (Fig. 107). The soldiers responded to the voyeuristic demand of their queen by presenting their prostheses to Cundall and Howlett's camera, or by holding up the projectiles that were responsible for their injuries. In the case of Jessy Lackurst and Thomas O'Brian, Phipps even jotted down the weight of the bullets that had destroyed their faces (Fig. 108). Like Fenton's laudatory gallery of heroes, these photographs do not document the actual events of war in Crimea; they record the soldiers involved in the battle and the physical harm these men suffered. Their "realistic effect" is confirmed by the sitters themselves.³⁰⁷ Cundall and Howlett's portraits document the war by documenting its actors and the physical consequences the fighting inflicted upon them. The soldiers had seen the war with their own eyes, and their physical presence on the battlefield was documented by their injuries. As their frontal gaze met that of their audience of one, the queen, a direct connection was made between their fight and her authority. In a letter to Lord Panmure, Secretary of War, from March 22, 1855, Victoria called herself a "witness" of their suffering.³⁰⁸ They had fulfilled their task for society and secured its integrity by means of their engagement and sacrifice.



106. Howlett and Cundall, *Amputees at Chatham Military Hospital*, negative 1856, printed c. 1883, carbon print, 18.1 × 23.7 cm. Royal Collection, London (acc. no. RCIN 2500189)

305 See journal entry from February 22, 1855, where she recounts her meeting with invalids, in Hibbert, *Queen Victoria in her Letters and Journals*, 130.

306 In a number of cases detailed descriptions from newspaper articles were copied and included as well.

307 Roland Barthes, "Discourse of History," trans. Stephen Bann, in *Comparative Criticism: A Yearbook* 3, ed. E. S. Shaffer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 3–20, here 17.

308 Hibbert, *Queen Victoria*, 130–131.



107. Howlett and Cundall, Thomas Walker, 95th Regt. Wounded Top of Head Inkermann. Top of Head shot through. Joseph Conolly, 41 regt. Lost left leg. Inkermann. Seen by the Queen at Chatham, 1855, carbon print, 29.5 × 23.1 cm. Royal Collection, London (acc. no. RCIN 2500156)



108. Howlett and Cundall, Private Jesse Lockhurst and Private Thomas O'Brien, 1883, copy after 1856 original, carbon print, image 21.3 × 17.3 cm. Royal Collection, London (acc. no. RCIN 2500194)

Why the queen felt compelled to have this portrait series produced is a matter of speculation. Possibly she felt the need to document these men in order to privately relieve her encounter with them, and confirm her “compassion,” which she had announced publicly in her letter. Victoria mentions this emotion regularly, in her diary as well as her published statements. The relation between this specific emotion and the photographic image has been a topic of photography theory. According to Susan Sontag, the photographic image suggests an intimate connection between the visually documented victims on the one hand, and the image-consumer on the other. But this connection does not hold the viewers accountable for the detestable conditions they look at. Compassion proclaims the viewers’ innocence and their inability to stop the suffering they see. It veils the fact that their privileged position is mapped on the same geography as the plight of those who are photographed. In suggesting physical and emotional closeness, photographs actually produce distance.³⁰⁹ During her hospital visits, Victoria

309 Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003), 99–103. Sontag refers to the Crimean War as the historical starting point of war photography, and Fenton’s

came intimately close to the suffering of her soldiers. Her proclaimed “compassion” emphasized this closeness, but released her of any responsibility for their fate. Viewing their photographs, she could reproduce this closeness at will. But she was also free to avert her gaze at any time, or to close her photo album.

Victoria’s claim of compassion, then, indicates how her photographic inventory of injured soldiers documented her own steadfast belief in traditional relationships of patronage and service. Despite the visual differences between the two royal commissions, the portraits of the injured soldiers are conceptually much in tune with Fenton’s gallery of heroes. Victoria explicitly asked for images of those veterans whom she had met personally during her visits. Only the men that she had laid eyes on were photographically immortalized in the sunlight in front of their London hospital barracks and emerged from the nameless and faceless mass of soldiers that fought and died in Crimea. They were acknowledged by being photographically documented, because their suffering had been witnessed and validated by their queen. She became an eyewitness to their sacrifice for the nation, which she herself embodied. Her compassion described their suffering as unavoidable. They had performed a necessary duty for their country, just as she did as queen.

In Victoria’s two personal photo albums dedicated to the Crimean War, “her” officers are presented in military splendor and order while “her” soldiers are inventoried as willing combatants for Britain.³¹⁰ The conventional role and position of both groups was



109. John Jabez Edwin Mayall, *Sergeant Thomas Dawson with his Daughter*, c. 1855–1856, salted paper print, 25.3 × 19.7 cm. Royal Collection, London (acc. no. RCIN 2500126)

narrow focus on the “war heroes” as the first serious blunder of this genre. Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, 48. The ethical encounter with documentary photographs of the dispossessed is also discussed in Gillian Rose, *Doing Family Photography: The Domestic, The Public and The Politics of Sentiment* (Burlington/Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2010).

310 I do not use the term inventory without due consideration. In his well-known study *Pencil of Nature* (1844), Henry Fox Talbot listed a number of possible functions of photography. Two of them are relevant for the new medium’s subsequent role in the conflict in Crimea. Writing about a collection of chinaware documented in one of his photographs, he praised the image’s function as a visual inventory on the one hand, and as a silent witness on the other, whose “mute testimony” would function in



A CONVALESCENT FROM INKERMANN.—(FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY MAYALL.)

110. Henry Linton and E. Morin (Edmond Morin?) after John Jabez Edwin Mayall, *A convalescent from Inkermann*.—(From a photograph by Mayall., from *The Illustrated Times*, June 9, 1855, 5, engraving. Nottingham Manuscripts and Special Collections

visually confirmed: aristocratic commanders on the one hand and mostly working-class subjects of command on the other, both acting under the age-old patronage of the Crown. Once again, society was united under a common objective, and everyone had to take on the task reserved for them, based on their social position as well as their gender. Both commissions confirmed the war effort as a personal service to the queen, who herself was at the service of the “common man.” They testified to the inevitable necessity of the Crimean War for the preservation of British society and attested to the crucial role of the queen for the maintenance of social peace and order at home. In both of these series the war itself remained largely invisible. It was replaced by its participants. While the officers’ intact bodies and dress uniforms confirmed the authority of the British army, the injured bodies of the soldiers verified the war’s meaningfulness to society. Both Fenton’s and Cundall and Howlett’s “war photography,” then, visually reconstituted an ideal of social order.

The image of the injured veteran proved ambiguous, however, and its interpretation was difficult to control. Cundall and Howlett’s group portraits did not lend themselves easily to the moral elevation of the war. They did not adhere to the conventions of representative portrait photography, and although the soldiers’ hospital garb was clean and their wounds were dressed, the plain frontality and unapologetic documentation of their physical injuries demarcated them as outside of the social norm. It is thus not surprising that Cundall and Howlett’s inventory photographs hardly made it into a larger print circulation.³¹¹

court as “evidence of a novel kind,” should the collection ever fall into the hands of thieves. Both functions of photography, as inventory and as testimony, are in evidence in the royal commissions. Talbot, *The Pencil of Nature*, n. p.

311 Only a few of these photographs found their way into the *Illustrated London News*, transformed into wood-engravings. They were printed in the issue of July 21, 1855; 69. Perhaps recognizing the public’s need to clutch at some positive element from the war, Cundall and Howlett expanded the works produced for the queen into a larger series of Crimean portrait studies aimed at the commercial market. The collection consisted of 25 photographs depicting veteran privates and non-commissioned officers from the war in the East, together with the earlier views of British soldiers and their captured

A portrait of the injured soldier Sergeant Dawson visually reigns in this ambiguity (Fig. 109). It was taken in 1855 by John Mayall, who in 1861 would also become responsible for the first commercially available cartes de visite of the royal family. Mayall applied all available means of photographic manipulation to make the portrait of Sergeant Dawson fit the sensibilities of his customers. In front of a neutral, subtly lit studio background, the soldier, dressed in a spotless uniform, poses together with his little daughter. The photograph's negative was massively retouched, so that father and daughter were framed by a light halo. Only the empty coat sleeve and cane held by the little girl are subtle indicators of the soldier's battle wounds.³¹²

On June 9, 1855, Sergeant Dawson's portrait was published in the first edition of the *Illustrated Times* (Fig. 110). With the transfer of the photograph to the printing block, a number of changes were made. They transformed the photographic documentation of a wounded soldier's injuries even more completely into a bourgeois family idyll. The Sergeant's wife is in the picture as well and envelops her seated husband in a caring embrace. The little girl no longer turns her head away from her father in worried expectation, but rather looks at him affectionately. Dawson has come a long way from the anonymous common soldier, who was added to Fenton's "gallery of heroes" as a display mannequin for the presentation of a uniform. Portrayed as a respectable family man, he is aesthetically sublimated and morally elevated—a transformation similar to that of the psychiatrist Diamond's photograph portraits of his cured patients with day-dress and pinned up hair beneath a neat cap. Dawson's portrait was now suitable for the cultivated drawing room; on a newspaper page or in a picture frame the war had become readily consumable. The contrast between Mayall's soft-focus portrait and Cundall and Howlett's unapologetic human inventory is striking, and it is surely no coincidence that the queen, impressed by Mayall's soothing re-interpretation of the motif of the wounded veteran, requested a print of Sergeant Dawson's portrait for her own collection as well.

The justification of the war as a necessary defense of British values subsequently became entrenched in the countless readymade history lessons of commercial slide sets. The lantern slide set *The Life of Queen Victoria*, produced almost half a century later, includes a colored reproduction of an engraving of the Queen at Netley Hospital, Southampton on May 9, 1863 (Fig. 111).³¹³ A young nurse at the foot of the

Russian prizes. The photographs were apparently sold in albums again entitled "Crimean Heroes, taken by Command of Her Majesty the Queen," or in some cases, "Crimean Braves." Lalumia, *Realism and Politics*, 127.

312 Mayall's studio at Regent Street was an exclusive establishment and normally did not serve lower-middle- or working-class customers. The Sergeant's injury opened the door to them.

313 "Slide set: *The Victorian Age: or the glorious reign of Queen Victoria—its events, inventions, and progress* (lecture: Walter Tyler, 58–72 slides, 1897)," Lucerna. The Magic Lantern Web Resource, accessed September 8, 2020, <http://lucerna.exeter.ac.uk/set/index.php?language=EN&id=3001241>. Another slide showed the Charge of the Light Brigade, a celebrated battle victory of the British forces. In the slide set *The record reign of Queen Victoria* produced by York & Son in 1901, this list is slightly varied



111. Glass slide of lantern slide show "The Life of Queen Victoria," 1897, glass slide, 8.25 x 8.25 cm. Collection of Jeremy Brooker, London

bed brings to mind the popular figure of Florence Nightingale. The space at the soldier's head is taken by the queen herself, however. She leans toward the man, whose attention is focused on her. The original engraving dates from June 13, 1887. With great success it graced the pages of the Jubilee edition of the *Illustrated London News*, which was dedicated to important events in the life of Victoria (Fig. 112). The image of the queen who transgresses conventional social barriers to visit her soldiers at their bedside had made its first appearance in the coverage of the War in Crimea. But by the end of the century it served to confirm all armed confrontations as justified acts for the protection of contemporary British so-

ciety, sanctioned by a queen who presented herself as the loving and caring mother of her family and her nation.

Slide shows dedicated to the Crimean War itself also framed the event as fundamental for the preservation of a peaceful life in homeland Britain. The slide manufacturer E. G. Wood produced a lantern slide show titled *Crimean War*, produced in or before 1894 and containing 52 slides. None of the slides has survived, and we can rely only on the manufacturer's sales catalogue to reconstruct what it presented to its audience. The images were probably a mixture of reproduced portrait photographs and photographically reproduced paintings or engravings of battle scenes. The set likely included portraits of members of all the warring parties: Sultan Abdul Medjid as head of the Ottoman Empire, Napoleon II and Empress Eugenie representing France, Russian Emperor Nicholas I, and Omar Pasha, Lord Raglan, and Marshal St. Arnaud as exemplary Ottoman, British, and French war heroes. Florence Nightingale made an appearance, and her hospital at Scutari was introduced as well. The last slide of the set showed Queen Victoria as she distributed medals of honor to the brave soldiers upon their return to England.³¹⁴ Victoria's acknowledgement of

and expanded to include the queen's proclamation as Empress of India as well. "Slide set: *The record reign of Her Majesty Queen Victoria* (lecture: York & Son, 77 slides, in/after 1901)," Lucerna. The Magic Lantern Web Resource, accessed September 8, 2020, <http://lucerna.exeter.ac.uk/set/index.php?language=EN&id=3004577>.

314 All available information about this set may be found in the web-archive of the Lucerna Magic Lantern Web Resource. "Slide set: *Crimean War* (lecture: E. G. Wood, 52 slides, in/before 1894)," Lucerna. The Magic Lantern Web Resource, accessed September 7, 2020, <http://lucerna.exeter.ac.uk/set/index.php?language=EN&id=3006263>.

the soldiers' engagement and sacrifice for their country was presented as the chronological culmination point in the narrative of the war. It was tied back to the domestic, justifying the war as a defense of Britain—an abstract aim made comprehensible through the direct interaction between common soldier and queen. When the slide show was released in 1894, the queen, then seventy-five years of age, was visually aligned with her younger self distributing honors to soldiers returning from Crimea in 1855. Her continued presence anchored the Crimean War as a decisive event in Britain's contemporary history.³¹⁵

A Shock to Moral Order: The Indian Uprising

Two years after the war in Crimea, another armed conflict far from home massively shook the self-perception of Britain as a successful modern nation and geopolitical player. On May 10, 1857, Indian soldiers under British command rose against their British officers at Meerut in the northwestern Provinces. The conflict was triggered by British cartridges that had apparently been treated with pig or cow grease, in blatant ignorance of Muslim and Hindu religious sensibilities. Arguably the violent attack originated much more fundamentally in general discontent over British colonial rule, further aggravated by recent jurisprudence concerning ownership rights and the ban on cultural traditions. At Meerut, Indian soldiers killed a number of their British superiors, burned down the cantonment with help of local inhabitants, and then departed rapidly southward. Within weeks, serious unrest spread across many of the surrounding regions.



