"Dismal Art"—or "Strong, realistic pictures"?
Luke Fildes, Frank Holl and 'social realism'.

VOLUME 1

Thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
at the University of Leicester

by

PHILIP DANIEL McEVANSONEYA
BA (CNAA), MA (London)
Department of History of Art
Trinity College
Dublin

1992
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A photographic realism of modern life is apt to look cynical if it is faithful, and it is sure to seem false if it is made pathetic: and in this dilemma there is chance for art.

*Pall Mall Gazette*, 2 June 1874, p. 2075.
Acknowledgements.

Much of the research and some of the writing of this thesis was carried out whilst I was research scholar in the History of Art at the University of Leicester between 1986 and 1989. I am grateful to the Research Board of the University for funding much of my research, including the costs of travel and of purchasing photographs, and to my erstwhile colleagues at Leicester, Margaret Lintern-Ball, Brenda Tracy and Hazel Williamson. This thesis was completed at Trinity College, Dublin.

I have benefitted from the help, advice and information provided by Julian Treuherz, Dr Bill Brock, Dr Lee M. Edwards, Bernard Myers, Professor Anne Crookshank, Jeannie Chapel and Jeremy Maas. The staff of many galleries, both commercial and public, libraries and sale-rooms have greatly assisted me and I would like to single out for especial thanks the inter-library loan staff of the University of Leicester, the search room staff at the Colindale Newspaper Library and the staff of the Old Library reading room, TCD. Most of the photos were taken and or printed by the Central Photographic Unit at Leicester and by Brendan Dempsey at TCD. The blurred ones are by the author.

I reserve special thanks for my supervisor, Alison Yarrington and for all the private collectors whose encouragement and hospitality I truly appreciated. To Mr.
and Mrs. H.C.H. Armstead, Frank Holl's grand-son and his wife, for their kind interest in my work, I am most grateful.

I would like to thank Margaret and John McEvansoneya for their interest in my work. Celia and Stanley Taylor have been immensely helpful to me in all manner of ways, especially by providing much needed child care facilities during the first attempt at writing up this thesis.

I would like to record the debt I owe to my wife Rachel Taylor for her complete support and great encouragement at all times, and to our children Harry and Olivia, for tolerating my absence so often. When they grow up I shall enjoy the peace and quiet, but in the meantime this thesis is dedicated to them.
# Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACGB</td>
<td>Arts Council of Great Britain.</td>
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<td>AMR</td>
<td>Art Monthly Review.</td>
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<tr>
<td>bt.</td>
<td>bought by.</td>
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<tr>
<td>DNB</td>
<td>Dictionary of National Biography.</td>
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<tr>
<td>ex. cat.</td>
<td>Exhibition catalogue.</td>
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<tr>
<td>ILN</td>
<td>Illustrated London News.</td>
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<tr>
<td>NG</td>
<td>National Gallery, London.</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGS</td>
<td>National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh.</td>
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<tr>
<td>OWS</td>
<td>Old Water-Colour Society, i.e. Royal Society of Painters in Water-Colours.</td>
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<tr>
<td>PMG</td>
<td>Pall Mall Gazette.</td>
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<tr>
<td>RA</td>
<td>Royal Academy, London.</td>
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<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>SBA</td>
<td>Society of British Artists.</td>
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<td>VAM</td>
<td>Victoria and Albert Museum, London.</td>
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<tr>
<td>VPR</td>
<td><em>Victorian Periodicals Review</em>, formerly <em>Victorian Periodicals Newsletter</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YCBA</td>
<td>Yale Center for British Art, New Haven.</td>
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Illustrations.

All works are in oil on canvas unless stated otherwise. Height precedes width.


5. Frank Holl, *"I am the resurrection and the life" (The Village Funeral)*, 1872, 45" x 63", Leeds, City Art Gallery.


22. Frances Wheatley, Mr Howard offering relief to prisoners, 1787, 41" x 51", Earl of Harrowby.

23. Frank Stone, The Convict, 1858-60, York, City Art Gallery.

24. Frank Holl, Want - Her poverty but not her will consents, 1873, 39 1/2" x 54 1/2" untraced, reproduced from the Art Journal, XVI (1876) p.10.


31. Frank Holl, The Sewing Circle, watercolour, 1874, 8" x 12", private collection.

32. Frank Holl, Seamstresses, c.1875, 19" x 26", Exeter Royal Albert Memorial Museum.

33. Frank Holl, Doubtful Hope, 1875, 37 1/2" x 53 1/2", FORBES collection.

34. Frank Holl, 'Gone', The Graphic, 19 February 1876, pp.180-1.

35. Frank Holl, Gone, 1878, 36" x 28", private collection.

36. Frank Holl, Gone, detail of plate 35.


40. P.H. Delamotte, 'Innocence', (1855), photograph.


44. James Hayllar, "The Old Master," 1883, Nottingham, Castle Museum.


47. Frank Holl, "Mother and Child," detail of plate 45.


49. Frank Holl, study for "The Lord gave....", c.1868, 20" x 29", private collection.


52. Frank Holl, "Her Firstborn," 1876, 42" x 60", Dundee, City Art Gallery.

53. Frank Holl, "'I am the resurrection and the life'", Graphic, 17 August 1872, pp.148-49.


62. Frank Holl, 'At a Railway Station - A Study', *Graphic*, 10 February 1872, pp.128-29.


75. Frank Holl, *Ordered to the Front*, reduced replica, 1880, 30 1/42 x 25", Walsall Art Gallery.


78. Frank Holl, study for *Home Again*, c.1881, 16 3/4" x 13 1/4", private collection.

79. [Gordon Thomson], "Recollections of the Royal Academy, No. II", *Fun*, 12 May 1880, p.188.


84. Frank Holl, *No Tidings from the Sea*, 1870, 27 1/2" x 35 1/2", Royal collection.


89. Frank Holl, *An Italian scene*, panel, 23 1/2" x 44 3/4", private collection.


94. [Gordon Thomson], 'Sketches at the Royal Academy', Fun, 19 May 1883, p.196.

95. Frank Holl, 'Bereaved', Graphic, 29 April 1882, suppl., n.d.


97. Frank Holl, Besieged, 1880, 40" x 29", Baroda Art Gallery.


100. Frank Holl, Hush, 1877, 13 1/2" x 17 1/2", London, Tate Gallery.

101. Frank Holl, Hushed, 1877, 13 1/2" x 17 1/2", London, Tate Gallery.


103. Josef Israëls, Expectation, 1874, 71 1/2" x 54", New York, Metropolitan Museum.


105. Frank Holl, Widowed, 1879, 33 1/4" x 45 1/22, Melbourne, National Gallery of Victoria.


109. Frank Holl, Bad News, watercolour, c.1879, 7 3/4" x 11 1/2", Edinburgh, MGS.


111. Frank Holl, No Tidings, 1882, 20" x 29 1/2", private collection. Photo: Sotheby's.


113. Frank Holl, Peeling Potatoes, c.1880, 14" x 17 7/8", New Haven, YCBA.

115. Frank Holl, *Suspense*, 1881, 32 1/2" x 43 1/2", Shuttleworth College.


128. Thomas Faed, *The Doctor's Visit*, 1889, 37" x 48", Belfast, Queen's University.


133. Henri Gervex, *Dr Pécan operating at the St Louis Hospital*, 1889, 95 1/4" x 74", Paris, Musée de l'Assistance Publique.


137. H.P. Robinson, *Fading Away*, 1858, composite photograph, 9 1/4" x 14 1/2".


Introduction.

Luke Fildes (1843-1927), Frank Holl (1845-1888) and Hubert Herkomer (1849-1914) are invariably mentioned in general surveys of Victorian painting where they are generally lumped together as exponents of an undefined 'social realism'. Their paintings of the 1870s and 1880s are focused on and their association with illustrated journals sketched in, with a few remarks about their later careers as portraitists. The most recent analysis by exhibition of Fildes, Holl and Hubert Herkomer has been within the limited context of 'social realism'. Rarely is the full extent of their participation in and contribution to the British art world of the 1870s and 1880s assessed in any detail. Fildes's career was surveyed in 1895 and in 1968 and Holl's in 1912. There are

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3. This has recently been attempted in part by Paula Gillett, The Victorian Painter's World, (Gloucester, 1990), but her otherwise useful book is marred by factual errors in the sections on Fildes and Holl.

no modern or scholarly accounts of their lives and work. Because so little documentary evidence of Holl's life has survived there is inevitably an imbalance in my treatment of him vis à vis Fildes. This absence of primary material has necessitated a much greater reliance on other nineteenth-century sources for information on Holl than on Fildes.

Previous to this thesis, there has been no detailed study of the works by Fildes and Holl now widely and unquestioningly included in what has become almost the canon of 'social realism'. It is the aim of this thesis to provide such a study, in the context of Fildes's and Holl's involvement in the wider art world. The absence of an earlier study is surprising given the amount of unpublished and unnoticed material which has been found and this primary source material will be used wherever appropriate. It is used here to flesh out our understanding of Fildes's and Holl's work, especially the former's two

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*Victorian Painter*, (London, 1968) and A.M. Reynolds, *The Life and Work of Frank Holl*, (London, 1912). L.V. Fildes, the artist's son, wrote his book in 1962 (a typescript of this version is in the NAL, 198 H 33). It is the key source of information on his father. It relies extensively on his letters but quotations from them are partial in both senses of the word. Fortunately most of the letters survive in the NAL and I have quoted from the originals except in the few cases when the originals cannot be found. The book also contains a large amount of family mythology which is impossible to verify or disprove. Reynolds, who was Holl's daughter, seems to have based her book on the recollections of her mother, information from Holl's surviving friends and a notebook and diary kept by the artist. Sadly these latter items have not been found and very few letters to or from Holl have come to light. The book contains some serious factual inaccuracies and its uncorroborated evidence can only be used in the light of such knowledge.
best-known paintings, Applicants for admission to a casual ward (1874, Egham, Royal Holloway and Bedford New College) and The Doctor (1891, London, Tate Gallery).

Indeed, the wealth of material available on these two works, early and late examples of 'social realism' of the later nineteenth-century model, means that they will receive an entirely appropriate emphasis in this thesis. These works were, as Fildes realised, of the utmost importance in establishing and consolidating his reputation, although he always produced popular, conventional scenes too. Although his 'social realist' works were numerically less significant than his Venetian genre scenes or portraits, they were the works for which he was most applauded in his lifetime - and subsequently, thus providing another reason for studying them.

Although it was much shorter, Holl's career fell into two readily identifiable phases: genre painter c.1862-c.1880 and portraitist c.1880-88. It is here that Holl resembles his principal rivals. In the 1880s the most sought-after portraitists were Holl, Herkomer, W.W. Ouless (1848-1933) and J.E. Millais (1829-96). Ouless painted virtually nothing other than portraits and consequently is now almost forgotten, whereas Holl, Herkomer and Millais, despite being celebrated in the nineteenth century as much for their portraits as for their genre scenes, are remembered today almost exclusively for their subject works.

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5. Marginal numbers refer to the plates.
'Social realism' remains a troubled category. It was invented by Graham Reynolds in 1953 as a term to categorise a phase in art peculiar to late nineteenth-century Britain. It was quickly and widely taken up, although it has no precise definition. Recently, the term has been taken further and a "Social Realist movement" discovered. This is thoroughly misleading and has no nineteenth-century justification (see below, pp.172-4).

'Social realism' was a category which was apparently invented in an off-hand way and with no intention that it should be widely adopted. It is a curiously specious term, having overtones of a more rigid category, twentieth-century Soviet Socialist Realism, and of an equally diffuse one, nineteenth-century French Realism.

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7. For example the term is used in Ford Madox Brown 1821-1893, ex. cat., Liverpool, Walker Art Gallery, 1964, p.3. I shall use the term to describe British paintings of the Victorian period which deal with crime, death and poverty in a direct and, to many contemporary eyes, unsentimentalised way. My doubts about using the term are expressed by the inverted commas into which it is placed.


9. The impact of French Realism of the period c.1850-70 on British art has not been much debated (Hilary Diaper, The English reaction to modern French painting circa 1850-1880', Ph.D., Leeds University, 1990, came to my attention too late to be considered here), whereas the influence of Jules Bastien-Lepage (1848-84) in the late 1870s and 1880s has been. However it is clear that in the mid-nineteenth century there was little interest in Britain in the work of Gustave Courbet (1819-77), whose influence therefore is likely to have been negligible, a distinct preference being found amongst British collec-
The two words ('social' referring to the subjects, 'realism' to the style) have in combination an apparent meaning which is greater than the sum of the parts. The widespread use of the term is a result of the tendency of the critical world to taxonomise and pigeon-hole moments and attitudes in art, regardless of the extent to which simplifying labels are useful. A term such as 'social realism' is especially useful precisely because it is as nebulous as the works it is used to describe are various. It has no obvious associations with scale, subject matter or the affiliations of the artist. In her thesis Borzello has analysed nineteenth-century and modern ways of referring to works by Fildes, Herkomer and Holl, the three key figures of 'social realism' of Reynolds's definition. She has concluded that whilst a common tendency was sensed in the 1870s and 1880s in the work of those three artists and others, their work was treated as a sub-category of genre painting and was not given a separate classification. However, as I shall detail tors for the works of Barbizon school painters, Edouard Frère (1819-86), whose genre paintings were closely akin to those of the British Cranbrook Colony painters, and J.-F. Millet (1814-75): see Howard D. Rodee, 'France and England: Some Mid-Victorian Views Of One Another's Painting', Gazette des Beaux-Arts, 6e période, 91 (1978), pp.39-48. Courbet was most often characterised in British journalism as a communist revolutionary who could not paint: Rodee p.41. There were some exceptions of course, such as Evelyn Douglas Jerrold's anonymous article 'Gustave Courbet', Temple Bar XLII (1874), pp.535-46, on which see T.J. Clark, 'Courbet the Communist & the Temple Bar Magazine', Block, no.4 (1981), pp.32-8. One of the few British artists to refer to his work was Richard Redgrave (1804-88). He was dismayed by Courbet's Studio of the Painter (1855, Paris, Musée d'Orsay) when he saw it in Paris in 1855: Richard Redgrave, C.B., R.A. A Memoir Compiled from his Diary, by F.M. Redgrave, (London, 1891), cited by Benedict Nicolson, Courbet: The Studio of the Painter, Art in Context, (London, 1973), Appendix II, pp.81-2.
below in the section on Holl's Newgate - Committed for trial (1878, Egham, Royal Holloway and Bedford New College, see Chapter Two, Part C), Fildes, Herkomer and Holl were sometimes united, not as individuals but in terms of their subject matter, under the term "Dismalism". It is hoped that this thesis will help weaken the hold of the specious term 'social realism'.

One feature of 'social realism' - size - may be focused upon as offering the modern viewer a means of codifying otherwise disparate works. The large dimensions of Fildes's Applicants for admission to a casual ward, of Herkomer's Eventide: A Scene in the Westminster Union (1878, Liverpool, Walker Art Gallery) and of Holl's Newgate is their chief common element. None of these three subjects had been attempted before on the history painting scale. It was precisely this transgression of the academic organisation of the hierarchy of art which was found disturbing. And this transgressive mode was usually combined with subject matter found unacceptable in the canons of high art. Therefore such works had a double impact, materialising before their audience as even more shocking and emphatic representations of a hidden social underworld. It is important to recognise the paradox


11. The very exposure of a formerly occluded social underworld constituted a challenge to mid-nineteenth century British middle-class morality. As Douglas Jerrold wrote to a friend in relation to Mayhew's Morning Chronicle revelations:

Do you devour those marvellous revelations of the inferno of misery, of wretchedness, that is smouldering under our feet? We live in a mockery of Christianity that, with the thought of its hypocrisy, makes us sick. We know nothing
that a work such as Fildes's *Casuals* was seen both as an indictment of society and as a reinforcement of the status quo, as well as a more-or-less acceptable artistic artefact.\(^{12}\) As I will show, the acceptability as a work of art of such a painting was sometimes discussed separately from the perceived social comment of the work.\(^{13}\)

The point about scale needs some general expansion here, but is dealt with specifically later in relation to individual works. Extremely large works were common throughout the nineteenth century, from the apocalyptic sublime of Francis Danby (1793-1861) and John Martin (1789-1854) to the genre of W.P. Frith (1819-1909) and G.E. Hicks (1824-1914) to the 'social realism' of Fildes to the symbolist works of G.F. Watts (1817-1904). However, one of the fundamental attributes of the genre painting was its cabinet size. Consequently a work such as the *Welsh Funeral* (1848, Birmingham, City Art Gallery, 18 1/4" x 28") by David Cox (1783-1859) was acceptable in a way that Holl's "I am the resurrection and the life", also known as *The Village Funeral*, (1872, Leeds, City Art Gallery, 45" x 63") was not.\(^{14}\) Those who objected to

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of this terrible life that is about us - us in our smug respectability.

12. See for example the discussion in the *Daily Telegraph*, 11 May 1874, p.5e.


14. It should also be remarked that in Cox's painting the funeral is seen from the rear and at a distance, whereas in Holl's work the viewer is presented head-on with the
genre subjects being painted on the history painting scale were fighting another battle in a long-lost war, seeking to prevent the elision of the genres, a process which had been in train in Britain at least since the 1770s. In the mid-nineteenth century the preference for smaller scale works was widely seen as evidence of the triumph of middle class patronage. It was felt, for example by the Redgraves, that as paintings were intended for the decoration of an Englishman's home, they should be appropriate in size and subject matter:

It was soon found that pictures to suit the English taste must be pictures to live by; pictures to hang on the walls of that home in which the Englishman spends more of his time than do the men of other nations, and loves to see so cheerful and decorative. His rooms are comparatively small, and he cannot spare much wall-space for a single picture.

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grief of the advancing mourners.


For historical pictures there can never be a demand; our churches reject them; the nobility prefer foreign productions, and the generality of our apartments are too small to contain them.

Quoted by Redgrave, p.2. Redgrave remarked of the display of paintings at the International Exposition in Paris in 1855 that:

Our subjects are undoubtedly of a less
Finally on the subject of scale it should be mentioned that the artist had another motive to work on a reduced scale. Only after the RA moved to Burlington House in 1869 could very large pictures such as the *Casuals* or *Newgate* be hung on the line: above the line their detail, particularly of facial expression, would have been much less readable and their impact would have been diminished. At Somerset House where the Academy was based from 1780-1836 the line was a two-inch ledge eight feet above the ground, designed to support the largest works which, according to the Academy's rules, had to be hung above it. A work hung on the line was immediately below this ledge, at or just above head height, which was thought to be the most advantageous position for a painting to be seen. Consequently, by the 1860s, works of modest dimensions predominated at the RA Summer Exhibitions.¹⁸


The works which are now categorised as 'social realist' are too often treated in geographical isolation. It seems to me that the subject matter and scale of social realism have connections in many parts of Europe. Courbet and Millet in France had introduced the new large-scale for genre works of social import in the late 1840s and 1850s and their paintings seem to have inaugurated a period in which the artistic Zeitsgeist was especially strong. It was precisely the size of Courbet's The Stonebreakers (1849, destroyed) that attracted one of the few comments made about his work by a British writer when W.M. Rossetti referred to it as "a couple of men breaking stones, painted on a large scale briefly; and absolutely nothing more". Subjects and motives were replicated across Europe by artists who were working in ignorance of each other. For example one can point to paintings of drowned women, or village funerals, or queues for various kinds of poor-relief which were produced in a short space of time, in widely separated places and under different social circumstances. One specific comparison will suffice.

In 1873 the Russian painter Ilya Repin (1844-1930) exhibited his Barge-haulers on the river Volga (1871-3, Moscow, Russian Museum) at the Imperial Academy. The following year Fildes (1843-1927) exhibited the Casuals

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19. Fine Art, Chiefly Contemporary, (London, 1867), p. 112, cited by Rodee, 'France and England', p.41. It is therefore unsurprising that only a French writer should have associated Fildes's Casuals with this work by Courbet, as is discussed below, p.151-3.

at the RA. Both works had great appeal being designed as readable portrayals of a variety of characters and in contemporary circumstances of a sort not acknowledged by society. Both were critically praised as true and realistic.\textsuperscript{21} Both were by artists who had escaped their poverty-stricken provincial origins to study at an academy. Their life-spans are almost identical, so in the early 1870s both were still comparatively young men eager to establish themselves quickly within the context of academic art, choosing surprisingly similar means to do so - large-scale, carefully prepared scenes of the ignored, unpleasant side of life, which coincidentally share a compositional feature, the diagonally receding line of figures.

It seems to me that no great effort has been made to reinsert British 'social realism' into a wider European framework. Admittedly there have been attempts to produce a broader picture, for instance Nochlin's \textit{Realism}\textsuperscript{22} and the essays in \textbf{The European Realist Tradition}.\textsuperscript{23} But the former is hampered by a bias toward French painters and

\begin{itemize}

\item \textsuperscript{22} Linda Nochlin, \textit{Realism}, Penguin Style and Civilisation series, (Harmondsworth, 1971). See the review of it by Gerald M. Ackerman in the \textit{Art Bulletin}, 55 (1973), pp.466-69.

\item \textsuperscript{23} Gabriel Weisberg (ed.), \textit{The European Realist Tradition}, (Bloomington, 1982). The essays are based on conference papers delivered to coincide with the exhibition \textit{The Realist Tradition: French Painting and Drawing 1830-1900} shown in Cleveland, Brooklyn, St. Louis and Glasgow, 1980-82, catalogue also by Weisberg.
\end{itemize}
superficial coverage of other areas and in the latter there is no attempt to integrate the evidence presented on the international range of realist practices described. Treuherz attempted to give a sense of the international influences on, and of, British 'social realism' by including works by Josef Israëls (1824-1911) and Vincent Van Gogh (1853-90) in the Hard Times exhibition, and Rodee referred briefly to the international context in which mid-nineteenth century British paintings on social themes may be seen. An analysis of 'social realism' in Britain must be recognised as insular and as being a study of only a part of a much wider pattern of events.

The Revival of Interest in Victorian Painting.

Since about 1960 Victorian painting has rapidly been rehabilitated, a process spearheaded by the revival of enthusiasm for the Pre-Raphaelites and their circle. A

24. The same must be said of the conference papers delivered at the time of the Glasgow showing of the Realist Tradition exhibition, abstracts of which were published in a special number of the Scottish Art Review, XV (November 1982).


generation of neglect and invective was inaugurated by the dismissive writings of Rothenstein, Fry and others.\textsuperscript{27} Public appreciation of Victorian paintings reached its nadir just after the second World War. This was matched by depressed sale prices of just a few pounds for works by artists such as Burne-Jones, Mulready and Frith.\textsuperscript{28} But from the late 1940s onwards a series of publications and exhibitions, both commercial and 'academic', began to bring Victorian art again to prominence.

Interest in Victorian painting grew in the post-second World War period for a variety of reasons. One of the most important reasons however was not to do with taste but with practical realities. Restrictions on travel remained in place - as did rationing - until the early 1950s. Consequently there was a tendency to introspection.\textsuperscript{29} Another possible explanation of the renewed popularity of nineteenth-century British painting

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{29} Another practical reality resulted in many nineteenth-century works, including many purchased from the Chantrey Bequest, being brought out into the daylight from the Tate Gallery's basement for literally the first time in a generation or more. This came about in February 1953 when, in order to save works stored in the basement of the gallery from a threatened flood (which fortunately did not happen), they were all brought up into the main rooms. Thus many nearly forgotten works came under modern scrutiny for the first time. I am grateful to Anne Crookshank for talking to me about these events. See also the \textit{Times}, 11 February 1953, pp.2e, 14.
\end{itemize}
may be advanced. The renewal coincided with a distinct phase of anti-modernism in the British art world, epitomised by Sir Alfred Munnings's address to the RA banquet in April 1949, and is bound up with ideas of retrospection. Evidently there were also opportunities for commercial exploitation of a dormant market and these were taken most notably by Jeremy Maas and M. Newman Ltd., but not until the 1960s. Current world events in the 1950s - such as the Cold War and the Suez débâcle - may have directed attention to a seemingly more ordered and hierarchical age. The period around 1960 was one of economic stability and low unemployment when, in Macmillan's phrase, the British public had "never had it so good". Consequently it was able to look back with feelings of superiority and curiosity to the age in which many elements of twentieth-century society had first appeared. The centennial appeal of the 1850s to the 1950s was brought into sharp focus in 1951. In that year the Festival of Britain took place. It symbolised post-war resurrection in a similar way to that in which the Great Exhibition of 1851 had symbolised British international dominance (and, incidentally, had advanced the vogue for huge international exhibitions). Amongst the events organised in 1951 was an Arts Council exhibition Masterpieces of Victorian Photography and it was followed in

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30. Modernism was accepted increasingly widely in Britain from the early 1920s and in the immediate post-war period it seemed on the point of winning the upper hand: see Tim Wilcox, Munnings v. The Moderns, ex. cat., Manchester, City Art Gallery, 1986-7.

1953 by the same organisation's Pre-Raphaelite Drawings and Watercolours. The Pre-Raphaelites had earlier been celebrated in centenary exhibitions at Birmingham in 1947 and in 1948 at Port Sunlight, the Tate Gallery and the Whitechapel Art Gallery. The latter was organised by John Gere and Robin Ironside whose catalogue remained a key work for many years. In 1954-5 there was a well-received exhibition of G.F. Watts, an important transitional figure in British art, at the Tate Gallery. This was followed by a survey exhibition of Victorian painting at Nottingham University in 1959 and, soon after that the commercial sector began to enter the field. Agnew's mounted a loan exhibition of Victorian art in 1961 and in the following year M. Newman Ltd. began their influential series of shows which coincided neatly with another Arts Council touring exhibition. Thereafter there was an efflorescence of individual and survey exhibitions culminating in the great series of shows in Liverpool and London of F.M. Brown (1964) Millais (1967), Holman Hunt (1969) and D.G. Rossetti (1973) and the Arts Council's Great Victorian Pictures touring exhibition of 1978.32

The work of Fildes, Holl and Herkomer remained on the walls of public and private galleries until the 1970s.33

32. This is only an indicative, and not an exhaustive, list.

33. With a few infrequent exceptions, such as the exhibition of The Casuals at Ottawa in 1965: Exhibition of Paintings and Drawings by Victorian Artists in England, Ottawa, National Gallery of Canada, 1965, no.38. This exhibition was centred on the Pre-Raphaelites.
By that decade academic researchers, in particular thesis writers, were beginning to explore British nineteenth-century painting too. Their efforts were aided by the establishment of Victorian Studies as an autonomous academic discipline which brought 'social realism' and other phases under interdisciplinary scrutiny. Sadly this has all too often led to a simplistic approach being adopted which sees British nineteenth-century paintings of contemporary life as being aggregates of sociology and journalism possessed of a natural authority, without the authenticity of such paintings being investigated.

Notwithstanding the desire of each generation to reinterpret the past, it is instructive to see how works of

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36. Notably errant in this particular is Christopher Wood's Paradise Lost, (London, 1988). See the review of it by Deborah Cherry in Art History, 12 (1989), pp.374-81. At the other end of the scale is Lynda Nead's Myths of Sexuality: Representations of Women in Victorian Britain, (Oxford, 1988) which does not even mention the processes by which art is made.

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art, made and sold for their decorative qualities and/or their perceived espousal of moral principles, are now treated as records of events, ideas and attitudes. From being an innocuous record of a time and place Eyre Crowe's *The Dinner Hour, Wigan* (1874, Manchester, City Art Gallery), which was seen by the *Art Journal* as being so banal it might as well have been a photograph, is now seen as a documentary source of knowledge on social behaviour, industrial practices and the need for social control (i.e. the social life of working women, the employment of women in factories and the presence of a policeman). The Victorians judged art firstly as art and secondly as anything else; the modern tendency is the reverse. That is why I have deliberately devoted space to describing the artificial nature of what Fildes and Holl did, by recording the technical procedures by which certain works were made. There is no denying that Victorian art is informative about the society which made it, but that was not its purpose. As Helène E. Roberts has written:

[The contemporary art] periodicals reveal that to Victorians a work of art was not usually a hallowed object evoking awe; art more frequently was looked upon as an entertainment, a show, a commodity...To the critics writing for the Victorian periodicals the artist seemed not so much a lonely genius, unknown and unappreciated, but as a producer of goods that brought enjoyment and edification and that, if purchased, would embellish the home and bring pleasure to its inhabitants.\(^3\)

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38. 'Exhibition and review...', p.80.
The contemporary reaction to the paintings - derived mainly from newspapers and journals - will be closely examined throughout this thesis as the source likeliest to explain the popularity of 'social realism'. It is a great pity that individual, private reactions to paintings feature so little in diaries kept in the nineteenth century which I have consulted. It would be essential, if it were possible, to discover what the artist intended a work to express and what that section of society which recorded its views thought the paintings were for. One of the best known Victorian diaries is that of the Rev. Francis Kilvert, an interested and intelligent exhibition-goer. However his surviving recorded reactions are conventional and it is curious that he never mentions works by Fildes and Holl widely held to be 'pictures of the year'. However it is interesting to note that before his second visit to the RA Summer Exhibition of 1875 he "marked the Academy Catalogue and pictures yet to be seen and studied according to the Daily Telegraph notice and critique". This casual remark is of some significance, because it indicates the authority that published reviews had, even amongst educated and well-informed exhibition-

39. Helène E. Roberts has claimed that contemporary reviews permit the modern historian to reassemble the social and psychological context in which paintings originally functioned: 'Art Reviewing in the Early Nineteenth-Century Art Periodicals', VPN, no. 19 (1973), pp.18-19. See also Appendix 2 where I have tried to identify and summarise the political leanings of the nineteenth-century publications I most often refer to.

goers. Additional evidence of this reliance on the taste-forming of journalists is given by Roberts who has described how the opinions of the press were commonly adhered to, particularly amongst middle-class patrons to whom the demystification of art by some periodicals seems especially to have appealed.  

In order to account for the great popularity of 'social realist' scenes of urban misery and rural poverty it would be necessary to establish two things. Firstly whether the contemporary audience (which would need definition) thought that art gave information about the actual lives of the subjects depicted, and secondly what responses - if any - the paintings inspired in the viewer. These important questions can partly be answered from the journalistic sources already described. By the 1870s, after a generation of acquiring the skill of un-ravelling symbolically narrated images, the exhibition-going public was adept at moral and narrative exegesis.

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41. Roberts, 'Exhibition and review...', p.86.

42. The question of the composition of the audience - or audiences - for British nineteenth-century art has been much debated, but ultimately it is impossible to give a precise break-down of audience composition. See Gillett, Victorian Painter's World, Ch. 7 and L.S. King, The Industrialization of Taste: Victorian England and the Art Union of London, (Ann Arbor, 1985), pp.66-7 and passim.

The need for critical interpretation and definitive readings declined as the images became more frank, the figures fewer and larger, the meanings patent. The critics' role became more one of description and technical assessment rather than the disentangling of obscure stories and illuminating subtle symbolism. Until about the 1880s, most art journalism also sought to preserve the hierarchy of the profession. Indeed Fildes was one of many nineteenth-century artists whose life-long endeavour seems to have been to prove that art was a suitable job for a gentleman.

The Role of Graphic Journalism.

Fildes, Herkomer and Holl and others such as Arthur Boyd Houghton (1836-75), Sydney Prior Hall (1842-1922) and Charles Green (1840-98) are generally described as successors to the painters of the social scene of the 1840s and 1850s such as Richard Redgrave, Thomas Faed (1826-1900) and Erskine Nicol (1825-1904). But links with the eighteenth century are closer than has often been al-

44. Roberts, 'Exhibition and review...', pp.90-5 and 'Art Reviewing...', p.10. The art critics of c.1880 were vastly more knowledgeable and sophisticated than those of c.1840, as well as vastly more numerous. It has been estimated that twenty journalists went to the Academy 'show Sunday' in 1848 but over 300 attended the special press viewing in 1892: Richard D. Altick, Paintings from Books: Art and Literature in Britain 1760-1900, (Columbus, 1985), pp.196-97.

45. e.g. Wood, Victorian Panorama, Ch. 5. The Hard Times exhibition was predicated on such an analysis.
lowed, as I shall try to show. 46 However, a great transformation took place in both subject matter and handling in the late 1860s and early 1870s. This transformation can partly be explained by reference to more recent influences such as changes in theatre and literature, discussed in depth in Chapter One, and especially in graphic journalism.