112. Drawn by Lucien Davis, engraved by R. Taylor, *Queen Victoria Visiting Netley Hospital*, from *The Illustrated London News*, Jubilee Number, June 13, 1887, 29, engraving. Lipperheidsche Kostümbibliothek, Berlin (Lipp Zb 75-90.1887)

315 The slide show "*The life of Queen Victoria and King Edward VII*, series 1 (London: Theobald & Co., 12 slides, c. 1901)" also includes the scene of Victoria receiving Crimean soldiers at Buckingham Palace. See "Slide set: *The life of Queen Victoria and King Edward VII: series 1* (lecture: Theobald & Co., 12 slides, c.1901)," Lucerna. The Magic Lantern Web Resource, accessed September 7, 2020, <http://lucerna.exeter.ac.uk/set/index.php?language=EN&id=3006100>. Slide 70 of the set "*The personal history of Queen Victoria* (Newton & Co., 120 slides, in/before 1913)" contains an image of Victoria addressing the troops departing for Crimea. "Slide set: *The personal history of Queen Victoria* (lecture: Newton & Co., 120 slides, 1896–1899)," Lucerna. The Magic Lantern Web Resource, accessed September 7, 2020, <http://lucerna.exeter.ac.uk/set/index.php?language=EN&id=3008732>.

The Indian rebels established the 82-year-old retired King of Delhi, a descendant of the Mughal emperors, as the symbolic head of their movement against the British, referencing to the political system of the Mughal empire and its various regional principalities, which since the eighteenth century had been stripped of their power, and installing a familiar Indian authority outside of colonial structures. In appointing the “natural” leadership of a political order dating from before British rule, the insurrectionary forces presented themselves as a legitimate affair, sanctioned by the Indian public.³¹⁶

The British military had only very limited forces available to devote to the revolt. 232,000 Indian and 45,000 European troops were at their disposal, the latter so few due to earlier withdrawals for campaigns in Crimea and Persia.³¹⁷ Consequently, a corridor 200 miles wide, stretching from Meerut to Benares, was largely under rebel control for several months, with small groups of Europeans besieged in Cawnpore and Lucknow. The massacres committed on British individuals trapped in these places, as well as the equally gruesome retaliatory measures swiftly taken by the British forces, were significant news stories in Britain.³¹⁸ Howard Russell from the *Times* was again one of the first journalists on the scene, and the photographer Felice Beato, who together with James Robertson had documented the war in Crimea in 1855, took on a similar role in India as well.³¹⁹ The British reception at the time illustrates the work invested to make sense of this event, which was perceived of as massively destabilizing. Not only was Britain’s political and military hegemony in India being questioned, but,

316 Rudrangshu Mukherjee, “‘Satan Let Loose Upon Earth’: The Kanpur Massacres in India in the Revolt of 1857,” *Past & Present*, No.128 (August 1990): 92–116; Rudrangshu Mukherjee, *Awadh in Revolt, 1857–58: A Study of Popular Resistance* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1984).

317 Hoppen, *The Mid-Victorian Generation*, 188.

318 Mukherjee, “‘Satan Let Loose Upon Earth’: The Kanpur Massacres in India in the Revolt of 1857,” 92–116. For an account of the Indian historiography of the Uprising see Biswamoy Pati, *The Great Rebellion of 1857. Exploring transgressions, contests, and diversities* (London/New York: Routledge, 2010).

319 Beato documented the destroyed Indian defense facility Sikandar Bag in Lucknow after the British had successfully captured the city in 1858. In British contexts, his photograph of the destroyed city gate, with the skeletonized remains of Indian partisans lying scattered in the dust, was often wrongly interpreted as a document of the violence committed against the British. Astrid Erll, *Prämediation—Remediation. Repräsentationen des indischen Aufstands in imperialen und post-kolonialen Medienkulturen von 1857 bis zur Gegenwart* (Trier: WVT Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2007). William Howard Russell, *My Indian Mutiny Diary*, ed. Michael Edwardes (New York: Kraus, 1970). Accounts of the rebellion began to appear in British news outlets immediately, and they were of two distinct modes: quasi-official reports and military dispatches by civil and army officers of the East India Company, and first-person accounts, many by women, which gave a sense of the experience of the rebellion for beleaguered garrisons. See for example Martin Gubbins, *An Account of the Mutinies in Oudh and the Siege of the Lucknow Residency* (London: Richard Bentley, 1858); W.J. Shepherd, *A Personal Narrative of the Outbreak and Massacre at Cawnpore, during the Sepoy Revolt of 1857* (Lucknow: London Printing Press, 1879); Mowbray Thomson, *The Story of Cawnpore* (London: Richard Bentley, 1859); Amelia Bennett, “Ten Months’ Captivity after the Massacre at Cawnpore,” *The Nineteenth Century* 19–20, no. 436 (January–June 1913): 1212–1234. Amelia Bennett, “Ten Months’ Captivity after the Massacre at Cawnpore,” *The Nineteenth Century* 19–20, no. 437 (July–December 1913): 78–91. Chakravarty, *The Indian Mutiny*, 2005, 20.

more importantly, the brutal retaliation of British forces led to doubts about the nation's own moral integrity as progressive, benevolent, and modern.

From the British perspective, the initial violence of the Indian Uprising seemed to justify, even necessitate, overwhelming retributive actions. But in historical accounts written in the immediate aftermath, a lingering uncertainty was discernable regarding British accountability for the excessive violence unleashed on both sides. For one, the brutal retaliation starkly contradicted the British self-imagination as a modern nation. In addition, contemporary British observers admitted that one reason for the Indian Revolt had been the blatant disregard for Indian social and religious traditions during the preceding decades. In stripping Indian society of its traditional structures based on caste and feudalism, the argument went, the British had contributed to the deregulation of Indian society, all the while failing to implement an alternative hierarchy that could be understood and appreciated by "the natives."³²⁰ While ignoring the Indian rationalization that the King of Delhi would reconstitute the original order of Indian society, British commentators defined the quintessential lack of social hierarchy as the ultimate source of violence and chaos in mid-nineteenth-century India. The by now familiar British fear of social disorder was thus projected onto India. The British administration was seen as at least in part responsible for the disintegration of Indian hierarchies, and for failing to provide the Indian population with an alternative symbolic order. This also explains the subsequent decision to proclaim Victoria Empress of India in an attempt to recast such an order.

Both the Crimean War and the Indian Uprising, events that happened in close succession, were regarded as a threat to Britain's integrity as a model modern society, as well as to its role as a prominent geopolitical power. The British "winter troubles" in Crimea had rendered visible a serious rift in the social and political make-up of British society at home, as it called into question the authority of military and governmental leadership alike. In India, the explosive violence on both sides undermined Britain's military and moral authority. The British dream of order was overshadowed by this nightmare of violent chaos. For some commentators, the brutality of the British retaliation proved the persistence of the barbaric past in modern civilization. For others, it highlighted the lack of moral compass characteristic of moder-

320 This view was formulated, for example, in Charles Ball, *The history of the Indian mutiny: giving a detailed account of the sepoy insurrection in India and a concise history of the great military events which have tended to consolidate British Empire in Hindostan; Vol. 2* (London: London Print, 1859), 636; Sir James Fergusson, *Archeology in India with Especial Reference to the Works of Babu Rajendralal Mitra* (London: Trübner and Co., 1884). For the British discourse regarding social structure in India see Bernard S. Cohn, "Representing Authority in Victorian India," in *The Invention of tradition*, ed. Eric J. Hobsbawm and Terence O. Ranger (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 165–209. For the perceived threat of comparability between Indian and British citizens and the role photography played in this discourse see Christopher Pinney, *The Coming of Photography in India* (London: British Library, 2008), 137; Jill H. Casid, *Scenes of Projection: Recasting the Enlightenment Subject* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 91–93.

nity.³²¹ The temporal and visual alignment of the two conflicts in the British public imagination made it all the more necessary to portray the eventual suppression of the revolt in India as a total success.³²² To accomplish this, two interpretative sleights of hand needed to be accomplished. First, the rebellion needed to be fit into the rubric of a “military mutiny,” excluding any sign of a nation-wide anti-imperial Indian insurrection. Second, the initial success of the partisan campaign, which was based mostly on the chauvinistic inability of British authorities to fathom serious pushback against increasingly unjust administrative and judiciary decisions, needed to be downplayed against the glory of the subsequent British victory. Based on these two reinterpretations, the Indian Uprising was framed as a “caesura moment” in the history of the British Empire. All was nearly lost only to be regained once more, as the formal imperialism of crown and parliament replaced a hundred years of “informal” rule by the East India Company.³²³

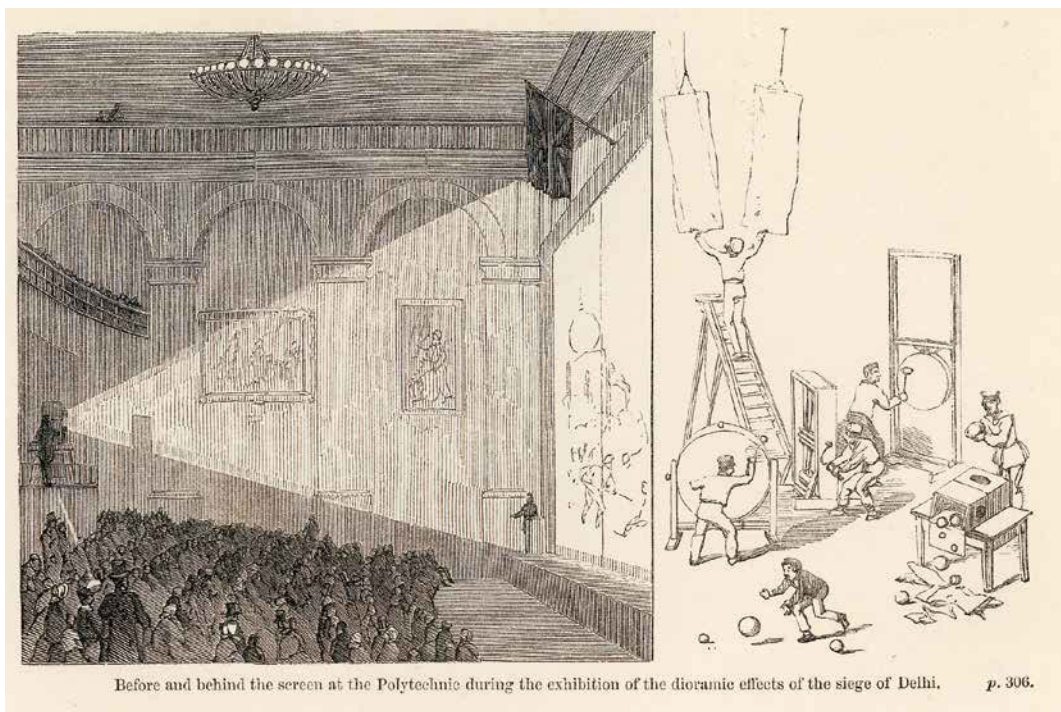
The lantern slide show allowed its large public audiences to physically and emotionally immerse themselves in this shared narrative and to relive and stabilize it through communal experience. One case in point is that of slides picturing the Siege of Delhi, which was celebrated in British accounts as an important turn of events during the Indian Uprising. This was a popular topic for lantern slide shows, which were put together as early as 1857, immediately following the event itself. John Henry Pepper, resident director of the Polytechnic Institution in London, gave a detailed account and provided an enlightening drawing of how the siege of Delhi was presented on screen (Fig. 113). The Royal Polytechnic spared no expense in acquiring the latest “drawings made on the spot” by the artists of the *Illustrated London News* and in transferring them to lantern slides. The show, produced with help of six lanterns simultaneously, was supplemented by extensive sound effects situated behind the screen, to render the “realistic effect” of the large, colorful, dissolving views more convincing and entertaining. An anonymous reviewer in the journal *The Builder* noted that the “last novelties of the more showy and popular description comprise ... a series of dissolving views of places and events connected with the Indian Mutiny.”³²⁴ A complex and elusive event

321 Christopher Herbert discusses the Indian Uprising in this sense as a “cultural crisis” for Britain. Christopher Herbert, *War of No Pity*. How deeply this “moral crisis” extended into the social dynamics of contemporary Britain is apparent in the rhetorical conflation of the Indian Uprising with the concurrent domestic political struggles, for example regarding a new legal framework for divorce. See Karen Chase and Michael Levenson, *The Spectacle of Intimacy*, 181–200.

322 According to the historian K. Theodore Hoppen, the close proximity of the Crimean War and the Indian Revolt even helped reinterpret the Crimean disaster. The British army’s apparent success in India quickly wiped clean the slate of dissatisfaction drawn up between 1854 and 1856. Hoppen, *The Mid-Victorian Generation*, 197.

323 Chakravarty, *The Indian Mutiny*, 4.

324 Anon., “The Polytechnic Institution,” *The Builder* 15, no. 768 (October 24, 1857): 617. J. H. Pepper (revised, with additions, by T. C. Hepworth), *The Boy’s Playbook of Science* (1860) (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1881), 346–354, here 349–350. The regular integration of color, text, music, and the movement and animation of slides to add to the entertainment factor of the show is discussed in Kember, *Marketing Modernity*, 44–68; See also Jeremy Brooker, “Paganini’s ghost. Musical Resources



113. H.G. Hine (engraver) after a sketch by John Henry Pepper, *Before and behind the screen at the Polytechnic during the exhibition of the dioramic effects of the siege of Delhi*, 1860, engraving, from J.H. Pepper, *The Boy's Playbook of Science: Including the Various Manipulations and Arrangements of Chemical and Philosophical Apparatus Required for the Successful Performance of Scientific Experiments*, London: Routledge, Warne, and Routledge, 1860, 306. Mecklenburgische Landesbibliothek Schwerin

unfolding many thousand miles away and over the course of months was thus integrated into the normative logic of British history.³²⁵ As Ian Baucom has argued, the constant visual reminder of the Indian Uprising in late-nineteenth century slide shows, stereoscopic views, guidebooks, memorials, and other visual media served as an important argument for the continuation of the British Raj.³²⁶ The event served as the very foundation of attachment and entitlement to the Indian subcontinent, as it memorialized British sacrifice to save the integrity of the Empire.

of the Royal Polytechnic Institution," in *Realms of Light. Uses and Perceptions of the Magic Lantern from the 17th to the 21st century*, ed. Richard Crangle, Mervyn Heard, and Ine van Doren (London: The Magic Lantern Society, 2005), 146–154.

325 Lester Smith, "Entertainment and Amusement, Education and Instruction. Lectures at the Royal Polytechnic Institution," in *Realms of Light. Uses and Perceptions of the Magic Lantern*, 141. Smith also points out the institution's dedication to and success in giving "Lessons in Contemporary History" to large audiences. *Ibid.*, 143. See also W.F. Ryan, "Limelight on Eastern Europe: the Great Dissolving Views at the Royal Polytechnic," in *The Ten Year Book. Celebrating the 10th Anniversary of the Society*, ed. The Magic Lantern Society of Great Britain (London: Magic Lantern Society, 1986), 48–55. Noam M. Elcott, *Artificial Darkness. An Obscure History of Modern Art and Media* (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 2016), esp. 77–133.