The advent of The Graphic in 1869 for which Fildes, Holl, Herkomer and a cohort of young artists worked, was crucial for this transformation. The combination of high artistic and technical quality and news coverage established a new type of journalism. It was a progression from the smaller scale journals of the 1840s and 1850s. 47 The illustrations used in the earlier phase have been claimed to be more authentic in that they are less mediated through notions of art. 48 But it was one of the founding principles of the Graphic's owner that it should pay more attention to artistic expression than to...

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46. Such a point was made in passing as long ago as 1953: see the anonymous review of Reynolds's Painters of the Victorian Scene in the TLS, 29 May 1953, p.350.


authenticity. As Herkomer remarked in a memorial letter to the *Times*, the importance of W.L. Thomas, its founder, could not be overstated:

It is not too much to say that there was a visible change in the selection of subjects by painters after the advent of the *Graphic*. Mr. Thomas opened up its pages to every phase of the story of our life: he led the young artist into drawing subjects that might never have arrested his attention: he only asked that they should be subjects of universal interest and artistic value.

Their involvement with the *Graphic* allowed many young artists to try out certain subjects before embarking on large-scale oil paintings of them. As well as being a source of income, these illustrations would create an audience beyond metropolitan exhibition-goers. The principal differences between the print and the painting are those of facture and appearance. The stark, linear qualities of the woodblock made it especially suitable for 'grim' subjects. Its monochrome nature enforced the simplest design techniques, light and shade. These prints were produced rapidly, new material being required for each weekly edition. But not all were quickly forgotten. The most popular were collected and republished in volume

49. The *Graphic*'s own publicity highlighted this, describing it as:

A new and admirably illustrated journal, intended to combine "Literary excellence with artistic beauty". The illustrations are in the first style of art and numerous distinguished artists are named as assisting the enterprise...[It contains] twenty-four pages imperial folio, printed on a fine-toned paper of beautiful quality admirably adapted for the display of fine engravings.


50. *Times*, 19 October 1900, p.9f.
form. Fildes's ground-breaking 'Houseless and Hungry' for instance was included in the Graphic Portfolio (London, 1877). However, the painting based on it was the product of several years' work and was intended to endure.

The large scale and the low-life subject matter of much of Fildes's, Holl's and Herkomer's painted work was often objected to. The Art Journal, for instance, thought that "the state of such things [i.e. poverty] ought rather to be removed than perpetuated". As a rule the Journal preferred the genre paintings of Thomas Faed or Erskine Nicol whose work usually included reassuring sentimentality which by-passed any kind of harsh social comment. This thesis devotes some space to a consideration of the origins and practice of sentimentality in Victorian art (see Chapter 1). Much critical attention was given to the suitability of some subjects: the way in which this often replaced or shrouded discussion of other aspects of the paintings, such as contemporary significance or relative artistic merit, is discussed below.


53. Altick, Paintings from Books, pp.99-102, has argued that this ignoring of "touchy subjects" was the hallmark of "Victorian painting", with a few notable exceptions such as 'social realism'.
Fildes and Holl combined a larger scale than hitherto common for genre works with a looser (and much criticised) technique. Their work is significantly less highly finished than that of Richard Redgrave or W.P. Frith. It also lacks anecdotal foci. By leaving their work more open to reading precisely because of the limited amount of detail, Fildes and Holl were trying to break the bias towards narrative. They readily absorbed the influence of Edouard Frère and Josef Israëls' simplifying scenes, eliminating the inessential and heightening the dramatic impact of their work by uncluttered compositions. They depicted scenes or episodes rather than stories. Their experience in producing a wide variety of subject matter, often at short notice, had given Fildes, Herkomer and Holl the capacity to seize on the salient features of a scene and the confidence to include only the minimum of necessary detail to permit readability. Thus the skill and discipline of the illustrator is revealed in their paintings.

54. Owners of works by Holl, such as Hill, Levy, Pawle and Mitchell, commonly owned examples by Israëls and Frère too, suggesting that these artists had a shared appeal to certain collectors, both middle-class and nouveau riche): see Appendix 4, 'Some patrons of 'social realism''. See also Madeleine Fidell Beaufort, 'Peasants, Painters and Purchasers' in James Thompson et. al., The Peasant in French 19th Century Art, ex. cat., Dublin, Douglas Hyde Gallery, 1980, pp.45-82, especially pp.75-7.
Chapter One. Sentimentality and Sensationalism.

Introduction.

One of the terms most commonly encountered in the criticism of and writing about later nineteenth-century painted scenes of suffering or 'social realism' is 'sentimental'. To my knowledge there is no published attempt to define and analyse the term and its application in writing on art of the period c.1869-91. Consequently an attempt will be made here to provide a context showing how 'sentimentality' and its cognates was employed in this period. It will be shown that there is a continuity between the ideas and effects of eighteenth-century painting and painting of the period c.1869-91. The uses and definitions of the word 'sentimental' are both complicated and ambiguous. They were positive and laudatory in meaning from their introduction into English in the 1740s until c.1780 when they increasingly acquired negative connotations.¹ But by the middle of the nineteenth century the terms were regaining positive usage² and

1. 'Sentimental' was a vogue word in the 1740s, but imprecise of definition. An early discussion of it occurs in a letter of Lady Bradshaugh to Jonathan Richardson: Anna Laetitia Barbauld (ed.), The Correspondence of Jonathan Richardson, (London, 1804), Vol.4, p.282. See also the definitions given by Jean H. Hagstrum, Sex and Sensibility: Ideal and Erotic Love from Milton to Mozart, (London, 1980), pp.5-10.

thereafter their applications were flexible. Into the 1890s the words could have contradictory applications: for some they were terms of praise, for others terms of execration.

Positive sentimentality in the period under review was generally thought of as entailing a stimulus to an emotional, moral response in the reader or viewer. However, as will be argued below, these were responses which were not designed to encourage any alteration in the physical conditions of the world in a way which would expunge the source or stimulus of the sentimental reaction. Rather, the sources or stimuli were presented to elicit only feelings of sympathy for the sufferer. Consequently certain paintings of the 1870s had subjects which could be easily read and readily sympathised with: the moral response had to be both unconditional and immediate. Therefore such paintings had comparatively less detail than the "bourgeois realism" of the 1850s and 1860s. The distant origins of this situation, I would argue, lie in the so-called Age of Sensibility in the eighteenth century with a more immediate well-spring being found in the Sensation Novel of the 1860s.

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3. The term "bourgeois realism" was used by Mary Cowling to describe the work of William Powell Frith and others in her thesis 'The conception and interpretation of character in Victorian modern life art'. This thesis has since been published in book form as The Artist as Anthropologist: The Representation of Type and Character in Victorian Art (Cambridge, 1989). The term is also used to categorise Frith by Chris Brooks, Signs for the Times: Symbolic Realism in the Mid-Victorian World, (London, 1984), p.128.
Part A: Sensibility.

The peak years of the Age of Sensibility lie between about 1740 and 1780. By the 1770s sensibility had become a pejorative term to describe debased and affected feelings, indulgences of emotions beyond the needs of a situation and feelings elicited by contrivance or manipulation. At first the cult was confined to novels which focused on the considerable, enduring and undeserved suffering, exploitation and distress of completely blameless characters, who tended to be almost natural victims - such as defenceless women, aged men and helpless children. The events which they were subjected to were seen as a trial of their "virtue in distress".

4. By Age of Sensibility I mean the period in which the ostentatious and affected emotional response to textual stimuli was a fashionable behavioural vogue. This is discussed further below.


6. The Novel of Sensibility is the key artefact of the Age. Its object was to:
illustrate the alliance of acute sensibility with true virtue. An adherence to strict morality and honour, combined with copious feeling and a sympathetic heart, were (with whatever consequences of failure or humiliation) the marks of the man or woman of sentiment.


7. This was identified early on by Denis Diderot (1713-84) in his Salon of 1767: Nous aimons mieux voir sur la scène l'homme de bien souffrant que le méchant puni, et sur le théâtre du monde, au contraire, le méchant puni que l'homme de bien souffrant. C'est un beau spectacle que celui de la vertu sous les grandes épreuves; les efforts les plus terribles tournés contre elle ne nous déplaisent

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Soon after its emergence, the taste for such writings rapidly spread and grew to even greater popularity in France than in England. In France sensibilité - that is contrived emotional responses to dramatic or literary narratives - was also evident in painting and is best seen in the work of Jean Baptiste Greuze (1725-1805) and his followers, to whose popularity in nineteenth century Britain I shall return below.

The novel of sensibility set out to exploit the capacity of the individual reader for emotional stimulation. Soon after its inception, sensibility acquired moral connotations: it ceased to refer to the capacity for mental reflection and began instead to require a physical

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Quoted by Michael Fried, 'Toward a Supreme Fiction: Genre and Beholder in the Art Criticism of Diderot and His Contemporaries', New Literary History, VI (1975), p.557. Diderot's ideas are, of course, a partial reiteration of Aristotle's on tragedy as described in the Poetics and the latter may well have inspired Sir Joshua Reynolds in his fourth Discourse (1771) to write:

...no subject [in painting] can be proper that is not generally interesting. It ought to be either some eminent instance of heroick action, or heroick suffering. There must be something either in the action, or in the object, in which men are universally concerned, and which powerfully strikes upon the publick sympathy.


8. Greuze has been identified as the pivotal figure in the incorporation of sentimentality (i.e. sensibilité) in painting: Louis Hautecoeur, 'Le sentimentalisme dans la peinture francaise de Greuze à David, II: Les Thèmes Sentimentaux', Gazette des Beaux-Arts, 51 (1909), p.269: "C'est Greuze qui, veritablement, introduisait le sentimentalisme dans la peinture".
manifestation, namely tears. As Richardson said: "The man is to be honoured who can weep for the distress of others".\(^9\) The focus on tears is important because they were the only universal, outward sign or evidence of sensible engagement. And as the cult declined in the late eighteenth century as the practice of sensibility became less acceptable, so too diminished the acceptability of tears - only to resurge in the mid-nineteenth century. At the peak of the cult *Man: A Paper for Ennobling the Species* was able to publish an article on "moral weeping".\(^10\) But by 1782 Hannah More (1745-1833), a leading evangelical opponent of sensibility scorned those who relieved suffering "cheaply - with a tear".\(^11\) Indeed, by the 1780s it was admitted that good deeds were no longer thought to be a direct result of tears.\(^12\) More's statement provides a clue to the way in which sensibility had,


\(^12\) Samuel Pickering Jnr., *The Moral Tradition in English Fiction 1785-1850*, (Hanover, N.H., 1976), p.9. Within the realms of art theory, there was sound support for the encouragement of lachrymosity by the painter. In *On Painting*, written in the 1430s, Alberti stated that:

> the Istoria will move the soul of the beholder when each man painted there clearly shows the movements of his own soul...we weep with the weeping, laugh with the laughing, and grieve with the grieving.

by this stage, fallen into disrepute. It had become almost an aspect of taste - a moral taste - to be indulged, developed, refined.\textsuperscript{13} Monglond has termed sensibility the "masturbation of the emotions".\textsuperscript{14} As Brissenden has phrased it:

...an undue emphasis on the need for refining the sensibilities can lead to an unhealthy preoccupation with moral discrimination at the expense of moral action, [Shaftesbury's] man of taste can become a connoisseur and voluptuary in matters of morality as well as in matters of art and pleasure.\textsuperscript{15}

Brissenden evidently had in mind statements such as that of Lord Kames who wrote that "a taste in the fine arts goes hand in hand with the moral sense, to which indeed it is nearly allied". A recent scholar has amplified this point:

From Shaftesbury onwards taste in art had almost invariably been conceived as a species of virtue. No notion was more characteristic of English neo-classicism than the idea that taste in the fine arts is an ally of morals.\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{13} Ruskin associated taste with morality (see Buckley, \textit{Victorian Temper}, pp. ix, 143) and Reynolds associated taste and virtue: see below.


\textsuperscript{15} Brissenden, \textit{Virtue in Distress}, pp.124-25.

It is the indulgence of feeling at the expense of action that provides the point of comparison between eighteenth-century sensibility and nineteenth-century sentimentality. Both gave the impression of involvement through a feeling of sympathy for the sufferer but neither required any changes in conduct. Hence, Barzun's definition of sentimentality as "the cultivation of feeling without ensuing action" and Richards's idea that the indulgence of certain feelings essentially demands the inhibition of others.\(^17\) Mid- and later nineteenth-century sentimentality in both art and literature focussed predominantly on the fate of the poor, particularly poor families.\(^18\) It was realised that one of the consequences of the inability of the individual to alter a general social condition was the *Schadenfreude* which could be extracted from the knowledge of such hopelessness.\(^19\) Abstract feeling was supreme for many: "pity [was] the greatest luxury the soul of sensibility [was] capable of relishing".\(^20\) The charitable involvement of many was undermined by the:

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\text{inevitability of poverty [which] seemed to contradict the assumption that man, like his creator is both benevolent and reasonable [because] the relief of the poor posed a perpetual challenge to the individual who wished to express his philanthropic impulses in useful action.}^{21}
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However, belief in the inherent goodness of man was buttressed by the moral philosophy of men such as Shaftesbury, Smith and Hume who claimed that 'right thinking' (i.e. correct moral responses, albeit only mental) and what might be termed 'right feeling' were enough:

[They] provided the intellectual substructure for the widespread popularly cherished Victorian belief that human beings are innately good, that the source of evil is malignant social conditioning, and that the spontaneous, uninhibited expression of the natural feelings...is admirable and the basis for successful human relationships. 22

Part of the backlash against sensibility can be explained in terms of international politics. The cult was taken up even more enthusiastically in France than in England. When relations between the two countries broke down at the time of the Revolution and Napoleonic wars the denigration of sensibility as a gallic affectation became a good way of mocking the French. 22

Another powerful source of active opposition to sensibility in Britain derived from evangelical Christianity. Amongst non-conformist denominations charity was felt to be the supreme and proper manifestation of the Christian faith. Reaction against sentiment in novels - at least in those which lacked specifically religious purposes - was led by journals such as the Christian Observer. It was convinced that sentimentality in novels

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was doubly injurious. Firstly it created "unnatural excitation" in readers by pandering to their basest values. Secondly, it blunted "benevolent affections" by encouraging readers to "substitute mere sentiment in the place of conscience and a sense of duty". These contentions parallel statements made by Anna Laetitia Barbauld (1743-1824) who was a friend of Hannah More, the evangelist. In her wonderfully titled essay 'An enquiry into those kinds of distress which excite agreeable sensations' she noted that "constant suffering deadens the heart to tender impressions" and that where a novel excited a strong emotion "without any possibility of exerting itself in virtuous action [then] those emotions...are wasted without advantage". Virtuous impulses not acted on eventually lose their meaning, the mind grows callous and becomes immune to being moved. The important suggestion to retain from Barbauld's discussion is that deadened responses to fictional events could have a complementary manifestation in the real world. The Christian Observer also mounted criticism from a different angle. It lamented that "moral sentiments" had subverted basic Christian ideals by obliging morality to become the vehicle of sentiment, a process which resulted in the subordination of truth to feeling.

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Inevitably, sensibility and sentimentality were viewed as having class biases. The higher the class, it was assumed, the greater the capacity for sentimental reaction. Consequently, the classes most expected to practice monetary charity were also those most likely to enjoy sentimental indulgence. Therefore they were also the most likely to have the former aroused by the latter. Sentimentality on one side eroded the sense of moral responsibility, and popular assumptions on the other claimed that the poor were naturally poor. That poverty was part of the divine ordination of the world was given a specious Biblical rationale. Therefore poverty could be seen as a problem beyond the capacity of man to solve. Under these circumstances genuine charitable action can only have been hard to sustain. Individual acts of charity could be a pleasure, bolstering the impression of a struggle against the irresistible flood of poverty. Barbauld's warning against unreflecting "habitual benevolence" serves as a foretaste of a later manifestation of this tendency. In George Eliot's Middlemarch (1872) Miss Noble found:

fostering and petting all needy creatures so spontaneous a delight to her, that she regarded it much as if it had been an pleasant vice that she was addicted to.

Similar charitable motivation existed in the non-fictional world of the 1870s. In a short article advocating living within one's means the *London Journal* stated that:

...it is no man's duty to make an iceberg of himself, to shut his eyes and ears to the sufferings of his fellows and to deny himself the enjoyment that results from generous actions, that he may hoard wealth for his heirs to quarrel about.  

For as long as the poor were thought of in terms which elicited only generalised and non-specific sympathies in literature, then their treatment would be the same in society. As Barbauld put it, objects of pity in the real and fictional worlds rarely overlap. The girl who weeps over a distressed heroine in a book:

...shall be little moved at the complaint of her neighbour, who...laments to her that she is not able to get bread for her family...[writers] make great misfortunes so familiar to our ears, that we have hardly any pity to spare for the common accidents of life: but we ought to remember that misery has a claim to relief, however we may be disgusted with its appearance: and that we must not fancy ourselves charitable, when we are only pleasing our imagination.  

In painting it is only with the advent of extensive metropolitan imagery that strongly pathetic scenes were represented. These can readily be distinguished from those in the eighteenth-century genre-of-sentiment tradition such as William Collins's *Rustic Civility* (1833, London, VAM). Only during the 1840s did explicit scenes

appear regularly and then only in prints and in response to literature. Of the former Cruickshank's series *The Bottle* (1847) and *The Drunkard's Children* (1848) are the best examples and as an example of the latter Thomas Hood's poem *The Song of the Shirt* (1843) may be cited. Before the beginning of Victoria's reign pathetic imagery was mostly confined to rural and piscatorial scenes, by artists such as William Collins (1788-1847) and William Shayer (1787-1879). These remained popular throughout the century, but acquired greater realism over time, losing their close associations with seventeenth-century Dutch genre painting. Recent publications have examined aspects of landscape painting in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in an attempt to explore the realities beneath the surfaces. Both John Barrell and Anne Bermingham have provided interpretations which suggest that processes similar to those operating in literature were also current in landscape painting and their findings may also be applied to genre painting.

nineteenth such as the scene of cottagers giving food to beggars which, as *Rustic Benevolence* was painted by Wheatley in c.1796 (untraced but engraved in 1797), by Faed, *The Poor, the Poor Man's Friend* (1867, London, VAM) and by John Reid *Poor are the friends of the Poor* (RA 1893, untraced). Nochlin, *Realism*, p.127 traces French versions of this subject back only as far as 1836.


However, although painting repeated some literary subjects and changes, it was usually done following a time-lag of about twenty years. Sensibility in painting peaked in the late eighteenth century, well after it had begun to decline in the novel, and sentimentality in painting appeared in the mid- and later nineteenth century. Indeed it should be emphasised that at least one mid-nineteenth century source of some influence described the portrayal of sentiment in painting as the greatest achievement. Another link between art and literature may be seen in the way in which the Sensation Novels of the 1860s were followed by the outbreak of 'social realism' in painting in the 1870s and 1880s. The novel was more open to the vagaries of fashion. Greater and more rapid change was possible in literature than in painting, principally because of the way in which art was regulated in Britain right up until the expansion of exhibiting bodies in the 1880s.

According to Barrell eighteenth-century painting of the rural poor was designed to plaster over the cracks in the social fabric, to sustain and reinforce the status quo. He points out that the subject matter of poems by Crabbe and paintings by Gainsborough meant that the works became to the patron classes a form of moral compensation for the effects of the economic changes from which they

35. Mary Webster, Francis Wheatley, (London, 1970), pp.67-8 recognised this but the figure of about twenty years is mine.

These works thereby "congratulate[d] the very classes that were responsible for the repression of the poor for the humane concern they feel at the results of their own actions". Barrell goes on to explain how the wide appeal of prints after Morland's work to a less sophisticated public led the artist to become fixed in "a phase of cloying sentimentality which regarded a squire's benevolence or a landlord's bonhomie as a remedy for debt, starvation and bitter cold". The popularisation of certain themes ineluctably entailed their debasement to the point where superficial responses to genuine difficulties were felt to be adequate.

Bermingham has described how the artist's view of the rural environment was largely conceived and presented in terms of the picturesque. She indicates that the picturesque was both a refuge from and a response to some of the effects of the agricultural revolution. The picturesque was found in hovels, old barns and worn-out cart-horses; the "aesthetic effect of the picturesque seems to be calculated precisely on poverty and misery", she writes, paraphrasing Price's Essay on the Picturesque.

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In her discussion of images of stonebreakers, Bermingham indicated how depicting the task - a common form of outdoor relief in rural areas - allowed artists to skirt:

...the industrial issues of wages and hours by focussing on a form of rural poor relief [so] the paintings could make a universal appeal to contemporary humanitarian and philanthropic concern for the poor.

Bermingham concluded that such a work "draws its power, as well as its inconsequence, from the fact that it extracts from its audience little actual or precise commitment".39 This point, and that made in relation to Morland above, is close to the findings of Barbauld in the late eighteenth century, indicating a continuity between the writers.

Sensibilité in France.

The first wave of sentimentality in painting occurred in France where it coincided with, rather than followed, the French version of the cult of sensibility.40 An interesting and useful distinction has been drawn between two forms of French sensibilité: firstly as a moral and metaphysical movement and secondly and subsequently as a form of upper class and aristocratic fashionable be-


40. Hautecoeur, 'Le sentimentalisme dans la peinture française II', p.270, wrote that sentimentalism first appeared in French painting between 1753 and 1761 in response to sentimental literature. However, in a previous article he traced the vogue back to England in the period 1730-50: 'Le sentimentalisme dans la peinture française, I: Les Origines', Gazette des Beaux-Arts 51 (1909), p.162.
The evidence of literary and social sensibility is tendential and sensibility in painting is even less clear cut than in literature. Brookner draws another useful distinction in relation to France in the eighteenth century, differentiating between the sentimental subject matter and treatment found mainly in paintings of anecdote in the manner of seventeenth-century Dutch genre painting and enjoyment of 'sentimental' painters of the past such as Correggio, Reni and Murillo. She sees these two factors combined in the work of Greuze.42

41. Anita Brookner, Greuze: The rise and fall of an eighteenth century phenomenon, (London, 1972), pp.2, 9, 10. Altick, Paintings from Books, p.86, has written that the "notorious sentimentality (of the nineteenth century) in which the preceding century's sensibilité, a prized affectation of the elite, was coarsened for, and by, the middle class".

42. Brookner, Greuze, p.37. It is interesting to note that there was an increase in enthusiasm for Murillo in the later eighteenth century, for evidence of which we have only to look at works such as Gainsborough's Girl with a dog (1785, Dublin, National Gallery of Ireland). See E.K. Waterhouse, 'Murillo and eighteenth-century painting outside Spain', in Bartolomé Esteban Murillo 1617-1682, ex. cat., London, Royal Academy of Arts, 1983, pp.70-71. Murillo was the favourite Spanish artist across Europe in the mid-nineteenth century, but he was increasingly superceded by Velasquez from the 1850s onwards, with whom Frank Holl was often compared in the 1880s. See Alan Braham, 'The triumph of Murillo: Spain, Paris and London (1830-1853)', in El Greco to Goya: The Taste for Spanish Paintings in Britain and Ireland, ex. cat., London, NG, 1981, pp. 27-35.
There was an attitude which spread as Greuze's career continued which held that in appreciating paintings, reason should be excluded and the viewer's response should be decided by feeling alone. In Hussey's telling phrase, this was the age of "feeling through the eyes". This approach brought about a situation where the quality and quantity of sentiment evoked in the viewer became the yardstick of artistic merit. Just like Britain in the 1870s and 1880s, when French viewers and critics of the 1770s found works too strongly emotional they complained. But the terms of the complaints made against Greuze in his lifetime - that works such as Le fils ingrat (1777, Paris, Louvre) and Le fils puni (1778, Paris, Louvre) were simply too moving - are significantly different to those of the Victorian critics who warned Fildes and Holl that certain of their subjects were not fit for artistic representation on a large scale, if at all. In Brookner's opinion Greuze's influence was most enduringly felt in Britain. It is possible that a work such as Holl's There's many a slip (1868, untraced), which shows an urchin child who has just dropped and smashed a jug in the street, was conceived as a bowdlerised version of Greuze's metaphorical works such as La cruche cassée (1773, Paris, Louvre).


45. A number of Greuzian works appeared in Britain in the later nineteenth century. At the Glasgow Institute of Fine Arts in 1868 Eugène de Block exhibited The Temptation.
There are two other points which Brookner makes which may
be applied to the situation in Britain in the nineteenth
century. Firstly, a consequence of the popularity of cer-
tain themes and subjects was to ensure that each innova-
tion was soon imitated and plagiarised. The audience was
familiarised with artistic sentimentality in general and
with individual sentimental works in particular by means
of prints. 46 Minor artists thrived on their ability to
produce variations, usually bowdlerised, on themes con-
ceived by major artists. This is certainly true of Holl's
work. 47 Secondly, British sentimental painting mirrored
French painting of sensibilité by the way in which over a
short period of time (1730-70 in France, 1830-50 in
Britain) the subject matter changed from a focus on men
to women and finally children. 48 British sentimental
genre - typified by such works as Baby's Birthday (1867,
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which showed "a young girl of the humblest class" ponder-
ing the alternatives "vice and riches or virtue and des-
titution" (Art Journal, VII (1868), p.88), apparently a
reworking of Greuze's La vertue chancelante (c.1777, 
Munich, Alte Pinakothek).

46. Webster, Francis Wheatley, p. 68 mentions that
Greuze's influence was spread in England by means of the
thriving print trade. See also Emile Dacier, 'Greuze et
les graveurs', L'Amateur d'Estampes, V (1926), pp.1-15,
47-58, 71-80.

47. Compare illustrations 113 and 116.

48. Brookner, Greuze, pp.47, 144, 149; Peter Coveney,
The Image of the Child, (London, 1967), Ch. 1; Carol Dun-
can, 'Happy Mothers and Other New Ideas in French Art',
Art Bulletin, 55 (1973), pp.570-83; Michael Irwin,
'Readings of Melodrama', in Reading the Victorian Novel,
not figure prominently in British literature or art until
late in the eighteenth century.
Greuze's art is relevant to this study because its dependence on complementary literary material. As I shall describe below, literary components or narrativity in subject paintings are an indivisible part of the orchestration of sentimentality. As Levey has shown, the literary appeal of Greuze to his audience was a primary one: his objective was, in Diderot's phrase, "d'enchaîner des événements d'après lesquels il serait facile de faire un roman." Of course Diderot and Greuze were closely connected and the artist wanted to realise the writer's aesthetic ideas. Despite this cautionary fact it is still incontrovertible that Greuze, under the influence of Hogarth, realised the need to narrate his subjects and supported them with published descriptive matter, often in the Journal de Paris. Greuze's work has long been typified in terms of its sentimental content. The de Goncourts wrote of his intentions "to play upon the heart strings of the public...by sounding the note of moral


decency", of his wish "to touch the spectator intimately and profoundly, to stir emotions and to inspire love of virtue and hatred of vice", and to "create a moral art based upon the dramatisation of sentiment" and, finally, to "express materially a system of domestic morality, to induce virtuous conduct by the efforts of his brush, to propagate morality by his imagery". Or, as Diderot summarised it, Greuze's art is "dramatic poetry that touches our feelings, instructs us, improves and invites us to virtuous action". So in Greuze narration and sentimentality are combined.

In nineteenth-century Britain Greuze was perceived as the painter par excellence of female beauty and his genre paintings were commonly thought immoral. Sometimes an effort was made to assess the allure of his paintings of women and to reconcile the youthful innocent faces so many have to the mature bodies they surmount. A measure of Greuze's popularity can be obtained from Algernon Graves's, Summary of and Index to Waagen, (London, 1912) which lists as many pictures by Turner in English collections of the 1840s and 1850s as are attributed to Greuze. One of the earliest numbers of the Graphic contained a whole page reproduction of one of Greuze's "tetes d'expression" and a lengthy biographical note.


Part B: Sentimentality.

Conrad has argued in relation to British painting of the 1850s to the 1880s that it is precisely the narrative qualities of much of that art which makes it sentimental. He has contended that because the action of a painting is momentary and isolated from a sequence of events, the viewer is automatically expected to read the work and the clues in it in order to narrate the scene depicted, that is to explain how those figures came to be there. This is distinct from reading a literary text in which motives and consequences which develop sequentially over the duration of the fictional action are analysed over a period of the time, the time it takes the reader to read the book. Painting cannot function in this way but it can stimulate a process of analysis in the viewer. This stimulation serves to engage and draw in the viewer, to make him or her par-


56. This is an elaboration of the distinctions made since classical times between the arts of time and space and expressed systematically by Lessing in Laocoön (1766).

ticipate in the event by the interpretation of clues, by
the invention or deduction of character and by the narra-
tion of the lives of the fictional figures outside of the
frame.58 The engagement of the viewer, Conrad wrote, and
his experience of noble or charitable feelings acted as
an excuse or substitute for the assumption of respon-

sibility or the performance of any action:

The Victorian narrative pictures are machines
for evasion: they elicit sympathy but guarantee
to keep it hypothetical and harmlessly per-
functory. They give the spectator the illusion
of having behaved well; they flatter him that
he has felt finely.59

The last phrase returns us promptly to the eighteenth-
century concept of 'right feeling'.60 In Conrad's opinion

narrative paintings in general, and 'social realist'
paintings in particular, did not have an accusatory func-
tion. The direct stares out of the frame toward the
viewer or his space in 'Houseless and Hungry', On Strike
(1891, London, Royal Academy of Arts) or Newgate - Com-
mitted for Trial are irrelevant. The viewer is made com-


58. Conrad, p.58. These issues are analysed in depth by
Carla Rachman, "Story-painting and picture-writing":
Narrative in Victorian Art', Ph.D. thesis, Courtauld In-
stitute of Art, 1988; on this point see pp.93-4. This
thesis contains findings and conclusions which I had
reached independently. Curiously Rachman did not cite
Alpers's seminal essay, although on p.63 she did make a
distinction between description and narration. Nar-
rativity is predicated on the assumption that viewers
shared the same interpretative faculties, assuming much
common knowledge and experience in an audience.


60. In his tract Academy Paintings and Their Moral Teach-
ing, (Leeds, 1884) James Reid wrote that the value of a
painting depended on its embodiment and inspiration of
"right thoughts" and its prompts to noble and generous
action (p.75).
licit with the artist in a sentimental distancing of the subject from reality, no matter how 'really' it might be presented.

Of course by the 1870s the situation was complicated by the intervention of expanded ideas of social morality and the more frequent occurrence of discussions of the morality of art. Two contemporary discussions of morality and modern painting provide excellent evidence that the fundamental framework of the debate on the role of art remained constant from the eighteenth into the nineteenth century. The first, an unsigned piece 'The Morality of Art' published in The World in May 1875, recognised two forms of the moral danger inherent in art. Firstly, it claimed the immediate object of art is delight but the pursuit of pleasure for its own sake is ignoble and enervating. Secondly, because art is a world of itself in which the viewer is apt to lose him- or herself, forgetting the realities of life, the viewer is also apt to waste "in mere emotion the force which ought to be concentrated in action" (emphasis added). The author (probably Edmund Yates, the editor of the magazine) continued:

In the present day, which loves pleasure and eschews penance, there is much more to be said against art from another point of view, namely, that it is not actual life; that it has a tendency to distance life by a vain show; and that it hinders and enfeebles action.

61. The World, 5 May 1875, pp.16-17. These comments seem to be indebted to Shaftesbury's comments in the Characteristicks (1711) on the moral purpose of painting: see the discussion in John Barrell, The Political Theory of Painting from Reynolds to Hazlitt 'The Body of the Public', (New Haven and London, 1986), p.11 and passim.

62. World, ibid.
The nature of the action which should be forthcoming is not described by the writer. His starting point had been to assert that a moral purpose lay at the heart of the work of William Hogarth (1697-1764) and therefore had always existed in the British school. However, he was against art embodying any clear attempt at didacticism, preferring to believe that art would ennoble as it refined the viewer's sympathies. The writer is revealing an evident debt to Reynolds's ninth Discourse (1780) in which the idea that art would ennoble and refine was described as one of the "publick benefits" of taste.