326 Ian Baucom, *Out of Place* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 101–135. See also Zahid R. Chaudhary, *Afterimage of Empire. Photography in Nineteenth-Century India* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 14–15.

An Empress of India for the British Imagination

One direct outcome of the “Indian Mutiny,” as the uprising was called in British media outlets, was administrative reform.³²⁷ Immediately after the conflict, Prime Minister Palmerston decided to abolish the East India Company and place the nation’s most important colony under direct governmental control. In 1877, eighteen years after the India Reform Bill, the decision to proclaim Queen Victoria Empress of India gave this political and administrative reform a much-needed symbolic anchor.³²⁸ Twenty years earlier, in 1857, the Indian partisans had coaxed the last Mughal emperor out of his retirement in order to confirm their campaign’s authority. Now Britain circumvented this traditional Indian authority again, by installing an all-encompassing imperial hierarchy. The explicit denial of the Mughal emperor’s claim to rule paved the way for this new imperial order. The Indian king’s trial and judicial exiling was a prerequisite for Victoria’s ascension to the Indian throne. Victoria’s ascension was celebrated on January 1, 1877 with the “Delhi Durbar,” an official event based on Indian traditions of appointing their leaders. At the Durbar, the Maharajas were demoted from kings to princes. Their original position at the top of the Indian social hierarchy was seamlessly integrated into the larger pyramidal structure of the British Empire, headed by the remote and abstract figure of the Queen Empress.³²⁹ Though physically absent, Victoria was doubly represented at the event: Viceroy Lord Lytton, acting as official representative of the British Crown, was seated underneath a canopy with a large-scale painting of the Queen and Empress placed behind him. It was a copy of the well-known royal portrait by Henrich de Angeli, which in 1887 would also serve as a model for W.D. Downey’s photographic state portraits produced on the occasion of the queen’s Golden Jubilee. As such, it also entered into the circulation of countless slide sets. Lytton’s authority to act as the ruler of India was confirmed by his joint appearance with Victoria’s portrait underneath the canopy.

The way in which the British reconceptualization of Indian society as part of a larger, imperial order was integrated into the Indian self-imagination during the second half of the nineteenth century merits its own examination.³³⁰ In the context of this chapter, I focus on how the idea and image of the Queen Empress helped to codify imperial order for the British public, an order based on feudal hierarchies that apparently had long been overcome in modern Britain. I argue that the image and ideal of such an ancient order was folded into the progressive narrative of

327 The name of this event is contested still today. It has been variously termed “Sepoy Mutiny,” “Indian Mutiny,” or “Great Rebellion,” “Indian Insurrection,” or even the “First War of Independence.”

328 Hoppen, *The Mid-Victorian Generation*, 194–195.

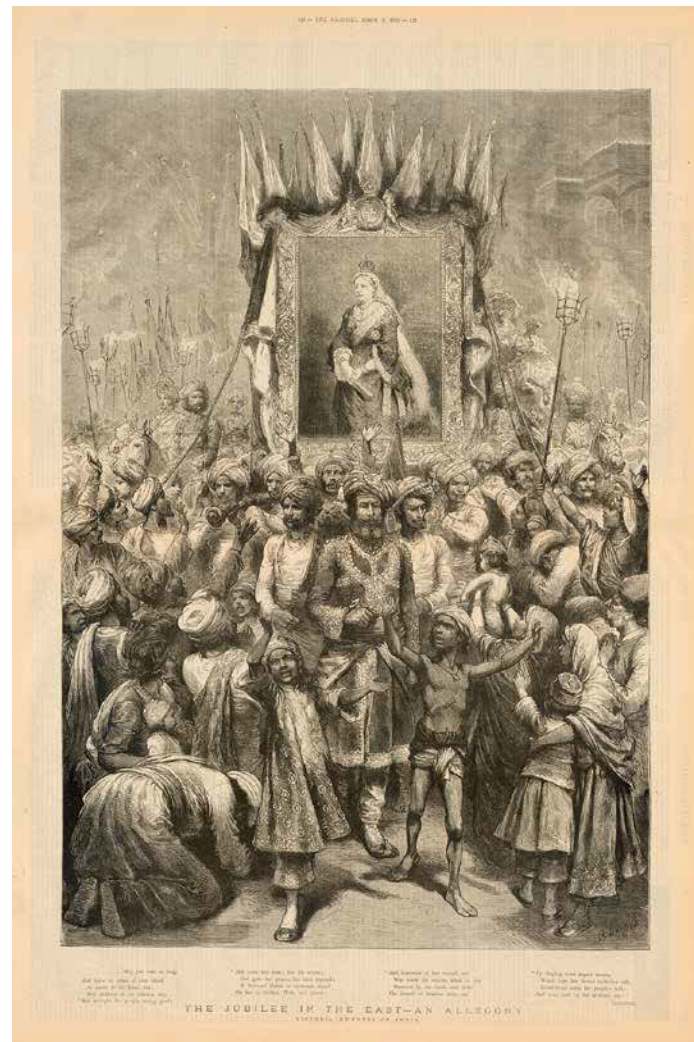
329 Pratapaditya Pal and Vidya Dehejia, *From Merchants to Emperors. British Artists and India, 1757–1930* (Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press, 1986), 87–88.

330 Eva Ehninger, “Group Formation. Queen Victoria in India,” *PhotoResearcher* 30 (2018): 6–18; See also John Plunkett, “A Tale of Two Statues: Memorializing Queen Victoria in London and Calcutta,” *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century* 33 (2022).

nineteenth-century Britain. Reconceptualized as the natural order of the British Empire, it stabilized, from a distance, the British self-fashioning as a modern, but orderly, society.³³¹

Commercial print products offered creative and multi-layered visualizations of this restorative rhetoric. On March 5, 1887 an engraving titled *The Jubilee in the East—An Allegory* was published as a supplement to the magazine *The Graphic* on the occasion of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and to commemorate her first decade as Empress of India (Fig. 114). It depicts a scene of public veneration.³³² A larger-than-life royal portrait in a heavy frame decorated with garlands and flags is carried through the streets. The crowd represents a cross-section of the Indian population. Turbaned luminaries lead the way, lending authority to the spectacle, while barefoot children and simply-dressed women frame the procession with gestures of humility and joy.

Once again, the depicted portrait is the same portrait that served as Victoria's stand-in at the Delhi Durbar, a version of the state portrait originally painted in 1875 by the court painter Henrich de Angeli. The painted original was kept in the royal family's private dining room at Windsor Castle (Fig. 115). The painting also plays an important role in a popular cabinet card by the photographer Mary Steen, titled *A Royal Luncheon Party at Windsor* (1895) (Fig. 116).³³³ Produced eight years after the print for *The Graphic*, this photograph had Victoria in her role as



114. Godefroy Durand, *The Jubilee in the East—An Allegory*. Victoria, Empress of India, from *The Graphic*, March 5, 1887, 236–237, wood-engraving? Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin (1:FOLIO:2"@Ad 2551-35-892/917.1887)

331 Michael Taussig and Regina Mundel have radically reconceptualized the history of modernity in these terms, describing a colonial dialectic of sympathetic and terrorizing magic carried out between Europe the colonizer and its projected others in the period after the seeming watershed inventions of photography and the phonograph. Michael Taussig and Regina Mundel, *Mimesis und Alterität. Eine eigenwillige Geschichte der Sinne* (Hamburg: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1997). See also Casid, *Scenes of Projection*, 120.

332 A large number of similar supplements that were produced on the occasion of the Queen's Jubilee depict Indian veneration for their Empress. See for example the illustration *Celebrating the Queen's Jubilee at Abbotabad, Punjaub* [sic], also from *The Graphic* 1887. By the end of the nineteenth century *The London Illustrated News* and *The Graphic*, illustrated with engravings, remained in high demand, whereas "photographic journals" or books, which employed photogravure processes, were still a quite expensive niche product.

333 The Danish feminist and photographer Maria Dorothea Frederikke "Mary" Steen (1856–1939) would merit a study of her own. As the first female Court photographer she portrayed the Danish royal family, and from 1865 also members of the British royal family. Princess Alexandra recommended her to Victoria.

Empress as well. But it was combined with the British ideal of a contemporary queen, who represented contemporary norms and ideals. Clad like her family in contemporary fashion, Victoria was integrated into the familial circle defined by the dining room table. In black mourning dress with white collar and lace cap, she was the fitting mother to the matronly figure of her daughter Beatrice and her suit-wearing and mustached son-in-law Heinrich, and grandmother to the sailor-suited boys and the girl in the white dress.

A timeless image of the queen and empress emerges simultaneously from this contemporary genre scene. Victoria's face, captured in full frontal view, is the focal point of the photograph, positioned where horizontal and vertical axes meet. This central position lifts her out of the everyday scene at the dinner table.³³⁴ The impression is aided by the two Indian servants flanking her. In the background to her left and right, they visually fill out the space left between Victoria and her family members. The "allegorical" scene of Indian veneration shown in the *Graphic* print is visually repeated here, but folded into an image of contemporary British domesticity. The servants' upright posture, highlighted by their white turbans, draws the viewer's attention to the image's vertical axis.³³⁵ In the background directly above Victoria's head hangs de Angeli's state portrait. The living Victoria at the dinner table is confirmed in her role as Queen and Empress by this portrait, just as Lord Lytton received his authority as Viceroy of India by means of her painted portrait positioned behind him.

In Steen's photograph, however, the representative oil painting, conventionally the most distinguished form of representation, is transformed into a blurry, stamp-sized echo of the decidedly non-idealized photographic likeness of the queen sitting beneath it.³³⁶ The queen's aging body and its timeless depiction in oil are presented as complementary. The confirmation of their roles seems to go both ways. The timeless monarch in the back confirms the aging widow in the front, but the aging widow also reaffirms the currency of the age-old institution of the monarchy. The dou-



115. Heinrich de Angeli, *Queen Victoria*, 1875, oil on canvas, 147.1 × 98.9 cm, Royal Collection, London (acc. no. RCIN 405021)

334 For the commercial print, Steen's original photograph was cropped, in order to move Victoria into the center of the room depicted, and of the photograph itself.

335 Victoria laid down elaborate guidelines for the court livery of her Indian servants: a hybrid of a red European tunic bearing the royal crest, Indian turban, and a silk sash around the waist. Miles Taylor, *Empress. Queen Victoria and India* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2018), 252. The queen also commissioned Heinrich von Angeli to paint a portrait of her favorite Indian servant, Abdul Karim (RCIN 406915). See also Andrew N. Wilson, *The Victorians* (London: Penguin Random House, 2002), 505.

336 The variability that comes with scale, the change from micro to macro, also connects local action with global patterns, and vice versa. This importance of scale is emphasized by Galloway and Thacker with reference to Bruno Latour, *The Exploit. A Theory of Networks*, 157.

bled queen is presented as the foundation for a modern British society prominently and safely positioned within the larger, well-ordered, geo-political sphere of the Empire.

Both the *Graphic* print and Steen's cabinet card were made for British customers. Visually, they demarcate an apparently unbridgeable gap between the British and the Indian population as subjects of the Queen and Empress. The print situates Victoria's image in the foreign world of India and communicates a positive attitude on the part of the Indian public toward British rule and authority. This is a reassuring, if trivializing, narrative for British image consumers, illustrative of the shared effort to erase the trauma of the Indian Uprising. Steen's photograph of Victoria as a model housewife at the dining table visually connects the scene of peaceful domesticity to the larger geo-political order of the Empire. Progress at home is underwritten by Britain's hold on its colonies. The suppression and violence that had characterized British foreign policy—and of which the Indian Uprising was a glaring example—are effaced, or sublimated, by this demonstration of domesticity. It is the same ideal of familial peace that was conjured up in Mayall's soft-focus portrait of the Crimean war invalid

Sergeant Dawson in 1855. The domestic ideal, which is apparently achievable for all British citizens, was framed by and distinguished from the role of Victoria's Indian subjects. Britain's self-fashioning as a peaceful modern nation was based on its differentiation from its colonies, and the exclusion of the colonized from the nation's understanding of self-determined citizenship. The large quantities of images produced to accompany Victoria's ascension to Empress of India in 1877 and her Jubilees in 1887 and 1897, respectively, testify to the visual rhetoric applied to stabilize this self-imagination.

The medium of the lantern slide show is a prime example of this visual production.³³⁷ Victoria's portrait as Empress of India was included in virtually all of the lan-



116. Mary Steen, printed and published by James Russell & Sons, *A Royal Luncheon Party at Windsor*, 1895, albumen cabinet card, image 14.4 × 10.4 cm. National Portrait Gallery, London (acc. no. NPG x46561)

337 Achille Mbembe argues that the systems of democracy and colony are always inextricably entwined. The colony, says Mbembe, is the offspring of democracy; it does not exist outside of democracy.

tern slide shows that celebrated her long life, and with it the recent history of Britain. This slide, for example, depicts local preparations for the Jubilee Celebrations in India (Fig. 117). Victoria's monumental portrait, applied in color to a large banner, is fastened on a makeshift wood structure by anonymous figures. The vast difference in scale between the Indian workers and the portrait they hold in place is underscored by the magnifying powers of the slide projection technology. It transforms the 8.3 cm square glass plate into a luminous, wall-to-wall image and presents Victoria's likeness in spectacular scale. The difference between the interchangeable, faceless small figures, radically fragmented by the circular projection, and the central, larger-than-life profile of the queen is striking. The slide's caption is written on the banner that the men are unfolding. It reads "Long may she Reign—God Save the Queen." Written in English, this declaration momentarily and virtually bridges the geographical distance between the imaginary Indian crowd gathering in front of the monumental portrait-banner and the lantern slide audience in Britain meeting in a large darkened hall for the same purpose: to celebrate their Queen and Empress.³³⁸



117. *God save the Queen*, n.d., glass/paper, 8.3 × 8.3 cm. Chetham's Library, Manchester (acc. no. 26.64)

Imperial citizenship as an abstract and universal ideal suggested the equality of all subjects of the British Empire. In the slide, however, this reassuring unity of the British Empire was characterized by an unambiguous social hierarchy. British audience members had no trouble distinguishing themselves from the nameless, faceless, and barely-clothed figures depicted on the slide.³³⁹

British audience members had no trouble distinguishing themselves from the nameless, faceless, and barely-clothed figures depicted on the slide.³³⁹

Achille Mbembe, *Politik der Feindschaft* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2017), 42. Casid argues that effects of colonial power were produced by technologies of recording and projection, and the European metropolises depended on these formats, which narrated, justified, and actualized authorities and simulated, at a safe distance and according to European rules of conduct, contact with the "others" of the Empire. Casid, *Scenes of Projection*, 90.

338 On the shift in scale and its powerful effect of physically magnifying and psychologically "imposing," see Casid, *Scenes of Projection*, 98. For the application of the educational lantern slide set in the British colonies see Gabrielle Moser, *Projecting Citizenship*.

339 Nonetheless, this differentiation was in permanent need of visual and rhetorical confirmation, since by vesting their monarch with the sovereignty of India, the British, who had started their rule as "outsiders," became "insiders." Cohn, "Representing Authority in Victorian India," 165. See also "Queen Victoria's Proclamation, 1 November 1858," in *Select documents on the history of India and Pakistan; Vol. 4. The evolution of India and Pakistan. 1858 to 1947—select documents*, ed. C.H. Philipps,

Contemporary reports on the popular entertainment of lantern shows substantiate the double function of these events, to stabilize Britain's self-imagination as a modern, orderly nation while at the same time educating the public on recent history. Reviews of the lantern lecture "Our Glorious Empire," by the celebrated lanternist Georg Albert Smith at the Brighton Aquarium, comment on the depicted "loyalty of those brethren of ours across the seas" and emphasize the show's success in awakening in its British audience sentiments of patriotism and "Rule Britannianism."³⁴⁰ Seriously challenged at mid-century by events such as the war in Crimea and the Indian Uprising, this sentiment was reconstructed in popular visual accounts of recent history. Photography served as an important tool to consolidate imperial citizenship both in Britain and abroad.

Victoria's Time: History as an Ordering Device

Nineteenth-century historians such as Thomas Arnold, Ruskin, and Carlyle regarded the writing of history as a matter of urgent necessity. Though these authors and their writings cover a broad political and stylistic spectrum, they were all in agreement about the importance of history for the management of the present. History, they believed, gave readers a shared purpose and meaning in the general flow of time. In an "age of transition," society was in dire need of guiding examples from the past.

The authors agreed that history, if told in engaging and persuasive images, had great potential to serve as a didactic tool. Arnold called for the lively narrative of a history filled with "living pictures," and Ruskin also valorized the sense of sight as a cognitive faculty and highlighted the importance of the visual for the comprehension of reality and history.³⁴¹ All three authors emphasized the necessity of providing their readers with suspense and excitement, interesting characters, and engaging stories, in order to help them identify with past events. A history presented in such images was seen to mediate most convincingly between the past and the present.

H. L. Singh, and B. N. Pandey (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 10–11; Pal and Dehejia, *From Merchants to Emperors*.

340 Anon., "Around the World with a Magic Lantern," *Brighton Herald* (March 21, 1896): 5; Anon., "The Brighton Aquarium," *Brighton Herald* (April 3, 1897): 5. A large number of sets were produced on the topic of India, with staggering numbers of slides frequently ranging from 300 to 400. Most of the slide sets presented the colony to the audience as something that belonged, in some abstract way, to them. E. g., "Our Indian Empire," (lecture: Riley Brothers, 60 slides, 1899). Regularly, gruesome scenes of Indian life were included to demarcate cultural difference and generate excitement for the crowd. E. g., "Dying Man at the Ganges," "Infants thrown to Crocodiles," and "Self Torture," in the slide set "Life in India" (lecture: E. G. Wood, 43 slides, in/before 1888). Slide sets also specifically focused on the Indian Uprising. E. g., "Indian mutiny" (lecture: E. G. Wood, 48 slides, in/before 1894).

341 Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, *The Life and Correspondence of Thomas Arnold, D.D.*, 7th ed. (London: B. Fellowes, 1852), 448. John Ruskin, "A Joy for Ever. (And its price in the market). Being the substance (with additions) of two lectures in the political Economy of Art. Delivered at Manchester, July 10th and 13th, 1857," in *The complete works of John Ruskin*, Vol. 16, ed. Edward Tyas Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (London: Allen, 1905), 90 f.

Carlyle sought to counter the apparent irrelevance of the modern individual, positioned in a randomly determined universe, with his theory of hero worship. In his book *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History* (1841) he introduced historic “heroes” who had provided their contemporaries with a clear moral compass in uncertain times. They served as helpful role models to his nineteenth-century readers as well. It remains unclear if Carlyle wished his heroes to be Representative Men, who embodied all characteristics of their age, or Great Men, who rose above it. But each of the “heroes” he introduced played a key role in providing stability through times of social change. Carlyle devoted his major works to the most fundamental social, political, and cultural upheavals in modern Europe, connecting each of them to a hero: the Commonwealth of England had Oliver Cromwell; the European Enlightenment had Friedrich II of Prussia; and the French Revolution had its “anti-hero” Louis XVI. Carlyle suggested that the action of one individual was enough to recompose social chaos into new order. Conversely, in the case of the French Revolution, the inaction of the King and his incompetence as a “hero” resulted in chaos.

Carlyle’s literary style of history was immensely popular in the mid-nineteenth century, as it provided just the kind of reassuring confidence in exceptional leaders that was seen as missing in the military and political authorities of the time. Building on Carlyle’s model and vocabulary, writers on the Indian Uprising regularly referred to the concepts of chivalry and heroism to justify British retribution as a necessary prerequisite for the restoration of moral order.³⁴² During the second half of the nineteenth century, however, Carlyle’s dramatic rendering of historical events was increasingly at odds with the development of history as a scholarly discipline.³⁴³ New media

342 See Anon., “Cartes de Visite Shops,” *The British Journal of Photography* 17 (August 26, 1870): 403–404. The Indian Uprising brought forth a large body of such history writing, which was produced very quickly after the event itself. See, e.g., Charles Ball, *The history of the Indian mutiny: giving a detailed account of the sepoy insurrection in India and a concise history of the great military events which have tended to consolidate British Empire in Hindostan, Vol. 1* (London: London Print, 1858); Ball, *The history of the Indian mutiny, Vol. 2*; R. Montgomery Martin, *The Indian Empire: history, topography, geology, climate, population, chief cities and provinces; tributary and protected states; military power and resources; religion, education, crime; land tenures; staple products; government, finance, and commerce; with a full account of the mutiny of the Bengal army, of the insurrection in Western India, and an exposition of the alleged causes; illustrated with maps, portraits, and views* (London: London Print and Publ. Co., 1858); John William Kaye, *A History of the Sepoy War in India, 1857–1858; Vol. 1* (London: Allen, 1864); John William Kaye, *A History of the Sepoy War in India, 1857–1858; Vol. 2* (London: Allen, 1870); John William Kaye, *A History of the Sepoy War in India, 1857–1858; Vol. 3* (London: Allen, 1876). For a critical analysis of these sources see Herbert, *War of No Pity*, 134–204. The broad reception of history amongst the British public, made possible by new image technologies, is discussed in Leslie Howsam, *Past into Print. The Publishing of History in Britain, 1850–1950* (London: British Library, 2009).

343 The *Saturday Review* began to distinguish between the two as early as 1858, when J.F. Stephen used Carlyle’s book on the French Revolution to exemplify “the especial advantages and disadvantages of the literary temperament” of the historian. By the end of the century, *The French Revolution* was dismissed as “poetry” instead of “solid historical science” and “true social philosophy.” Rosemary Jann, *The Art and Science of Victorian History* (Columbus: Ohio State University, 1985), 61–62. See Culler, *The Victorian Mirror of History*. See also Paul Readman, “The Place of the Past in English Culture c. 1890–1914,” *Past & Present* 186 (2005): 157.

such as photography contributed to a paradigm shift in history writing, toward research and the supposedly “objective recording” of events. This development did not curtail the general popularity of Carlyle’s conception of history, however. His narratives remained required reading for every educated person of the time. His assertion that custom, convention, and tradition provided the necessary framework for human activity and thought, and were most convincingly defended by heroes, was still broadly understood as a fundamental lesson of the past.³⁴⁴

Popular educational formats of the second half of the nineteenth century, such as lantern slide shows or multi-volume illustrated histories, sought to combine these competing concepts of history writing, by integrating the stories of great heroes and important persons into the apparently scientific documentation of historical events, to capture an experiential reality of the recent past. They connected the demand for spectacle and narration to the aesthetics of scientific objectivity, to provide a visual history that their paying customers could agree upon and identify with.³⁴⁵

The lantern slide lecture is an example of how image technology and its commercial use played an integral part in the construction of the history of the recent past. Through its sequencing logic it defined relations between past, present, and future, and between the different agents participating in these periods. In the early eyewitness accounts of the Crimean War and the Indian Uprising, a lingering uncertainty about the objectivity of the reports had been detectable. Multiple and contradictory narratives and the interrupted transfer of information made for fragmented and opaque portrayals of these events, despite the growing demand for objective and complete coverage. Due to this polyphony, the interpretation of the brutal British retaliation as a necessary, ethical, and ultimately successful measure to stabilize the political and moral integrity of Britain and its Empire remained in question. Both the events themselves and their role in British history needed to be carefully constructed, and this rhetorical effort was recognized by contemporary history writers.³⁴⁶ In contrast, the popular slide shows produced thirty years later visually redeemed history as an incontestable sequence of chronologically and causally linked events. The rhythmic projection of uniform slides presented history, in parallel with Victoria’s biography, as a story that followed a natural logic. In their inexorable march to the present all events are necessarily meaningful.

In this context it is also relevant that by the 1870s it had become increasingly common for private households to own a lantern slide apparatus, to conduct presentations for friends and family in the home. Simultaneously, the coloring of photographs, as

344 Thomas Babington Macaulay’s, James Anthony Froude’s, John Richard Green’s, and Edward Augustus Freeman’s histories also were popular readings. Each of these authors delivered a vision of the past that he hoped would do for society what it had done for him: to order and make sense of the present. See Culler, *The Victorian Mirror of History*, 282–284; Jann, *The Art and Science of Victorian History*, xiv–xv.

345 Casid, *Scenes of Projection*, 28. Kember, *Marketing Modernity*, 60–67.

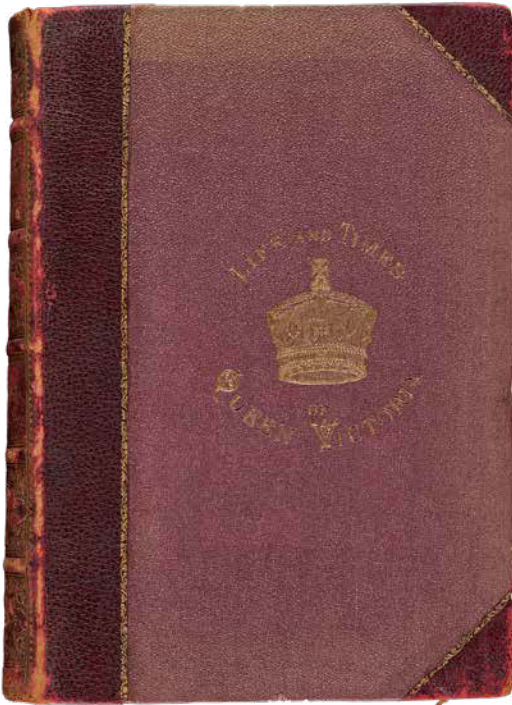
346 See Herbert, *War of No Pity*, 134–204.

well as of photographic slides, became a common pastime for consumers of photographic products.³⁴⁷ This allowed for an intimate and personal encounter with the commercially produced slides and their content. As a readymade slide set, history could be consumed in the same spatial setting that also held the family photo album. The same circle that viewed and confirmed the image of the social community presented in the album was now able to consume, again with the help of photographs, a readymade visual history of Britain. Both formats allowed for a certain freedom in personalized order and design but remained based on the available products of commercial photography, and both catered to the market demand for readily comprehensible images of social order.

Customized histories of Britain's recent past, structured by the biography of Queen Victoria, were also offered in other media. Another drawing room-friendly format was that of illustrated publications, such as Robert Wilson's *The Life and Times of Queen Victoria* (1887–1888) and his later *The Life of Queen Victoria* (1901), which were published in the last two decades of the nineteenth century before Queen Victoria's death in 1901 (Figs. 118–119). They reiterated in print the same laudatory sequence of events presented in the slide shows narrating Victoria's life. Chapters recounting the queen's life—her accession to the throne in 1837, the courtship of Prince Albert, marriage, the birth of the Prince of Wales and her other children, the death of Albert—were bracketed by descriptions of military conflicts abroad (the Crimean War and the Indian Uprising amongst them) and political turmoil in Britain (changes of government, public outrage over the Corn Laws, the famine in Ireland). Victoria's biography was again presented as running in parallel to national and international political events. Her life framed them as the self-evident unfolding of recent history.

The books' illustrations support this reading. They were for the most part reproductions of those well-known photographs of the queen that had been popular throughout the preceding forty years. The sequence of illustrations gives evidence of a thriving royal family, of children being born, growing up, and marrying, and of Victoria in her different roles as mother, wife, widow, grandmother, and great-grandmother. The self-contained interior space in which these photographs were set was fundamentally removed from the dynamic developments outside in the world. Whereas in the lantern slides the parallel between queen and history was constructed visually, by the juxtaposition of slides of people and slides depicting events, in Wilson's publications this parallel needed to be produced verbally. Accordingly,

347 Already in 1869, the popular article series "Household Amusements" in *Cassell's Household Guide* dedicates an essay to the pastime of lantern slide presentations at home. The article, titled "The Magic Lantern, and How to Work It," motivated readers to invest in a personal apparatus, as photography now allowed every household to own a collection of slides: "At first a mere toy, the magic lantern is now a really scientific instrument; and not only a source of endless gratification alike by young and old, but a valuable aid and adjunct to popular instruction." *Cassell's Household Guide*, III (London: Cassells, Petter and Galpin, 1869), 360–361. Humphries, *Victorian Britain through the Magic Lantern*, 118.



118. Robert Wilson (author), *The Life and Times of Queen Victoria*, London, New York [etc.]: Cassell & Company limited, 1887-1888, book cover, 25.5 × 17.5 cm. Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin, Gernsheim Collection, purchase (acc. no. 964:3530:0001-0004)



119. Walery (Stanisław Julian Ostroróg), *Her Majesty The Queen*, 1880s, woodburytype, page 24.8 × 16.5 cm, as published in Robert Wilson, *The Life and Times of Queen Victoria*, London, New York [etc.]: Cassell & Company limited, 1887-1888, 1. Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin, Gernsheim Collection, purchase (acc. no. 964:3530:0001)

chapter headings aligned the queen's state of mind with the condition of the state of the nation. The year 1871, for example, was described as a year in which both queen and country were in distress. While Victoria was worried about the health of her eldest son, the Prince of Wales and future king, the country braced for economic disaster and a market crash. The fate of the country was directly linked with the health and future of the monarchy—narrated through the motherly love and worry of the domestic queen. This construction of recent history as a counterpart to Victoria was extremely persuasive and popular. Victoria was presented as a distant, majestic figure, but also as a human being, whose joys, sorrows, and worries were recognized as common to one's own.³⁴⁸

A fascinating document evidencing the broad success of this alignment of the queen's biography with that of the nation is a photo album that Victoria herself put together during the last decades of her life. It was dedicated to portraits of persons who had reached the exceptional age of eighty, ninety, or one hundred years. The queen herself was already approximately seventy years of age when she began to collect these

348 Greg King, *Twilight of Splendor. The Court of Queen Victoria during Her Diamond Jubilee Year* (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2007), 2.