The writer's thinking here is also close to the Aristotelian idea that the aim of tragedy is not the stimulation of the emotions but their purgation (catharsis) through sympathy with the victim: thus emotional indulgence and vicarious experience become a "pleasurable relief", the tragedy (or painting) providing an outlet for repressed emotions which could not otherwise be

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63. The artist, Reynolds said, is always pursuing beauty: ...which he is so far able to communicate, as to raise the thoughts, and extend the views of the spectator; and which, by a succession of art, may be so far diffused, that its effects may extend themselves imperceptibly into publick benefits, and be among the means of bestowing on whole nations refinement of taste [which will conduct] the thoughts through successive stages of excellence till that contemplation of universal rectitude and harmony which began by Taste, may, as it is exalted and refined, conclude in Virtue.

Reynolds, Discourses on Art, ed. cit., p.171. Barrell, The Political Theory..., p.96, suggests that "may" seems "to express a wish rather than a belief". Cohen has noted that parallels of taste and virtue go back at least as far as the Platonic triad of the good, the true and the beautiful (Cohen, Engaging English Art, p.182) and Plato's Republic advances the idea of the moral effect on behaviour that Art may have.
expressed.  

64. Aristotle, The Poetics, ed. W. Hamilton Fyfe, Loeb Classical Library, [1927, revised 1932], (rpt. London, 1973), pp.xvii, 45-51. The essay 'The Morality of Art' was published in an attempt to preempt a forthcoming sermon by Christopher Wordsworth, the then Bishop of Lincoln, against whom the writer held a considerable personal animus. The Bishop's sermon 'On the character and functions of the arts of painting, sculpture and architecture' was to be given at St. James's, Piccadilly on the 9th of May, that is the Sunday following the publication of the article in the World. The sermon was to be the last in a series of six being the third annual series of sermons at St. James's given under the general title The Use and Abuse of the World. These sermons are a useful source of information on contemporary religious attitudes not least because they were all published. The World had wanted to preempt Bishop Wordsworth because of what it thought he would say, expecting it to be illiberal cant. However the printed version of the sermon consists only of a parade of the Bishop's wide reading draped around two principles (The Use and Abuse of the World, 3rd. ser., [1875], pp.181-207). Firstly that art had fallen into unmistakeable decay (taking his cue from Reynolds's fifth Discourse [1772]) which was perhaps related to national degeneracy. Secondly the Bishop expected art (and man) to recover their earlier positions because of the enduring consciousness of the heavenly origins of both man and his artistic talents. This returned him neatly to his prefatory quotation from Exodus XXXI; 1-5:

And the Lord God spoke unto Moses saying: 'See I have called by name Bazalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah; and I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge and in all manner of workmanship, to devise skilful works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in cutting of stones for setting, and in carving of wood, to work in all manner of workmanship.

This reminds us of the statement of moral purpose given on the title-page of the official catalogue of the 1851 Great Exhibition:

Not the discoveries we make are our own/ The germs of every art are implanted within us/ And God our instructor, out of that which is concealed/ Develops the faculties of invention.

Such ideas had been present in such early English writings on the arts as Franciscus Junius's The Painting of the Ancients, (London, 1638).
The idea of vicarious experience is a crucial one for understanding 'social realism'. As Hamilton Fyfe has written in relation to Aristotle's criticism of tragedy: "That [tragedy's] aim is a peculiar form of pleasure, the pleasure of having one's emotions stirred not by the facts of life but by their artistic representation, seems to have been Aristotle's own discovery". Aristotle's findings might well be applied to nineteenth-century responses to 'social realism': the many references found to lachrymose reactions to works of 'social realism' indicate that such a response to fiction was a convention which purged the emotions which it engaged, thus preventing those emotions from being carried over into action.

Other contributors to the St. James's series of sermons were keen to publicise the action which had followed the publication of various novels, which introduces the second discussion. In 1873 the Rev. Henry White, Chaplain to the Speaker of the House of Commons, in his sermon on 'Popular Literature' had noted that, by changing the climate of opinion, Oliver Twist (1837-8) had helped to bring about reforms in the operations of workhouses; that Nicholas Nickleby (1838-9) had done the same for certain types of school and that Charles Reade's It is never too late to mend (1856) and Hard Cash (1863) had contributed resolutely to ameliorations in prisons and lunatic

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asylums. "A similar point was made by the Bishop of Derry in his sermon on 'Sensationalism' when he stated that reforms in the Poor Laws, better conditions for lunatics and debtors and the Factory Acts can 'be almost directly connected with the names of three novelists'. " I am not aware that any painting inspired such change, although rhetorical calls to action were made in response to works by Fildes and others. These are discussed below in Chapter Two.

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67. William Alexander (1824-1911) who, with his wife Cecil Frances (1818-95), the authoress of such hymns as 'Once in royal David's city' and 'There is a green hill far away', moved in cultivated, 'arty' circles and was well known as a public speaker on cultural topics: see Primate Alexander, Archbishop of Armagh. A Memoir, ed. Eleanor Alexander, (London, 1913), Ch. XIII.

68. 'Sensationalism' in Use and Abuse, 2nd. ser., (1874), p.90. He evidently had in mind Dickens, Reade and Lytton.
Part C: Sensationalism and Melodrama: contemporary literary and theatrical influences.

The Influence of the Sensation Novel.

Another way in which literature played an important part in the emergence of 'social realism' was through the influence of the so-called Sensation Novel of the 1860s and after. Certain correspondences can be seen between the way in which the Sensation Novel supplanted - or at least gained prominence over - preceding realist novels and the way in which the 'social realism' of Holl, Fildes and Herkomer took over from the "bourgeois realism" of Frith, Hicks and Clarke. It is my conviction that the ground broken by the Sensation Novel in the 1860s and by theatrical melodrama at a slightly earlier date helped to prepare the popular imagination for 'social realism'. The emphasis on extremes - extreme situations, extreme measures - found in novels such as Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* (1859-60) or in Mrs. Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862) presaged the 'social realists' explicit and apparently unmitigated presentation of the bleaker side of contemporary life. This emphasis was recognised as an essential quality of modern artistic production. In relation to the Sensation Novel it was explained that "it is natural that art and literature

69. The term was adopted from the 'sensation drama' of contemporary theatre in which there was often one highly dramatic, pivotal scene, the 'sensation scene'. Such scenes appear to be shown in two paintings by George Smith, *The Rightful Heir* and *The Coming of Age*, versions of which, c.1874, are in the FORBES collection.
should, in an age which has turned out to be one of events, attempt a kindred depth of effect and shock of incident." It is also true that reactions to the Sensation Novel and to 'social realism' in painting and criticism of them both was often couched in similar terms. Another parallel which exists between the two forms is the appeal they shared across the barriers of social class. One of the reasons why the novels were seen to have subversive effects was because of the way in which their broad popularity eroded the kitchen/drawing room division. Both genres managed to portray extraordinary events in mundane settings and both genres evolved from artistic modes with, initially, a lower-class audience. The Sensation Novel has been seen as a development of the down-market literature of the 1830s and 1840s such as the so-called 'Newgate Novel' and 'social realism' has been seen as an advance on the illustrations in the early cheap illustrated journals of the 1840s and 1850s. Both genres can therefore be seen as the


71. Temple Bar, XXIX (July 1870), p.424. This remark stands in contrast to the efforts made by some (for instance by Matthew Arnold in Culture and Anarchy, (1869), Ch. 1) to increase social cohesion by trying to interest the lower classes in forms of 'high culture'. Whereas uniformity of interest was acceptable in the case of improving works, it was not in the case of meretricious, amoral or base works.

products of a society ever eager for more explicit information and entertainment which required the employment of the affective emotions. As Disher phrased it "there can be no doubt that more realism was what the mid-Victorian public wanted." 73

The subject matter of the Sensation Novel and 'social realism' rarely overlap. In literature Dickens's approach was picaresque, concentrating on character and using humour. Collins tended to tackle middle-class concerns, such as divorce and married women's property, and feature middle-class characters. 74 Of course Dickens wrote about the workhouse and Newgate which were painted by Fildes and Holl respectively, but their aims and methods were different, especially since the printed and painted works were produced more than thirty years apart. Indeed the subject matter of 'social realism' and the Sensation Novel is rarely unprecedented. Originality lies in the handling: in 'social realism' this is often marked by the

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73. M.W. Disher, Melodrama: Plots That Thrilled, (London, 1954), p.69. However this was not new. In the preface to his Lyrical Ballads (1800) William Wordsworth had noted the "increasing [sic] accumulation of men in cities, where the uniformity of their occupations produces a craving for extraordinary incident [and a] degrading thirst after outrageous stimulation"; quoted by Conrad, Victorian Treasure House, p.104. And Ruskin, in the context of the consumption of reproductive illustrations, commented on the labour "of finding new stimulus for the appetite - daily more gross - of the tyrannical mob": Works, XXII pp.264-70.

use of a large canvas to paint on and in Sensation Novels by the extreme, even excessive, nature of the situations or characters depicted (i.e. the two genres are permeated by different types of exaggeration). Hughes has identified the underlying feature of this situation with the assertion, which is unexceptionable, that Victorians perceived their situation in terms of polar opposites and expressed it by means of overstatement and emphatic instances. Hence melodrama may be seen as the single characteristic mode of nineteenth-century British thought and art. }

The authors of 'social realist' paintings and Sensation Novels drew on the everyday world around them for their source material. It is no surprise to find that Dickens, Reade, Fildes and Holl are all said to have toured the backstreets of London looking for picturesque events and characters to reinvent in their work. Fildes claimed that the real world was his singular source of reference and

75. Hughes, Maniac in the Cellar, p.13. It has been suggested that:

...melodrama should be seen as something more than just a literary, theatrical (and musical) or visual art form, but rather as a general mode of cultural 'production' which manifests itself in a wide and various range of particular forms and practices, all of them exhibiting a tendency towards simple antithesis or opposites of experience organised in [an] exaggerated, heightened way...The melodramatic contrasts between villainy and innocence, rich and poor, and so on, might then be understood as an aspect of the total consciousness of the time, assuming that there is something melodramatic in the very nature of urban, industrialised society.

Collins, echoing Baudelaire, lamented that many of his contemporaries could not see the "romance" of everyday life as fit material for writers or painters. 76 Collins returned to the theme in a later novel, Heart and Science (1883), when he regretted that "not one man in ten thousand living in the midst of reality has discovered that he is also living in the midst of romance." 77 This kind of bias toward the contemporary had been given a democratic gloss by Dickens who, in 1850 had described the intentions of the newly-founded journal Household Words thus:

To show all, that in all familiar things, even in those which are repellent on the surface, there is Romance enough, if we will but find it out - to teach the hardest workers at this whirling wheel of toil that their lot is not necessarily a moody, brutal fact excluded from the sympathies and graces of imagination; to bring the greater and lesser, in a degree, together upon that wide field and mutually dispose them to a better acquaintance and a kindlier understanding - is one main object of our Household Words. 78

Dickens's statement marks the important phase in the development of the arts when legitimacy could no longer be refused to those many subjects which had previously been excluded from artistic representation in any authentic way. And it is no surprise that this process should


78. C. Dickens, 'Preface', Household Words, 30 March 1850 p.1; see also Phillips, Dickens, Reade and Collins, p.100.
have run parallel to the growing pictorialisation of life. By this I mean the interlocking chain of events in social evolution and technological innovation which both led to and fostered a new way of looking at the world—through the medium of pictures and pictorialised modes of representation. The early nineteenth century saw the introduction of plate-glass, gas and then electric lighting: it was the period of the panorama and the diorama and their domesticated equivalent the magic lantern. It was a time when society was exposed to a whole new range of visual stimuli. The range was extended from the 1820s onwards by the rise of illustrated books, part-works and magazines, the abolition of the duty on paper and newspapers and the foundation of cheap mass-circulation newspapers such as the Daily Telegraph. All of these sources of visual excitement "satisfied and expanded the taste for a pictorialisation of important events and foreign landscapes" as well as for domestic realities. Eventually "the pictorial means of information and entertainment grew more sophisticated and better adapted to mass public consumption".


Theatre and 'Social Realism'.

We now encounter another source of formative influence on 'social realism', that of Victorian spectacular theatre and melodrama. The relationship of drama and painting in the period has long been realised and has been the subject of a recent, authoritative survey by Martin Meisel. Theatrical terminology was regularly used as part of the fine art critic's vocabulary in the 1870s and 1880s. It should be emphasised that this borrowing of theatrical terminology should not be seen as an empty rhetorical device but as an indication of a deliberate attempt to find a means of characterising particular paintings which amplified the sense that these were 'sister arts'. Herkomer realised the potential for cross-fertilisation between drama and painting. In speaking of his production of *An Idyll* (1889) Herkomer revealed his belief that the painter could:

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82. Such usage originated much earlier and correspondences between painting and drama are commonplace in the eighteenth century in both Britain and France. This seems to have been a development of the classical idea of *Ut Pictura, Poesis*. However, such usage seems to have become widespread and specific only in the later nineteenth century: see below. See also Kate Flint, 'Moral Judgement and the Language of English Art Criticism 1870-1910', *Oxford Art Journal*, 6 (1983), pp.59-66.

...experiment in scenic art, in grouping figures and in story-making, only changing the canvas for the stage in order to express with real objects and real people the thoughts he placed ordinarily upon canvas with brush and colour."

Of course this is nothing like the situation of the scene-painter turned artist such as Philip de Loutherbourg (1740-1812), Clarkson Stanfield (1793-1867) or David Roberts (1796-1864): a distinction needs to be made between perceived theatricality in a painting and simply designing or decorating a stage set. The correspondence Herkomer identified had been taken to its logical conclusion as early as 1829 when three paintings by Charles Eastlake (1799-1865) of brigands had been realised on stage as a tableau vivant during the performance of Planché's The Brigand at the Drury Lane Theatre."

These realisations soon became a regular practice."

The level of public taste and knowledge of art can be ascertained from the fact that the theatrical audiences immediately recognised the painting(s) so replicated. This suggests that certain types of theatre and works of art (either in the original or in reproduction) shared an appeal to the same audience - which was an expanding and increasingly heterogenous one in the period." By about


85. Booth, p.9. The tableau vivant was a popular form of middle class domestic pastime throughout the nineteenth century.

86. Booth, pp.9-10; Meisel, *Realizations*, passim especially 381-401.

1850 the theatrical audience had become accustomed to looking at the stage as if it were a pictorial mode. The pictoriality of the theatre reached its zenith in 1880 when the manager of the Haymarket Theatre put a two foot wide picture frame around the stage. Other theatres soon followed suit. Consequently fears arose that the imaginative faculties of the audience were not being employed and the appeal of theatrical spectacle was increasingly to the senses rather than the emotions because its use was purely spectacular rather than narrative. W.B. Donne, later the Examiner of Plays, wrote in 1855 that audiences were more and more demanding:

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88. Booth, p.10. Literature too was becoming more pictorial. Dickens characterised places in terms of their resemblance to the work of artists. For example, in David Copperfield, (London, 1849-50) the accommodation in an emigrant ship is described as like being in a picture by Ostade (Ch. 57). Elliot was prone to do the same, favouring Dutch and Flemish seventeenth century painters with whom her work was often compared: see Hugh Witemeyer, George Elliot and the Visual Arts, (London, 1979), Ch. 7. At the end of the century Thomas Hardy also used pictorial descriptive means: see Alistair Smart, 'Pictorial Imagery in the Novels of Thomas Hardy', Review of English Studies, XII (1961), pp.262-80.


90. Booth, p.11.

91. Booth, p.2 and pp.16-17 for comparable, later fears that the realism of stage sets was anaesthetising the public imagination.
To touch our emotions we need not the imaginatively true, but the physically real. The visions which our ancestors saw with the mind's eye, must be embodied for us in palpable forms...all must be made palpable to sight no less than to feeling: and this lack of imagination in the spectators affects equally both who enact and those who construct the scene. 92

Just as sensibility's appeal to the nerves or emotions rather than to the intellect or brain was criticised in the late eighteenth century, so too was sensation writing's appeal "to the nerves rather than to the heart" in the 1860s. The Christian Remembrancer accused sensation writers of willingly and designedly drawing:

...a picture of life which shall make reality insipid and the routine of ordinary existence intolerable to the imagination...by drugging thought and reason and stimulating the attention through the lower and more animal instincts. [All sensation novels] appeal to the imagination through the active agency of the nerves. 93

Donne was writing in the period when the so-called 'sensation drama' was at its peak. Fire, flood, earthquake, wild horses and steam trains all made real or simulated appearances on the London stage at some point in the nineteenth century. These spectacular effects, known as 'sensation scenes', soon became an event in their own right, narratives being manipulated to allow for the incorporation of, for instance, Miles na-Copaleen's leap into the sea to rescue the eponymous...


heroine of Boucicault's *The Colleen Bawn* (1860) or the hero's escape from an oncoming train in the same author's *After Dark* (1868). Both 'social realism' and spectacular theatre drew on events from the contemporary world and therefore both were engaged in recycling "contemporary visual experience from the spectator's own contact with the diurnal world...back to his storehouse of material images". Just as theatre-goers liked to see a version of the real world on stage, so too did they enjoy seeing a version of the real world on canvas. What then could be more profitable than putting the painting onto the stage? Frith was a favourite for realisation. The immense popularity of his *Derby Day* (1858, London, Tate Gallery) and *Railway Station* (1862, Egham, Royal Holloway and Bedford New College) meant that they had a currency into the twentieth century; the latter was realised in 1866, 1867 and in 1903. References to Fildes's *Applicants for admission to a casual ward* and to Barnard's *Saturday Night* (R.A. 1876 [62], untraced) are found in Wilson Barrett's production of G.R. Sims's *Lights o'London* at the Princess's Theatre in 1881.

It is not only the visual nature of melodrama which causes it to be readily comparable with "social realism". Booth has written that melodrama was:

> ...anti-aristocratic, anti-employer, anti-landlord, and anti-wealth, often violently so...While it was escapist and wish-fulfilling, melodrama was also realistic in that it

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94. Booth, p.15.


96. Meisel, pp.396, 399.
presented not only the daily life of London streets and homes, but also a considerable number of serious social problems, including drink, poverty, urban life, homelessness, class antagonism and industrial strife. 97

The second part of this statement could easily be applied to 'social realism' and can only consolidate the links between popular theatre and 'social realism'. The latter was regularly described as 'melodramatic', and, like the Sensation Novel, melodrama dealt with extreme situations. 'Social realism' and spectacular theatre shared a broad appeal. 98

The fact that the narrative rationale of a scene was subordinated to its immediate visual and affective impact corresponds closely to the 'social realist' painting's power immediately to engage the viewer and to the sensation novelist's use of shocking events to draw the reader in, and cliff-hanger chapter endings to spur the reader on. Indeed one commentator on the success of sensationalism has emphasised the novelists' use of pictorial expression and their need for "strong passions pictorially represented". Dickens, Collins and Reade thought of their work as "dramatic":

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97. Quoted by John Golby, 'Popular Culture and the Labouring Classes' in Culture: Production, Consumption and Status, p.87.

98. Booth, p.3. In 1864 Dickens was horrified by the content and the success of Boucicault's melodrama The Streets of London. He found it:

...the most depressing instance, without exception, of an utterly degrading and debasing theatrical taste that has ever come under my notice. For not only do the audiences - of all classes - go, but they are unquestionably delighted.

Dickens to Forster, August 1864, quoted by Richard Fawkes, Dion Boucicault, (London, 1979), pp.149-50, emphasis added.
...partly as indication of preference for a dramatic story and partly as designation of a method which aimed more than had been customary in the English novel to accentuate the necessary mode of fiction for the stage. 99

On a slightly different tack it should be noted that both the novel and especially the theatre amplified and reinforced the division between the city (usually London in drama) and the country. During the nineteenth century plays included more references to London life and London settings and in melodrama a strong contrast was drawn between the virtue, innocence and order of rural life and the vice, degradation and anonymity of city life. London itself became a character in many dramas and the full variety of its inhabitants was included in plays in recognition of the diversity of city dwellers and to help satisfy the demand for authenticity of character, costume and setting. 100

It is worth recalling that Dickens, Collins, Holl, Herkomer, Frith and Fildes, Wilkie, Mulready and Leslie, amongst others, all had an active interest in the theatre and/or amateur theatricals. 101 Therefore it is


101. This fact begs the question whether these painters were merely indulging in a common nineteenth-century pastime or whether their dramatic interests should be seen as fundamentally important to their painting. N. Cross, The Common Writer: Life in Nineteenth-Century Grub Street, (Cambridge, 1985) pp.95-102 has pointed out that the loose group of young, radical, republican writers around Dickens and which was much involved in amateur


inevitable that theatrical and dramatic influences should be found in their work and it is arguable that the 'sensation scene', so widely found in both plays and novels, had a pictorial incarnation too - 'social realism'.

Sensation Pictures.

Sensationalism in literature has long been held to have originated in the 1860s, specifically with Collins's *The Woman in White*. But Thomas Boyle's recent research, starting from Thackeray's first recorded use of the word 'sensation' to mean a "particular literary or dramatic phenomenon" (O.E.D.) in the *Cornhill Magazine* for September 1861, has shown that the term was current in 1855 and therefore was well established and universally understood to mean an artistic mode or convention by the 1870s.

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theatricals included Sala, Jerrold and Collins's friend and admirer Edmund Yates. Sala and Yates were both friendly with Fildes.


There seems to have been no reference to a genre of sensation pictures as such although, as I shall show, sensationalism was widely perceived in the works now categorised as 'social realism'. Three articles have been found which discuss the subject. F.T. Palgrave's 'Sensational Art' first appeared in the Saturday Review in 1866, G.A. Sala's 'On the Sensational in Literature and Art' appeared in Belgravia in 1868 and the anonymous 'Sensation Pictures' was published in the Strand in 1909. Countering contemporary criticism of sensationalism, Sala makes a simple case for diversity in the arts and argues that Dickens and Shakespeare are the most sensational writers ever, their works being crammed with outlandish and violent events. He recognised that the term "sensational" could be misapplied to mean simply "vivid, and nervous, and forcible, and true". Among artists he found Henry Fuseli (1741-1825), William Hogarth (1697-1764) and Francisco de Goya (1746-1828) to suffer from "deleterious sensationalism" and John Flaxman (1755-1826), Wedgwood (presumably Josiah, 1730-95, rather than the ware), William Holman Hunt (1827-1910), Millais and Thomas Woolner (1825-92) to be sensational.

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106. Belgravia, IV (1868), pp.449-58. Belgravia (1866-99) was "conducted" between 1866 and 1876 by one of the key sensation novelists, Mary Elizabeth Braddon (1837-1915).
109. Ibid.
his tone reveals that he is mocking the anti-sensationalists by showing how easily the term can be misapplied to inappropriate figures because the term itself was flexible and indefinite and often could not readily be distinguished from its cognates.

The writer in the *Strand* relied more on illustrations than on written argument and was more concerned to show how contemporaries such as Arnold Böcklin (1827-1901), Sigismund Goetze (1866-1939) and John Byam Shaw (1872-1919) were sensational in the tradition of William Blake (1757-1827), John Martin, Theodore Gericault (1791-1824) and Gustave Doré (1832-83) than to discuss the origin of the term and its early application. However two interesting comments are made. Firstly, an implicit definition of a sensation picture is given: it is "melodramatic, unreal or astonishing". Secondly, in a brief discussion of the French artist Jean Béraud (1849-1936) it is stated that he drew sensational effects by setting religious scenes in contemporary settings, thereby making them into direct indictments.

In the third article, by far the most serious and analytical, Palgrave defined two types of sensational picture. Firstly, there was the work which stirred the deepest feelings of its audience, feelings not easily


stirred, and was a work which required patience, knowledge and delicacy in the artist. Secondly, there was the work which aimed to make an immediate impact and which required vivacity, facile force and dramatic power of the artist to touch his audience "strongly rather than lastingly". As an example of the former he cites Hunt's Measure for Measure (i.e. Claudio and Isabella [1850-53, London, Tate Gallery]) and of the latter Solomon's Waiting for the Verdict (1857, London, Tate Gallery). Palgrave further defines sensationalism in painting as excessive vigour in representation, especially in vulgar subjects and "telling incidents which would make a hit at the Adelphi". Palgrave also distinguished sensational works from "telling pictures of incident" which did not move the deeper feelings. Because sensational art relied on pretentions of vigour beyond the abilities of the artist, it lacked enduring interest, Palgrave concluded. Otherwise creditable works such as Ward's Sleep of Argyle and Alice Lisle (1856, London, Palace of Westminster) are reduced to the

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113. Other examples of the higher form are Gérôme's Masquer's Death (presumably Sortie du bal masque, [Salon of 1857, Chantilly, Musée Conde]) and Wallis's Chatterton (1855-6, London, Tate Gallery) and of the lower Millais' Nun's Rescue (unidentified) and Frith's Derby Day and Railway Station.


115. Ibid, p.197.

sensational level by "insufficiency in intellectual grasp for meeting the 'high argument' of historical painting",117 that is they appealed to the lowest common denominator.

The term 'sensational' seems not to have entered the vocabulary of the art critic until after it had become well established in literary criticism and general debate. In her novel Eleanor's Victory, Mrs. Braddon included a description of a fictional "sensation picture" called The Earl's Death.118 The earliest use of the term in art criticism (i.e. an exhibition review as opposed to an article) that has been found occurs in 1873 in the Era, a weekly newspaper concerned chiefly with coverage of the theatrical world. In its review of the R.A. Summer Exhibition it stated that the Mother and Child by G.E. Hicks (1873, Manchester, City Art Gallery) would not receive the attention it merited because of "the absence of anything like sensationalism".119 In 1874 the Pictorial World predicted that Fildes's painting, referred

117. Ibid, p.199.


119. Era, 11 May 1873, p.12. It is highly likely that there are many earlier uses which have not been found. Writing in 1882 about his Graphic Illustration 'Sunday at Chelsea Hospital' (18 February 1871, p.160, worked up into the painting The Last Muster (1875, Port Sunlight, Lady Lever Art Gallery) Herkomer stated that he had expressed the idea of the death of the old soldier by the anxious expression of his companion, rather than any death-like apperance in the soldier which he feared "might give a sensational tone to the drawing": Hubert Herkomer, 'Drawing and Engraving on Wood', Art Journal, XXI (1882), p.166.
to as 'Waiting for Relief' (i.e. Applicants for admission to a casual ward), would be "one of the sensations of the year". Here the word means "popular success" and likely to be the topic of conversation. The same magazine also made a noteworthy claim when it stated the work would touch the heart, whereas Fildes had only previously pleased the senses.

I would argue that any 'heart-touching' was done in a superficial way because the feelings evoked by the painting had been debased and their moral significance diluted by exposure to similarly explicit and contrived material in the past, primarily in print but also in visual imagery. Therefore the work would touch the heart secondarily to its capacity to shock, intrigue and engage the viewer by requiring narration. The Observer wrote of the same work that "there is little added in the way of sensation, to what naturally arises out of the subject"

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120. Pictorial World, 28 March 1874, p.58.

121. The cornerstone of Boyle's argument in Black Swine in the Sewers of Hampstead, with which I agree, is that the widespread enthusiasm for Victorian sensational writing - both fiction and forensically explicit journalism - constituted a subversion of 'official' Victorian morality. Much of this writing, both fiction and journalism, was illustrated. The liking of the press for stories including outrageous sex and violence has recently been examined by Richard D. Altick, Evil Encounters: Two Victorian Sensations, [1986], (London, 1987) and G.H. Fleming, Victorian 'Sex Goddess' Lady Colin Campbell, [1989], (Oxford, 1990). The former is concerned with two stories of attempted murder and the latter which, like the former, is derived entirely from newspaper reports, covers the sensational divorce case of 1886 which featured allegations of multiple adulteries and venereal disease in high places.
because its contents, "the most besotten and repulsive forms of human degradation", were sensational enough in their own right.\textsuperscript{122} Also in 1874 Holl's \textit{Deserted} (RA 1874, untraced) was described as "mildly sensational...will have many tears shed over it".\textsuperscript{123} This description reminds us that the correct response to sensationalism in painting was the same as the response to the sentimentality of English literature in the mid-century or the French paintings of \textit{sensibilité} in the previous century. The horrifying subject of Holl's work - the abandonment of a child - could be met with a reflex response of tears which would be sufficient in itself and would not require any action from the viewer. Superficiality was still the order of the day. This was explicitly recognised by the \textit{Queen} in 1878 when it commented that Fildes's intentions in the \textit{Casuals} were threefold: "to suggest sad histories, to teach a moral and to enlist sympathies for the less fortunate".\textsuperscript{124} That is: to provide the basis of clues for narration by the viewer, to provide a monitory expression of the the pauper's fate and to justify merely token responses to the situation depicted. In 1874 the same publication had felt differently about the work, thinking that it constituted a genuine call to action:

\begin{quote}
...if [Fildes's] grand work but serve the purpose of inducing the philanthropic and true-hearted to endeavour to combat this misery
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{122} Observer, 3 May 1874, p.5f.

\textsuperscript{123} Daily Telegraph, 2 May 1874, p.6a. The Queen, 23 May 1874, p.417 also found it sensational.

\textsuperscript{124} Queen, 11 May 1878, p.353.
which is in our midst, in his success he will be rewarded, and the true object of his art attained."

The Queen remained consistent by writing in 1879 that those who recognised the high mission of art - "encouragement to acts of benevolence" - would have cause to feel grateful to Fildes. The way in which art could serve as a prompt or stimulus to moral activity (generally intended to mean charitable donations) was often touched upon in nineteenth-century criticism. For instance, when James Charles (1851-1906) exhibited Our Poor (1878, Warrington, Art Gallery) the Daily Telegraph was ready with a smart riposte. The painting shows a number of elderly women in an almshouse or similar institution:

"It serves no purpose as an incitement to be charitable since these old women in blue are indoor paupers, and we must pay our poor rates whether we like it or not."

125. Queen, 23 May 1874, p.417. These sentiments are expressed in a very passive way. There is no sense that the writer felt personally challenged to act, but there is an underlying assumption that others will do 'the right thing'. The Queen was aimed at a mildly conservative middle-class, female readership and the views expressed in it usually took its audience fully into account. The more strongly conservative Art Journal and the Times could not have agreed that such art could have a remedial function because they had already said that the subject should not have been painted anyway. It was in May 1874 that the Bishop of Derry gave his sermon at St. James's, Piccadilly, opposite the Royal Academy, on the subject of 'Sensationalism' in the Use and Abuse of the World series mentioned above, Part B.

126. Queen, 1 March 1879, p.183. Whether such acts were so stimulated it is impossible to know. However the hope that they would be so stimulated in others was widespread amongst writers on art.

127. Daily Telegraph, 6 June 1878, p.3a-b.

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That sensationalism was associated with a meretricious appeal to the lowest common denominator of public taste was indicated by the *Pictorial World*:

In Gallery No. 1 of the exhibition of pictures at Burlington House there are certainly many pictures of great merit, not sensational works calculated to create a furore amongst those who are ever ready to make a picture the fashion, but beautiful, natural paintings that appeal to the appreciative public.\(^{128}\)

The "appreciative public" may mean the higher, educated social classes who could appreciate paintings which did not have the trappings of sensationalism. In 1876 the *Queen* found Fildes's *The Widower* (1876, Sydney, Art Gallery of New South Wales) "full of the deepest pathos, without a touch of unworthy sensationalism".\(^{129}\) Such terms seem rapidly to have become a standard verdict of praise from this journal.\(^{130}\) In 1878 Holl's *Newgate—Committed for Trial* was dismissed for missing "the high motive [and] attaining only to sensationalism". That the figures in it were "shocking" was not intolerable. What made it a failure in the "true purposes of art" was that the figures inspired the viewer to "distress and horror only",\(^{131}\) instead of, one presumes, to vacuous sentimentalism or philanthropic action. The *Saturday Review* found both Holl's work and Frith's *Road to Ruin* series (1878, 

\(^{128}\) *Pictorial World*, 10 May 1879, p.178.

\(^{129}\) *Queen*, 6 May 1876, p.303.

\(^{130}\) In 1877 Williams's *Ars longa, vita brevis* (RA 1877 (945), unlocated) was found to have "true sentiment without sensationalism" (2 June, p.239) and so on. Therefore sensationalism might be seen as synonymous with false sentiment, a commonly used term in art criticism.

\(^{131}\) *Queen*, 25 May 1878, p.392.
private collection)\textsuperscript{132} to appeal to "the most superficial, the most unreflecting and the least true sentiments of the onlookers",\textsuperscript{133} and the \textit{Morning Post} thought that Frith's series was "'sensational' [only] in the theatrical sense of that trashy word".\textsuperscript{134} This statement brings us to another area of critical operation, the use of theatrical terms and metaphors in the criticism of paintings.

Connections with Melodrama.

Accusations of being melodramatic were commonly levelled against 'social realist' works, especially those by Holl. For example \textit{Newgate} was described by the \textit{Times} as having the "action of melodrama" and an absence of truth and the \textit{Saturday Review} said it was "cast in the spirit of low-class melodrama".\textsuperscript{135} In 1879 the \textit{Saturday Review} thought that Holl's portrait of Samuel Cousins (1879, London, Tate Gallery) was far better justification of Holl's election as an Associate of the Royal Academy "than was


\textsuperscript{133} \textit{Saturday Review}, 11 May 1878, p.592.

\textsuperscript{134} \textit{Morning Post}, 4 May 1878, p.5b. On the use of theatrical means to present theatrical subjects see Pamela Gerrish Nunn, 'Rebecca Solomon: Painting and Drama', \textit{Theatrephile}, 2 (Issue 8, 1985) pp.3-4.

\textsuperscript{135} \textit{Times}, 11 May 1878, p.6c; \textit{Saturday Review}, 11 May 1878, p.592.
given by any of his former 'sensational' works which are perhaps in a certain sense more attractive to the general public". Fildes's Return of the Penitent (1879, Cardiff, City Hall) was defended by Tom Taylor: "I have heard it called stagy [sic]. I fear that any painter who aims at telling a story dramatically must be prepared for this charge". Taylor's point is borne out by reference to an earlier review written by him in which he preemptively described Arthur Marsh's Missing Boats (RA 1871 [166], untraced) as having a "sincerity and truth which take the picture quite out of the tableau vivant category". Others, such as the Observer, simply found Fildes's picture hard to understand. Although it occurs earlier, from about the 1870s onwards it became a critical commonplace to dismiss paintings as "stagey". These criticisms reached their peak in 1891. That year was effectively the last in which any works of "social realism" of the model of the 1870s were exhibited. Fildes showed The Doctor and Herkomer On Strike at the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition. Both works were excoriated by G[eorge] M[oore] in the Speaker and by Claude Phillips in the Academy.

Moore dismissed The Doctor as "clap-trap" which:

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137. Graphic, 17 May 1879, p.490.
138. Times, 22 May 1871, p.6c.
139. Observer, 4 May 1879, suppl. n.p.
...is calculated to awaken every sentiment except the sentiment of what is beautiful in art. It is Adelphi melodrama, only more so, and it holds the same place in art as melodrama does in literature.

Dicksee's *The Crisis* (1891, Melbourne, National Gallery of Victoria) was challenged on the grounds that Dicksee thought a picture was "some thing not too different from a scene in a theatre" and *On Strike* was plainly "a very ugly theatrical poster". The contrary opinion was expressed by the *Graphic* which described *The Doctor* as "entirely free from exaggeration and false sentiment, and conveys a strong sense of reality".

Phillips took a swipe at *On Strike* for being "studied, we should say, from the theatre, with a view to obvious effect, rather than direct from nature, with a view to truth". Moore returned to *The Doctor* later in 1891. Using the pretext of an article lambasting the taste of the "general art patron" (whom he, like many predecessors, blamed for the decline in British art) Moore again berated the artist attacking a vulnerable point - his enduring reputation as expressed in the monetary value of his work:

> The popular RAs have appealed to popular sentiment and popular sentiment has responded; and the City has paid the price. But Time is not at all a sentimental person: he is quite unaffected by the Adelphi reality of the doctor's face or the mawkish treacle of the village.

[140. *Speaker*, 2 May 1891, pp.519-20. Moore had started work on the *Speaker* only in March 1891 and the sharp tone of his review might be attributable to an effort to establish himself by maligning 'establishment' figures.]

[141. *Graphic*, 2 May 1891, p.486.]

[142. *Academy*, 16 May 1891, pp.471-72.]
church, and when the collection is sold at auction twenty years hence, it will fetch about a fourth of the price that was paid.\textsuperscript{143}

It is surprising that only after many years of using theatrical parallels does a direct reference to a theatre appear, pace Palgrave's reference to the Adelphi given above,\textsuperscript{3} It was at the Adelphi from the early nineteenth century that many of the most far-fetched and sensational melodramas were performed. It was also one of the key theatres where, from the 1860s a wealthier and more sophisticated audience could have seen "a spectacular variety of melodrama whose sensationalism was located in its reflection of modern urban life".\textsuperscript{144} It was also the home of many of the pictorial realisations on stage mentioned above. It is interesting to note that in the eighteenth century comparisons with painting were commonly used to elevate the theatre,\textsuperscript{145} whereas in the nineteenth century comparisons with the theatre were used to denigrate paintings.

As was mentioned above in passing the use of theatrical terms and metaphors in art criticism predates the 1870s. C.R. Leslie in his Hand-Book for Young Painters\textsuperscript{146} referred to the "theatrical, or modern pictorial effect".\textsuperscript{147} This shows that the theatrical terminology

\textsuperscript{143} Speaker, 27 June 1891, pp.757-9.

\textsuperscript{144} Meisel, Realizations, pp.95, 116, 158, 380.


\textsuperscript{146} (London, 1855), p.247

\textsuperscript{147} Leslie (1794-1859) had been Professor of Painting in the RA schools from 1847-52 and the book was based on his lectures there.
had a currency which coincided with the coining of the term 'sensational' and its cognates. Meisel has shown that the term 'theatrical' as applied to art has a long history of use in a pejorative manner to describe "manipulative artifice and crude exaggeration". Those terms could easily be used to define sentimental, sensational works too.

Amongst the artists condemned for being "theatrical" was Greuze who, as has been shown, was a key figure in French sensibilité. Yet Diderot found Greuze's art true to life and crammed with didacticism. Le fils ingrat and Le fils puni are theatrical precisely because of (in Meisel's phrase) "the presence within the work of an obtrusive awareness of the spectator". The fact that both Leslie and Tom Taylor found Greuze too theatrical seems to have had little public importance.

148. Meisel, Realizations, pp. 28, 84.
150. Meisel, Realizations, p. 83. When Meisel wrote this he was evidently thinking of, but did not cite, the distinction Dickens drew between the "dramatic" and the "theatrical" in art. In Household Words (19 January 1856, p. 626) Dickens had described how in the former "a story is strikingly told, without apparent consciousness of a spectator, and... in the latter case the groups are obtrusively dressed up, and doing (or not doing) certain things with an eye to the spectator, and not for the sake of the story": see Richard Lettis, 'Dickens and Art', Dickens Studies Annual, 14 (1985), pp. 93-146.
151. Leslie, Handbook, p. 246. Leslie and Taylor collaborated on a book about Reynolds (1865) and Taylor edited Leslie's posthumously published autobiography (1860) so it is not surprising that their views on Greuze overlapped. Leslie is an interesting figure in the development of British painting about whom too little is known. One writer saw Leslie as the contemporary embodiment and direct descendent of the Hogarthian genre tradition and regretted that Leslie had deserted his own time for the profitable pastures of costume paintings: see
Maclise's *The Play Scene in Hamlet* (RA 1842, London, Tate Gallery) is an early example of a work brought into the theatricality debate in the Victorian period. Blackwood's Magazine wrote that:

"[Maclise] dares to tell the whole of a story, some will say, do say, theatrically - that we consider no dispraise... The boards of theatre and the canvas are the same thing - the eye is to behold and the mind is to be moved."^152^  

The reviewer, John Eagles, was defending Maclise from verdicts such as that of the *Times* which praised Leslie's *Scene from 'Twelfth Night'* (RA 1842, untraced) to the detriment of Maclise's Shakespearean scene. Leslie's work was:

"An admirable picture. It is a pure transcript of Shakespeare on canvas, without the theatrical exaggerations by which the illustrations of the great bard are deformed and distorted in the hands of artists."^153^  

The use made in melodramas of spectacular effects is akin to the use made by the 'social realists' of large canvases. Melodramatic spectacle had two functions; firstly, the imitation of social life, primarily in an urban setting on an appropriate scale of magnitude and secondly "to express in striking visual terms the sensationalism inherent in its nature."^154^ So melodramatic spectacle could either be a reinforcement of quotidian reality

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153. Quoted by Meisel, p.78.

(trains, coaches and horses, liners) or an exploitation of the truly sensational (heroine tied to the tracks before an oncoming train, horses running wild, shipwreck). Exactly the same is true of 'social realism': what could be more mundane than the queue for tickets to a casual ward and what could be more sensational than the re-presentation of that queue in a shocking, dramatically-lit but consumable manner?
Chapter Two. City Scenes.

The city was one half of what has been seen as the fundamental dichotomy of nineteenth-century Britain, the country and the city, although the contrast between the two was recognised in classical times.¹ The census of 1851 showed for the first time that Britain's population was predominantly urban.² To the educated nineteenth-century mind, the city often constituted the present, the locus of the modern and the cynosure of sophistication and civilisation, whereas the country was constituted as a diminishing, nostalgic continuum where the past lived on. To others the city was the site of alienation, degradation and disease. I have chosen to categorise the paintings discussed here in accordance with this nineteenth-century perception. 'Social realism' appears in both rural and urban subjects, but in the work of Fildes and Holl the earliest scenes were predominantly urban.³

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¹ The key study of this is Raymond Williams's The Country and the City, (1973), (rpt. London, 1985).
Part A: Houseless and Hungry.

Following a provincial art school training, Fildes came to London in 1863 to train at the South Kensington art school as a designer of ecclesiastical mosaics. He soon redirected his ambitions to book illustration which was flourishing in the 1860s. He resigned his scholarship, enrolled at the RA schools and supported himself by taking various menial jobs on the fringes of the wood-engraving trade. Somehow Fildes obtained an introduction to William Luson Thomas (1830-1900) one of the leading wood engravers of the 1860s. Thomas had a large workshop and extensive contacts in all areas of publishing. He initially offered Fildes employment redrawing parts of works submitted by others to give sufficient clarity for the engraver. This was in 1865-66. Fildes evidently got on well with Thomas who soon began to commission full drawings from him. However the bulk of Fildes's work between 1867 and 1869 was produced for the workshop of Thomas's main professional rivals Joseph Swain (1820-1909) and the Dalziel brothers, George (1815-1902), Edward (1817-1905) and Thomas (1823-1926).

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4. LVF, pp.6-9. Early watercolours and drawings by Fildes from 1862-65 are in the VAM, Department of Prints and Drawings. These include entries for the 1863 National Scholarship Competition which are endorsed on the reverse by Richard Redgrave: VAM E 1945 - 1948-1909.


During the summer of 1869 Thomas requested a different sort of work from Fildes. Although the artist had rapidly gained much experience of originating his own ideas for illustrations, that is illustrations which were not drawn to complement a pre-existing text, they had always been within carefully prescribed limits. Now Thomas gave him the chance to produce a subject entirely of his own choosing.

Fildes gave a variety of not entirely compatible accounts of what happened next. In a letter of June 1888 Fildes said that following Thomas's request "in the June of that year [1869] I made a drawing of an incident I saw in the streets one winter's night when I first came to London in '63". In an interview of 1893 Fildes stated that he knew the drawing would be for a new journal (Thomas did not in fact tell him this until the September) and based it on a scene he had observed in the Portland Road a few years earlier.


8. Fildes to Carey, 1st June 1888, Royal Holloway and Bedford New College archives, AR 500/1. I am grateful to Mrs. Barbara Cotton of RHBNC for her help.

Whilst he was contributing drawings of subjects of his choice to various publications, it was allegedly Fildes's practice to roam the streets of London looking for material. However he did not use a sketchbook in which to make rapid records of incidents, character or locality as one would have expected him to:

It was enough for him to have seen them, and the impression remained so firmly fixed in his memory that he could reproduce them years afterwards without the necessity of referring again to the originals. His sole proceeding was to enter the name of the scene in a notebook he carried for the purpose, and a glance at it always sufficed to supply him with a subject.\(^*\)

According to this account Fildes found his subject in a note in his pocket-book from which he quickly worked up a preliminary design. The final drawing was finished by September when Thomas wrote to Fildes and confessed the motive behind the commission, that it was to be for an entirely new journal, to be called The Graphic. Having refused Fildes's offer to reduce the price of the drawing (£20) on the grounds that "the more I see of [it], the better I like it" and therefore considered it worth the money, Thomas continued:

And now for the grand secret - the drawing you have made, and others I have, is for a new weekly journal, to be a high-priced paper, the very best we can get together by the combination of the best writers, artists, engravers and printers. I have you in my eye for many good drawings, and I only hope you will be able to do them...In the meantime please keep this entirely private. I have paid you the compliment of selecting you first to speak about this matter, as I know you will keep it in trust.\(^{11}\)

\(^*\) M. H. Spielmann, 'Painters in their Studios, VII. Mr. Luke Fildes, R.A.' Graphic, 11 August 1888, p.169.

\(^{11}\) Thomas to Fildes, 6 September 1869, NAL, 86 PP 10, I,1. This letter is given partly in LVF, pp.12-13. Later that month Thomas again contacted Fildes offering him the opportunity to travel to the USA for three months and supply drawings of his experiences there for the Graphic.
Fildes had another reason to give Thomas all the help and support he could. He had accepted Thomas's offer of shares in the fledgling publication. Thomas had, by September 1869, raised much of the £25,000 capital he needed to get his project started. The capital was raised by the sale of 2,500 shares at £10 each. From the beginning Thomas had reserved 150 shares for artist contributors who would therefore have a vested interest in supporting – and presumably could expect employment from – the new journal. In the same letter he offered Fildes 5-10 shares. Exactly how many shares Fildes subscribed is not known, but they were a most profitable investment. In the year to 31 April 1873 the dividend he received from his investment in the Graphic was £28.12 Even if it is assumed that he bought 10 shares at £10 each, an annual return of 28% was many times higher than the ordinary commercial interest rates which stood at 3-5%. This gives some idea of the profitability of Thomas's venture. Fildes did not hang on to all his shares for long. As soon as he had established himself as a painter, and realising that his days as a contributor to the Graphic

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Thomas to Fildes, 27 September 1869, NAL, 86 PP 10, I, 2. It is not known why Fildes declined to go. Arthur Boyd Houghton (1836-75) went instead and his drawings appeared throughout 1870: see Paul Hogarth, Arthur Boyd Houghton, (London, 1981). Fildes may have had some knowledge that the proposed launch date for the journal would be in December because of the presence of snow in his drawing. 12. MS set of accounts headed 'Income from 1st May 1872 to 1st May 1873', NAL, 86 PP 9. These accounts also indicate that Fildes had another dividend in June 1873 of £7 8s 4d.
in particular and as an artist in black-and-white in general were over, he sold some shares in the autumn of 1876 for "five times their cost". 13

The first number of the Graphic was published on the 4th December 1869. Fildes's page-sized drawing (11 1/2" x 16") entitled 'Houseless and Hungry' appeared on page nine. It showed a line of people queuing outside a police station on a snowy winter's night to obtain tickets of admission to the casual ward of the local workhouse. The ticket would entitle the holder to one night's food and shelter, in return for which some sort of manual labour such as breaking rocks or picking oakum would have to be performed for a set number of hours the following morning. The drawing was accompanied by an explanatory article on the following page as were many of the Graphic's independent illustrations. 14 Fildes's drawing, which had been engraved by Thomas himself, 15 was an immediate popular and critical success. As Spielmann remarked "the

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13. Fildes to Henry Woods, 28 October 1876, NAL, 86 PP 3. Fildes retained some connection with the journal being elected to the board in 1895. Fildes seems to have been an astute investor who gave advice on the subject to others: LVF, pp.138, 217-18. His MS accounts for the year ending 31st March 1876 (NAL, 86 PP 9) include £112 4s 5d interest on money invested, suggesting capital of £2,500 or more.

14. The text is given in Appendix 3.

15. It was a feature of Thomas's close managerial (indeed proprietorial) supervision of the Graphic that he himself engraved onto the woodblock many of the most important plates in the earlier years.
sensation was tremendous". On the strength of it Fildes was invited to illustrate Dickens's next novel, *Edwin Drood*. Thomas wrote again to Fildes saying:

"Virtue meets its own reward... The pains and trouble you have bestowed in your drawing of the Casualls has not been thrown away. Yesterday and today I saw Sir F. Grant [President of the Royal Academy], Watts, Elmore, Faed, Leslie, Yeames, Frith [leading Academicians or Associates] and others and all expressed their great pleasure with what they saw & more particularly your engraving. I told them you were painting & think they will, in fact know they will, look out for your work. So it may happen it will be useful to you."

Indeed the drawing was useful to Fildes. It is reported that Millais saw it and immediately recommended the young artist (whom he had apparently not yet met) to Charles Dickens (1812-70) who was looking for an illustrator to participate in his next project. It was Fildes's work for Dickens which suddenly brought him to the attention of a wide public and really set him on the road to success. It also provided him with an association he could later exploit. When his agreement with Dickens was concluded, Fildes wrote to Woods "...it is the turning point of my career. I shall be judged by this".

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18. Thomas to Fildes, n.d. but about mid-December 1869, NAL, 86 PP 10, I,3. This letter is given partly in LVF, p.13.
Thomas's intentions in founding the Graphic were multiple but distinct. In his teens he had worked as a wood-block engraver with his brother in Paris, New York and Rome before returning to London and entering the workshop of W.J. Linton (1812-98). Thomas eventually set up as a wood-engraver on his own account and was employed for many years to supply illustrations to the Illustrated London News. His objective in founding the Graphic was that it should "be open to all artists, whatever their method, instead of confining my staff to draughtsmen on wood as had been hitherto the general custom". He also intended to employ writers "of some literary distinction". Although he had no resources of his own Thomas raised the large sum required in a fairly short space of time from friends, relatives, potential contributors such as Fildes and professional (speculative) investors. Many potential titles were discussed before The Graphic was decided upon and an extensive campaign of pre-launch publicity was mounted. Public curiosity ensured the success of the first few issues but circulation fell thereafter. At its lowest point it dropped to about 18,000 compared with an average sale of the ILN of about 70,000.

21. Fox, 'Wood Engravers and the City', p.4.
23. Thomas, 'Making of the Graphic', p.82. From the context this would seem to have been in the spring of 1870.
Its only direct rival was the ILN which sold at 5d. whereas the Graphic cost 6d. Thomas candidly admitted that it was the public thirst for information following the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War and during the Commune that most added to the paper's sales. The Graphic was fortunate enough to have a correspondent in Paris, S.P. Hall (1842-1922), who sent out sketches by balloon, some of which were worked up for publication by Fildes. Thus the Graphic had eye-witness material on the progress of the war and its effect on the population of Paris which lay under seige. From this point Thomas did not look back. The Christmas edition of 1881 sold 450,000 copies; the Jubilee edition of 1887 sold 205,000 and the special edition which included a colour print of Cherry Ripe by Millais sold out an edition of 500,000 without satisfying public demand. Thomas acknowledged his debt to the devoted band of contributors who stuck by him when the project was in the doldrums, but noted craftily that some were "pecuniarily interested in its success". The success of the Graphic soon spawned a number of imitators, but none had the benefit of the pool of talented

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25. However, the ILN had a completely different programme. From the time of its establishment in 1842 it had always endeavoured never to upset the sensibilities of its readership by publishing material which could have offended even "the most delicate": Celina Fox, 'The Development of Social Reportage in English Periodical Illustration During the 1840s and 1850s', Past and Present, 74 (1977), p.93.


contributors that Thomas could draw on, including Durand, Fildes, Gregory, Green, Hall, Herkomer, Holl, Houghton, Linton, Macbeth, Nash, Paterson (Allingham), Pinwell, Small, Thomson (Butler), Walker and Woods.29

The half page of anonymous text published with the illustration sought to describe and explain the lives of the figures Fildes had depicted. It constitutes another link with the theatre because the text functions as a guide to the viewer in a similar way to that in which the programme of a play helps the audience to identify the characters. The article is interesting because it seeks to substantiate the drawing's claims to authenticity by describing the lives of apparently "real" people, telling how each had ended up in a queue for admission to a casual ward. Although the basic motif was derived from a common occurrence across London and wherever a casual ward existed, Fildes's representation of it was built up between about June and September 1869 from a large number of individual and group studies, many of which survive in the Department of Prints and Drawings of the Victoria and Albert Museum.

It is possible that some of the preparatory studies were made from genuine paupers but many were made from named individuals whose addresses Fildes carefully noted on the

appropriate studies. These may well have been professional or semi-professional models. All drawings were made in the studio.\textsuperscript{30} (Fildes never claimed to have made any sketches \textit{in situ}.) Therefore the Graphic's claim that these are "portraits of real people who received the necessary order for admission \textit{[to the casual ward]} on a recent evening" can be seen to be at best ambiguous and at worst untrue. Its statement that "these people...were admitted into the casual ward of one of our great workhouses a few minutes after this sketch was taken" is similarly inaccurate.\textsuperscript{31}

The way in which the personal history of each figure is retold and the character of each assessed is a direct repetition of the sort of thing Tom Taylor did in his prescriptive reading of Frith's \textit{The Railway Station} (1862, Egham, Royal Holloway and Bedford New College).\textsuperscript{32}

As an example one may cite "the poor woman with a baby in her arms, and a ragged boy and a woebegone girl running at her side". She, the Graphic writes, "is the wife of a dock labourer who is now undergoing three weeks' imprisonment for assaulting her":

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\textsuperscript{30} The actual process by which the drawing and the later painting on the same theme were made is discussed by Bernard Myers, 'Studies for \textit{Houseless and Hungry} and the \textit{Casual Ward} by Luke Fildes, R.A.', \textit{Apollo}, CXVI (1982), pp.36-43 and in which the studies are reproduced. I am grateful to Bernard Myers, who is married to a descendent of the artist, for answering my queries. The studies are now all in the VAM, Department of Prints and Drawings, E 65-1987, E 129 - 42-1987.

\textsuperscript{31} [Anon], 'Houseless and Hungry', \textit{Graphic}, 4 December 1869, p.10. See Appendix 3.

Her case serves to explain the unwillingness to prosecute so often observed among wives who have been brutally ill-used, and which is sometimes commented on as inexplicable. But signal punishment for the husband means starvation.\textsuperscript{33}

In debt at the general shop and in arrears with the rent, she has been turned out onto the streets. With her children she is walking to helpful friends in Essex rather than enter the workhouse. This portrays her as self-reliant rather than dependent on state welfare - an idea not apparent from the drawing alone. It is as if some kind of text were felt to be needed to prescribe the types of social and moral inferences which may be drawn. However the fact that it was possible to present such material as Fildes's drawing owed much to earlier "propaganda periodicals which had undermined the conventions relating to the illustration of social conditions". Publications such as the \textit{True Briton} (1851-54) and the \textit{Poor Man's Guardian} (1847) had failed in their endeavour to attract a readership which would have permitted them to thrive. Their legacy however was the alteration they encouraged in attitudes to such illustration, preparing the ground for the \textit{Graphic}.\textsuperscript{34}

The \textit{Graphic} article is clear evidence of the practice Fildes described as having his illustrations "written up to".\textsuperscript{35} Rather than illustrate a prepared text, a text would be written to complement Fildes's finished illustration. In fact the boy on the extreme left has noth-

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{33} \textit{Graphic}, Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{34} Fox, 'The Development of Social Reportage', p.109.
\item \textsuperscript{35} IV 1893, p.119.
\end{itemize}
ing to do with the woman holding the baby and her daughter: inspection of their superior clothing reveals that they are much better protected against the winter weather than he. The fact that they are all lumped into the same group is an error of the anonymous author. As Myers has shown, the group of the mother, baby and girl went through a number of trial forms. The first is a rough sketch of the mother holding the baby under her cloak and facing to the left. Two later variants both show the woman facing to the right, no longer holding the baby but touching the hem of her cloak to her mouth and clasping a girl to her side in one and a boy to her side in the other. Myers did not comment on this change: a female child, homeless and on the streets was felt to be at even greater risk of corruption and exploitation than a male child and was therefore a more pathetic figure.

As Myers recognised, it is possible that Fildes had certain literary sources in mind when he embarked on his drawing. In particular he may have been aware of a novel

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36. Myers, 'Studies...by Luke Fildes', Fig.4, VAM, E 141-1987. Directions in the original drawing would of course be reversed in the printing process.

37. Myers, Figs.5, 6, VAM, E 129-, 142-1987.

38. Myers made one mistake. The sketches he reproduces (Figs.7,8,9, VAM, E 138 - 40-1987) for the man seen face-on just to the right of the mother and child group are indeed for that figure whom Myers calls the "rough-looking fellow in the 'Scotch cap'" (p.42). But the text which accompanied the drawing in the Graphic refers to the figure on the extreme right as wearing a 'Scotch cap', who is characterised as a hardened graduate in petty larceny: Graphic, 'Houseless and Hungry', p.10.
by Henry Mayhew's brother Augustus called *Paved with Gold* which was illustrated by 'Phiz' (Hablot K. Browne, 1815-82) whom Fildes seems to have known. The novel contains a description of a queue on a winter's night waiting for admission to an Asylum for the Houseless Poor (as they were then known) which bears a distinct resemblance to Fildes's image:

...they stand shivering in the snow, with their thin cobwebby garments hanging in tatters about them. Many are without shirts with their bare skin showing through the rents and gaps like the hide of a dog with the mange...A few are without shoes, and these keep one foot only to the ground while the bare flesh that has had to tramp through the snow is blue and livid-looking as half-cooked meat...41

Many of these elements are seen in Fildes's drawing. Mayhew's novel is a good example of the process by which the public was prepared by literature for later pictorial imagery.

It seems not to have been previously noticed that the title Fildes gave the drawing occurs in James Greenwood's famous work of social investigation and reportage *The Seven Curses of London* which had been published earlier in 1869:

...time was, and at no very remote period, when to be poor and houseless and hungry were accounted worse sins against society than begging or stealing...42


40. LVF, pp.53-4.


42. J. Greenwood, *The Seven Curses of London*, [1869], ed. J. Richards, (Oxford, 1981), p.277, emphasis added. The book was based on Greenwood's pseudonymous articles ('Amateur Casual') published in the PMG in 1866. These articles were specifically recalled by the *Morning Post*.
This passage occurs in a section entitled 'Waste of Charity' in which Greenwood estimated that two-thirds of male casuals were in receipt of help they did not deserve: they were simply "too lazy to work and too cowardly to take openly to the trade of thieving". An earlier chapter (XIV) in a section on 'Professional Beggars' is entitled 'Begging Dodges'. In it Greenwood describes some of the favourite tricks of the begging trade. Amongst them are the "shaller dodge" which involved making the most of the beggar's ragged appearance by deliberately exposing the skin beneath. This was especially productive in cold weather particularly if used in conjunction with some blue colouring on the skin "to excite the compassion of the charitable".

It is interesting to note that Fildes should have drawn and later painted the casual ward applicants queueing up outside the police station for their tickets of admission, rather than entering, or inside, the casual ward itself. One reason for this may have been the common knowledge that not all deserving applicants could be admitted, so the question of where that night's shelter was to be found still hangs over several of the figures in

in its review of the *Casuals* in 1874: 2 May 1874, p.3c.


the drawing and later painting. The woman holding the baby is clearly shown to have been successful, her ticket is easily visible (this is true in the painting too).

Given that Fildes used models with addresses in the Holborn/Charing Cross area (Russell Place, Verulam Street, Chapel Place, Little Coram Street and Bedfordbury) - that is near his lodgings in Hunter Street - it is likely that the police station was based on one in the area too. In the various accounts of the genesis of the drawing that Fildes gave he variously described observing such a scene in the Portland Road and visiting various police stations and casual wards, befriending policemen, paupers and workhouse overseers. All of these claims were made to bolster the appearance of authenticity of his painting. However what Fildes did not tell any of his interviewers and what has not previously been noticed is that Fildes's lodgings at 53 Hunter Street were virtually next door to the Hunter Street police station. Therefore he would have been able to see queues of casuals on a daily basis practically on his

45. These are the addresses of his models which appear on the preparatory drawings: Myers, Figs.12 (VAM, E 133-1987), 10 (VAM, E 136-1987), 14 (VAM, E 141-1987), 12 (VAM, E 65-1987).

46. In later interviews Fildes tended to conflate 'Houseless and Hungry' and the Casuals and their respective preparatory processes. See IV 1893, pp.119, 122-24 and Thomson, pp.4-6.

47. Census Returns for 1871 (microfilm in the Local History section, Swiss Cottage Library, London) gives the address as no.53 whereas the RA catalogues for 1869-76 give it as no.52. Post Office Directory London 1869; Ordnance Survey Map 1878. However, other directories list Fildes as resident at 22 King Henry's Road, Primrose Hill, between 1871 and 1876.
own doorstep. The tickets obtained at Hunter Street entitled the bearer to accommodation at the Holborn Union Workhouse at 158 Gray's Inn Road nearby.

So despite the ready availability of genuine casuals - whom indeed Fildes claimed to have used as his models - the artist chose instead to work from identifiably housed people. One must say in his favour that he would have needed to have models he could rely on to reappear and that could not easily have been the case with genuine casuals who by definition were itinerant. He claimed that if, on one of his expeditions, he saw "anyone who took my fancy I gave him my card and asked him to come round after he had picked his oakum". (Fildes was fortunate to have chosen only literate paupers.)

One example may serve to make this point more clearly. At the centre of both 'Houseless and Hungry' and the Casuals is the figure of a portly man wearing a top hat. This figure was much commented on by reviewers of the later painted version of the scene as an inveterate boozer and a regular feature of London's streets. Annotations on preparatory sketches made by Fildes in 1869 indicate that he was in fact George Mills of 46, Bedfordbury, Chandos St., Charing Cross.

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48. IV 1893, p.122.

49. Myers, Fig.15, VAM, E 65-1987. I am inclined to agree with Myers, 'Sketches...by Fildes', pp.42-3, that Fildes reused the sketches he had made for 'Houseless and Hungry' when painting the Casuals, but also making a limited number of new studies.
Fildes's claims, and those of the Graphic, to authenticity can only be sustained by invoking the idea of the 'higher truth'. Whilst the image was not true in fact, what it represented was typical of the mundane reality, allowing Fildes to present an image of the contemporary city which could be perceived as authentic in a similar way to that found in contemporary drama. The fact that the image was not literally true but typical may have encouraged the anonymous editorialist to try to present the drawing as unmediated, that is to attempt to establish its credentials as honest reportage, rather than as an individual's opinion. Perhaps Thomas feared that such a striking image would repel rather than attract subscribers to his new journal if it were not allied to a text which glossed the drawing as informative and journalistic rather than as reflecting badly on a social injustice. Indeed, the text carefully indicates that the provision of casual wards under the appropriate legislation is evidence that something was being done about the problems of homelessness and unemployment.  

50. The first number of the Graphic contained the following illustrations: 
Front cover: an Egyptian girl from a painting by Richter (q.v. pp. 13, 16, 17, 20 below). 
p. 4 The King of the Belgians receiving a public address. 
p. 5 Pius the Ninth in Council. 
p. 8 The wreck of the 'Spindrift'. 
p. 9 Houseless and Hungry. 
p. 12 Queen Victoria. 
p. 13 'The Pasha's Couriers' (after Gerome). 
p. 16 A bird's eye view of the Suez Canal. 
p. 17 Scenes on the banks of the Suez Canal. 
p. 20 The Opening of the Suez Canal. 
p. 21 Paris fashions. 
The subject matter is, with the exception of "Houseless and Hungry", closely comparable to what the ILN offered: foreign scenes, especially those concerned with imperial endeavours, portraits of royalty and other notables. The next few issues each contained an image equivalent in
Part B: The Casuals.

From Illustrator to Painter.