120. Richard Tippetts, *Sergeant-Major Howe [Howes], Sergeant Parkinson, Sergeant-Major Hughes, Survivors of the Balaclava Charge*. [Album: *Photographic Portraits. Volume 67*], 1894, albumen print, pasted onto album page, image 18.4 × 16.6 cm. Royal Collection, London (acc. no. RCIN 2911073)

photographs.³⁴⁹ Victoria's motivation for assembling portraits of persons unknown to her, but of advanced age, is again a matter of speculation. However, news about her interest in such photographs spread quickly, and she regularly received photographic portraits of the elderly. In the accompanying letters, which were included in the album and carefully attached to the left-hand side of each page, explanations were given as to why the respective person might arouse Victoria's interest.³⁵⁰ In a letter from 1888, sent along with the portrait of one Colonel Basil Jackson, of some 94 years of age, the photographer Richard Britton Buetin wrote: "He was on the staff at the Battle of Waterloo. Afterwards he went with Napoleon to St. Helena and was one of his custodians. There I have taken a photograph of him and as the number of Waterloo veterans is now so very small it has occurred to me that her Gracious Majesty might be interested in seeing and accepting a portrait of one of the brave defenders of her empire" (Fig. 120).³⁵¹

The Battle of Waterloo, which ended in the victory of the British against Napoleon, had taken place in 1815. Colonel Basil had been only 21 years old at the time; Queen Victoria would be born four years later. Buetin's photograph not only gave a face to Colonel Basil, an otherwise nameless and faceless soldier of the British army who now, like Howlett's Crimean invalids, came under the queen's gaze. It also documented the time that had passed since this important historical event

349 Several studies have recently taken aging as their topic, focusing mostly on nineteenth-century literature. E.g. Andrea Charise, *The Aesthetics of Senescence. Aging, Population, and the Nineteenth-Century British Novel* (Toronto: University of Regina Press, 2020) or Jacob Jewusiak, *Aging, Duration, and the English Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

350 Note at the beginning of the album: "This album, which belonged to Queen Victoria, contains photographs which were sent in by, or on behalf of, elderly people, some of them centenarians." Photographic portraits, Vol.67 (01/0073), Photographic Department, Royal Collection, Windsor Castle, UK.

351 Letter by Richard Britton Buetin, Nov. 1888, Photographic Portraits, Vol.67 (01/0073), Photographic Department, Royal Collection, Windsor Castle, UK. Letter accompanying the photograph of Anne Aldham, May 23, 1899, Photographic Portraits, Vol.67 (01/0073), Photographic Department, Royal Collection, Windsor Castle, UK. The letter accompanying the image of the one-hundred-year-old Mrs. Webb, written on May 23, 1899, two years before Victoria's death and one day before her own eightieth birthday, refers obliquely to the advanced age of the queen: "All your subjects are united in praying for a long continuation ... and blessing of health and prosperity on your Majesty."

that was regarded as a milestone in British history, cementing the nation's claim as a "modern Empire."

Colonel Basil's 94 years, as well as Victoria's own advanced age, mapped contemporary history. Their lifespan encompassed the epoch that bore Victoria's name. Photography documented Victoria's contemporary status to her soldiers in the Crimean War in 1855, as well as to the veteran of the Battle of Waterloo in 1888. Their histories ran in parallel, in different photo albums. Victoria momentarily transgressed the invisible and insurmountable gap between herself and her citizens—in the act of commissioning portraits of the injured soldiers she had visited at their bedside in 1855, and similarly in the act of collecting photographs of elderly citizens in her private album during the 1880s. With this she symbolically acknowledged the "common man" as an active agent of history. If history was understood as the life story of individuals, the queen and her citizens were no different. They were eyewitnesses to historical events, and their individual age, unflatteringly documented in the photographic image, was evidence of time passed, battles won, and progress made.

History was constructed by the consumption of historical documents. Originally produced in vastly different contexts for diverse reasons, these were brought together in shared formats of presentation, such as the lantern slide show or the illustrated history. The commercial formats' technological parameters and commercial orientation determined to a large extent the selection of visual material and its organization into a logical and affirmative narrative of past events that situated society at large, as well as each watching individual, safely within the flow of time.

In the early and mid-twentieth century, the philosophers Walter Benjamin, Siegfried Kracauer, and Roland Barthes grappled with the relationship between photography and history. In 1931, Benjamin famously employed photography as a metaphor and allegory of history, which he described as a fragmented sequence of images rather than a continuous and logically progressing story.³⁵² From my account of the photographic practices of documentation and narration throughout the second half of the nineteenth century we can gather, however, that photographs were actually utilized to overcome the partial nature of historical inscription and understanding, of which they were a part. Incidentally, their fragmentary and quintessentially mute documentary status added to the mid-nineteenth century's "doubt of history," palpable in historians' struggle with contrasting eyewitness accounts from Crimea and India. But photographs were subsequently applied to the construction of a holistic storyline in an attempt to counter the ambivalence and instability of the narrative, and to support the illusion of

352 Walter Benjamin, *Über den Begriff der Geschichte*, in: Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. I/2 (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1974). See Eduardo Cadava, *Worlds of Light: Thesis on the Photography of History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); E. Leslie, "Souvenirs and forgetting: Walter Benjamin's memory-work," in: *Material Memories*, ed. Marius Kwint, Christopher Breward, Jeremy Aynsley (Oxford: Berg, 1999); M. Steinberg, *Walter Benjamin and the Demands of History* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996).

complete transparency and knowability.³⁵³ As John Tagg has argued, photographs illustrate a double desire of history: the careful assembling of detailed and objective records on the one hand, and the restoration of history as a “lived reality” on the other.³⁵⁴ Though the two aims cannot be satisfactorily reconciled, this does not impinge on photography’s success within both systems of constructing the past. Personal albums as well as commercial publications and communally viewed slide shows all offered the illusion of complete knowability of recent history as well as its causal and instructive link to the present.³⁵⁵

It was of course blatantly obvious to contemporary viewers that each image integrated into a slide set such as *The Life of Queen Victoria* had been lifted out of its original context of production to serve the chronological narrative of the show. This knowledge, however, did not prevent each image from successfully holding its position in the constructed story of both queen and nation. Her portraits visually connected events that spanned seventy years and multiple continents. Her well-known and aging face supported the comprehensible succession of visual history, which was further validated by the shared viewing experience.³⁵⁶

Importantly, the acts of constructing history discussed here—with the use of commercial images and their integration in albums, books, and slide sets—do not document an overarching technological determinism of modernity, where the audience is relegated to passive consumption of predetermined content. Both the production of images at the time of an historical event—such as the Crimean War or Indian Uprising—and the subsequent selection from and ordering of this visual repertoire provide ample opportunities for active involvement in the shaping of history. The viewing of the same photographs within the context of the public event of the lantern slide

353 Barthes’s famous comment, that the same century “invented History and Photography,” does not do justice to the multiple and complex historical imaginations of the nineteenth century, which are realized through the photographic image. Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 93. For a critique of Barthes see Tagg, *The Disciplinary Frame*, 212–213. Edwards, *Raw Histories*.

354 Tagg, *The Disciplinary Frame*, 217. For a thoughtful discussion of how new media such as photography and film complicated and undermined ideas and ideals of linear periodization and narrativization as well as national and geographical distinctions and boundaries, see Lynda Nead, *The Haunted Gallery. Painting, Photography, Film, ca. 1900* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2007).

355 For the relationship between historical imagination and the uses of commercially-produced photo albums see also Elizabeth Edwards, “Folded in History. Multiple Times in a Family Album,” *Fotogeschichte* 41, no.161 (2021): 35–42; Elizabeth Edwards, *Photographs and the Practice of History* (London: Bloomsbury, 2022).

356 In 1870, Edward L. Wilson differentiated the viewing experience of glass slides compared to looking at a single photograph: “A small picture, seen by passing it from hand to hand, seems comparatively tame; but when represented to all eyes at once, enlarged to life size and to life-like appearance, it is viewed with cumulative enthusiasm.” Edward L. Wilson, “The Magic Lantern in its Relation to Photography,” in: *Photographic Mosaics: An Annual Record of Photographic Progress*, ed. Edward L. Wilson (Philadelphia: Bennerman & Wilson Publisher, 1870), 118–119. Twenty years later G.R. Baker set a warning tone, noting that the shared experience of lantern slides could also be used to influence and control a large audience. G.R. Baker, “Lantern Mems,” *British Journal of Photography* 40, Monthly Supplement (November 3, 1893): 109–110.

show and in the privacy of the drawing room reveals how visual information was digested and discussed as part of a daily experience of viewing, interpreting, and producing a shared history. Within these photographic practices the pragmatic aim of British society to affirm its self-image as an ordered, modern society was achieved. The albums, publications, and slide sets illustrate the individual and communal effort to create a coherent visual narrative, successfully combining complex and multi-faceted historical events into a single and simple shared storyline. This popular history-consciousness formed a normative basis for the conceptualization of national belonging. Of course, Victoria's ascension to Empress of India and her subsequent Jubilee celebrations acted as image-machines for this purpose, helpfully churning out visual confirmation of Britain's continued royal splendor. Still, the dream of the continuity and moral integrity of the nation was not artificially imposed by means of ritualized ceremony, but individually enacted in formalized consumption of a broadly shared archive of images.³⁵⁷

The result was a commodified version of British history as a visual entity—ordered, structured, and meaningful. Hering's ornamental carte de visite *From the Conquest to Queen Victoria* (1862) had answered to the same demand. Both the composite carte de visite and the slide show document how photography's specific qualities were at the basis of this construction of history. At the level of the single image, they were accepted as documents of reality. With their uncomplicated transfer from one surface to another, they were easily incorporated into sequences or combined with other visual material to form a shared narrative. Thanks to their inexpensive reproduction they filtered through different spaces of consumption and reception, where diverse social groups came into contact with the same visual material. They were at the intersection of domestic, familial, national, and imperial space-time and acted as connective tissues of wider networks at points where these narratives were woven together.³⁵⁸ It is not sufficient, then, to sum up the photographic practices of making history with the simple logic of either active reflection or passive consumption, a division regularly encountered in media theory.³⁵⁹ These practices were snugly tucked into a commercial logic of supply and demand while at the same time serving as a means to reflect one's own positioning in society and history. The aging body of the queen, photographically documented in the many portraits taken of her throughout her lifetime, was an important agent in this production of history. At the end of the nineteenth century, she served as a living link to the recent past. Temporal distance but necessary connection to the present—the concept of history that Carlyle had promoted—was personified by the gray-haired, bent, and widowed grandmother-queen and empress.

357 See Paul Readman, "The Place of the Past in English Culture c. 1890–1914," *Past and Present* 186 (2005): 147–199.

358 Edwards, *Folded in History*.

359 Casid, *Scenes of Projection*, 36.

As has become apparent in the preceding chapters, Victoria was a constant visual presence in the lives of British citizens throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. The ready availability of her image allowed consumers of photography, album owners, drawing room visitors, and the audiences of slide shows to negotiate, in smaller and larger social contexts, social order and their own place within it. Since the 1980s prominent, post-structural theories of representation have discussed modern representation as a process of negotiation with a largely unpredictable and unstable outcome. The French Revolution, and with it the loss of the absolutist king, served as their authors' starting point for the discussion of a paradigmatically different, modern form of representation. But while Victoria's commercially available image does allow the localized, sometimes even idiosyncratic, determination of social affiliation, these multiplied and stratified imaginations of society do not eliminate or subvert a given hierarchy. Quite to the contrary, traditional norms and conventions of representation are adapted, updated, and confirmed in photography, to serve as crucial markers of social order. In mid-nineteenth century Britain, the very revolution that served the theorists of the 1980s as the turning point of representation was presented as a warning example. Contemporary British thinkers regarded not only the immediate violence and social upheaval of the French Revolution, but also its long-term consequences for society, as intolerable—the loss of form, of structure, and of order, and the reign of chaos. The historically specific case of Victoria as a queen of the nineteenth century thus puts the predominant discourse on modern representation into perspective. My epilogue is dedicated to the contextualization of Victoria's photographic presence in this larger discourse on modern representation.

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121. After George Washington Wilson, *Page from Catalogue of Queen Victoria's Private Negatives, Vol. I, 1858-1867*, printed in carbon c. 1889-1891 by Hughes & Mullins, 20.7 × 26.6 cm. Royal Collection, London (acc. no. RCIN 2931316)

5 Queen in the Mud

Few scholars of photography take note of the fact that the French philosopher Roland Barthes chose a photograph of Queen Victoria to illustrate one of his major theoretical ideas: the difference between *studium* and *punctum* in the viewer's perception of a photograph. Barthes used George W. Wilson's 1863 portrait, which shows the forty-five-year-old queen on horseback (Fig. 121). Victoria defines the *studium* of the photograph. According to Barthes, viewers recognize the historical nineteenth-century figure of the queen and register her equestrian pose as one which is traditionally reserved for representations of rulers. The queen's servant, John Brown, is Barthes's *punctum*. In highland dress he stands at the head of the pony to keep it from moving during the time of exposure. Brown's presence constitutes a break with the historical continuity of the image and its accepted message. His clothing does not indicate his social position in relation to the queen. What is more, his presence implies a possible uncontrollable turn of events in the photographed scene: "[W]hat if the horse suddenly began to rear?" asks Barthes, "What would happen to the queen's skirt, *i. e.*, to *her majesty*?"³⁶⁰ According to the author, the presence of the Scottish servant and the potential tumble of the queen disrupt the historically-sanctioned message of the photographic image and its representational function, adding a personal layer of interpretation.

Barthes proposed the differentiation between *studium* and *punctum* as an analytical tool rather than as a description of the actual process of viewing a photograph. He emphasized that in the act of reception, the general recognition of a historically sanctioned motif and the personal attentiveness to a specific pictorial element actually fall into one. Nevertheless, Barthes's definition of the *punctum* as a private and individual moment of interpretative openness contrasts with the fundamental ambivalences which, as I have shown, characterized the photographic motif of the queen from the start.

³⁶⁰ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida. Reflections on Photography* (1980), 57 [italics in original]. If the queen's dress really covered the horse's back, that could be considered a direct reference to traditional equestrian statues. Barthes, however, did not look closely enough—though Victoria's outfit is neatly draped, it is not thrown over her horse's back.