Having discussed Fildes's reputation-making illustration I want now to consider how it was turned into a painting and what the contemporary significance of the work was. But firstly I shall sketch in Fildes's career between 1869 and 1874, which period saw his evolution from black-and-white illustrator to fully-fledged oil painter. This was a pivotal period in Fildes's career. He had already shown himself prepared to make substantial changes in career direction when in 1866 he resigned his scholarship to the art school at South Kensington in order to study at the RA schools. Thereby turning his back on financial security, Fildes was obliged to earn a precarious living on the fringes of the engraving trade. He soon established himself in that field, acquiring sufficient status to be invited by Thomas to contribute to the *Graphic*. This status seems not to have satisfied him and he soon decided to attempt to join the ranks of the most socially estimable artists - painters. Fildes's participation in few exhibitions other than the RA's seems to indicate that he intended to establish himself within, and on the conditions enforced by, the dominant artistic organisation in nineteenth-century Britain, the Royal 

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subject matter to Fildes's contribution but this apparent policy of including one image of the social underworld per issue seems to have lasted only until the spring of 1870.
Academy. Whereas Holl had begun exhibiting at small commercial galleries in about 1863, and at the RA in 1864, evidently trying to give his work wide exposure, Fildes seems to have been more single-minded, evidence, perhaps, of ambition and self-assurance. Indeed the deliberation which lay behind the creation of the Casuals strongly suggests that Fildes saw the painting as his means of (as we might now express it) changing his career path and realigning his market position. He was taking a short cut, via notoriety, to fame, success and wealth.

In 1871 Fildes took his first studio, something for which he had presumably felt no need as long as he was an artist in black-and-white and watercolour only. At 22 King Henry's Road, near Primrose Hill, Fildes took a small flat and studio from mid-1871 until about 1877 when his Norman Shaw house in Kensington was finished. The house in King Henry's Road had three other occupants at about the same time: Henry Woods, later Fildes's brother-in-law, Edward Humphery (dates not known) and Laslett J. Pott (1837-98) all of whom were painters. Fildes evi-

51. LVF, p.19; Post Office Directories 1871-77; Andrew Saint, Richard Norman Shaw, (London, 1976), pp.153-7 and p.415 no.81. A receipt from Shaw to Fildes gives the cost of the house to build as £4,500 (plus the unknown cost of the land) and £225 (5% commission on the outlay) to Shaw: NAL, 86 PP 7, L,7. It is not clear how the house was financed. Fildes apparently had capital of about £2,500 in 1876 and he inherited an unknown sum from his grandmother in that year. His income increased six-fold between 1872-3 and 1874-5: see below.

dentley intended to abandon his black-and-white work for a
career as a 'proper' artist, as a painter. He already had
some experience as a watercolourist and had exhibited two
watercolours at the Royal Academy, one each in 1868 and
1869. Trying to decide which subject to tackle first,
Fildes was unable to choose between painting a version of
'Houseless and Hungry' or a version of 'Hours of Idle-
ness' an illustration of an idyllic scene of lovers in a
punt in Regency costume which had appeared in Once a Week
also in 1869. Fildes decided to consult Millais whom he
may have known through Charles Alston Collins (whom
Fildes had replaced as the illustrator of Edwin Drood)
but whom he is likelier to have known through Dickens.
Millais' advice was to produce a first picture which
would definitely sell and which would stand a good chance
of getting hung at the Royal Academy. So 'Hours of
Idleness' became Fair Quiet and Sweet Rest (1872, War-
tingham, Art Gallery) on a canvas measuring 51" x 94".
This subject was an artistic cliche of the 1860s, al-
though Fildes's work gained from its emulation of a Wat-
teauesque manner. Millais was right: before the Academy

53. RA 1868 (729) Nightfall; RA 1869 (557) The loosened
team, both untraced. No reviews have been found. In 1870
he exhibited two untitled illustrations prepared for Ed-
win Drood (854) (these may be amongst the Drood drawings
now in the Beinecke Rare Book Library, Yale University)
and in 1871 showed a watercolour version of his Graphic
Illustration (25 December 1870, opposite p.14) "The Empty
Chair" Gad's Hill, Ninth of June, 1870 (1870, Philadel-
phia, Free Library). The latter is strongly reminiscent
of Sir William Allan's The Orphan, also known as The
Empty Chair, Abbotsford (1834, Royal collection) which
was engraved in the Art Journal, new series I (1855), op-
posite p.304.

55. LVE, pp.19-20.
opened Fildes sold the work to the dealer McLean for £600. He quickly resold it to the well-known collector and industrialist Thomas Taylor (1809-92).\[57] Thus Fildes came into contact with a wealthy collector, a connection which served him well in the future.\[58] Earlier that year he had written to his grandmother Mary Fildes explaining how the picture would be "sent in" at the beginning of April and how he would have his work cut out in order to be able to finish it in time. He added:

...several first-rate artists who have seen it say I shall make a name with it. I have really gone beyond what I expected, or rather hoped to do. Everyone says it will sell like a shot, and at not a 1/4 less than £500 - we'll see...\[59]

The painting was well-received in the press, being described as "a very brilliant performance which destroys the pretensions of everything near it"\[60] whilst the Times thought it a "gallant, but not great, debut", conventional and derivative but "dashingly painted".\[61] It cer-

56. Other examples of the subject type include Marcus Stone's Summer Punting (1864, private collection) and Thomas Brooks's Amongst the Lilies (c. 1860, Sotheby's Belgravia, 23 July 1981 [267]).

57. LVF, p.20.

58. See Appendix 4 on Fildes and Taylor.

59. Fildes to Mary Fildes, about 25 February 1872, NAL, 86 JJ Box I,(x),1. Borzello, 'Fine Art and the Poor', p.245 misunderstood this letter, not realising that "1/4" meant a farthing.

60. Art Journal, XI (1872), p.185

61. Times, 27 May 1872, p.5b, which preferred a similar scene by W.F. Yeames, A rest by the river side (RA 1872 [165], untraced) for its present-day setting.
tainly owes a significant debt to Watteau in whose work there had been a growth of interest in Britain during the mid-nineteenth century.62

For the following year's Academy Fildes merely reprised *Fair, Quiet and Sweet Rest* but with one couple instead of two as *Simpletons* (1873, private collection). The repetition can be explained quite easily. Fildes already had a buyer, Lord Ronald Gower (1845-1916), the sculptor and writer on art. Although it was only a modest success at the RA Fildes received a number of commissions for replicas of it in both oil and watercolour. The original brought him £400 and the replicas another £905 over the next three years.63 Gower quickly sold his version, to Fildes's chagrin.64

From about 1872 Fildes became financially secure as a painter, but he continued to produce occasional drawings for magazines, sometimes for the money and sometimes as favours to old friends and former employers. For instance two drawings for the *Cornhill Magazine* in 1872-73 brought in only 15 gns., whereas 'The Emperor Napoleon III after death' and 'The Bashful Model', Photographing a prisoner in Goal' for the *Graphic* brought in £50 and £60 respect-


63. MS accounts headed 'Income from 1st May 1872 to 1st May 1873', 'From sending in of 1874' ('Simpleton copies £540') and 'Income for year ending 31 March 1876 (copies at £210, £105 and £50): NAL, 86 PP 9.

64. LVF, p.22.
tively. The illustrations for Edwin Drood, for which Fildes was not paid until the summer of 1873, brought him £150 for the cover, a title-page vignette and 12 illustrations. 65 Fildes's known income for 1872-73 was £553 15s (against an expenditure of £425 3s 3d); for May - September 1873 it was £267 8s 4d; for 1874-75 it was £1,580 and for 1874-75 it was £3,297 4s 5d. 66 His burgeoning annual income testifies that Fildes had established himself in a short space of time, but there is evidence to show that he wanted to go beyond mere financial success.

In the summer of 1873 Fildes began work on his next painting. By September he was well advanced and Thomas Taylor had already expressed an interest in it. Taylor had just lent Fair Quiet and Sweet Rest to the recent international exhibition at Vienna where it had won a medal. In a letter to Mary Fildes he explained how, if Taylor were to buy the work in progress, he intended to send both to the "Great American Exhibition" to be held in 1875 [sic], "to get me more honours". 67 Taylor even-

65. Ibid. Napoleon III lying in state was drawn from a photo and was published as a supplement to the Graphic, 18 January 1873. 'The Bashful Model' appeared in the Graphic on 8 September 1873, pp.440-41. Both were large, double-page illustrations. The latter was a light-hearted treatment of an essentially brutal procedure whereby prisoners were forcibly photographed.

66. Ibid.

67. Fildes to Mary Fildes, 30 September 1873, NAL, 86 JJ Box I,(x),3, partly in LVF, p.24. Presumably Fildes was referring to the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition of 1876 where indeed the Casuals was shown, as was Betty (RA 1875 [1221], untraced). By about 1875 Fair Quiet and Sweet Rest belonged to John Lewis of Savile Hall,
tually bought the finished work for £1,250.«

Despite Myers' article it is still not clear how 'Houseless and Hungry' transmuted into the Casuals. It seems highly likely that Fildes re-used the extensive sketches he had made in 1869 with a few new studies for newly-introduced elements such as the gas-lamp.« The composition of the painting is basically the same as that of the drawing but whereas the wall in the latter is parallel to the picture plane in the painting it recedes at an angle. Fildes began to work out the composition of the painting by drawing over a copy of the original Graphic illustration.» All of the figures seen in the drawing reappear in the painting, some in different positions, with the exception of the man seen face-on between the woman with the baby and the huddled man.» It is interesting that he should be omitted, being the only figure directly to engage the viewer by his firm gaze out of the drawing. In the painting all the figures are

Halifax, Yorks., who refused to lend it. See [J.M. Jopling], 'Philadelphia Exhibition 1876: Painters to be represented...', MS, NAL, 86 FF 58. On the history of great exhibitions see P. Greenhalgh, Ephemeral Vistas, (Manchester, 1988) wherein Philadelphia is mentioned on pp.214-6.

68. LVE, p.24. The MS accounts give the price as £1,890.


70. Myers, Fig.2 (VAM, E 137 -1987).

71. A comparison of the facial features of this figure and those of Fildes in the period strongly suggests a self-portrait was used for that figure: see the carte-de-visite photograph reproduced by Thomson, p. 22.
self-absorbed and look down, except for the policeman and the old man to whom he gives directions on the left and the girl in the foreground who stares uncomprehendingly ahead. By removing this figure Fildes was eliminating the only source of direct reproach to the viewer thus diluting the impact of the image.

Before the exhibition opened Fildes managed to get a certain amount of advance publicity. It was a common practice to invite friends, other artists and potential buyers to the studio to see that year's work before sending-in day. This activity had a social function as well as being a kind of marketing ploy. Hence the Academy's reference to "Fildes's long-heralded replica of a cut for the Graphic". Some artists even managed to get reviewed before the official opening. Fildes's work was amongst those noticed by the Pictorial World at the end of March. Then, titled 'Waiting for Relief', it was promoted as unquestionably "one of the sensations of the year".

The public response to the Casuals was overwhelming. Fildes received the accolade of having a protective barrier placed around it and a policeman brought in to keep the enthusiastic and curious throng at a safe distance.

72. Academy, 2 May 1874, p.5c-d.
73. Pictorial World, 28 March 1874, p.58.
74. LVF, pp.25-6. This was necessary only seven other times in the nineteenth century: 1822 (Wilkie's Chelsea Pensioners), 1858 (Frith's Derby Day), 1865 (Frith's The Marriage of the Prince of Wales), 1867 (Frith's Charles
Press coverage was extensive and thorough and the work was discussed from just about every conceivable point of view. Whilst the comments were generally encouraging, praising the artist's success, certain criticisms recurred in different publications. Only the Manchester Courier dismissed the work out of hand, writing that the figures were:

...repulsive in the extreme and quite belong to the chamber-of-horrors style of art...they simply appal and disgust without doing the slightest good to humanity or making it more merciful."

Many praised it with the reservation that it was not really suitable as a subject in art. " Others, such as the Saturday Review, went further, adopting a Reynoldsian line in finding it completely unacceptable and a mistake which lacked 'improving' qualities: "the [subject is] too revolting for an art which should seek to please, refine and elevate"."

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75. Manchester Courier, 27 May 1874, p.6e. This paper also thought that Elizabeth Thomson's The Roll Call (1874, Royal collection) was so much like a wax-work that Madame Tussaud might feel the popularity of her chamber-of-horrors threatened.

76. Art Journal, XIII (1874), p.201; ILN, 23 May 1874, p.494; Times, 26 May 1874, p.6c.

77. Saturday Review, 2 May 1874, p.562. It was a commonplace assumption in nineteenth-century Britain that the arts should be 'improving'. E.S. Dallas devoted a two-volume work (The Gay Science, [London, 1866]) to a discussion of the purpose of the arts, implying at length, but never explaining how, ennoblement should be the purpose: see Wendell Stacy Johnson, "The Bride of Literature": Ruskin, The Eastlakes, and Mid-Victorian Theories of Art, Victorian Newsletter 26 (1964), p.24.
The subject matter itself was an important element in the majority of the discussions. The view was widely expressed that whilst paupers were not really a fit subject for art, Fildes had done his best to elevate the scene. The conservative *Art Journal* regretted that the "grovelling misery" of such an "accident of civilisation" should be perpetuated in art:

> A picture cannot be shut up and put away like a book, and therefore a subject in painting which cannot always make an impression of satisfying beauty is so far unfitted for the purposes of artistic expression. To this extent we think Mr. Fildes's choice is indefensible.

The *Architect*'s critic recognised that there was a difference in what was acceptable in different media. It thought Fildes's scene was a journalistic one being "more suited to the pen than the pencil." A similar point was made by the *Saturday Review* which contended that the quotation from Dickens which appeared in the catalogue

> "Dumb, wet silent horrors! Sphinxes set up against that dead wall and none likely to be at the pains of..."

78. Rachman, 'Story-painting and picture-writing...', p.87 has interestingly contended that as reviewers increasingly depended on a discussion of subject-matter, they encouraged painters who were eager for publicity and success to produce works which would easily lend themselves to written description, that is had plenty of action or plot.


> ...our glory not our shame - our civilisation, our wealth, not our poverty and ignorance...objects of cast-down poverty in art are all but as wretched as in life; and pictures of poor-house penury are scarcely less low indications of art-tendencies than the increase in pauperism is fatal in national economy.

Quoted by Rachman, p.42, who interprets this to mean that to show poverty was to add to it.

with the title could not serve as mitigation for having painted a subject unfit for representation because "it has always been held that in written description a place may be found for horrors which become intolerable when brought into pictorial form bodily before the eye". On this theme the *Times* argued that:

... it is too late to argue that such a subject is not within the limits of art now recognised; but we doubt the justification of inflicting such pain through painting, unless there be some suggestion, in subject or treatment, of hope, remedy or repentance. Here we fail to find any of the three.

The last point is one that is also made quite widely, that of blame, guilt and remedy. The *Athenaeum* made a remarkable claim that "not a few will see the miseries of their fellow-beings for the first time" (emphasis added) in the "dismal, pitiable set of folks" in Fildes's picture. It continued:

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solving them until the general overthrow": J. Forster, *The Life of Dickens*, (London, 1874), Vol.3, pp.54-55. This biography was published after the RA exhibition. Fildes chose to use the quotation (which is taken from a letter of November 1855 in which Dickens described a visit to the Whitechapel workhouse) when the parallel between it and his painting was pointed out to him by Forster. The *Manchester Courier* (6 May 1874, p.6e) was alone in discussing Fildes's choice of motto. It showed that the quotation had been completely decontextualised. Dickens had been referring to "seven heaps of rags" he had seen outside the workhouse which turned out to be young women.

82. *Saturday Review*, 23 May 1874, p.654. Perhaps this is what the *Art Journal* had been getting at when it wrote that a picture could not be shut up like a book.

83. *Times*, 26 May 1874, p.6c. It is worth recording that William Mulready at an unknown date jotted down the words "Workhouse idea" in one of his many notebooks. He does not seem to have produced a painting on the theme: see Marcia Pointon, 'Pictorial narrative in the art of William Mulready', *Burlington Magazine*, CXXII (1980), p.233.
Few men will turn away without long study of this mournful representation of the debris of London life; and many will not fail to say "What can I do to better this state of things?"

But such rhetorical challenges were easily forgotten. More commonly encountered were vapid phrases such as that from the Queen which stated the work to make a "direct appeal to the highest and most charitable feelings", rather than invite any action. The Art Journal pursued a different line, refusing to relate poverty to society in general and merely wishing that it would be eradicated in both reality and art:

The state of things [Fildes] represents to us ought rather to be removed than to be perpetuated, and its introduction into art which should be permanent is rather matter for regret.

The Times attempted to justify its lack of real enthusiasm for the painting by pointing out that:

Mr Fildes has unconsciously betrayed the unsoundness of his grounds by choosing for so many of his models the professional beggars of the streets - those who never, or very rarely, seek the shelter of the casual ward, but prefer the warmth and squalid luxury of the thieves kitchen or cheap lodging house, and are seldom without the price of it in their ragged pockets.

84. Athenaeum, 2 May 1874, p.602.
85. Queen, 23 May 1874, p.417.
86. Art Journal, XIII (1874), p.201. This was a long-standing type of criticism. Richard Redgrave's Fashion's Slaves (RA 1847, private collection) was criticised for dwelling on such matters: "The end of art is pleasure; and to dwell habitually on the dark side of humanity is to miss that end": Athenaeum, 22 May 1847, p.552. On Redgrave's social subject pictures see S. Casteras, "Social Wrongs": The Painted Sermons of Richard Redgrave, in Richard Redgrave 1804-1888, eds. S. Casteras and R. Parkinson, (New Haven and London, 1988), pp.9-28. For a general discussion of the subject in the mid-nineteenth century see T.J. Edelstein, "But who shall paint the grief of those oppress'd ?" and Rodee, 'Scenes of Rural and Urban Poverty'.
The writer, probably the well-known critic Tom Taylor, was attempting to undermine the painting's perceived authenticity by suggesting that Fildes's ignorance of the ways of city beggars had provided a mistaken premise for his work. The newspaper continued by saying that:

there is a certain hollowness in any appeal to compassion on behalf of these [professional beggars] and it cannot be got rid of by spicing the unsavoury dish with such ingredients as the young mother and her children.

In a long article devoted to the Casuals the Builder began by praising Fildes for daring to attempt an exposition in picture form of homelessness and starvation and saw Fildes's work as another contribution to the debate on the "ever-recurring and painfully difficult question of 'How best to ameliorate the sad condition of our poor and poorest'". Whilst the writer berated his readers for their self-satisfaction whilst thousands starved, he could recommend no changes other than to say:

Mr Fildes's great picture will be outside the present view of the province of art, indeed, if it should work some beneficial change in so sorrowful a state of affairs as that he points to."

He goes on to say, with a mixture of prescience and error:

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87. Times, 26 May 1874, p.6c. It felt that "all society has to do is to provide [the casuals] with such bare shelter and subsistence as may keep life and soul together".

88. Builder, 30 May 1874, p.453. A problem in which the ILN thought "we are all more or less implicated", 9 May 1874, p.446. The Morning Post, 2 May 1874, p.3c, saw as a rebuke its depiction of "the abject poverty and hopeless misery that exists, even at our very doors, in this great city, in this enlightened nineteenth century".

89. Builder, ibid.
But now [Fildes] stands a chance of being best appreciated a hundred years hence...[having rejected a living "decorating pleasant facts"] when the living body of society will be benefitted by his deviation from that rule that would promise for him present prosperity more certainly; and when some miraculous remedy has come for such crying social evils...His pencil, then, will be considered as having resembled scalpel in the hand of skilful surgeon, that lays bare nerves, veins and arteries in search of the cause of morbid appearances;...he may possibly suggest some mild alternative in poor law pathology to mitigate the sufferings...from ineradicable disorder. 90

High hopes indeed for the power of art, especially since Fildes's objectives in painting it seem to have been entirely careerist. 91 In 1874 he was thirty-one and impatient for major success. A strong sense of his personal ambition can be detected in his letters to Mary Fildes whilst working on the painting. For example a letter of 30 September 1873 begins with:

I am hard at work in London, I have been all this summer, on my big picture for next year's Royal Academy. I am anxious about its Success. I want it to be one, very much, as so much depends on it: It is a very important work and like all things that are pretentious if they are not very successful they have a corresponding failure - But I hope for the best. It promises well now and I have six more months to do all I know on it. 92

90. Builder, ibid.

91. The Academy, 2 May 1874, p.5c-d noted that money seemed to have been the greatest source of motivation for exhibitors that year.

92. Fildes to Mary Fildes, 30 September 1873, NAL, 86 PP Box I,(x),3, partly given by LVF, p.24. Of course Fildes could have produced something akin to Fair, Quiet and Sweet Rest, but chose instead to distinguish himself from the mass of his competitors in a striking way. It is my opinion that his subject and scale were chosen as much to make an impact as to draw attention to a social injustice.
Critical Responses: Theatrical Parallels.

Some of the published responses to the *Casuals* can be related to the earlier discussion of sentimentality and sensationalism. In its review the *Architect* declared that:

> The arrangement, colour, and types selected for this group of outcasts and victims of modern society are all in keeping with the sensational and harrowing episode of poverty-stricken wretchedness."^3

Although it is impossible to be precisely sure about how the writer intended the word "sensational" to be interpreted, he obviously intended it to convey the acute impact of the scene, thinking that it almost made the viewer start by confronting him or her with the seamy underbelly of life. But given contemporary usage of the word, particularly in the language of criticism, the writer must have been aware that the word could be taken to mean either striking and dramatic, packed with impressive incident or brimming with superficial and meretricious pathos. Both of these definitions can be taken to mean speaking to the nerves and emotions and not the mind. He therefore hints that the scene may seem artificial and agrees that the painter is manipulating a scene which is "true in the main"."^4

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94. *Architect*, *Ibid*. See also Edelstein, "'But who shall paint...'", p.197, where she quotes Walter Thornbury's verdict (in his *May Exhibition*, [London, 1860]) on some of Redgrave's subject-pictures the subject and pathos of which he found second-hand:
The *Athenaeum* used a cognate term but in a much more immediately definable way. Its account of the *Casuals* began by calling it "a picture which will, probably, create a greater sensation than any other now before us" meaning that the *Casuals* was the painting best calculated to excite popular interest by stirring the emotions of many people. In this it was aided by the fact that:

...there is not a figure in it that is not genuine in design or faithful or true in sentiment, for Mr Fildes has not given us anything sentimental here. Woeful and sorrow moving as the design is, there is no clap-trap in it..."

It is interesting that the claim of distortion should be denied by means of term of theatrical origin ("clap-trap"), for other critical responses reveal a perceived debt on Fildes's part to theatrical influences. A reviewer in the *ILN* thought the *Casuals* had something theatrical and melodramatic about it. And in a second piece on the painting in the *Athenaeum*, written after a few weeks reflection, the writer began to go back on his earlier characterisation of it as "morally and socially...the picture of the year" instead finding it too emphatic:

"...the pathos of the picture is a pathos produced by a well-known receipt. We doubt if the artist felt anything about the "feelingness" of the situation: and feigned pity is unpleasant to men and angels - let alone critics."


96. *ILN*, 9 May 1874, p.446. "Clap-trap" originally meant a showy theatrical device designed to elicit applause.
We are compelled to feel that there are too many incidents and too great a number of contrasts of character. The picture is like an epitome of the woe and misery of London in squalor.  

But the Athenaeum's most severe criticism was kept to the end: "The design, true as it is, recalls a scene in a theatre". The outspoken critic of the Manchester Courier made a similar point, writing that debased public taste demanded both exaggeration and theatricality in a painting for it to be popular:

...the utmost feeling must be touched, the most superlative of adjectives must be used, the hardest realism must be lit up by electric or lime light.  

That is that the 'action' must be emphasised in an unmistakeable, theatrical way so that, he sarcastically remarks, "the imagination of the spectator [is] spared the slightest exertion". This phrase instantly recalls Donne's comments on explicit theatrical presentation in 1855 and Palgrave's comments in 1866 on sensational art. Moreover this critic made an important point finding in "realist" works the sort of "Dickensian exaggeration" which led to the production of Le Sphinx and "kindred horrors" on the stage. It is very revealing that the writer should give a theatrical example of the debased, exaggerated, explicit form to compare with paintings which were found to be of equally low merit.

98. The Graphic, 9 May 1874, p.455, denied that Fildes was "tempt[ed] to be theatrically effective".  
99. Manchester Courier, 6 May 1874, p.6e.  
100. Manchester Courier, ibid.  
101. Manchester Courier, ibid.  
102.
It is pertinent at this point to emphasise that from about 1866 Fildes and Henry Woods became regular theatre-goers. Amongst the many metropolis-set plays

102. The play in question was produced in French at the Princess's in May 1874 and concerned the mutual infidelity of a husband and wife, - "not a pleasant subject" as the Saturday Review described it, finding it wildly exaggerated and unreal (10 May 1874, p.622). It is interesting to note that no "feminine hysteric sentiment, no French theatrical glory, no Russian piling-up of horrors" were found in Thomson's The Roll-Call by the Spectator, 9 May 1874, pp.596-8.

Other journals were prepared to confer honorary citizenship on French painters who especially appealed to British patrons. Blackwoods Magazine, ('The Royal Academy and Other Exhibitions', LXXXVIII [1860], p.69) wrote:

It has often been remarked that the French language has no word for home; and so French art, if we except the almost English works of Edouard Frère, thirsts for glory, and is fired by ambition, yet cares little for the quiet and seclusion of the family home. (Emphasis added.)

(Published anonymously, the author has been identified as the well-known writer on art J.B. Atkinson: The Wellesley Index of Victorian Periodicals 1824-1900, Vol. I, ed. W.E. Houghton, [Toronto and London, 1966], p.111, no.3860.) It was precisely because of his espousal of domestic genre subjects that Frère was felt not to be French. There was a continuity in the Spectator's desire to see the British national school preserved uncontaminated by foreign influences, as one would expect in a conservative journal. In 1881 (7 May, p.604) a critic, probably Harry Quilter, regretted:

The amount of false sentiment which now seems to obtain in the painting of the simplest scenes. It is curious to notice how entirely the English feeling has died out in social and domestic painting, and how all the most popular pictures are those which have a certain French air of either theatrical sentiment, costume interest, or morbid feeling. Look, for example, at the pictures of Mr Frank Hol [sic] one of the recently elected Associates, and see how their very great ability is shadowed, and, in some cases, almost obscured by this sort of tinsel feeling, which puts sadness in the place of joy and substitutes lime-light for sunlight.

Although it is not strictly germane to the present discussion, it is worth remarking that the term 'Zolaism' was occasionally used in British criticism of the 1880s to describe works tainted with French-style realism i.e. dealing with baser human instincts. More important, perhaps, is the fact that: "'Sensation Novels'...were regarded as essentially alien to the English tradition". In The Reader in 1863 a reviewer of Collins's No Name commented that:

we doubt very much whether the sensation
they may have seen was Halliday's *The Great City* at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane in 1867. This play contained a scene of paupers queuing outside a casual ward and a terminal *tableau* replicating Frith's *Railway Station*.\(^{104}\)

Fildes, Hogarth and Moralism.

There are two comments made in the journalistic reaction to the *Casuals* which shed some light on the way in which moralism, as opposed to morality, was construed in painting. Firstly the *ILN* praised Fildes for his courage in tackling such a repulsive subject which had a "sad moral [in] which we are all more or less deeply implicated".\(^{105}\) It regretted that since the days of Hogarth "the scope of

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school...will ever become genuinely popular in England. It is a plant of foreign growth. It comes to us from France [where novels] are based upon the working of those loves and passions which are not in accordance with our rules of respectability.


103. *LVF*, p.11.

104. *LVF*, p. 11. Meisel, *Realizations* pp.380, 398. The play presents a series of transitions between metropolitan polarities, contrasting what the play-bill calls the 'Extremes of St. James's and [St.] Giles's'. These two areas had come to represent the Disraelian 'Two Nations': see for example the cartoon 'St. James turning St. Giles out of his parks', *Punch*, XIX (1850), p.167. In Act One a fashionable Belgravia entertainment gives way to 'The Gates of the Workhouse'. Casual paupers come in and crouch about the steps. This in turn gives way to 'The Jolly Beggars Club', a thieves' kitchen full of fraudulent beggars. It is followed by 'The Board Room' where aristocratic business men set up a swindle: see Meisel p.382.

105. *ILN*, 9 May 1874, p.446.
art as a moral teacher has been very imperfectly understood and practised among us". Secondly, the Athenaeum remarked of Fildes's "epitome...of London in squalor" that "it was not thus that Hogarth, in his finer works, impressed us". Hogarth was brought into the discussion for two reasons: most importantly he was, in the 1870s, widely credited with the successful incorporation of moral messages into genre scenes. He was also widely accepted as the founder of the British school Inasmuch as the British school was defined as using a narrative means to a moral purpose through realistic representation. The comments of the ILN and the Athenaeum can be seen to be all the more important in the light of the anonymous claim reported by L.V. Fildes that his father was labelled "Hogarth's successor" in 1874.

These references put Fildes at the centre of the long-running debate on the nature and longevity of the British school, as realist and moralist, in the face of continental influences. The debate flared up dramatically in the 1870s during the Ruskin-Whistler court case in which Frith, one of Ruskin's witnesses, spoke out in favour of realism as opposed to faddish "isms" and "sloppiness".

106. ILN, ibid; Athenaeum, 30 May 1874, p.740.

107. LVF p.20. However, Edward Armitage, the professor of painting at the RA warned young artists against trying to emulate Hogarth's "moral lessons": Lectures on Painting, (London, 1883), p.213.


109. Frith's thoughts on this were later summarised in two articles; W.P. Frith, 'Crazes in Art: 'Pre-Raphaelitism and "Impressionism"', Magazine of Art, XI (1888), pp.187-91 and 'Realism versus Sloppiness',
Hogarth was widely respected, especially by younger artists in the mid-nineteenth century. In 1858 F.M. Brown and D.G. Rossetti had been the prime movers in the foundation of an exhibiting society known as the Hogarth Club. It lasted from 1858-61 and works from the Pre-Raphaelite circle were shown there in opposition to the Royal Academy. Brown suggested that the club be called after the artist "he deeply reverenced as the originator of moral invention and drama in modern art" and Holman Hunt stated that the name was chosen "to do homage to the stalwart founder of modern English art". Hogarth was as popular as ever in the mid- and late nineteenth century. Accounts of his life and work regularly appeared in art periodicals. His name was often drawn into debates and discussions of individual works and, as the OED confirms, "Hogarthian" was an adjective widely used to signify realist, especially low-life, subjects. Artists were measured against Hogarth's example. For instance, Wilkie's and Haydon's contemporary scenes were praised for their resemblance to and continuation of Hogarthian themes. As Celina Fox has written:

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112. F. Antal, Hogarth and his place in European Art, (London, 1962), pp.188-9. However, the use of the term is sometimes evidence of critical inertia, being a ready substitute for detailed analysis.
It was to Hogarth that the Victorians turned increasingly, both in art and literature, whenever they wanted to justify the depiction of vice rather than virtue, to teach through the illustration of bad rather than good example.\footnote{113}

In the 1860s G.A. Sala, a writer and critic whom Fildes seems to have cultivated because he was so influential,\footnote{114} published a book on Hogarth which, whilst deploiring the "improprieties" and "vulgarities"\footnote{115} of his work, accurately summarised his appeal to a contemporary audience:

...this philosopher ever preached the sturdy English virtues that have made us what we are. He taught us to fear God and honour the King; to shun idleness, extravagance and dissipation; to go to church, help the poor, and treat dumb animals with kindness.\footnote{116}

\footnote{113. Fox, 'The Development of Social Reportage...', p.103.}

\footnote{114. LVF, pp.21, 25, 27. In 1875 Fildes painted a replica of Betty for Sala, inscribed "to G A S" (FORBES collection): see Christopher Forbes, The Royal Academy (1837-1901) Revisited, ex. cat., New York etc., 1975, pp.50-51. Sala was art critic of the Daily Telegraph from the 1860s to the 1890s and he usually gave Fildes encouraging notices. In March 1874 he was invited to see the Casuals before sending in but was unable to attend: Sala to Fildes, 26 March 1874, NAL, 86 PP 7, XLVI, 2.}

\footnote{115. In doing this Sala was following the nineteenth century trend which sought to 'clean up' Hogarth. In a long article on 'Sensationalism' an anonymous writer, taking his cue from the sermon on the subject preached by the Bishop of Derry in May 1874 (mentioned above in Chapter I, p.66), referred to Hogarth describing his "disgusting, though well-meant, pictures of the stages of cruelty" as the prototype for the sort of artist who "derives a sort of agreeable titillation from the sight of pure animal pain": Saturday Review, 16 May 1874, pp.614-5. On another occasion Hogarth's name was invoked to rebuke painters of costume drama such as George Smith and Charles Green. The Times, 22 May 1871, p.6c, railed against their falsity and preemptively rejected any plea that they were following Hogarth's model by stating that he took "for themes the serious realities of his own time" as they should too.}

\footnote{116. G.A. Sala, William Hogarth Painter, Engraver and Philosopher, (London, 1866), pp.7-8; originally published in the Cornhill Magazine in 1869.}

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As Antal has said "Hogarth's was the most pronouncedly middle-class art that England ever produced". This can be taken a step further. Hogarth himself embodied all the key middle-class qualities; model husband, self-made man and charitably inclined.\(^{117}\) Perhaps Fildes had Hogarth in mind when he painted the *Casuals*: it has recently been argued, with some accuracy, that middle-class acceptability and financial success were the highest of his ambitions in life.\(^{118}\) A reassessment of Hogarth in the nineteenth century had been initiated by the extensive exhibition of his work at the Manchester Art Treasures exhibition in 1857 (17 works), at the International Exhibition in 1862 (35 works) and at the National Portrait Exhibition in 1867 (45 works). These were the first exhibitions of his work for a generation.\(^{119}\) Therefore the renewed interest in Hogarth coincided with Fildes's arrival in London and burgeoned in the period when Fildes was transforming himself from an illustrator into a painter.

In the 1870s there still existed what might be termed a Reynoldsian-Hogarthian dichotomy, the Reynoldsians favouring the 'high art' approach derived from continen-

\(^{117}\) Antal, *Hogarth*, pp.175, 182.

\(^{118}\) Gillett, *Victorian Painter's World*, passim.

tal theory and practice, the Hogarthians preferring to pursue what were seen as the native qualities of art—moralism, realism and narrative. Much of the criticism of Fildes's work is in the mould of Reynolds's criticism of Hogarthian material—that it was simply not proper art and, in the case of Fildes, should not have been painted at all.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century Hogarth had been elevated as the archetype of the British school by the enthusiastic propagandising of such liberal controversialists as William Hazlitt (1778-1830), Leigh Hunt (1784-1859) and Charles Lamb (1775-1834). For example in 1811 Lamb published his essay on 'On the Genius and Character of Hogarth' in a paper, The Reflector, run by Hunt. Three years later the large exhibition devoted to Hogarth at the British Institution was enthusiastically reviewed by Hazlitt in another of Hunt's publications. They, and others, helped to restore his reputation after a generation of oblivion in which the Reynolds/RA axis prevailed. A fundamental point to make

120. Antal, Hogarth pp.180-81 and Reynolds's third and fourteenth Discourses, (1770 and 1788), ed. cit. pp.51, 254-55. See also Joseph Burke, Hogarth and Reynolds: A Contrast in English Art Theory, The William Henry Charlton Memorial Lecture, 1941, (Oxford, 1943). This debate became even more focused in 1876 when Fildes's work was closely compared with Leighton's and Poynter's: see below.

121. 'On the Genius and Character of Hogarth; with some Remarks on a Passage in the Writings of the late Mr. Barry' in Lamb as Critic, ed. Roy Park, (London, 1980), pp.315-34. Future quotations are from this edition.

122. Antal, pp.186-7. On this occasion 59 works were shown: Graves, loc. cit.
about Hogarth is to note his close literary connections and the similar fate his work and that of his literary allies shared. Just as Hogarth's work declined in popularity towards the end of his life and was replaced by the bourgeois, sentimental imagery of John Opie (1761-1807) or Wheatley, and the superficialities of Morland, so too was Henry Fielding (1707-54) supplanted by Samuel Richardson (1689-1761). However, Antal has interestingly compared Wheatley with Greuze and has stated that moralising genre paintings of the 1850s often owed more to the Frenchman than to Hogarth.

There are other connections between Fildes and Hogarth inasmuch as theirs were supposed to be accurate depictions of the city. Hogarth has been called the "supreme British painter of the city" and several reviewers commented on Fildes's metropolitan specificity or, in the case of the Manchester Courier, his complete misunderstanding of the city. This precision over the setting of the painting in London would have reinforced popular perceptions of the city as a place of loss, failure and degradation and it corresponds to the ac-

123. Robert Etheridge Moore, Hogarth's Literary Relationships, (London, 1948). J.R. Harvey, Victorian Novelists and their Illustrators, (London, 1970), Ch. 3, has discussed the way in which Dickens's work was found "Hogarthian".

124. Antal pp. 182, 193-4. Greuze, of course, may have been influence by prints after Hogarth.


126. Morning Post, 2 May 1874, p. 3c; Spectator, 9 May 1874, p. 597; Manchester Courier, 6 May 1874, p. 6e.
curate portrayal of the city on the London stage. Finally there is the apparently unnoticed republication of Hogarth's *Rake's Progress* in a specifically sensationalist journal designed to cash in on the sensationalism craze. Hogarth's eight plates accompanied by two dense pages of text appeared in the first (and only) number of *Sensation: A Record of Thrilling Incidents & Journal of Sensational Romance*.\(^ {127}\) Hogarth, having been used to support Frith's mid-century "bourgeois realism", was later coopted by belated proponents of another fashion.

Fildes's own opinions of Hogarth are fragmentary. In 1890 he referred to Hogarth as the "great Father of the English Illustrator" during a speech at a dinner to celebrate the *Graphic's* 21st year.\(^ {128}\) Unfortunately a full text of this speech has not been found and it was not reported in detail, not even in the *Graphic* itself. In October 1872 Fildes resigned for no known reason from a then-existing Hogarth Club\(^ {129}\) a gentleman's club based in the West End of London which had been established "to facilitate association amongst artists"\(^ {130}\) but which was unrelated to the earlier Pre-Raphaelite organisation of the same name.

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\(^ {127}\) *Sensation*, 21 February 1877: British Library, P 973/58.

\(^ {128}\) LVF, p.120

\(^ {129}\) Fildes to Gray, Secretary of the Club, 30 October 1872, NAL, MS Eng. Cundall Letters. I am grateful to Deborah Cherry for answering my query on this point.

\(^ {130}\) *The Year's Art 1889*, (London, 1889), p.121.
More Critical Reactions.

A wide range of opinions were published on whether or not the Casuals was exaggerated and sentimental. The Manchester Courier was explicit in finding "unnecessary and unnatural exaggeration" whereas the Athenaeum claimed "there is no exaggeration here" and the ILN felt there was "some exaggeration". 131 F.T. Palgrave, whose comments on sensational art are recorded above, writing in the Academy feared that the quotation from Dickens which appeared in the catalogue presaged:

...a work in which a forced style of sentimentalism would predominate...the weakness to which subjects of this character are undoubtedly prone...from this...fault, after repeated study, the picture seems to me free. 132

And the Athenaeum agreed that Fildes "has not given us anything sentimental here" 133 The Graphic was immediately convinced of the painting's honesty:

The force of the picture results from its truthfulness, in combination of course, with the skill and judgement which mark its entire treatment. 134

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131. Manchester Courier, 27 May 1874, p.6c; Athenaeum, 2 May 1874, p.602; ILN, 9 May 1874, p.446.
132. Academy, 23 May 1874, p.585.
133. Athenaeum, ibid.
134. Graphic, 9 May 1874, p.455.
It did realise that Fildes had suppressed some things in recognition of the "laws of art", his work both recording and penetrating the "outward aspect" and giving real insight. It continued:

...the work is not merely photographic: these faces and figures and the general effect are severely true to the streets and to metropolitan wretchedness: but over all is apparent that artistic sense of selection and arrangement which leaves upon the senses the impress of a picture and not of a mere transcript.135

The Graphic was not the only journal to comment on Fildes's rearrangement of reality to make a better picture.136 This is exactly what he had done in making the seminal drawing for that publication. The Pall Mall Gazette understood this point too, lauding "the pains the painter has taken to make his work presentable in a purely pictorial sense". Although the subject is not favourable to the exercise of high artistic qualities:

...the laws of art are so far permitted a control over the composition that, partly by judicious suppression of elements that might otherwise become discordant and partly by deliberate choice and arrangement of material, the final effect leaves the pleasant impression [sic] that we have here a painting as well as a casual ward.137

Because they allowed for the manipulation of the artist these three journals gave a more convincing appraisal of the Casuals. In a second piece in the Pall Mall Gazette an evolved position is revealed, showing an awareness of both positive and negative aspects of the work. In a long

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135. Graphic, ibid.
136. The ILN, 9 May 1874, p.446 mentions "the suggestiveness of the manipulation".
137. PMG, 2 May 1874, p.1658.
discussion the writer tries to produce an *apologia* for the unattractive aspects of Fildes's work, simultaneously allowing himself a jibe at current French art. Realistic painting of modern life he found, is "not a very beautiful subject" and, released from the control of beauty, art, he remarked, can become one of several things:

...it may choose to become philanthropic, and to teach society moral lessons with a brush. It then purposely presents sights of deformity, and delights to reproduce whatever is calculated to show the world that some duty is neglected...[Ur]ged by Mr. Fildes [art] may plead powerfully the cause of unfortunate persons who are without the means of shelter at night. Thus art attaches itself to social science, and labours in the service of reformers who have at heart the improvement of the moral and sanitary condition of the people.\(^\text{138}\)

If not philanthropic art may, as currently in France, become cynical and "careless of the deformity it strives to reproduce". However, the *Pall Mall Gazette* continued:

...if our own painters seldom exhibit this pitiless spirit, it is generally because they are in great haste to point the moral of the tale, and are apt to falsify the facts for the sake of immoderate pathos.

The writer recognised that the artist can easily be caught by either or both of two incompatible propositions:

A photographic realism of modern life is apt to look cynical if it is faithful, and it is sure to seem false if it is made pathetic: and in this dilemma there is chance for art.

\(^{138}\) *PMG*, 2 June 1874, p.2075.
The *Pall Mall Gazette* contended that Fildes's work would probably be less popular than it otherwise might have been because of its "uncompromising fidelity to fact". It is in its truth to nature that its sole value lies, its moral effect is irrelevant to artistic taste:

But as a reformatory may possess certain architectural excellences, so Mr. Fildes's picture, which has a like social purpose, may, and does, exhibit certain pictorial qualities.

The final sentence returned to a theme in the earlier coverage referring to the combination of art and artifice:

For, besides the merit of invention which lies in the strict observance of the truth, the picture is admirably composed, the drawing is strong and expressive, and the colour, although too much suppressed for positive harmony, is at any rate without offence. 139

The undoubted artistic qualities of the work have not been employed to obfuscate the subject by divorcing the image from the reality by reconstituting it as art, but rather have been used to heighten or to dramatise a subject which did not readily present itself for pictorial treatment.

The subject Fildes chose was far from original even in 1869. As Wolff and Fox remarked the work of Fildes and others for the *Graphic* was not a new departure but a:

...sentimentalized painterly extension of themes anticipated - not only in subject matter but also in artistic convention - by cheaper and ultimately less successful periodicals like the *Illustrated Times* and the *Penny Illustrated Paper* earlier in the century. 140

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139. PMG, ibid.

140. Fox and Wolff, 'Pictures from the Magazines', p.568.

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There is also a restricted number of painted images to do with poor relief of which Fildes may have been aware. For instance at the Society of Female Artists exhibition in 1872 Louise Swift showed *The Casual Ward* (untraced) a work which has apparently gone completely unrecorded. Its existence indicates that painted depictions of the institution were made before Fildes's own. Fildes's painting bears a resemblance to a cartoon by Charles Keene, called 'Police Tyranny', which shows casuals lining up outside a police station. They are against a wall which recedes from left to right as does the wall in Fildes's painting and similar types are present in both, such as the ragged bare-foot boy, the top-hatted man, the slumped, crouching figure and the man with his arms folded on his chest. Posters also appear on the wall in both, and the inclusion of written material within the image to comment on the action of a painting or illustration has a long history. In the painting the posters

141. Published in *Punch*, XXXIX (1870), p.260. Jeannie Chapel, *Victorian Taste: The complete catalogue of paintings at the Royal Holloway College*, (London, 1982), p.85 reports that this was first noticed by one Caleb Scholefield Mann whose grangerised copy of the 1874 RA Summer Exhibition catalogue (Oxford, Ashmolean Museum) contains a note referring to the earlier cartoon, which he hinted derived in turn from Fildes's 'Houseless and Hungry'.

142. For example in many works by Hogarth or, more recently, in cartoons such as 'Here and There' by John Leech which appeared in *Punch*, XV (1848), p.27, the composition of which has parallels with the *Casuals*. There are also a number of parallels which might be drawn between the *Casuals* and the illustrations in Jerrold and Doré's *London: A Pilgrimage*, (London, 1872) especially pp.66, 117, 121, 142, and opposite pp.180 and 185. Homelessness and temporary refuges are discussed in the text, especially pp.143-44 and 184-86. Our awareness of the artifice in Doré's illustrations inevitably leads to a questioning of the accuracy of Jerrold's text: see A. Woods, 'Doré's *London: Art and Evidence*', *Art History*, 1 (1978), pp.341-59. On the subject generally see also Gareth Stedman Jones, *Outcast London*, (1971), (rpt. Lon-
provide an ironic commentary on the scene, a choric device favoured by A.E. Mulready (1844-after 1903). Whilst only £2 is offered as reward for the return of a lost child, £20 is offered for a missing dog, £50 for the apprehension of a murderer and £100 for an absconder. The Royal Artillery's request for "smart young men" contrasts sharply with the figure on the right-hand side who appears to be a crippled ex-serviceman. The dog which Fildes included in the painting is another element with a long history. Hogarth and Greuze, for example, both included canines to comment on the virtues or - lack of them - of characters in their paintings. For example, in The Marriage Settlement, the first scene of Hogarth's Marriage-a-la-Mode series (1743, London, NG) the shackled dogs convey the mis-matched nature of the married couple and in the final scene, The Lady's Death, the avarice of the Alderman is amplified by the mangy dog which snatches the pig's head from the table. Greuze used a bitch suckling a puppy in the corner of The Paralytic helped by his children or, the fruits of good upbringing (Salon of 1763, St. Petersburg, Hermitage) to mirror the way in which the helpless man is fed by his daughter. Fildes's dog symbolises the hunger of the cold casuals: as they queue, it gnaws a bone. The dog was thought un-

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143. Since classical times animals, not least dogs, have been given attributes and symbolic functions. On the traditional associations of dogs see Cesare Ripa, Iconologia, (Padua, 1611); see also Richard Thomson, "Les Quat' Pattes": the image of the dog in late nineteenth-century French art', Art History, 5 (1982), pp.323-37 and Robert Rosenblum, The Dog in Art from Rococo to Post-Modern, (New York, 1988).

144. However, the dogs of which Fildes is likely to have
necessary and unsubtle by Sala who wrote to Fildes saying
"I am going to pitch into that dog of yours, gnawing a
bone: he is not wanted: You have written up "Hunger"
plainly enough on your canvas".145

had close knowledge were Landseer's anthropomorphic ones.

145. LVF, p.27, c. May 1874. The original of this letter
is one of the few I have not found. Sala seems not to
have carried out this threat, at least not in his Daily
The Casual Ward: Contemporary Details.

It is worth repeating the point that even in 1874 Fildes was painting a very recent and innovative system of poor relief.\textsuperscript{146} Treuherz noted that the casual ward system was set up under the Houseless Poor Act,\textsuperscript{147} but omitted to say that it was passed only in 1864 as a temporary measure which was refined and made permanent under acts of 1865 and 1867. Additional legislation in 1872 and 1882 made the system stricter.\textsuperscript{148}

A contemporary audience would have been aware of this legislation. It would have seen casuals queuing and, through the rates, was responsible for the maintenance of the casual wards. The poverty and homelessness problem in London was in abatement during the mid-seventies, to judge from the evidence of contemporary statistics. Commenting on official Poor Law Board returns the Pall Mall Gazette indicated that from a peak in 1870 of 165,000 (5\% of the population) the number of paupers in the metropolis had declined to 118,000 (3.6\%) by 1874. Of the latter figure 41,000 were 'indoor' and 77,000 were 'outdoor' i.e. casuals. In 1870 the total had comprised 38,000 and 127,000 respectively: indoor relief was in-


\textsuperscript{147} \textit{Hard Times}, p.83.

\textsuperscript{148} T. Mackay, \textit{A History of the English Poor Law},
creasing slightly as outdoor relief declined quickly. The consequent loss of freedom and independence that entering the workhouse entailed served as a huge disincentive to paupers to do so. Although the total figure was in decline the fact that indoor relief was more expensive to provide and administer meant that the average annual contribution per capita as raised through the rates rose from 9/- in 1870 to 10/- in 1874.\textsuperscript{2}\textsuperscript{2} Popular understanding of the allied problems of homelessness and poverty would have been extended by such journalistic discussions. However the \textit{Daily Telegraph} wrote of the \textit{Casuals} that it was "fuller of vital and eloquent statistics than a whole shelf-full of Poor Law Blue-books".\textsuperscript{150}

The subject of Poor Law finance is closely related to 'Houseless and Hungry' because shortly before its publication the Valuation (Metropolis) Act (1869) had been passed.\textsuperscript{151} Poor Law finance was an extremely controversial subject which in 1869 as always roused the passions of the proponents and opponents of the Poor Law. The act referred to was a refinement of the provisions of the Metropolitan Poor Act of 1867 by which a system of common metropolitan chargeability was set up, meaning that ratepayers all contributed at the same rate, regardless of local conditions, to a common fund which was allocated

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\textit{(London, 1899), Vol.3, pp.379, 489-93.}

149. These figures are drawn from 'Metropolitan Pauperism' in the \textit{Pall Mall Gazette}, 9 May 1876, p.1750 and 'English Pauperism and Its Money Cost' in the \textit{Pall Mall Gazette}, 16 June 1876, p.2276. It is impossible to know how accurate such statistics were.

by parish or union according to need. Thus the wealthier and less distressed areas subsidised poor law provision in poorer areas.\textsuperscript{152} The debate over the new act would have added to the interest of the illustration to its contemporary audience. By the time the painted version had been made the Pauper Inmates Discharge and Regulations Act (1871) had been passed which made casual ward conditions even more harsh, notwithstanding the already "deterrent system of workhouse management".\textsuperscript{153}

The longest and most heart-felt analysis of the \textit{Casuals} was that given in the \textit{Daily Telegraph}, the cheapest national daily newspaper.\textsuperscript{154} This detailed notice began and ended on the same note: the situation depicted was a "simple and almost naked tragedy...a tale as clear...as an antique tragedy...a tragedy in blank verse". Its account is unique in pinpointing the origin of the tragedy. It does not give a simplified 'its all our fault, society is to blame' explanation. It wrote that none of the casuals has a halfpenny in the world, "they are worse off than wild beasts":\textsuperscript{155} if they steal to survive they will

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\textsuperscript{152.} The disparity in local poor rates had earlier been criticised by Dickens who complained that poor areas of Wapping were assessed at 5s 6d whereas rich parishes paid only a few pence: see 'Wapping Workhouse', \textit{All the Year Round}, 18 February 1860.


\textsuperscript{154.} \textit{Daily Telegraph}, 11 May 1874, p.5d-e. The critic may well have been Fildes's friend Sala.

\textsuperscript{155.} The \textit{Academy} described the various paupers as "various vices nailed against the wall of a casual ward like gamekeepers vermin against a barn door, and those
be sent to the treadmill or to Portland (the major new prison of the 1850s156):

Society cannot tolerate shop robberies...yet Society might have thought twice, perhaps, ere she set herself to the task of manufacturing criminals and paupers, of fabricating food for the gallows, the convict prison and the warder's cat-o'nine-tails, by withholding education from people - that education which is still withheld from them, all the School boards in the country notwithstanding - by denying them decent homes in which to dwell, and by selling them as many penn'orths of gin as they can pawn their clothes and their tools, and ruin themselves or rob others to procure.157

Although the writer was keen to emphasise the truthfulness and reality of the scene, glossing the life stories of various figures, he recognised what lay behind it. It had only a limited resemblance to the Graphic drawing which:

was a very clever one, based, doubtless, on actual observation; but in the picture before us study, reflection, invention, fancy and the poetic sublimation of realism have been at work.158

who love horrors can study their remains" (2 May 1874, p.5c-d). In relation to Henry Mayhew's London Labour and the London Poor (1861-62) P. Stallybrass and A. White (The Politics and Poetics of Transgression, [London, 1986], p.132) wrote that "to the extent that the poor are constituted in terms of bestiality, the bourgeois subject is positioned as the neutral observer of self-willed degradation", that is individuals were responsible for their own failures and no-one could not be held responsible for the fecklessness of others. Chapter 4 of this book gives a useful summary of bourgeois attitudes to difference and otherness in the nineteenth century. Gordon Thomson's lampoon turned the casuals into 'Fly Paupers': Fun, 19 May 1874, suppl. n.p. The link between paupers and vermin was also made in the Daily Telegraph (11 May 1874, p.5c) when it wrote that the Houseless Poor Act might "provide these wretched outcasts with a pallet and a crust, but, in the way of definite relief, perhaps the most merciful dole to them would have been a dose of prussic acid".


The perception of "poetic sublimation" contrasts sharply with the Manchester Courier's view that Fildes had given a "prosaic description of an exaggerated character, rather than a poetic rendering of the subject" and that:

...the types of these suffering ones requires a keener observation to detect and a more poetic pencil to depict than do the brutalised form and features of those whose cup of vice is at the dregs." 159

That is, that Fildes's figures should be processed to make them acceptable in art, raised from their momentary 'realism' into timeless symbols. As mentioned above, the Daily Telegraph consolidated the claims to authenticity by finding the picture more informative than a shelf-full of Poor Law statistics. The painting expressed more clearly the essence of destitution and abject want than the dry, abstract figures which, then as now, serve as the common measure of the success or failure of policy and legislation on the poor.

A most curious (and apparently heretofore unnoticed) analysis of the Casuals was that composed by Louis Colomb and published in Le Courrier de l'Europe, a French-language weekly published in London. He praised it highly not for its technical accomplishment, but for its rejection of convention. 160 Fildes's effort to depict reality

158. Ibid.

159. Manchester Courier, 6 May 1874, p.6e. See the discussion of poetic versus prosaic renderings in the section on Newgate below.

160. 'Chronique de Londres: Le tableau 504 à Royal Academy. - Le Sphinx à Princess's Theatre', Le Courrier de l'Europe, 16 mai 1874, p.312:
is underlined repeatedly, as is his rejection of sentimentality:

...Fildes n'a pas essayé d'héroïser les personnages, il n'a pas essayé d'en faire les Jobs ou les Jeremies, des anges Gabriels ou des Satans foudroyés du trottoir et du ruisseau. Il a pris les gens tels qu'ils sont... Il n'a pas fait tomber des larmes de leurs yeux comme des œufs durs qui roulent sur les joues des pauvres dans les tableaux d'école... Il a saisie [cette misère] telle qu'elle est... sans l'ébouriffer ou la peigner, sans l'enluminer de pâleur ou la pommader de rouge.... 161

However, Colomb perceptively remarked that:

... J'ai vu de si près l'artiste pauvre dans le cours de ma vie, que j'oserais parler que [Fildes] n'a pas eu à lutter contre les angoisses de l'horrible misère. 162

Moreover Colomb felt that Fildes's success would open the gates of the Academy to others, thinking that he would open a new way in art as Courbet had done in the 1850s:

Ce tableau de 1874, m'en rapelle un autre de 1851 [sic]. C'était à Paris, on passait autour d'une toile aux tons tristes, à l'horizon terne qui balafrait dans un coin une signature G. Courbet. Devant ce nom écrit en rouge qui égratignait comme le loup de patte d'un lion la curiosité publique, j'entendais des jeunes gens qui criaient bravo et merci: jeunes peintres à qui le pinceau de Courbet avait d'un coup ouvert une voie, tracé un chemin. Le tableau se

Il y a certes à Royal Academy des toiles qui ont été peints avec plus d'art par des mains savants, il y a les scènes de Millais à côté des portraits de Watts, il y a des chefs d'œuvre de patience et des merveilles d'habileté, il y a ceci, cela, et autre chose encore, mais il n'y a pas de tentative plus hardie, d'essai plus franc: il y a de meilleure peinture, il n'y a pas de plus beau tableau. Et pourquoi? parce qu'au lieu de s'égarer dans la domaine de la convention, ce peintre est entré crânement dans le pays de la réalité, parce qu'au lieu de faire joli ou de viser à faire grand, il a fait vrai.

161. Ibid.

162. Ibid.
nommait les *Casseurs de pierres*. Le... [sic] de M. Fildes entre dans le débat comme les *Casseurs de pierres* de Courbet.¹⁶³

Contemporary Readings of the Casuals.

The *Morning Post* ended its review of the *Casuals* by stating that it "is not a picture to be dismissed at a glance, it is a picture to be returned to often, *to be read and re-read*, to be studied and pondered over".¹⁶⁴ Given this propensity to read paintings for narrative clues and detailed assessments of character it is worthwhile to record some of the 'biographical' information made up about the characters in Fildes's painting by a number of critics.¹⁶⁵ (The figures have been numbered 1-24 from left to right.) This evidence provides useful clues as to how the painting was read and how an overall interpretation was developed. The areas where opinions were divergent (2) are as informative as those where critics agreed (13 and 14) because they indicate the sorts of details which were readily understood and those which were more controversial.

¹⁶³. Ibid. The remaining column of this article was devoted to the play *Le Sphinx* mentioned above.

¹⁶⁴. *Morning Post*, 2 May 1874, p.3c, emphasis added. This review may be the one referred to by Fildes in a letter to Woods, 12 June 1874, NAL 86 PP 3.

There was an interesting diversity of opinion about figure 2 who was variously described as a destitute refugee communard (D. Tel.), a poor artist (Morn. Post), someone who had known better days (Era) and years of poverty (Queen) or was a seedy but half-respectable adventurer (ILN). The policeman (3), was cheerful-looking (D. Tel.), stern (Era), but good-natured (ILN). The widow and her children (7,8,9) were widely found to have come down in the world, the M. Post detecting torn embroidery, "remnants of soiled finery", on the child's hem. The ILN thought the child chubby indicating that their fall was recent and that a reduced diet had not yet thinned her cheeks. The widow was on the verge of poverty-induced insanity (D. Tel.) but could still be described as a "half-dead primrose" (Pict. World). There was some agreement that 13 and 14 were professional beggars (Times, Manch. Cour., Pict. World) and universal agreement that 15 was an alcoholic professional beggar. The family group (16,17,18,19,20) was widely commented on. The man was held to be a skilled or semi-skilled worker, starved out or unemployed (D. Tel., Pict. World, ILN) but others thought him a wreck of a navvy bound to die soon (M. Post). The ragged, crippled boy (21) was described as a street-arab (Times), a wretched callous lad neglected from the cradle (Queen) and, more allusively, as "Tom-all-Alone" (Pict. World), recalling the disguise taken by


167. This family group closely resembles that drawn by John Leech in the Punch cartoon 'Here and There' referred to above.
Edgar in *King Lear* as Tom the lunatic beggar with his refrain "Tom's a-cold" and "Tom-all-Alone's", the slum described in Dickens's *Bleak House*. The figure behind him (22) was identified as a hopeless rascal (Era) and a ruffian (Times), a garotter or ticket-of-leave burglar (ILN), that is an active mugger or recently released prisoner. Next to him (23) is a sailor who might have been a jolly publican (M. Post) or a starveling hydrocephalic cad with staring eyes (ILN). The last figure (24) was either noted as a poor woebegone wretch in militia uniform (M. Post), a broken down soldier (Queen) or a sham soldier and professional beggar (Pict. World, Times, ILN).

A common approach to the Casuals was, unsurprisingly, to search for Dickensian parallels. The *Morning Post* thought that the whole work was impregnated with a "Dickensesque" feeling and characterised the top-hated sot as a "Brummagem Micawber", that is a version of the penniless cod-philosopher in *David Copperfield* remembered for his sententious aphorisms. (Fildes's figure can be seen as an embodiment of Micawber's philosophy on income, expenditure and happiness). The *Morning Post* reviewer was


169. I have not attempted to give a physiognomical interpretation of the sort given for Frith's *Derby Day* and *Railway Station* by Mary Cowling in *The Artist as Anthropologist*. However, for Victorian opinions on the effects of hydrocephalus on character see Cowling pp.65-6, 156-7.

170. J.M.W. Hichberger, *Images of the Army* (Manchester, 1988), p.148 is wrong in stating that only one contemporary reviewer (ILN) recognised this figure as a fraudulent beggar.

171. C. Dickens, *David Copperfield*, (1849-50), Ch. 12.
the most reliant on literary parallels. As noted above Shakespeare was invoked in one case and Dickens was referred to in another two. The vicious-looking man behind "Tom-all-Alone" was described as a "bullet-headed 'Master Bates'" referring to the hardened, professional criminal in Fagin's gang in Oliver Twist (1837-38). The wide-eyed youth he is addressing is described as a "consumptive Smike", the character in Nicholas Nickleby (1838-39) who is the special victim of Squeers's violence and who dies an excruciatingly sentimental death in Nicholas's arms. The comparisons made by the Pictorial World complement the description of the painting by the Morning Post as:

Dickensesque...in its graphic power, in its ruthless exposure of all the horrors of the situation, in its study of character, in its vast human sympathy, in its tender touches of sentiment.

The Morning Post found it hardly surprising that Fildes's pencil could work in harmony with Dickens's pen, given their earlier collaboration. However the effect of finding literary associations for these figures is to diminish their anonymous typicality and topicality. Rather like the unsigned article which accompanied 'Houseless and Hungry', the Morning Post makes the Casuals into an image dependent on a textual corollary, reassuringly identifying its largely self-absorbed figures with sentimentalised characters. Thus the underlying thrust of the paper's commentary was to depict the Casuals as a work of fiction in the mould of Dickens and to detract from its implicit criticism of society.
The painting was enormously popular with the public. In the autumn and winter it toured to Glasgow, Manchester and Liverpool allowing provincial audiences the opportunity to see the subject of so much journalistic comment.172 Fildes's original drawing in the Graphic had a wide appeal too. It was one of his most admired works and was amongst the English illustrations most highly valued by van Gogh, who collected back numbers of the Graphic.173 Although the painting fell out of favour for many years and seems to have been an embarrassment to its owners during the inter-war period174 the Casuals has now achieved the status almost of an authoritative historical document. It, and Holl's Newgate, has been used as the cover illustration to modern editions of various nineteenth-century British novels. Moreover, the Casuals is regularly illustrated in books on nineteenth-century social questions, and forms the dustjacket to F.B. Smith's The People's Health 1830-1910, (London, 1979) and to Peter Woods's Poverty and the Workhouse in Victorian England, (Far Thrupp, 1991). Thus the Casuals is now allotted a dual significance, firstly as a visualisation of fiction and secondly as 'evidence' of historical fact.

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174. See the correspondence in the RHBNC archive.
Holl's painting of the prison - which, like the workhouse, was equally as important to the nineteenth-century world as a symbol and as a reality - is discussed next.
Part C: Newgate.

The most acclaimed of Holl's 'social realist' paintings was also one of his last. At the RA in 1878 he exhibited Newgate - Committed for Trial alongside his first mature portrait. The success of the latter, to Holl's chagrin, was greater than that of the former and thus presaged the path that his career was to follow thereafter, to the eventual exclusion of subject pictures.

Holl, like many others, had visited the notorious prison of Newgate which stood in central London on a site now occupied by the Central Criminal Court (the Old Bailey). Prison visits were an established element of the Victorian practice of exploring the metaphorically and literally darker parts of the city as if they were remote colonies populated by incorrigible savages. Visits to Newgate were particularly favoured because of the enduring reputation the prison had as the place of incarceration and execution of many notorious criminals.

175. The portrait was of a family friend George Gibson Richardson and was no. 599 at the RA of 1878. Unfortunately this work has not been traced. It was the even greater success of his portrait of the engraver Samuel Cousins (1879, London, Tate Gallery) at the RA in the following year that decided Holl to take up portraiture and he was rapidly swamped with portrait commissions.