The photograph by Wilson is a case in point. The proximity of Victoria to her servant John Brown showcased in the image fueled speculation among contemporary viewers about a romantic relationship between the two. The original version of Wilson's photograph showed the queen with two servants at her side, John Brown and John Grant (Fig. 122). It was taken in memory of her deceased husband Albert and marked the second anniversary of their trip as royal couple to the Scottish Highlands in 1861. The publishing house Marion & Co. subsequently cropped Grant out of the picture, leaving the queen alone with Brown, one of her few male intimates, seemingly illustrating their alleged affair (Fig. 123). To an ill-meaning gossiping public Victoria became known as Mrs. Brown, a nickname that indicates the loss of social position that would have come with such a liaison. As the wife of Mr. Brown, Victoria would have become a member of the middle class—similar to that “Mrs. Brown of Packham,” that crept up to the top of one’s calling card basket to overlay the more genteel visitors, “your favourite countess or millionaire,” as the anonymous reviewer in *All Year Round* had predicted.³⁶¹ The image Barthes referred to in *Camera Lucida* is a reworked copy of this cropped version, which was Wilson’s most successful photograph of the queen. Thus, interpretations of this image were ambivalent, multi-faceted, and largely uncontrollable, even during Victoria’s own lifetime.

Contrary to Barthes’s assessment, the photograph’s reference to the stately iconography of the equestrian portrait also fails to pin down its interpretation conclusively. In Britain, the iconography of the equestrian portrait as a defining image of a royal head of state had been cast into doubt at a much earlier point. In 1633, the celebrated painter Anthony van Dyck immortalized King Charles I in a mon-



122. George Washington Wilson, *The Queen, Balmoral*, October 20, 1863, albumen carte-de-visite, 5.8 × 9.1cm. Royal Collection, London (acc. no. RCIN 2333927)



123. George Washington Wilson, *Queen Victoria on “Fyvie” with John Brown, Balmoral*, October 20, 1863, albumen carte-de-visite, 8.2 × 4.9 cm. Royal Collection, London (acc. no. RCIN 2149209)

361 Wilson, *The Victorians*, 504. Anon., “The Carte-de-Visite-experience,” 166.



124. Anthony van Dyck, *Charles I with M. de St Antoine*, 1633, oil on canvas, 370 × 270 cm. Royal Collection, London (acc. no. RCIN 405322)

umental equestrian portrait that measures 368 × 269 cm (Fig. 124). The King proceeds through a triumphal arc on horseback. He is larger than life, dressed in shiny armor, and has a servant at his side. The outcome of Charles I's attempt to rule Britain as an absolutist king without parliament is well known: the country descended into civil war. Sixteen years after Charles I sat for van Dyck's portrait, the conflict ended with the King's execution and the temporary abolition of the monarchy.

Oliver Cromwell, commander of the parliamentary army, subsequently commissioned an equestrian portrait of his own to visually proclaim his position as head of the first British republic, the Commonwealth of England. The popular and broadly-disseminated etching mirrors van Dyck's famous portrait of Charles I. Cromwell, too, is on horseback, in full armor, with a servant at his side (Fig. 125). His body completely fills out the space that was formerly the king's. Unlike a monarch, however, he does not claim that his leadership is sanctioned by divine right. The landscape setting of Cromwell's equestrian portrait—as well as his dispensing with crown, scepter, and coat of arms—illustrate this significant change from divine law to law of nature. But even though Cromwell deliberately refused the royal title offered to him by parliament, he did fall back on the conventional iconography of the equestrian portrait, and on its specific interpretation for Charles I by van Dyck, to claim his position as leader of the Commonwealth.³⁶²

Cromwell's adaptation of Charles I's portrait shows how effective images can be for the construction and depiction of diametrically opposed concepts of sovereignty: absolute monarchy on the one hand and a republic on the other. It also highlights the difficulty of completely dispensing with a figurative representation of these concepts of social order.³⁶³ The smooth exchange of one figure for another cast into doubt the respective portrait's representational status, as the arbitrariness of assigning power to one specific person became evident. Nevertheless, Cromwell still trusted the power of visual conventions for his self-representation as the mighty leader of a new social order.

Victoria's photographic equestrian portrait, cropped by a savvy commercial studio from a photograph of the queen's vacation in the Scottish Highlands, exemplifies both the use of pictorial conventions to transform a photograph into a representative portrait and the potential of photographic images to change their representational status depending on context. On the one hand, the photograph leans on the stately equestrian portrait, even more so in the version Barthes refers to, where its original



125. Pierre Lombart, *OLIVERIVS MAGNAE BRITANNIAE, HIBERNIAE ET TOTIVS ANGLICI IMPERII PROTECTOR*, 1655, engraving, paper, 55.4 × 35.3 cm. Royal Collection, London (acc. no. RCIN 601864)

362 For a comparative analysis of both portraits which draws out the political implications of Cromwell's visual reference see Claudia Blümle, "Souveränität im Bild: Anthonis van Dycks Reiterporträt Karls des I.," in *Visuelle Argumentationen: Die Mysterien der Repräsentation und die Berechenbarkeit der Welt*, ed. Horst Bredekamp and Pablo Schneider (Munich: Fink, 2006), 79–101.

363 As Friedrich Balke rightly maintains, the problem of sovereignty cannot be reduced to the sovereign. Power necessarily needs to be symbolically reinforced and made comprehensible within a larger social figuration. Friedrich Balke, *Figuren der Souveränität* (Paderborn: Verlag Wilhelm Fink, 2009), 22–23.

background is blanked out to envelop the queen in a timeless halo of light. On the other hand, the portrait is clearly and unapologetically a document of the living queen. Her middle-aged face and matronly figure, Victorian dress, and stocky pony do not correspond well with the idealized image of a royal commander on horseback



126. W. & D. Downey, *John Brown*, 1868, albumen print, 13.9 x 9.9 cm. National Portrait Gallery, London (acc. no. NPG P22(9))

dressed in military splendor. Neither is her footman an anonymous stranger. John Brown was well known to the public as her regular companion, and his *carte de visite* portrait was successfully marketed in its own right (Fig. 126). The image's reference to the equestrian portrait and its simultaneous and unbridgeable distance to this traditional representational register is also evident in the radical changes of format and medium between the three images I have introduced. While van Dyck's oil painting of Charles I shows the King larger than life and in vibrant colors, and Oliver Cromwell's etched equestrian portrait is of representative size as well, Queen Victoria's endlessly reproducible photograph could fit into every coat pocket.³⁶⁴ The ambiguous image of the queen conflates historical and contemporary ideals of representation for its nineteenth-century consumers. This very ambiguity, combined with the conventionalized interpretation of photographs as "natural" images, makes Victoria's photographic image a productive tool for multiple visual constructions of "modern" society.

The broadly voiced nineteenth-century diagnosis of a social and political loss of order served as the starting point of my inquiry in this book. I examined the photographic practices employed to counteract this loss—by commercial photographers, in different social circles, and in the context of public slide shows and popular history books. Photography's technological possibilities of reproduction and recombination are the foundation for these visual negotiations. In these concluding pages, I will situate my insights about the function of commercial portrait photography for the construction and communication of social order within the larger theoretical discussion about the relationship between visual representation and modernity. Against the backdrop of Victoria's photographic representation, I argue, the fundamental paradigm of modernity as a "crisis of representation" needs to be both historicized and qualified.

³⁶⁴ Charles I's portrait was also transferred into print, which resulted in the portrait's renown and made it attractive to Cromwell for emulation in the first place.

Losing One's Head: Theories of Modern Representation

The absolutist king and his antithesis, the guillotined king, are at the basis of de-constructivist reconsiderations of the image and its representational function. This paradigm has dominated image theory since the 1980s, when Louis Marin, Claude Lefort, and Jacques Rancière constituted the French Revolution as its determinative turning point. For the authors, representation necessarily becomes discursive after this event, forming a largely invisible, arbitrary and unstable, but nonetheless extremely powerful social construction, which in turn affects social relationships. The bloody business of robbing the sovereign portrait of its royal head, and of making that space available for the representation of the people, is at the heart of the philosophers' image theories. All three authors build on Michel Foucault's diagnosis of a paradigm change at the turn of the eighteenth century. According to Foucault, from that point on, knowledge production was no longer based on the ideal of a transparent representation of the world, but rather on the acknowledgment of the historicity of science itself. The French Revolution served Foucault as the historical and conceptual starting point for such "modern thinking." The loss of the king as the uncontested head of society showed in an exemplary manner how representation lost its transparency and became a complex, multi-directional activity of communication.³⁶⁵

Marin, Lefort, and Rancière subsequently used the figure of the king as the basis for their own theories of modern representation. In his study *Le portrait du roi* (1981) Marin described the portrait of the Sun King Louis XIV as the paradigm of representation. Even if the king is not physically present, his unrestricted political power is confirmed by his portrait. It assumes the power of the absent king and receives political agency of its own. Marin referred to Ernst Kantorowicz's canonical study on medieval representation to discuss the discrepancy between the king's living, breathing, and aging *body natural* and his timeless, ideal *body politic*. Kantorowicz had described the king's natural body as equipped with physical attributes (it suffers and dies) whereas the spiritual body transcends this earthly presence and serves as a symbol for the king's position, which is equipped with the divine right to rule. In medieval England, the notion of the two bodies allowed for the continuity of the monarchy even when the monarch died. Marin modified Kantorowicz's two-body theory by introducing the king's representation, his painted portrait, as a mediator between the two bodies.³⁶⁶

365 In the opening chapter of *Les mots et les choses*, Foucault discussed Diego Velázquez's painting *Las Meninas* (1656) as a painterly reflection of the activity of representation, which is dispersed among images, beholders, faces, and gestures. Though Foucault went on to examine the discourses of science, economy, and philosophy, instances of political representation are at the basis of his larger argument about how history enters into the order of knowledge. Michel Foucault, *Les mots et les choses*.

366 Louis Marin, *Portrait of the King* (1981), 14. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies*. Though Kantorowicz cautioned against applying his theory outside of England, Marin transferred it to French absolutism. For a critique of Marin's decidedly ahistorical conceptualization of the portrait as the operator of the complete exchange between physical and political body see Ellen McClure, *Sunspots and the Sun King*.

According to Marin, the king's portrait serves as an interface between the *body natural* and *body politic*. Its purpose is to integrate them both into its pictorial construction "without remainder."

Marin explicated his claim in an analysis of Hyazinthe Rigaud's state portrait of Louis XIV from 1701. It is the same portrait that had incurred Reynold's wrath in 1822, as discussed in Chapter 1. In Reynold's eyes, Rigaud's focus on the portrait's representational function led him to neglect the inner character of the king. Marin, however, defines this portrait as Louis XIV's actual presence, his *présence réelle*. Only in his portrait is the king present, only as an image is he recognized by himself and by his people as king.³⁶⁷ Rigaud's portrait participates in the construction of reality by providing a plausible and credible image for it.³⁶⁸ This third, representative body of the Sun King guarantees the unity of the *body natural* and *body politic* by fusing them together in the public imaginary. Only as a fictive persona, produced in his manifold representations, can the sovereign define himself as an authority free from religious, legal, moral, and even biological bonds.

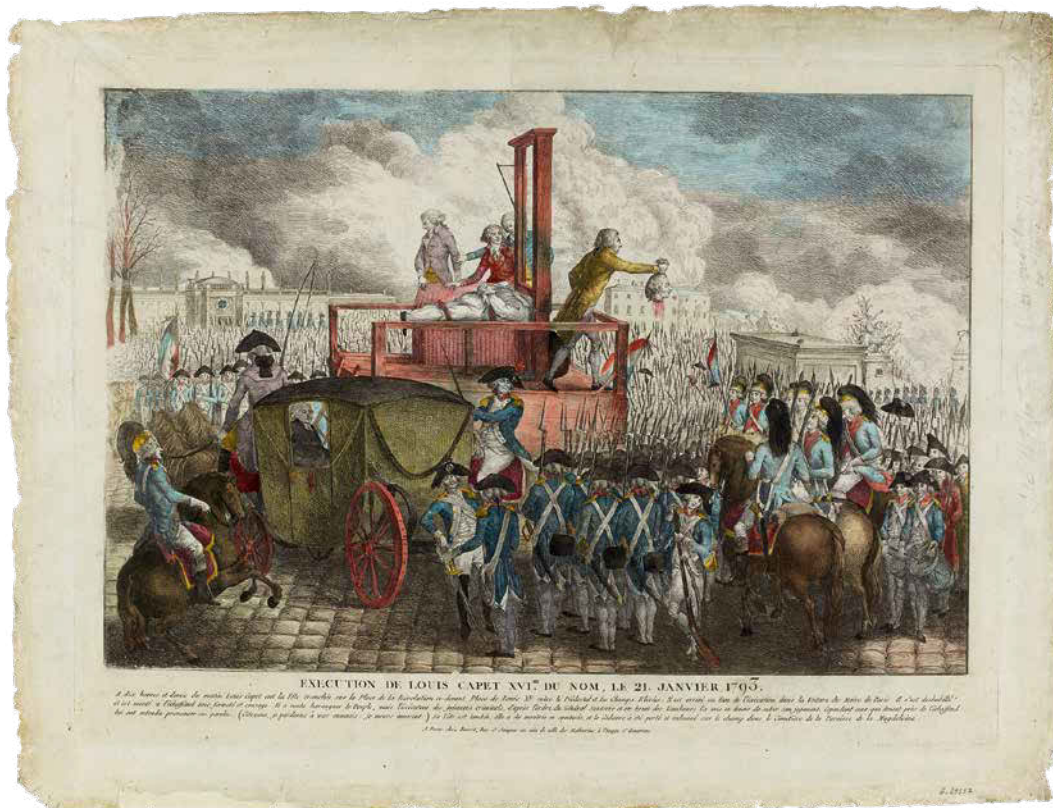
Based on his interpretation of absolutist representation as an instrument of political power, Marin described the decades around 1800 as a time of transition. In 1793, the violent removal of Louis XVI's head resulted in a shift from the representation of sovereignty to the sovereignty of representation (Fig. 127). In order to unpack this formula, Marin referred to the two denotations of the term "representation"—as embodiment on the one hand, and as a proxy for something that is not in the same room, or a recurrence of something that does not exist in the same time period, on the other.³⁶⁹ Applied to the unraveling of the social and political order in France around 1800, the first definition describes the immediate presence of the sovereign, or of a symbol embodying him, in pre-revolutionary French society, whereas the second definition defines political representation in what Marin considers a modern society. Representation as the embodiment of sovereign power differs from representation as an

Sovereignty and Mediation in Seventeenth-Century France (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 59, 77. See also Kristin Marek, *Die Körper des Königs. Effigies, Bildpolitik und Heiligkeit* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2009); Christiane Hille, *Visions of the Courtly Body. The Patronage of George Villiers, First Duke of Buckingham, and the Triumph of Painting at the Stuart Court* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2012), 51–55. Peter Burke, *The Fabrication of Louis XIV.* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1992), 33, 192.

367 The paradigmatic image of the king who sees his own portrait and thereby acknowledges his prominent position is also at the heart of German image theories, which focus on the essential, ontological nature of images. See e.g. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Gesammelte Werke. Band 1, Hermeneutik I. Wahrheit und Methode. Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik* (1960) (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 153; Gottfried Boehm, "Die Wiederkehr der Bilder," in *Was ist ein Bild?*, ed. Gottfried Boehm (Munich: Fink, 1994), 11–38.; Horst Bredekamp, *Bildakt. Frankfurter Adorno-Vorlesungen 2007* (Berlin: Verlag Klaus Wagenbach, 2015).

368 Vera Beyer and Jutta Voorhoeve, "Nichts dahinter. Eine Einleitung," in *Das Bild ist der König. Repräsentation nach Louis Marin*, ed. Vera Beyer, Jutta Voorhoeve, and Anselm Haverkamp (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2006), 7.

369 Marin, *Portrait of the King*, 5–6.



127. Exécution de Louis Capet XVI^e du nom, le 21. janvier 1793, 18th century, copperplate engraving, image 45.1 × 61.5 cm. Musée Carnavalet, Paris (acc. no. G.29557)

image of that power insofar as images present something that they are not. Modern representation, then, is the arbitrary delegation of power to a chosen agent. Images can serve as crucial operators in this process. But they may quickly lose their power when they are recognized as mere tools in the struggle for representational power.

To explicate this provisional nature of modern representation, the philosopher Eric Santner has introduced the image of a baron, as a member of the aristocratic elite, who falls and lands in the mud. During his fall, the man cascades from kingship, to “kingship’s name,” and from name (or image) to the naked misery of man.³⁷⁰ This “fall” from social distinction, due to the defacement of the representational image—the equestrian portrait—is exactly what Barthes anticipated for Victoria, sitting on her pony in 1863. The mere possibility of the horse suddenly shifting, causing the image of royalty to land in the mud and be defaced, destabilizes the authority of the queen’s historical representation.

Claude Lefort referred to the French Revolution as a moment of paradigmatic change as well, in order to pinpoint the specific qualities of modern representation. He

370 Eric Santner, *The Royal Remains: The People’s Two Bodies and the Endgames of Sovereignty* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 106, 110. Santner borrows the figure of the baron from Alenka Zupančič, *The Odd One In: On Comedy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007), 32. His cascading “rite of degradation” refers directly to Kantorowicz’s description of Shakespeare’s Richard II. Kantorowicz, *The King’s Two Bodies*, 27.

argued that with the beheading of Louis XVI, concepts of embodiment and incarnation became obsolete. What remained was a *lieu vide*, an empty space, at the center of democratic power.³⁷¹ A characteristic challenge for modern society is the temptation to close this contingency by reinvesting power in one person.³⁷² At its base, this challenge constitutes an imaging problem. The blank space that symbolizes the democratic right to choose one's own political representation is difficult to visualize; it requires constant negotiation.

Jacques Rancière drew parallels between the historical moment of the French Revolution and a fundamental shift from a representative to an aesthetic regime.³⁷³ Under the aesthetic—the modern—regime, an image of a king no longer represents the king's body, but only his figurative significance, which is based on contingency and conventions. When the image loses the power to embody the king, representation ceases to be a tool for distinction. Under the aesthetic regime, even the most insignificant subjects or objects may potentially receive the same attention as a king. Nineteenth-century critics of photography had come to a similar conclusion in their assessment of the dynamics of celebrity, which was fueled by the ready availability of commercial portraits, rather than by a God-given, or “natural,” authority of the person depicted. Here again, Andrew Wynter's assessment is apt, that thanks to the introduction of the *cartes de visite*, “some accident” could elevate anybody to “the hero of the hour.”³⁷⁴ Rancière concludes that if power exists only in its forms of representation, images are crucial, yet ultimately uncontrollable, agents in these negotiating processes, as the audience is free to accept or dismiss their representative claims.³⁷⁵

Marin, Lefort, and Rancière have dominated the theoretical discussion about modern representation since the 1980s, and the iconic image of the French king at the guillotine has supported their universalizing claims. Marin's understanding of representation as a productive force in the construction of reality, Lefort's definition of democracy as the task of safeguarding the symbolic void left at its center, and Rancière's understanding of both dynamics as the basis for the aesthetic regime that governs modernity have had enormous influence on the understanding of representation as a

371 Lefort, *Essais sur le politique (XIX^e–XX^e siècles)*, 265.

372 According to Lefort, the conflict between democracy and totalitarianism is decided ultimately by whether society resists or succumbs to the political metaphor of the body. Warren Breckman, “The Return of the King: Hegelianism and Post-Marxism in Žižek and Nancy,” in *The Modernist Imagination. Intellectual History and Critical Theory. Essays in Honor of Martin Jay*, ed. Warren Breckman et al. (New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books 2009), 122.

373 Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*. trans. Gabriel Rockhill (London: Continuum, 2006). While Lefort understands the loss of an embodied sovereign power as a “stage of representation,” Rancière regards representation as the exact opposite of democracy.

374 Wynter, “*Cartes de Visite*,” 135.

375 Rancière chooses specifically the medium of photography to discuss this indeterminacy of an image's function and meaning. Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, transl. Gregory Elliott (London/New York: Verso, 2009), 107–132.

volatile and provisional process of negotiation, and of images as powerful but unpredictable agents in this process.

The authors' shared focus on representation as a construction—a process with many participants and an open outcome—relates to the photographic practices of self-representation that I have examined in the preceding chapters. Their conviction that this visual construction operates within society and influences social dynamics is confirmed in the varied photographic spaces I have entered, in which social affiliation is practiced by means of producing and consuming images. However, Victoria's constant royal presence, which is facilitated by means of modern image technology, thoroughly historicizes the authors' theoretical claims, as they are tested against nineteenth-century image production and reception.

Many of Victoria's contemporaries witnessed the French Revolution personally. From the distance of the British channel, they watched in horror at the chaos and violence unfolding in France. The Revolution's unparalleled destabilizing force was very much on their minds and shaped the considerations of British thinkers about contemporary society's structure. For mid-nineteenth century Britain, post-revolutionary France was the foil against which the nation needed to differentiate itself. Consequently, the image Britain strove for was that of a modern society defined by order.³⁷⁶ The continued prominent symbolic position and visual ubiquity of the British monarchy was influenced by the impression of *terreur* in France as well.

At first glance, contemporary evaluations of the situation at the time might sound similar to the analysis put forth by Marin, Lefort, and Rancière one hundred and fifty years later. Philosophers such as Edmund Burke, Thomas Carlyle, and John Stuart Mill had also described the French Revolution as a violent shift of representational power, resulting in the loss of shared representational conventions and in the need to constantly renegotiate and reconstruct social order. However, their assessments of this instability had been vastly different: they did not perceive this dynamic as a defining quality of a steadily democratizing, modern society, but rather as an existential threat. Conservatives Burke and Carlyle agreed with liberal Mill that social conventions and their visual implementation remained crucial foundations for the shaping of contemporary society. Without these constants, chaos would reign.

In nineteenth-century Britain, the symbolic center of society remained occupied by a politically increasingly powerless woman whose aging *body natural* was positively portrayed by means of the medium of photography. But in the queen's photographic representation, and more specifically in the application of her photographic portraits for localized and personal acts of self-representation, conventions of embodiment per-

376 One cannot overestimate the extent to which the British, after the defeat of Napoleon, continued to feel paranoia about France. Not only did Palmerston and Wellington fear the prospect of a French invasion long after the very possibility of such an event had been quashed, but France was also seen as an object lesson of what could happen if a modern society imploded. Wilson, *The Victorians*, 16–17.

sisted. These were repeated, and combined with claims of social participation, affiliation, or distinction.³⁷⁷ These practices, aimed at recognizing and producing order, closely related to British efforts of the nineteenth century to theorize modern representation.

Fear of the Void: Britain's Reception of the French Revolution

In Britain, the bloody event of removing the sovereign portrait's royal head had taken place already 144 years earlier than in France, initiating the country's transformation into a constitutional monarchy.³⁷⁸ Led by Cromwell as the "Guardian of the Liberty of England by the Authority of Parliament," the "Commonwealth of England" lasted only until Charles II ascended the throne in 1660. Even though this was a relatively brief intermezzo, the fundamental contingency and flexibility of the social order remained a regular topic in public discourse. The state and its structure were now discussed as a man-made invention, ready to be altered and adapted to changing necessities.

From the violent death of Charles I, then, the British monarchy had faced the challenge of shaping its representation according to popular consensus.³⁷⁹ It needed to find a representational vocabulary appropriate to its changing position in the political system of Britain and at the same time suitable for its continued symbolic significance in the social fabric of the country. The monarchy's representation needed to be highly adaptable to the dynamics of British society, while simultaneously acting as a convincing symbol of the country's historically-sanctioned stability. The dichotomy between absolutism and republic that served as a conceptual starting point for the poststructural theories of representation described above did not exist in this historical setting.³⁸⁰

377 Thomas Nail, *Theory of the Image* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 362.

378 The poet John Milton, who served as Oliver Cromwell's secretary throughout the revolutionary years, had the task of writing an official narrative of the process against King Charles I. He discusses the process of stripping the *body politic* from the *body natural* and convicting the king as an "ordinary man" in his text "Eikonoklastes," in *The Works of John Milton*, Vol. 5, ed. Frank Allen Patterson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1932), 61–309. In 1789, the French king was stripped of his insignia as well. See Alain Boureau, *Le simple corps du roi. L'impossible sacralité des souverains français, XV^e–XVIII^e siècle* (Paris: Les Editions de Paris, 1988); Friedrich Balke, "Wie man einen König tötet oder Majesty in Misery," *Deutsche Vierteljahresschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 75 (2001): 657–679.

379 The constitutional settlement of 1688, which established the power of parliament to limit the royal prerogative, tied up the outcome of the Civil War in a formula that was little modified until the Great Reform Act of 1832. See Michael Alexander, *Medievalism, The Middle Ages in Modern England*, 2nd Edition, (New Haven/London: Yale University Press 2017), 24. Even after 1832, political power for the most part remained with the aristocratic gentry. Kevin Sharpe and Steven N. Zwicker, *Refiguring Revolutions. Aesthetics and Politics from the English Revolution to the Romantic Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

380 Heinz Duchhardt, "Absolutismus—Abschied von einem Epochenbegriff?," *Historische Zeitschrift* 258, no.1 (1994): 113–122; Wolfgang Reinhard, *Geschichte der Staatsgewalt. Eine vergleichende Verfassungsgeschichte Europas von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*, 2nd Edition (Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 2000), 51.

Moreover, during the nineteenth century, the French Revolution was in and of itself an important parameter in British discourse about contemporary society's need for structure and order. In his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) the conservative writer, philosopher, and politician Edmund Burke argued passionately against revolutionary intentions in Britain and against an understanding of the monarchy as based on civic agreement rather than genealogy. For Burke, the "natural" hereditary right provided society with a powerful "image" of blood relation, which in turn offered a moral and practical model for all other "artificial institutions" that structured society.³⁸¹ Note the differentiation between "natural" and "artificial" structures, a dichotomy which recurred prominently in the nineteenth-century discourse on photographic representation as well. The acknowledgment or dismissal of photography as a "natural" image, for example, or the demand for "natural" or "real" surroundings that produced "authentic" images of the photo studio's visitors and the drawing room's inhabitants, pointed to the underlying anxiety that any "natural" order, if not convincingly imaged, would cease to exist.

Burke feared that if the traditional form of monarchy was abolished, all principles upon which society was based would be eliminated in any subsequent restructuring. The "image" upon which society was modeled would be gone.³⁸² Post-revolutionary France served as a cautionary example for him. In accordance with his visual metaphor, Burke pointed out the missing "physiognomy" of the French assembly, a brand-new "faceless" institution, developed "mechanically" to produce social order according to the formal distribution of power. Because this institution was not "embodied by persons," Burke argued, it did not create "love, veneration, admiration, or attachment."³⁸³ His argument was guided by an understanding of monarchy and democracy as two antithetical forms of sovereignty. Whereas the former provided historical precedent and a moral and visual basis for the ordering of society, the latter left society without a model upon which to imagine and construct itself.

Burke's rhetoric proved extremely influential for Carlyle and Mill. Both conversed and wrote extensively about the consequences of the French Revolution for modern society. Carlyle's *The French Revolution: A History* was published for the first time in 1837, the year of Queen Victoria's accession, and became a bestseller. Carlyle began

381 Burke's impassioned justification of the monarchy, nobility, and established church in contemporary British society coincided with a troubling moment for the British king, as George III's temporary insanity throughout the winter of 1788–1789 had given rise to the Regency issue. Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1793). Burke's defense of the monarchy's principle of inheritance as a "law of nature" was countered by Thomas Paine in *The Rights of Man* (1791). Thomas Paine, *Rights of man. Being an answer to Mr. Burke's attack on the French revolution* (London: Jordan, 1791). For the British reception of Paine's pamphlet see Albert Goodwin, *The Friends of Liberty. The English Democratic Movement in the Age of the French Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979); Marilyn Butler, *Burke, Paine, Godwin. The Revolution Controversy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

382 Burke, *Reflections*, 60. According to Burke, this "image" is substantiated by the cultural records left behind by kings and queens: their "gallery of portraits," "monumental inscriptions," "records, evidences, and titles." Burke, *Reflections*, 30.

383 Burke, *Reflections*, 68.

his account with the death of Louis XV, who died of smallpox in 1774, a common death, as Carlyle pointed out, which underlined the King's mortality. Louis XV left a weakened monarchy to deal with a land in bitter financial crisis and a world in democratic awakening.³⁸⁴ In Carlyle's eyes the King's heir, Louis XVI, was an "innocent king," born into his position too young, and utterly inexperienced. He was confronted with internal upheaval, which was exacerbated by utterly uncontrollable geopolitical constellations, warranting their description as natural disasters. Carlyle's Louis XVI was a helpless and hapless bystander in the long and ultimately violent progression of the National Assembly toward a constitutionally sanctioned, post-monarchic France.³⁸⁵

Though resigned to the fact that the world was in constant movement and development, Carlyle was by no means a supporter of revolutions. Even if they might seem justified as rebellions against a "corrupt worn-out" authority such as that personified by Louis XVI, Carlyle regarded their uncontrollable violence as unacceptable. Revolutions led not to new order, but to utter chaos.³⁸⁶ In order to illustrate the loss of social norms due to the revolutionary upheaval, Carlyle made use of the well-established metaphor of undressing. Just as the king was stripped of his royal garments, society itself shed the "old garnitures and social vestures" of Royalism. But the novel vestures, the "new modes and rules" turned out to be "not vestures, but the wish for vestures! The nation is for the present, figuratively speaking, *naked*; it has no rule or vesture, but is naked."³⁸⁷ The effacement of the image of the king led to the effacement of the image of society as well.