177. One renowned journey of this sort is detailed in Jerrold and Doré's London: A Pilgrimage of 1872.
This association gave rise to the name given to a sub-genre of crime novels popular in the 1830s and 1840s, the so-called 'Newgate Novels'.\(^{178}\) Prison life was much more common in melodrama in the mid-nineteenth century than it was in the novels or drama of the 1870s.\(^{179}\) Consequently Meisel has been able to locate Newgate within a tradition of prison scenes in melodrama, although these predate Holl's painting by some years.\(^{180}\)

Reynolds has already described the motivation which lay behind Holl's decision to paint Newgate. He had, she wrote, in 1877:

> ...conceived the idea of painting a picture, typifying some stirring, dramatic incident, into which he could throw his whole being, and which should prove to be the complete expression of all the best that was in him.\(^{181}\)

Eventually he alighted on an incident he had observed some time before. Visiting Newgate, where he seems to have been friendly with the then governor Sidney Smith, he saw the first reunion of a wife and her husband after he had been jailed for defrauding the bank which employed him. This meeting was the source for the idea which Holl worked up into Newgate. According to Reynolds, as he

\(^{178}\) On this subject see Hollingsworth, The Newgate Novel 1830-1848. Writers of Sensation Novels preferred incarceration in asylums: see Taylor, In the Secret Theatre of the Home.


\(^{180}\) Meisel, Realizations, Ch. 14.

\(^{181}\) Reynolds, p.144. Also in 1877 Five Years Penal Servitude by 'One Who Has Endured It' was published to some notoriety. It described the regime at Newgate, including the part Holl painted and rekindled popular interest in the prison: see Pictorial World, 18 January 1879, pp.331, 337.
developed his scene he realised that the incident he intended to focus on might, in her words, appear "too melodramatic". Consequently he put a woman with her baby at the centre (thereby inadvertently making it even more melodramatic):

...divided from the brute who had probably half killed her before doing the deed which took him...between the walls of Newgate, and released his wife from a life of martyrdom at the hands of the big, burly, bully. "

In so doing Holl sets up an obvious opposition within the painting: an area for virtuous females is set apart from the area for criminal males.

The change in emphasis also allowed him to enlarge the canvas he had intended to work on to one measuring 60" x 83", one of his largest ever. This increase in size indicates the importance Holl gave to the work. Reynolds stated that for Holl a smaller canvas would have been appropriate for the subject as initially considered, "but as his ideas filled it out, he found it would bear a much larger canvas". This is important evidence that the large canvas was chosen as the best suited to the subject, rather than having been chosen independently.

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182. Reynolds, p.145. However her description does not accord with the painting.
183. Reynolds, p.145.
184. There is a larger version of this work, dated 1878, 71" x 97", in the Rochdale Museum. A preparatory study (1878, 27" x 37") remains untraced.
185. Ibid.
Holl did not mention his alteration to the composition or the enlargement of scale in his only known account of the work. In a letter of September 1887 to C.W. Carey, the curator of the paintings at the newly-founded Royal Holloway College, Holl described the part of the prison in which he had set his scene and what he had observed there during his visit:

It is the part of Newgate prison called the cage in which prisoners whilst on trial are permitted at certain hours & on certain days, to see their friends - on the inner side the prisoners are placed, & in the passage their friends are conducted to them when their relations or friends are at once brought out. A Warden walks between the 2 gratings, who can hear and see everything that takes place between the friend and prisoner. It is particularly impressive for scenes of such pathos & agony of mind on both sides take place. I don't know whether this goes on now at Newgate as I have an idea that the prison is now closed only for prisoners after sentence & up to that then interviews are not permitted - I believe.

I witnessed this scene some years before I painted the picture - visiting the prison through the interest of the then governor (Mr. Sidney Smith) & I shall never forget the impression it made upon me. Prisoners of all sorts of crime were there - the lowest brutal criminal - swindlers, forgers, & boy thieves - all caged together, awaiting the results of their separate trials, & in one or two cases, the misery of their friends in seeing them in this hopeless condition, fell but lightly on their brains, dulled by incessant crime.

186. In 1877 the use of the prison had been reviewed with the result that as from 1 April 1873 it was to be closed except for prisoners awaiting execution.

187. Holl to Carey, 1 September 1887, Royal Holloway and Bedford New College archives, AR 500/5.
Reynolds reports that Holl was accompanied on his visit by his friend the painter C.E. Johnson who told her that Holl managed "to obtain all the materials at the prison itself, where, through influence at headquarters, he was allowed to paint". \(^{188}\) Whilst there is no reason to doubt Johnson's story, Carey was unable to find any corroboration for the claim that Holl had painted in the prison. \(^{189}\)

Critical Reception.

*Newgate* met with a varied critical reception. The *Times* as usual criticised Holl's handling, finding the finish clever but slapdash. \(^{190}\) It did at least have the "action of melodrama" even if it was too much like "Munkacsy and other sensational French painters of the same black and violent school". \(^{191}\) These criticisms were repeated in the *World* which thought Holl had sacrificed truthfulness for...

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188. Reynolds, p.145-6. However Reynolds's wildly inaccurate statement that *Newgate* hung alongside the *Casuals* at the RA in 1878 brings the accuracy of her account into question.

189. Carey to J.G. Broadbent (who had been a senior warden at Newgate in the 1870s), 24 November 1897, RHBNC archives, AR 500/50.


191. *Times* ibid. The *Saturday Review* (11 May 1878, p.592) thought it "cast in the spirit of low-class melodrama". Mihaly von Munkacsy (1844-1909) was a Hungarian painter who had trained in Vienna, Düsseldorf and Munich and lived and worked in Paris from about 1872 and who was famed for his large-scale works with strong chiaroscuro. On Munkacsy see J. Beavington Atkinson, 'Our Living Artists: Michael Munkacsy', *Magazine of Art*, IV (1881), pp.406-10.
theatrical effect and had imitated:

...the broad, rude, scenic manner of those continental masters who are not so much colourists as painters in black and white, dipping their large brushes deep in the mire and splashing their canvases with sooty shadows.192

Both the ILN and the Spectator immediately associated the painting with one of Phiz's (Hablot K. Browne) illustrations to Dickens's The Old Curiosity Shop in which Kit is visited in prison by his mother and her entourage.193 The ILN thought that Holl's work was Phiz's vignette enlarged to "grandiose and magisterial proportions and invested with deeply romantic interest".194 Phiz's illustration shows only one group however and is drawn from the prisoner's side of the bars with Kit in the foreground. The illustration, like the text, relies on caricature. It is also possible that Holl had read another article by Dickens, his 'Visit to Newgate' in Sketches by Boz (1836) which includes a description of the meeting "cage". The cage aspect of Holl's work was exaggerated in Thomson's cartoon parody of it, 'The monkey house at the Zoo'.195

One of the most interesting aspects of the painting is its compositional complexity. Contemporary reviewers had difficulty in reading the painting because of its lack of a single focal point. For instance the Spectator thought the two halves of the work were separate paintings and

192. World, 22 May 1878, p.10.
193. C. Dickens, The Old Curiosity Shop (London, 1841), Ch.LXI. ILN, 18 May 1878, p.459; Spectator, 8 June 1878, p.730.
194. ILN, ibid.
reckoned it a serious artistic error "to fritter away or confuse the main effect...it is a collection of studies made into a picture, without sufficient thought of the unity of the composition". The theatrical journal the Era concurred with this point finding the composition misty, confused and difficult to pick out the story or to say which prisoner belonged to which group of visitors.\textsuperscript{196} The compositional disruption echoes the social disruption that crime and imprisonment cause.\textsuperscript{197}

Newgate is said to have been a subject considered by Landseer to be "especially dramatic and pictorial" and he recommended it to young artists as "full of living tragedy" but chose not to attempt it himself realising that his manner was not appropriate to such a subject.\textsuperscript{198} Holl is likely to have known Henrietta (Mrs. E.M.) Ward's Newgate in 1818 (RA 1876, private collection).\textsuperscript{199} It

\textsuperscript{196} Era, 12 May 1878, p.13. This section of its RA review was headed 'Pictures of Sentiment'. It usually put the paintings into the two theatrical genres, tragedy and comedy. The Era was unique in singling out for discussion Alfred Dixon's It may be for years (546). This work also had a criminal theme showing convicts waiting between trains in the early morning on their way to Dartmoor or Portland. In the background one prisoner receives a final embrace from his wife whilst in the foreground two strongly defined types are contrasted, the rough, thuggish St. Giles wife-beater and the "respectable" (sic) Camden forger. Its combination of purely poetic sentiment and strong dramatic effect made it successful in the Era's opinion. Rodee, 'Scenes of rural and urban poverty', p. 59 mistakenly thought this was an emigration scene.

\textsuperscript{197} At the RA in 1878 Herkomer's Eventide and Frith's Road to Ruin series attracted the most critical comment. The Saturday Review (11 May 1878, p.592) disliked Frith's work and found Holl's only marginally better.

\textsuperscript{198} Magazine of Art, I (1878), p.100; III (1880), p.189.

\textsuperscript{199} There is a later replica of this work at the Friends' House, London. On Ward see P.G. Nunn, Victorian Women Artists, (London, 1987), pp.132-46.
showed Elizabeth Fry visiting the female prisoners there and was well received at its exhibition. He may also have known Francis Wheatley's Mr. Howard offering relief to prisoners (1787, Earl of Harrowby collection) which had been exhibited at the RA Winter Exhibition of 1873. George Romney planned to treat the subject of prisons in a monumental work which never got beyond the planning stage. Prison imagery was a very restricted category in the nineteenth century, but was less so in the eighteenth. Prisons were treated several times by Hogarth, as well as by John Hamilton Mortimer, Joseph Wright and Philip de Loutherbourg who all produced versions of the Captive from Sterne stimulated by Sterne's Sentimental Journey (1768). Other nineteenth century examples date mainly from after 1878, although Doré did illustrate the exercise yard at Newgate in London.

200. In the Meeting of the Oglethorpe Committee in the Fleet Prison (1729, London, National Portrait Gallery), the fourth scene of The Harlot's Progress (1732, the Bridewell) and in the Rake's Progress (1735, the Fleet and Bedlam).


202. Such as Frith's Retribution from the Race for Wealth series (1880, Baroda, Baroda Art Gallery and Museum and versions) which shows the exercise yard of the Millbank prison on which site the Tate Gallery now stands and Eyre Crowe's Convicts at Work, Portsmouth (1887, London, Trafalgar Galleries in 1987).

203. Doré and Jerrold, London: A Pilgrimage, after p.138. This image was the basis of van Gogh's The Prison Courtyard (1890, Moscow, Pushkin Museum). In 1872 the Graphic had published a large illustration called 'A sketch in Newgate - The Garotter's Reward' which showed the administration of a flogging. The accompanying text did not agree that prison had the punitive or reformatory qualities attributed to it: Graphic, 9 March 1872, pp.219-20 and 221.
Other earlier scenes would include Sara Setchell's *The Momentous Question* (1842, London, VAM) (which was stimulated by a poem of 1819 by Crabbe, which in turn inspired a melodrama)\textsuperscript{204} and Frank Stone's *The Convict* (1858-60, York, City Art Gallery).

Some reviewers kept up the campaign against what they saw as meretriciously pathetic subject matter. In a piece spiced with spite the *Saturday Review* took both Holl and Frith to task for their unashamed appeal to "the most superficial, the most unreflecting and least true sentiments of the onlookers".\textsuperscript{205} Both the *Road to Ruin* series and *Newgate* were dismissed peremptorily for their sensationalism.\textsuperscript{206} It also reasoned that there was no internal evidence in *Newgate* that either of the prisoners had any claim to sympathy (thereby denying it to their families too) and reckoned that the world might be a better place with them behind bars.\textsuperscript{207} It was in agreement


\textsuperscript{205} *Saturday Review*, 11 May 1878, p.592.

\textsuperscript{206} The *Morning Post* (4 May 1878, p.5b) reviled Frith's work for being "'sensational' in the theatrical sense of that trashy word" and the *Queen* (25 May 1878, p.392) rejected Holl's effort for missing the high motive and attaining only to "sensationalism pure and simple". Because the shocking figures inspire only distress and horror in the viewer, it added, it therefore failed "in the true purpose of art".

\textsuperscript{207} It is vitally important to understand the difference between sympathy, the socially-conditioned reflex response, and empathy, the projection of oneself into the object of sympathy. A similar point is made in relation to the eighteenth-century novel of sensibility by John Dwyer in *Virtuous Discourse: Sensibility and Community in Late Eighteenth-Century Scotland*, (Edinburgh, 1987), p.142. See also John Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability: The Language of Feeling in the Eighteenth Century*, [1988] corrected ed., (Oxford, 1990), Chapter 1, 'Sympathy and the Production of Society'.
with the Examiner which found superficial sentiments and careless painting: "it may perhaps wring a few tears from the susceptible, but he will not surely charm the eyes of any". The mention of tears reminds us that they were the expected response to such images. Practical help for prisoners' families was never mentioned. The Examiner then launched into a telling, if brief, recapitulation of earlier criticism of such works, wherein the writer coins the term "strong realistic pictures" to categorise them:

...unless a painter can satisfy the eyes with beauty, we know of no reason why he should be a painter at all, or why he should not relate his story in another way. This is a text that might be illustrated by reference to a number of other works that are dignified with the title of 'strong realistic pictures'. In too many instances, though they may be very strong, they are not pictures at all, and the force of the sentiment that is in them only serves, where it serves any purpose at all, to blind our eyes to the failure of the artist.

By writing that some subjects should be confined to media other than painting the Examiner was labouring an established point of view, seen earlier in, for instance, the accounts of the Casuals by the Architect and the Saturday Review, that writing and painting had discrete areas of coverage, which, although they often overlapped, left certain subjects as uniquely presentable in one particular medium. For instance there is no attempt to present the foulest details in Doré's Illustrations to London: A Pilgrimage, they are confined to Jerrold's text. Newgate and other works - the category of "strong realistic pictures" presumably refers to the work of

208. Examiner, 4 May 1878, p.568, emphasis added.
209. Examiner, ibid.
Fildes, Holl and Herkomer, and possibly others too such as Faed and Green - were collectively objected to as being preferable and acceptable in print whereas they are not so in paint. It is possible that the sorts of scenes included in the category were those which might be construed as evidence of social inequality. If confined to written form they could more easily be hidden from the classes able to ameliorate such situations and would not then disturb the status quo. They would also be hidden from the classes who were the victims of the social ills depicted. Some subjects, it was felt, were simply too "strong" to be painted; that is they brought home too directly facets of life that the art-criticising and taste-forming social groups did not want to confront in reality or in art. It is usually hard to tell whether critical objections to paintings of the workhouse, the prison or the graveyard are derived from a genuine adherence to the tenets of 'high art' or are merely the results of personal squeamishness and social or political conservatism. Fildes, Holl and others were praised and blamed across the range of journals and there is no apparent correlation between the political stance of an organ and its attitude to various types of subject matter. For example Fildes could generally rely on a good press from the Daily Telegraph (which at this time was of a Liberal outlook), but the same paper criticised Holl's subject paintings so severely and incessantly that the painter felt his position undermined.210 Dealers showed

210. Holl to Fildes, 2 May 1883, NAL, 86 PP 7; Daily Telegraph, 6 May 1876, p.3e, 8 May 1876, p.3a-b, 4 May 1878, p.3a-d etc. This may explain partly the alacrity with which Holl switched to portrait painting.
no such qualms and were quick to follow and develop the
public enthusiasm for mournful scenes by Holl, for ex-
ample encouraging him to replicate his Welsh cottage in-
teriors, almost all of which take up the themes of fear
or death (see below Chapter 4, Parts A and D).

The **World** at about this time put forward similar views
rhetorically demanding to know the purpose of works such
as Herkomer's **Eventide** or **Our Poor** by James Charles.\(^{211}\)

In relation to **Her Last Sacrament** (RA 1878 [550], un-
traced) by Arthur Stocks (1846-89) it explained that "art
should aim at something more and higher than this prosa-
cal fidelity of record". It found such images too realistic
or rather insufficiently poetic, poetic elevation and
disguise of the subject being one of the "improvements"
suggested for the **Casuals** by the **Manchester Courier**.\(^{212}\)

The call for the artist's realism to be tempered with
reflection - to be poetic rather than prosaic - is a com-
monly found response to 'social realism'. A **propos** of a
group of unspecified paintings but including the **Casuals**
the same paper wrote that:

...prosaic description of an exaggerated
character, rather than a poetic rendering of
the episode, is the painter's aim in each case,
and this is evidently what the majority of the
British public most appreciates.\(^{213}\)

In relation to the same work the **Daily Telegraph** wrote
that it was a "tragedy in blank verse" whereas the
original **Graphic** drawing had been a "drama in prose".\(^{214}\)

\(^{211}\) **World**, 22 May 1878, p.10.

\(^{212}\) **World**, ibid; **Manchester Courier**, 6 May 1874, p.6e.

\(^{213}\) **Manchester Courier**, ibid.

\(^{214}\) **Daily Telegraph**, 11 May 1874, p.5e.
In 1878 the Era had claimed that the strongest pictures in that year's RA had been those which combined "purely poetic sentiment" and "strong dramatic effect". 215 In 1876 the Pictorial World made the remarkable claim vis à vis the Widower that "in the hands of the true artist [realistic art] can be sublimed, as here, into the region of sacred poetry". 216 Consequently it is no surprise to find the Morning Post in 1879 referring to the Return of the Penitent as a "touching sermon" 217 or to discover that in 1891 The Doctor served as the 'text' of at least two real sermons. 218

The World indicted the prurience of the artist and his money-driven pursuit of the ever more explicit:

Is there to be no artistic discretion, or forbearance, or selection? Is the truth, the plainest truth, always to be spoken under whatever circumstances by the painter on his canvas? 219


216. Pictorial World, 29 April 1876, p.135. This linguistic continuity emphasises the fact that paintings were 'read'. Nineteenth-century users of the word 'poetic' to describe paintings did not generally use the word as part of an Ut Pictura, Poesis analysis: see Rachman, 'Story-painting...' Ch. 2, especially p.68. In 1866 Palgrave had discussed 'Poetry and Prose in Art' as analogues of High/Low Art, Idealism/Realism and the Generalised/the Particular: Essays on Art, pp.202-10. Of course, "when mid-Victorian art critics write about 'poetry' in pictures, they are likely to mean narrative poetry...and not lyric poems": Johnson, "'The Bride of Literature": Ruskin, The Eastlakes, and Mid-Victorian Theories of Art', p.23.

217. Morning Post, 3 May 1879, p.6c.

218. See Chapter 4, Part E, The Doctor, below.

219. World, ibid.
It also followed the *Examiner* in stating that painters who appeal to the feelings must ensure that their subject "possesses certain pictorial qualities [and] is really amenable to the purpose of his art".\(^{220}\) *Newgate*, it found, had "dramatic power" and a "repellent character" and consequently it "fail[ed] to impress strongly". This description should not be seen as self-contradictory. Just as the *Times* could praise aspects of *Newgate* whilst deprecating Holl's technique, so too the *World* and the *ILL* could welcome Holl's "power" and "fidelity and assiduity" whilst systematically abominating the use of dismal, squalid, ignoble, mawkishly sentimental and repulsive subjects.\(^{221}\)

'Social Realism' or 'Dismalism'?

It was also in 1878 that the first opinions began to appear which detected a consanguinity of motivation and accomplishment among the artists now labelled 'social realists'. Works of the type acquired their own category, 'Dismal Art'. Holl, Herkomer and James Charles were

\(^{220}\) *World*, ibid.

\(^{221}\) *World*, ibid; *ILL*, 18 May 1878, p.459. That the *Times* should have found anything to praise in *Newgate* is noteworthy for in its reviews of the 1878 RA it made plain its preference for "pleasant country scenes and incidents" to "the dreary drama of the police court, and the prison, and the dreariness of the workhouse" (11 May 1878, p.6c). These are references to works shown that year by Holl and Herkomer and one unidentified other.
denominated the "professors of Dismalism" and Alphonse Legros (1837-1911) was labelled the "great exemplar of dismalism".\textsuperscript{222} The Graphic, in an article entitled 'Dismal Art', thought that not only artists were obsessed with "sorrowful or repulsive subjects" but so too were poets ("effusions in the minor key"), lyricists ("equally doleful" and "vulgar and cynical" when attempting humour) and novelists (a "dismal tribe" too keen on "vice and crime"). Dramatists were unoriginal and were tainted by French influence, "a pale moon borrowing its light from the garish Parisian sun". The Graphic thought this was so because modern life was too luxurious and:

\begin{quote}
Incessant travelling (of a kind, too, which affords no bodily exercise) the substitution of outdoor excitement for quiet home enjoyments, late hours, over indulgence in tea and tobacco and, above all, the want of a hearty belief in God and in a future state, are possibly some of the provoking causes of the depressed animal spirits of this generation.\textsuperscript{223}
\end{quote}

Another publication to realise that certain features were present in the work of a number of younger artists was the Athenaeum. In relation to Herkomer's Eventide it wrote that it was:

\begin{quote}
...a narrow view of Art which seeks only to amuse, and Mr. Herkomer and Mr. Fildes, and other painters of the same class appear to desire to give expression to some of the sadder truths of life existing in our midst, but of which the ordinary world knows little.\textsuperscript{224}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{222} ILN, 1 June 1878, p.507. After 1878 and possibly before the use by critics of the word "dismal" may be seen as a reference to this type of work. The works the writer had in mind were Holl's Newgate, Herkomer's Eventide, Charles's Our Poor and Legros' Le repas des pauvres, (1878, London, Tate Gallery) all four of which were in that year's RA Summer Exhibition. On Legros see Tim Wilcox, Alphonse Legros 1837-1911, ex. cat., Dijon, Musée des Beaux-Arts, 1987-8. Fildes did not exhibit that year, hence his exclusion.

\textsuperscript{223} Graphic, 28 September 1878, p.306.
The suggestion made by the *Athenaeum* is that these artists had a didactic purpose and a *genuine* sympathy with their subjects as opposed to what might be termed a *professional* sympathy with them which allowed observation and study but demanded no action other than the pictorialisation of their plight.\(^ {225}\)

The *Exposure of Hidden Social Problems.*

The idea that certain groups in society remained ignorant of one another gains some credence from comments which reveal how painted scenes of poverty may have constituted the only source of knowledge some might have had of how the poor existed. For instance *Half the world knows not how the other half lives* (untraced) by Emily Osborn (1834-c.1908) (which is reported to show life continuing

\(^ {224}\) *Athenaeum*, 4 May 1878, p.577. The analysis by Borzello (cited above) of the contemporary ways of referring to paintings of the Fildes, Herkomer and Holl types did not cite the paragraphs from the *ILN*, the *Graphic*, or the *Athenaeum*.

\(^ {225}\) H.D. Rodee has found the term "dreary" to have been commonly used to describe certain types of landscape and images of the rural poor in the 1870s and 1880s: *The "Dreary Landscape" as a Background for Scenes of Rural Poverty in Victorian Paintings*, *Art Journal*, XXXVI (1977), pp.307-13. However, that term lacked the precise application and careful discussion that "dismalism" enjoyed. At the time of the Holl memorial exhibition at the RA in 1889, the *Queen* noticed in Holl's earlier (i.e. subject) paintings "a feeling somewhat akin to that of Mr Luke Fildes": *Queen*, 19 January 1889, p.100. In his *Lectures on Painting*, p.198, Armitage refers to correspondence "last autumn" in the *Times* on the "dismal tendency of modern British art". Unfortunately this has not been traced.
in an attic around the shrouded body of a child, as the father continues working, the children playing, the mother standing sadly by and which won first prize at the Crystal Palace exhibition in 1864) has a title pregnant with didactic intent. But even then, ten years before the advent of 'social realism', it was reported that:

..such scenes are, unhappily, too prevalent throughout the length and breadth of the land: the painter does well to show in pictures of this kind what 'half the world' in its luxuries and in its enjoyment perhaps never thinks of, nor would know of, except through the aid of the pencil.227

226. Working class interments were often postponed until Sunday so as not to lose a day's pay. This obliged the family to live with the corpse until that day, risking infection. Thomas E. Jordan, Victorian Childhood, (Albany, 1987), p.89.

227. Art Journal, III (1864), p.236. The mutual invisibility of the various classes in nineteenth-century British urban society is striking and was much commented on in the period. Mutual ignorance cannot have been as severe as it would seem given the 'slumming' trips made by middle and upper class individuals to poverty-stricken working class areas and the large number of journalistic investigations of how the poor lived, such as J.E. Ritchie's The Night Side of London (1857), Greenwood's The Seven Curses of London already mentioned, and William Booth's Darkest England and the Way Out (1890). These and many others were influenced by Henry Mayhew's monumental London Labour and the London Poor (1851). In an early number of Household Words Dickens wrote that "one half of the world is said not to know how the other half lives, so it may be affirmed that the upper half neither knows nor greatly cares how the lower half amuses itself" (30 March 1850). On this subject generally see the Introduction to Peter Keating's Into Unknown England 1866-1913, (London, 1976). It is worth noting that one of the characters in George Gissing's posthumously published novel Will Warburton (1905) is an artist called Norbert Franks whose career path is akin to that of Fildes or Holl or Herkomer. Although the novel is in no sense a roman a clef, the character's name is an obvious play on names: Norbert = Hubert (Herkomer), Franks = Frank (Holl). From humble early beginnings Franks works his way up via contributions to illustrated papers, then works of a 'social realist' type to become a socially acceptable portrait painter with a studio in Holland Park. Franks's key work is a scene of middle class benevolence called 'The Slummer'. I am grateful to Kenneth McConkey for advising me to read this novel.
So according to this writer much of society is beholden to the artist for information on the true composition of society. In 1876 a comparable point had been made much more emphatically by the Observer in relation to Macbeth's *A Lincolnshire Gang* (RA 1876 [46], untraced) which it felt constituted a call for action, deserving praise for its efforts to "expose a type of slavery of whose existence we were unaware, but which certainly calls for prompt legislation if it is what the artist describes". But the meaning of the painting is not readily apparent from the canvas itself; it is only by reading the accompanying catalogue note that the viewer is made aware of the exploitive child-labour which existed in certain rural areas. Similarly, the Times rejected F.D. Hardy's painting *The Wedding Dress* (RA 1875 (1177) untraced), which contrasted the beautiful wearer

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228. The reference to the pencil rather than the pen contradicts the Examiner and the Saturday Review in their refusal to allow some scenes within the province of art.

229. Observer, 7 May 1876, p.5a. An alternative view of this work (which showed a gang of agricultural labourers rising in the morning to find one of their number, a boy, dead in the straw on which he had slept) is found in the Daily Telegraph (5 June 1876, p.3a-b) which thought it "a rebuke to Englishmen's ideas of freedom and independence". Like the Graphic (see next note), it questioned whether "such a repellent scene is suitable for the pencil". The author, probably Sala, wanted to remind Macbeth that a canvas was not the same thing as a Parliamentary Blue-Book and that the agricultural gang system was now regulated by law. The Casuals had been found "more eloquent" than Blue-Books by the same paper.

230. The catalogue text is reprinted by Rosemary Treble, 'The Victorian Picture of the Country', in The Victorian Countryside, ed. G. Mingay (London, 1981), Vol.1, p.171. When the painting was engraved in the Graphic (15 July 1876, pp.60-1) the author of an accompanying text doubted that the subject would be suitable for an exhibited painting.
and the haggard makers, on the grounds that laws now controlled the hours of such workers and therefore "its point as a rebuke and reminder no longer exists".\textsuperscript{231}

\textsuperscript{231} Times, 24 May 1975, p.5a.
Part D: Poverty, Desertion and Emigration: Holl's metropolitan scenes.

Following the successful exhibition and sale of "I am the resurrection" (see Chapter 3, Part A) Holl rejected rural scenes for the next few years and until about 1877 he concentrated on urban imagery. His earliest known work had been set in the city and he had painted other metropolitan themes in the 1860s. His contribution to the dealer Wallis's Winter Exhibition of 1873 was set in a pawnbroker's shop. Want - Her poverty but not her will consents (1873, untraced) showed a woman about to pledge her wedding ring in order to feed her child. It had been bought by the dealer Wallis for £250 who immediately commissioned a reduced replica. Holl had earlier painted a subject similar in tone, Is it a purse or a coffin? (c. 1866, untraced), a young girl model sitting by the studio fire pondering the eponymous question. Reynolds claimed that Want was built up by Holl from many studies made on the spot in the East End, which he was in the habit of touring in the company of C.E. Johnson in pursuit of pictorial material.

232. (Wallis's) French Gallery, 21st Annual Exhibition of Cabinet Pictures, 1873-4 (19); Reynolds pp.110, 116. The original measured 39" x 54". The replica, dated 1874, was about 34" x 47": anon. sales Christie's, 11 May 1917 (89) and Sotheby's, 11 November 1936 (21). A "study" for it was once in the collection of George Aitchison, who wrote the DNB article on Holl (his sale Christie's 20 February 1911 [136] 25 " x 18"). A version showing the mother and child only was once in the collection of Mrs. W.W. Deane, a family friend of the Holls: DNB, under F.M. Holl, p.135.

233. Athenaeum, 31 March 1866, p.435. Exhibited at the SBA Spring Exhibition, 1866 (112) and bought by Tooth for 25 gns: Reynolds p.27. Probably Sotheby, Parke, Bernet (New York), 28 February 1972 (28), 15" x 19", signed and dated 2/66 as "Urchin by the fireside".

It was on one of these speculative explorations that Holl had visited the docks and seen an event which he transformed into a drawing for the Graphic, 'The Foundling'. An abandoned baby had been discovered and was being carried away by a policeman followed by a "sympathetic, murmuring crowd". When Holl's drawing was published in the Graphic it was accompanied by an explanatory text as usual. The Graphic located the scene at Bankside, a very run down area on the southern bank of the Thames between Blackfriars and Southwark bridges. The scene, which appeared in the 'London Sketches' series, is given some topographical accuracy by the inclusion of the looming bulk of St. Paul's cathedral in the top right-hand corner. As Casteras has remarked, St. Paul's became a leitmotif in the backgrounds of scenes of destitution and fallen women.

237. Graphic, 26 April 1873, p.386.
238. The Graphic in the 1870s carried two occasional series, 'London Sketches' and 'Heads of the People drawn from Life'. These might be seen as modern manifestations of traditional subjects of prints, street criers and wandering salesman. I am thinking of examples such as Wheatley's The Itinerant Traders of London (1793-97) (a.k.a. 'The Cries of London'), Craig's Modern London (1805) and Rowlandson's Characteristic Sketches of the Lower Orders (1820). See Wolff and Fox, 'Pictures from the Magazines', p.565. The genre goes back to the Tudor period, although the earliest series was Cryes of the City of London Drawne after the Life (1687) by Marcellus Laroon (1649-1702): Sean Shesgreen, The Criers and Hawkers of London. Engravings and Drawings by Marcellus Laroon, (Aldershot, 1990), pp.vil, 46-9. Altick has usefully pointed out that in much eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century painting, humble (there were no paupers) genre scenes are all rural and that the lowest level of life admitted to was that of the picturesque street-vendor: Paintings from Books, p.65.
The Graphic text described the subject of the illustration as a fallen woman who had abandoned her child. (However she seems to be wearing widow's weeds, which suggests an alternative explanation, that the child may have been conceived before her partner's demise.) It said that she had been abandoned by her inconstant lover. The Graphic lamented the fact that despite copious warnings and the "dearly-bought experience of others" young women continued to yield to blandishments and temptation only to be visited by remorse, wretchedness and ruin. She, it wrote, having carefully wrapped her child and left it where it would easily be found, intended to throw herself into the river. A notice on the post near her reads "GO BEYOND...DROWNED". In the Graphic's reading, the cries of the child had rearoused her maternal instincts and there was hope that they may yet be reunited.

Holl's illustration bears a resemblance to the vignette by Hogarth on the subscription invitation issued by Thomas Coram's Foundling Hospital in 1739. This shows Coram indicating the Foundling Hospital to a penitent woman who was about to murder the baby the beadle now holds: Holl seems to have used the main part of Hogarth's image to provide the basis for the figures of the two policemen and the anguished mother. Holl's painting in turn proved influential on Atkin-

240. Graphic, loc. cit., p.386. Smith, "Savages and Martyrs"... p.27 wrongly describes this as a 'Found Drowned' notice.

son Grimshaw (1836-93) who, in a previously unnoticed borrowing, re-used the figures of the policeman gesticulating over his shoulder and the young woman with the basket in his painting Reflections on the Thames, Westminster (1880, Leeds, City Art Gallery).