Calling France a "Sansculottic Nation," Carlyle returned to the original, pejorative meaning of the term in order to diagnose a disastrous loss of social structure as the consequence of the violent destruction of the "natural" symbolic order:

*Royalism with its old modes and formulas [is swept] to the winds; and shall now govern a France free of formulas. Free of formulas! And yet man lives not except with formulas; with customs, ways of doing and living.... Ubi homines sunt modi sunt. There are modes wherever there are men. It is the deepest law of man's nature.*³⁸⁸

384 Thomas Carlyle, *The French Revolution. A History*, Vol. 1, 6.

385 Carlyle wrote of "signs of hurricane and earthquakes" (Carlyle, *The French Revolution. Vol. 1*, 46). He made reference to Edmund Burke, who had rejected the French Revolution as "to all appearance the end of Civilized Time" (Carlyle, *The French Revolution. A History*, Vol. 1, 64).

386 "French Revolution means here the open violent Rebellion, and Victory, of disimprisoned Anarchy against corrupt worn-out Authority: how Anarchy breaks prison; bursts up from the infinite Deep, and rages uncontrollable, immeasurable, enveloping the world; in phasis after phasis of fever-frenzy." Carlyle, *The French Revolution. A History*, Vol. 1, 170. Seventy years later, the image of France as a country "infected" by the disease of revolution was taken up by W.R. Greg, who argued that even by the 1870s the patient had not recovered. W.R. Greg, "Life at High Pressure," *Contemporary Review* 25 (1875): 623–638.

387 Thomas Carlyle, *The French Revolution. A History*, Vol. 2 (London/New York: J.M. Dent & E.P. Dutton & Co., 1837), 184.

388 Carlyle, *The French Revolution*, Vol. 2, 184.

The uncontrolled dynamic of the revolution could only be steadied, he maintained, by social conventions that had grown naturally and on a different time scale than the revolutionary momentum. Symbolic representation was one such norm. "A king or a leader," Carlyle wrote, "all bodies of men must have."³⁸⁹ Crucially, and in contrast to Burke, the necessary leader to counter social disarray did not have to be a king of royal blood. In his book on *Heroes and Hero-Worship*, Carlyle even discussed the republican leader Cromwell under the title "The Hero as King." The king of the future, then, was not the traditional king by divine right, of which Charles I and Louis XVI were faint relics, but the new, post-revolutionary king, who was able to impose order upon modern society by moral example.³⁹⁰

Carlyle's account of the French Revolution gave him ample opportunity to promote his own convictions. For him, that event illustrated what England might face, should the country follow France down the same path. Violent revolution and the concomitant loss of order would inevitably empower a "new elite," whose authority was based neither on tradition nor on merit, but rather on unapologetic commercialism.³⁹¹ For Carlyle, the French Revolution was not just a historical event to be recounted. The documentation of its dire consequences was a crucial argument for the promotion of a modern society based on moral order.

Mill's review of Carlyle's *The French Revolution* was published in the *London and Westminster Review*, also in 1837.³⁹² Mill and Carlyle had been in conversation about the topic ever since Mill had published his own essay on the French Revolution in 1826. Carlyle even sent Mill his manuscript a few years before publishing the book.³⁹³ France's great failure, its apparent post-revolutionary inability to create a new order of society, a new set of institutions and habits, figures large in Mill's own assessment as well. But in contrast to the conservative Carlyle, the liberal Mill does not propose a simple dichotomy between having a set of shared convictions that provide a secure

389 See e.g. Carlyle, *The French Revolution, Vol. I*, 7. He writes that "on such wonderful basis ... has Law, Royalty, Authority and whatever yet still exists of visible order, to maintain itself, while it can." *Ibid.*, 323.

390 Napoleon counts as another such "Hero as King" for him. Carlyle, "The Hero as King. Cromwell, Napoleon: Modern Revolutionism," 169–204. See also Culler, *The Victorian Mirror of History*, 70–71.

391 Carlyle calls this new elite the "Aristocracy of the Moneybag. (...) Apparently a still baser sort of Aristocracy? An infinitely baser; the basest yet known." Carlyle, *The French Revolution, Vol. 2*, 383. See also *Past and Present*.

392 John Stuart Mill, "The French Revolution: A History in three volumes. By Thomas Carlyle. Small 8vo. (London) Fraser, 1837," *London and Westminster Review* V & XXVII (July 1837): 17–53.

393 The story goes that Mill accidentally burnt Carlyle's manuscript, prompting his fellow author to completely rewrite the book. See Joanna Malecka, "'This is not *right* Radicalism': Thomas Carlyle's dialogue with John Stuart Mill in *The French Revolution*," *Global Intellectual History* 6, no. 103 (2018): 1–35. Mill, who called Carlyle's book an "epic poem," quoted at length from its pages, to present to the reader how Carlyle managed to make "dry facts" and "mere abstractions" become "realities." Anticipating criticism of Carlyle's literary style, Mill defended its merits, describing his writing method as a means to bring before the reader history in all its "concreteness" by making him or her "*acquainted* with persons, things, and events." Mill, "The French Revolution," xx [italics in original].

base for the order of society, or having none, which leads to the complete and violent loss of order.

Mill agreed with Carlyle that social order was achieved by a society's building and agreeing upon shared convictions. Edmund Burke was on the minds of both authors as they highlighted with equal vehemence the power of social norms and conventions to shape the realities of life. But Mill also problematized the blind, or "mechanical," adherence to obsolete social structures, which limited individual and social development. This limitation was potentially just as dangerous, he maintained, as the tyrannical absolutist rule of the past, or the revolutionary chaos of the present.³⁹⁴ Note how Mill turned Burke's prescription of "natural" and "mechanical" on its head: in contrast to Burke and Carlyle, he regarded as "natural" the personal development of the individual, not the social conventions that guide it. And he dismissed the mindless following of obsolete traditions as "mechanical," as opposed to the newly established, democratic institutions of order.

Photography: Dreaming Order

Almost thirty years after his exchange with Carlyle on the topic of the French Revolution, Mill dedicated his famous paper *On Liberty* (1859) to the defense of individual freedom. Again, the French Revolution served him as the historical backdrop, against which he examined the current state of contemporary British society.³⁹⁵ Mill shared Carlyle's assessment that, following the French Revolution, the social order had become visible as a fragile construction in urgent need of stabilization. He was also convinced that a stable social order was the necessary foundation for the progressive improvement of the lives of British citizens. However, for Mill, stability did not mean the unquestioning adoption of norms and conventions that had been established over time. To the contrary, conventions endangered individual freedom. Defined by a majority, they were a means to practice social tyranny.³⁹⁶ According to Mill, this "public opinion" was a result of the ongoing assimilation process between different social groups, who increasingly shared the same cultural environment, as they read, saw, and listened to the same things.³⁹⁷ Newspapers, magazines, commercial prints, lantern slide shows, and photographs were to a large degree responsible for the virtual convergence of formerly distinct social and cultural spaces.

394 "It will probably be conceded that it is desirable people should exercise their understandings, and that an intelligent following of custom, or even occasionally an intelligent deviation from custom, is better than a blind and simply mechanical adhesion to it." Mill, "On Liberty," 60–61.

395 Mill began his essay with a tour de force through the events of the French Revolution, which he summarized, quite abstractly, in just two short sentences. Mill, "On Liberty," 4–5.

396 "[I]t practices a social tyranny more formidable than many kinds of political oppression, since, though not usually upheld by such extreme penalties, it leaves fewer means of escape, penetrating much more deeply into the details of life, and enslaving the soul itself." Mill, "On Liberty," 7.

397 Mill, "On Liberty," 75–76.

Commercial portrait photography took part in this discourse about the role of conventions for the safeguarding of social order. On the surface, the mass-produced portraits seem to visualize the assimilation process between the “different ranks” that Mill diagnosed. Photo studios provided a similar setting and sold the same images to all their paying customers. The specific pictorial qualities of photography played into the apparent process of assimilation as well. In front of the camera everyone, even the queen, was transformed into a black and white paper print of a tiny figure posing in the middle-distance, dressed in respectable contemporary attire and positioned in front of interchangeable drawing room furniture.

However, commercial photographers as well as their customers—the owners of drawing rooms and photo albums—tirelessly worked against this visual comparability. They developed a broad range of strategies to integrate photographic portraits into alternative private or communal structures of social affiliation and belonging. Aristocratic album owners applied their considerable aesthetic skills and their distinct knowledge of painterly genres and time-honored formats of representation to their respective album designs. They utilized the playful and self-reflexive medium of the collage to tie their photographic representation back to historically sanctioned visualizations of a social elite. Middle-class consumers of photography evidently strove to adopt these conventions: they built their homes, furnished their drawing rooms, and posed in their photographs according to historically informed models of tasteful representation. Nonetheless, by applying these visual frameworks to their self-representation, they managed to make them their own. The polite society of the aristocratic drawing room was transformed into the respectable middle-class family circle. The virtue of taste was visually combined with that of morality. Over time, respectability as the defining trait of the “common people” outdid genteel politeness. Applied to the construction of history, photography finally offered all of its consumers a shared, stabilized, and historically sanctioned narrative of recent events. Illustrated by the photographic archive of the past fifty years, history was edited into a commonly shared reality.

Photography’s successful application to the imagination of self and society was based on its fundamental hybridity, its perception as both a natural and a representational image. Photography participated in the renegotiation of a “natural” order that would be commonly accepted by a diversified public who increasingly participated in its imagination and imaging. As we have seen, a “natural” social hierarchy, the “natural” home, the “natural” role of women as wives and mothers, and the “natural” unfolding of history all were constructed and confirmed by the photographic image. This indissoluble blending of documentary and representational claims made it possible to integrate different and sometimes even competing concepts of social order on the photograph’s 9 × 5 cm paper surface, an album page, or in the sequence of a lantern slide show. Queen Victoria was regularly a decisive component of these concepts—as monarch and empress, as wife and mother, as widow, and as an aging leader whose biography mapped the nation’s recent history.

Commercial portrait photographs were employed by their owners to define different levels of social affiliation: among family members, a social group, a nation, and even an empire. The inclusion of Victoria's photographic representation into these different layers of self-representation demonstrates how photographs aided the construction of the social order. It illustrates the power of photographic images as crucial mediators in the process of integrating and differentiating sovereignty in modern society. Two qualities of this process, which might initially seem diametrically opposed to one another, have turned out to be crucial for this dynamic. On the one hand, photographic technology, which allows for the reproduction, transfer, and broad dissemination of photographic images, was regarded as a quintessentially modern phenomenon. On the other hand, widely disseminated photographs were utilized for the conservation, stabilization, and visual enforcement of historically sanctioned hierarchies. The queen's photographic representation was used to shape connections, define relationships, and illustrate imagined affiliations. She was an effective symbolic sovereign for the nineteenth century precisely because of her visual and medial integration into the "middle" of society.³⁹⁸ Photographic image technology extracted the reproduced queen from the realm of tradition and integrated her seamlessly into contemporary perception, while simultaneously and in multiple contexts presenting her ceaselessly and unmistakably as queen. Due to this dual function as a "natural" and a representative image, the photographic royal portrait helped shape the imagination of British society as decidedly modern, yet committed to conceptions of order and hierarchy.³⁹⁹

During the nineteenth century new image technologies made possible the personal and communal reassurance of social order in the face of massive change. In providing a tool to satisfy the longing for order within everyday contexts of media consumption, these technologies contributed to a visual logic of modern society made for and by "the common people," which integrated historically sanctioned, conventional modes of representation, and replicated their discriminations and exclusions. The activity of integrating convention and tradition into modern representation was a distributed process. No authorship can be ascribed to the successful work of retaining the queen as the symbolic center of modern British society in order to provide symbolic order for an unstable and unpredictable present. It is rather the result of a negotiated process that involved the monarchy, aristocratic ladies, politicians, history writers, designers, journalists, photographers, publishers, middle-class homeowners, working-class slide show

398 Balke and Muhle speak of the "infamy of the sovereign," the "disqualified but still effectively operating sovereign, who is no longer the source of all power, but relies on the power of authorization released by certain discourses and gestures of speech." Balke/Muhle, *Räume und Medien des Regierens*, 27–28 (my translation).

399 Benjamin describes the dissolution of the traditional contexts and how the consequential updating of what is reproduced leads to a massive shock to tradition. I argue that despite this shock, it is precisely the renewal that comes with reproduction that allows tradition to remain so strongly a part of modern representative structures. Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1935), 219–253.

visitors, and, most crucially, the photographic image itself. The activity of imaging modern society cannot be definitively ascribed or localized. It is always “borrowed, suggested, affected, dominated, betrayed and translated.”⁴⁰⁰ The provisional and unstable, yet shared image of society, which can be identified across different contexts, is so convincing because it apparently comes into being without further prompting. Like the photograph itself, this constructed image seems “natural.”

Commercial photography proved a tool for these negotiation processes of social order which are, according to Marin, Lefort, and Rancière, at the heart of modern society. But the specific situation in nineteenth-century Britain, the reality of modern life with a queen, leads me to draw a different conclusion from this quality of modern representation. Modernity is defined not by the break, but rather by intricate negotiations, between tradition and revolution, within everyday practices of representation. Inexpensive, mass-produced photographic prints played an important role in this inconspicuous but all-encompassing, day-to-day effort to image and imagine contemporary society.⁴⁰¹

As a “quasi-object,” Victoria’s photographic image conveys the traditional claim of a royal portrait and affects those contexts into which it is integrated. At the same time, her portrait is modified and transformed by photography, its novel means of production and dissemination, and its utilization for the self-representation of each contemporary, individual consumer of photography. In a sense, then, Queen Victoria did fall off her horse. Her photographic image is evidence of the tumbling of the royal portrait from embodiment to representation to communicative tool for the distributed construction of social relations. But in their application for this purpose, the paper prints, cardboard cards, and glass slides bearing her portrait are persuasive evidence of modernity’s fundamental rootedness in pictorial and social conventions in the quest to imagine society. Modernity in this sense is defined not just by the dramatic changes it entails, but rather by the personal and communal efforts of counteracting such extreme change with the help of new image technologies, via the visual affirmation of continuity and stability.

400 Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 82.

401 Latour describes the social not as a specific domain of reality or some particular item, but rather as “a movement, a displacement, a transformation, a translation, an enrolment ... a type of momentary association which is characterized by the way it gathers together into new shapes.” Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 65.

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