The short article in the Graphic is notable because of the heavy-handed way in which it slotted Holl's drawing into the contexts of a constructed social convention, that of the seduction-desertion-suicide sequence and an established social problem, that of infanticide and child-exposure. The sequence of events beginning with seduction and ending with suicide has been analysed recently by Nead. She has pointed out the vulnerability of certain types of working

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242. David Bromfield, Atkinson Grimshaw 1836-1893, ex. cat., Leeds, City Art Gallery, 1979-80, p.16, has suggested that following the decline of the Pre-Raphaelite influence on his work, Grimshaw turned to illustrated journals for inspiration which seems quite likely given this quotation from Holl.

243. Although infanticide was rarely dealt with in a contemporary setting, certain literary parallels were popular with artists, in particular the story of Effie Deans in Walter Scott's The Heart of Midlothian (1818). Set in the 1730s, Deans is tried on a charge of concealment of pregnancy i.e. infanticide, a capital offence in Scotland in the 1730s. She is sentenced to death but is later reprieved. See Catherine Gordon, British Paintings of Subjects from the English Novel 1740-1870, Ph.D. thesis, Courtauld Institute of Art, 1981, (New York and London, 1988) Ch. IV and the same author's 'The Illustration of Walter Scott: Nineteenth Century Enthusiasm and Adaptation', Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes, 34 (1971), pp.297-317. The popularity of the subject of Effie Deans persisted into the 1870s and after. Scott's treatment of her, and that of subsequent artists, was safely distanced in time, "her misfortune could be depicted without disturbing reference to the contemporary scene": Gordon, 'Illustration of Scott', pp.315-16.

women who were exposed to greater risk of seduction when their professional duties took them outside the security of the home and neighbourhood. Although men could be blamed for the initial fall it was society which drove the fallen woman ever lower. It was a fait accompli in mid-nineteenth century Britain that a fallen woman was irrevocably doomed to a short life of prostitution. Inevitably it would be followed by death from drink, or disease, or suicide. The whole cycle had been presented in Abraham Solomon's Drowned! Drowned! (RA 1860 [478], untraced). This work showed a man on his way to a fancy-dress ball stopping momentarily as he recognised a drowned woman, who has just been pulled out of the river, as a former seducee. This work was perceived as truthful and accurate and was treated as if it were "evidence...for the reality of the cycle".

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246. This work has been examined in depth by Nead in Myths of Sexuality, pp.182-96, but the contemporary reading given by James Dafforne, 'British Artists: Their Style and Character. No. LIX - Abraham Solomon', Art Journal, n.s. I (1862), pp.73-5, should also be studied, not least for its use of the Hogarthian yardstick. Dafforne praised Solomon for rejecting subjects derived from literature and like Hogarth taking his inspiration from the world around him. Nead, Myths of Sexuality, pl.47 reproduces H.N. O'Neil's Destitute (n.d., untraced), her analysis of which (p.205) is inaccurate. Far from showing a tired widow leaning against a workhouse wall, it in fact shows a woman about to abandon her baby. She stands in anguish outside a Parisian convent where children who were unwanted or who could not be cared for could be deposited anonymously. This was achieved by means of a sliding door in the wall, which was opened when someone rang the bell, the pull-cord of which is clearly visible in the painting.

Holl's work — and Fildes's *Return of the Penitent* (see Chapter 4, pp. 27-42), which is on an allied theme — were produced about fifteen to twenty years after the peak in popularity of seduction-desertion-suicide cycle pictures. There are many examples from the 1850s which fit into the pattern such as Redgrave's *Outcast* (1851, London, Royal Academy of Arts),

24e Elmore's *On the brink* (1865, Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum), Egg's so-called *Past and Present* trilogy (1858, London, Tate Gallery)

249 and Rossetti's *Found* (begun 1854, Delaware, Wilmington Society of Fine Arts). 250 But although Holl and Fildes might seem to have been a bit behind the times their subjects were still current in the 1870s. For instance in 1878 a new edition of Thomas Hood's *The Bridge of Sighs* (1843) was published with illustrations by Doré. This poem, which was based on a real suicide, 251 had given a completely new impetus to the fallen woman as a subject in art and literature. 252 The poem had earlier been illustrated by Millais and may have been the stimulus behind Watts's *Found Drowned* (1848/50, Compton, Watts Gallery). 253


250. Linda Nochlin, 'Lost and *Found: once more the fallen woman*', *Art Bulletin*, 60 (March 1978), pp. 139-53.


The river, seen in the background to Holl's drawing, had acquired an ominous symbolism since the publication of Hood's poem. It offered an easy and free way to commit suicide as is exemplified by 'The poor girl, homeless, friendless, deserted, and gin mad. commits self-murder' by flinging herself into the Thames, plate 8 of Cruickshank's popular and influential series *The Drunkard's Children* (1848). The composition of Holl's drawing deliberately framed the woman against the river and the dim profile of the City, helping to express both her desperation and the social pressures which had brought her to the brink.

When Holl came to work the drawing up into a large painting (44" x 66", 1874, untraced) he altered both the title — to *Deserted* — and the composition. There is an oil sketch for the painting (private collection) which indicates that Holl intended to retain the original composition. In the finished work, which is known through photographs and engravings,254 Holl altered the tone of the scene. The topographic reference (St. Paul's) has been eliminated and a pathetic fallacy employed: the sky is made stormy, the river choppy, emphasising the woman's anguished emotional state. Instead of showing the mother looking remorsefully towards the child as in the drawing, he chose to move her to the gloomy background, her head between her hands and a look of hysterical despair on her face.

254. It was reproduced in the *Art Journal*, XV (1876), p.9 and a photo of it appeared in the catalogue of the Isaac Lewis sale held at Bedegbury, Kent by Knight, Frank and Rutley, 12-19 May 1919, first day, lot 79. Its whereabouts cannot be traced after this date.
face. This feature was identified by the *Times* as an "almost palpable mistake...[she] must have been 'spotted' by any policeman less blind than a pantomime 'Bobby'."^255^ The abandonment or exposure of children has several immediate associations with subjects common in art such as the finding of the abandoned infant Paris and the concealment and discovery of the baby Moses. Therefore it was a subject with elevated religious and mythological associations as well as being a mundane occurrence. In painting a scene of child-abandonment Holl was tackling a current social problem. Infanticide and the abandonment of children had been brought firmly into public debate (but continued to remain peripheral to the political agenda) as a result of journalistic investigations. Prime amongst these was that reported in the *British Medical Journal* in 1868 into abortionists and baby-farmers. The wide reporting of the Margaret Waters scandal in 1870 would have brought the subject to national prominence.^256^

^255. Times, 26 May 1874, p.6b-c.

^256. See Lionel Rose, *The Massacre of the Innocents*, (London, 1986). The editor of the *BMJ* at the time was Ernest Hart (1835-98), the *japoniste*, whose portrait Holl painted in 1883 (untraced).
Critical Responses.

*Deserted* was exhibited at the RA in 1874 where Fildes's *Casuals* and Thomson's *The Roll-Call* were the 'pictures of the year'. Although no-one mentioned that Holl's work too had origins in a *Graphic* wood-cut, the *Examiner* and the *Times* recognised some connection between their works, reviewing Fildes and Holl consecutively. The latter thought it a "street-drama" which suffered from the "neighbourhood of the still more sensational drama of Mr. Fildes's *Casuals". Other publications reviewed Holl's work in the context of sensationalism and melodrama. The *Daily Telegraph*, for example, praised Fildes's work over Holl's, finding the latter's efforts "mildly sensational" whereas the former's were "true and poetic". The likelihood that it would have "many tears shed over it" was to its favour, even if a "great gulf in the way of merit yawns between [its] well-meant sentimentalities and Fildes's work". The *Athenaeum* noticed a falling-off in Holl's "melo-dramatically [sic] touching" work because he was "content to appeal to lower, if wider, sympathies than before". Writing of it, Thomas Faed's *God's Acre* (1872, Walsall, Art Gallery) and the *Casuals* the *Saturday Review* said:


258. *Daily Telegraph*, 2 May 1874, p.6a, 11 May 1874, p.5d-e. *The Queen*, 23 May 1874, p.417 agreed that *Deserted* was "sensational".

It is an anomalous sign of the times that our painters turn more and more to the shadow side of nature... The worst of the matter seems to be that when a painter is lost in emotion, he is lost to art. 

Other City Scenes.

Before completing Deserted Holl's Want - Her poverty but not her will consents, a scene in pawnbroker's shop, had been exhibited at Wallis's and sold. Holl would have been encouraged by the comment of the Times that his work stood up well to his continental competitors and was free from his earlier tendency to "painful sentimentalism". It identified some of the objects in the pawnbroker's shop (the bass-viol, the Baskerville Bible) and mentioned the emotion on the face of the pawnbroker as the woman pledged her wedding ring. When the painting was re-exhibited ten years later, when Holl had become a successful portraitist, the Athenaeum claimed that Want was worth a dozen of Holl's portraits, no matter how clever or profitable they might be. Want may have depended on a strikingly similar work by Alexander Johnston, A Painful Necessity (RA 1872 [4271, untraced), which is said to have shown the interior of a pawnbroker's in which a

261. Times, 5 November 1873, p.8a.
262. The Magazine of Art, III (1880), p.189 thought that the Bible was evidence of "an equally significant sacrifice".
woman "of the class who have seen better days" is about to pawn her wedding ring in order to buy food for her child. The pawnbroker was an inescapable fact of life for many poor people. Representations of their shops are known in the period but seem not to have been common. Reynolds has said, that the shop Holl painted was studied from one in the East End or from one in Camden, indicating the composite nature of the scene.

Seamstresses.

In about 1874 or 1875 Holl painted two works on the seamstress theme, one watercolour (1874, private collection) and one oil (c. 1875, Exeter, Royal Albert Museum). It is quite possible that the watercolour is either a study for the oil or that it was produced at a meeting of the sketch club to which Holl belonged. It is impossible.


265. Only two have readily come to light; T.R. Lamont Hard Times (RA 1861, private collection), A.D. Brunton Extremity (1886, private collection), both repr. in Wood Victorian Panorama, Figs.113, 114.

266. Reynolds, pp.116, 127.

267. Holl was involved in a sketching club with a predominantly Scottish make-up from about 1867 until the early 1880s. It met weekly, circulating around the homes of the participants. Its function was partly social, but at each meeting a subject would be set by the host and worked on for about an hour. Holl's companions in it included Orchardson, Pettie, Burr, MacWhirter and Tom Graham, on all of whom see Lindsay Errington, Master Class Robert Scott Lauder and his pupils, ex. cat., Edinburgh, NGS, 1983, pp.39-44 and passim. See also Martin Hardie, 'A Sketching Club 1855-1880', The Artist, XXXIII (1902), pp.1-9, where Holl is referred to as the "secretary" of the club. A rare water-colour by Holl, signed and dated 1883, shows the sketch club in action. The artists present are identified as P. Morris, J. Burr,
sible to know why Holl should have turned to such a familiar subject type.²⁶⁸

The social problem of the impecunious seamstress, exploited in a long working week for minimal pay, was prominent in the 1840s and 1850s. Hood's poem, based on real events,²⁶⁹ had brought the awful scandal to full public attention, following only desultory press interest. By the 1870s the actual conditions of employment had improved a little,²⁷⁰ but the continued popularity of Hood's poem prolonged the life of the weary seamstress as a subject in art. For example it was painted by Millais in 1876 (Stitch! Stitch! Stitch!, Johannesburg Art Gallery) and by Holl's friend Calthrop in 1891 ('It's not linen you're wearing out but human creatures lives', (private collection). Like Blunden's, these works take quotations from the poem as titles.

However Holl broke away from the already established visual iconology of the seamstress which had rapidly been consolidated in the 1850s. This consisted of a single female figure, seated at a garret window, either stitching intently or looking imploringly heavenwards.²⁷¹ In-

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²⁶⁸. Treuherz, Hard Times, p.147 has hypothesised that the oil was commissioned by Henry Hill in whose collection it was until 1889, being known as The Seamstresses.


²⁷¹. Errington, Social and Religious Themes, Ch. 3;
stead Holl dealt with a group of three young women at work together, but each pressing on oblivious to the others.

Holl did not exhibit at the RA in 1875, but to Wallis's Winter Exhibition that year he contributed *Doubtful Hope* (1875, FORBES collection), which shows a young woman with a sickly-looking baby waiting patiently for a chemist to dispense her prescription. The title expresses clearly the idea that the drugs to be administered will probably not have any effect on the child, but will be more of a palliative to the anxious mother. This suggestion by Holl can be seen to have been an expression of an acknowledged medical reality: in 1867 Sir Thomas Watson, the then President of the Royal College of Physicians, described how medical knowledge had reached an impasse. It had arrived at a point where diagnoses could easily and accurately be made, but appropriate forms of treatment had yet to be discovered.

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272. Wallis's (French Gallery), *Winter Exhibition, 1875-6* (163).

The painting met with conflicting interpretations. The *Athenaeum* thought it represented a "country-doctor's shop" and that Holl's "grim and grimy" colouring marked a lost opportunity to paint brilliant patches of colour.\(^{274}\)

The presence of the handsome, dark-eyed model also seen in *Want, Seamstresses*, and *Gone* helps put *Doubtful Hope* into the metropolitan category, rather than the country location suggested by the *Athenaeum*. The same model also appears in *Gone*, Holl's treatment of the theme of emigration.

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Emigration.

The last in the sequence of city scenes also originated in a *Graphic* drawing, 'Gone - Euston station. Departure of Emigrants, 9.15 pm train for Liverpool, September 1875'.\(^{275}\) The subject of the departure of emigrants had been dealt with regularly in the *Graphic*.\(^{276}\) Like the seamstress and the fallen woman it was a subject which had been very popular since the 1840s and 1850s and continued to be depicted until the end of the century. The peak years for emigration were 1847-54 and it has been computed that paintings on this theme are concentrated

\(^{274}\) *Athenaeum*, 6 November 1875, pp.613-4.

\(^{275}\) *Graphic*, 19 February 1876, pp.180-1.

\(^{276}\) For example W.M. Ridley, 'Leaving Old England', *Graphic*, 18 December 1870, p.60 and several of the early images in A.B. Houghton's 'Graphic America' series: 5 March 1870, p.324, 12 March 1870, p.346, 19 March 1870, p.65, etc.
between 1847 and 1855 and were more common at the exhibitions of the SBA than at those of the more selective RA.\(^{277}\) This reflected the extensive popular discussion of emigration as a panacea to cure unemployment, starvation and other social ills. It formed the subject of much parliamentary and journalistic debate and was discussed in novels such as Gaskell's *Mary Barton* (1848), Dickens's *David Copperfield* (1849-50), and Kingsley's *Alton Locke* (1850).

Emigration, which was to all parts of the Empire in the mid-century but largely to the USA in the 1870s and after, offered hope for a new life but left great sadness in its wake. Departure and the sadness of those left behind was more often painted than the voyage, the arrival or the new life.\(^{278}\) The subject fell somewhat into abeyance in the 1860s but was occasionally painted, for example by Erskine Nichol whose *The Emigrants' Departure* (1864, Tate Gallery), like Holl's work, shows departure

277. T.J. Edelstein, "But who shall paint?", p.242. Her Chapter VI is on emigration subjects generally, but concentrates on the mid-century. Amongst the well-known works of this period are two works by Collinson, *The Emigration Scheme* (n.d. private collection) and *Answering the Emigrant's Letter* (1850, Manchester, City Art Gallery), Faed's *Sunday in the Backwoods* (1859, Wolverhampton, Art Gallery and Museum). Susan Casteras, 'Oh! Emigration! thou'art the curse... Victorian Images of Emigration themes', *Journal of Pre-Raphaelite Studies*, VI (1985), pp.1-23 lists the works on emigration themes exhibited between 1838 and 1890 at the RA, the BI, the RSA and the SBA.

278. Departure scenes include F.M. Brown's *The Last of England* (1855, Birmingham, City Art Gallery), Redgrave's *The emigrant's last sight of home* (1858, London, Tate Gallery), H.N. O'Neill's *The Parting Cheer* (1861, private collection) and Faed's *The Last of the Clan* (1865, Glasgow, Art Gallery and Museum).
from a railway station. It returned to popularity in the 1870s and 1880s with a new phase of emigration, seen in such works as C.J. Staniland's Goodbye (RA 1878, Bradford, City Art Gallery) and Herkomer's Pressing to the West (1884, Leipzig Museum). 279

Although there was usually a close relationship between Holl's paintings and the illustrations they derived from, they were often different in significant respects. When Holl came to paint the subject of emigration, Gone (1877, untraced), 280 he seems to have reversed and altered the composition and added a third woman. The original work seems not to have been engraved or photographed, but it was summarily described in the catalogue entry for it when it was shown at the Holl memorial exhibition at the RA in January 1889. This description suggests that the original oil was similar in appearance to the other surviving painted versions and did not follow the composition of the drawing. The focal point of a young mother looking tearfully away over her shoulder was retained. 281

The work was generally greeted with praise. The Times thought it was Holl's best work since The Lord gave:


280. Originally exhibited at Tooth's Gallery, Autumn/Winter Exhibition, 1877-78. Its dimensions, 56" x 43", helped it to stand out from the other cabinet-sized works: Times, 29 October 1877, p. 11a.

281. The original was no. 235 in the Holl exhibition of 1889. A reduced replica (36" x 28", 1878, private collection) seems to conform closely to its archetype. An undated sketch (30 3/4" x 22"), probably for the original, is in the Geffrye Museum, London (Hard Times, no. 69) and a smaller version (21" x 18 1/2", untraced) on panel, also undated, appeared in the sale room of Lawrence's of Crewkerne, 17 November 1977 (127).
It is fraught with feeling truly expressed, and the time and mode of lighting make the blackness of shadow, which is unpleasantly felt in most of Mr. Holl's daylight pictures, more natural.²⁸²

The Art Journal liked the way in which Holl had excluded needless detail and accessories. The poses and expressions conveyed the story well enough and there was no cause for complaint about the "sketchy and phantom" train in the background. But the Magazine of Art had a different opinion, thinking that "nothing is falsified, or even idealised, nor is any sordid detail omitted".²⁸³ It was later remarked in relation to Gone that Holl's decision to abandon subject painting for portraiture, lured by money, was "one of the most melancholy instances of genius misapplied and power wasted that this generation affords".²⁸⁴ Tom Taylor is said to have written an "accompanying description of the picture",²⁸⁵ which has not been traced. Quite what this might have consisted of is impossible to tell, but it seems doubtful that it was a comprehensive reading of the sort he prepared for Frith's The Railway Station in 1862. It may have appeared in the catalogue when the work was exhibited at Tooth's Autumn Exhibition in 1877 and in his Spring Exhibition in 1879, but no copies of the relevant catalogues have been traced.

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²⁸². Times, 1 December 1877, p.4d.
²⁸³. Art Journal, XVII (1878), pp.15-6, Magazine of Art, III (1880), p.189. It is interesting to note the way in which the work was seen to be both evocatively incomplete and bluntly full and detailed.
Part E: Convalescence.

The final category in this chapter is scenes of convalescence, one of the most popular subject types in nineteenth-century genre painting, both in Britain and throughout Europe. British examples include William Mulready's *The Convalescent from Waterloo* (1822, London, VAM), Abraham Solomon's *A Contrast* (1855, private collection), William Gale's *The Convalescent* (1862, private collection) and T.F. Marshall's *The Return to Health* (n.d. private collection). Continental examples include *Convalescence* (1869) and *The Convalescent* (n.d.) by Israëls and *The Sick Girl* (1880-81, Oslo, National Gallery) by Christian Krohg. The invalid was most often young, female, pretty and middle class. Usually imminent and complete recovery was suggested as in Thomas Webster's *Sickness and Health* (1843, London, VAM).

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289. Both untraced but reproduced in Max Eisler, *Josef Israëls*, (London, 1924), Pls.XIII and XVIII.
290. Kirk Varnedoe, *Northern Light*, (New Haven and London, 1988), no.55. The subject of the sick child can be seen to have had a long history in European art, for example *The Sick Child* (1660, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum) by Gabriel Metsu (1629 - 1677).
291. Reproduced by Wood, *Victorian Panorama*, Fig.100.
Only occasionally were the possibilities of relapse and death hinted at, for example in James Tissot's *The Convalescent* (c. 1876, Sheffield, City Art Gallery). High rates of infant and child mortality persisted during the nineteenth century. Despite the rapid advance of medical knowledge illness was feared by all classes in the absence of proven cures for even the most common ailments. Consequently, once the crisis point had passed and recuperation commenced, fears that the illness might prove fatal would diminish. Convalescence was an important part of the process of recovery and much medical advice was dispensed on the subject (see below).

In deciding to use such an established subject type Holl must have felt that there was sufficient originality in his approach to warrant the effort. On the two occasions he tackled the subject Holl chose to paint pretty young girls whose greatest problem seemed to be their enforced isolation and frustration at remaining bed-ridden for yet longer. In the first of his treatments of the theme, *Convalescent* (1867, formerly McCormick collection), Holl excluded nearly all peripheral detail. The young girl stares across her room, bored by having to remain immo-

292. Michael Wentworth, *James Tissot*, (Oxford, 1984), P1.113. Tissot's *The Convalescent* (c. 1878, Manchester, City Art Gallery) is unusual because it shows a male convalescent being taken out in his wheelchair: Wentworth P1.152. Convalescent men tend to be wounded military figures as in Mulready's work or Millais' *Peace Concluded 1856* (1856, Minneapolis Institute of Arts).

bile. The *Art Journal* thought it a "debut of unusual success" not least because "the patient suffering, the wasting away are not beyond reach of recovery". Her red hair is strewn across the pillow and the bedspread is strewn with flowers, primroses, snowdrops and bluebells. Although the flowers add touches of bright colour to a predominantly white and grey composition they have a much subtler importance. They are flowers of spring which hint at recovery and emphasise youth and delicacy. In the nineteenth century a vocabulary of flowers was compiled, different blooms having specific connotations. This was an advance on the traditional symbolic and religious meanings of such flowers as the lily, the iris and the rose. This Victorian botanical language could be used to express quite complex sentiments. According to one such dictionary the bluebell meant constancy, the primrose meant early youth and the snowdrop hope. An orange


lies on the girl's knees. It has been claimed that this was still, in the 1860s, a "rather expensive fruit often purchased for holidays or recuperative purposes". 296 However the orange was not as rare as it had been as a consequence of the abolition in 1861 of the import duty on that fruit. Hence the presence of an orange in images painted before 1861 has a different sense to those painted after. The orange was more popular with the lower classes than the upper because it had two drawbacks. Firstly it could not easily be eaten politely and secondly its strongly acid flavour would impair the appreciation of fine wines. 297

Although Holl was keen to emphasise recovery rather than illness (which was not always the case in his paintings) he managed to give the painting a darker aspect by showing the flowers strewn across the bed rather than in a vase beside it. When the bodies of women were laid (out often on the literal death bed) for the paying of last

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296. Casteras, Images of Victorian Womanhood in English Art, p.46. The same writer has catalogued the picture in The Edmund J. and Suzanne McCormick Collection, ex. cat., New Haven, YCBA, 1984, no.15. The orange is also a symbol of purity: see Ferguson, Signs and Symbols, p.35. It crops up in many illness and convalescence scenes including Alfred Rankley's Old Schoolfellows (1854, Sir David Scott collection), Thomas Brooks's Resignation (1863, FORBES collection), Mrs. A. Farmer's An Anxious Hour (1865, London, VAM), and in an anonymous work of c. 1860 (with Daniel Shackleton, Edinburgh in 1990, repr. Antiquary Collector, 61 (1990), p.111.

respects the corpse would be liberally sprinkled with fresh blooms mainly to disguise the smell of decomposition but also to provide an expression of the immutably cyclic nature of life. An apt depiction of this custom may be seen in Herkomer's posthumous painting of Queen Victoria (1901, Osborne House) in which the late monarch is shrouded in muslin and surrounded by lilies and other flowers.³⁹⁸ The child's coffin in Holl's Her Firstborn (1876, Dundee, City Art Gallery) is similarly bestrewn.

In 1879 Holl returned to this theme in The Daughter of the House (1879, Melbourne, National Gallery of Victoria). Again working on a small scale³⁹⁹ Holl introduced a number of differences. Firstly the composition is much more frontal, the girl being placed in a chair rather than a bed. She sits propped on pillows and wrapped in a rug embroidered with flowers. Flanking her are a begonia and an equally pink parrot. To distract her from her illness she has a coloured picture book which she holds listlessly, and an orange. Having reached a more advanced stage of recuperation than the Convalescent she has been allowed into the family living room. She need no longer be kept in isolation from the rest of the family for fear of infection.³⁰⁰ A parallel may be drawn between the parrot in its cage and the confinement of the girl to the chair. The title suggests that she is an only

298. Morley, Death, Heaven..., Pl.57.
299. It measures 16 3/4" x 22": the 1867 work is 18" x 22".
300. For a discussion of the major infant and childhood maladies see Smith, The People's Health, pp.87, 113, 136 and passim.
daughter if not an only child and consequently even more likely to be treated as the parents' 'pet'. Indeed such was the way children were thought of: one of the leading doctors and best-selling medical authors of the nineteenth century wrote that "a house without a child is like a garden without a flower, or a cage without a bird". This subject was also explored by contemporary photographers who, not deviating from the established vocabulary of painted images, reproduced the idea of the caged woman in photographs such as Hill's and Adamson's The Bird Cage (c. 1843/8) or P.H. Delamotte's Innocence (1855). Casteras has pointed out that the representations of women and birds together could, in the tradition of seventeenth century Dutch genre painting, have connotations of loose morals and seduction, but this is certainly not the case with Holl.

301. Pye Chavasse FRCS, Counsel to a mother on the care and rearing of her children, [1869], 4th ed., (London, 1879), p.8. Chavasse's Advice to a mother on the management of her children and on the treatment of some of their more pressing illnesses and accidents first appeared in 1839. It retained its currency for nearly 100 years going through 19 editions up to 1925. It gives specific advice on convalescence (13th ed., London, 1878) pp.62-93. See also George Wilson, Healthy Life and Healthy Dwellings..., (London, 1880), passim. The symbolic description of the trammelling nature of the conventional middle class home by juxtaposing a caged bird and a woman was not uncommon. Deverell's A Pet (1853, London, Tate Gallery) implicitly suggests that just as the bird is caged and displayed so too is the woman feeding it.


303. This subject may ultimately derive from a Greuzian prototype exemplified by Girl with dead canary (1765, Edinburgh, NGS).
The painting appears to have only a superficial and sentimental level of direct and unmistakeable viewer-engagement to offer. It was found by a contemporary writer to be "rather coarse for the delicacy of the subject". The technique employed, the scratchy, easily discernable brushwork, the bright highlights and dark shadows and the few areas apart from the face of high finish, were found "over-forced" and "exaggerated". The same writer was keen however to praise the painter for the pleasant change the work made to his usual mournful subject matter. Although the reviewer thought little of it, it was evidently a popular subject. The dealer Tooth bought it for £400 and at the end of the year it was reproduced in colour in the Christmas number of the ILN for 1879, which was then thought a great distinction.

The two works just described, one from early in Holl's career and one from the year in which he changed professional direction having established himself, are not remotely 'social realist' subjects. They are standard nineteenth-century genre scenes of standard cabinet dimensions. They have been included as reminders that Holl and Fildes worked in a range of idioms and did not confine themselves to 'social realist' subjects. Fildes

304. Casteras, Images of Victorian Womanhood, pp.59-60. The work by Greuze mentioned above has also been discussed in this context, notably by Diderot: see Edgar Munhall, Jean-Baptiste Greuze 1725-1805, ex. cat., Dijon, Musée de Dijon, Palais des États de Bourgogne, 1976, no.44.

305. Times, 2 June 1879, p.5b. See also Athenaeum, 7 June 1879, p. 733.

always made sure to follow a hard-hitting work with an unexceptionable one; the *Casuals* (1874) was followed at the RA by *Betty* (1875), the *Widower* (1876) by *Playmates* (RA 1877 [1059], untraced) which showed a girl cuddling a puppy, *The Return of the Penitent* (1879) by *Dolly* (RA 1881 [314], untraced) and so on. Until 1869 Holl's reputation was a painter of conventional genre scenes, some with a pathetic aspect admittedly, and often including children, whereas before about 1874 Fildes was thought of as primarily an artist in black-and-white.
Chapter Three. Between City and Country.

This chapter focusses on works by Holl and some of his contemporaries. Some are evidently rural, others possibly urban in setting, but all are on one of two themes: death, and the military life and its domestic consequences. Holl's scenes of death and mourning seem to have grown out of an Anglican sensibility and a melancholic, obsessive personality. Unfortunately there is no precise evidence of what Holl's own religious beliefs might have been. These death scenes sit comfortably in the category of 'social realism' as paintings which deal with their doleful subjects in a largely unprecedented way. A distinction between funereal works such as J.H. Mann's The child's grave (n.d. private collection) or James Hayllar's The Old Master (1883, Nottingham, Castle Museum) and Holl can best be drawn in terms of the impact their respective works were apparently designed to have on viewers. Paintings by the former two seem to have been conceived in terms of their anecdotal readability and focus on character and incident. Holl's works are comparatively less eventful, containing an emphasis on the psychological and physical effects of loss as evidenced by gesture and expression. These effects are emphasised by the use of a large canvas for certain, distancing them further from the standard format of genre works and allying them to one of the principal features of 'social realism'.

1. Reynolds, passim.
Holl dealt with the subject of death a number of times during his career. These works fall into two main categories, the death of children and the death of the husband/father and they explore the effects of these tragedies on those left behind. These lugubrious scenes became Holl's trademark and enjoyed immense popularity despite being critically reviled. Holl's change of direction away from mournful scenes to portraiture was widely lamented especially following his premature death in 1888, especially since he had painted few subject pictures after about 1880 and none are known which date from after 1885.

One of Holl's earliest oil paintings was a scene of ill-health and deprivation, *A Mother and Child* (1863, private collection). It shows a woman flower-seller and her sickly child sheltering in a church doorway. It has been


3. *Scottish Art Review*, I (1888-9), pp.83-4, 353. This view was echoed by Harry Quilter, 'In Memoriam - Frank Holl', *Universal Review*, II (1888), pp.478-93. The latest subject picture by Holl seems to have been *One of the six hundred* (1885, untraced).

4. Reynolds, pp.20-1. This may have been his first attempt at an oil painting, begun in 1862 when he was in his last year at the RA Schools. The only other traced work from this period is a portrait by Holl, dated 1863, of Ellen Sarah Gibbs in the VAM.
cited as evidence that Holl from his earliest works was keen "to bring home, in forcible language, the wretchedness of the poor". It has not been possible to identify the "small London gallery" where it was exhibited, nor to trace any reviews of it, but it was purchased by W.W. Schofield of Rochdale for £40.

At the RA in 1869 Holl showed only one work, its title being a quotation from Job 1:21, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away - Blessed be the name of the Lord" (1869 London, Guildhall Art Gallery). According to Reynolds the subject was loosely derived from a scene in a novel by Mrs. Craik (Diana Maria Mulock 1826-87) called *The Head of the Family* (1852). Holl illustrated a scene at the end of Chapter One when the Graeme family gather around their dining table for the first time with neither parent present and the elder brother, who is a curate, assumes the duties of the head of the family. In the novel all eight children are described as being present but Holl

5. Reynolds, p.20.

6. Reynolds, p.20. Schofield's sale, Christie's, 31 March 1882 (133) as 'The Flower Seller' bt. Scott £54 15s. It was bought by the present owner about 30 years ago in Lancaster. The transaction with Schofield was doubly beneficial to Holl. Not only had he sold what was probably his first work for a decent sum, but also Schofield commissioned another. But an argument before *Turned out of Church* (1864, untraced) was completed put an end to the incipient friendship. It was exhibited at the RA in 1864 (526) but remained unsold. It reappeared at the BI in 1865 (147) priced at 75 gns. Of the favourable reviews Reynolds says it received, only one has proved traceable, *Times*, 6 February 1865, p.5e, where it is referred to as "The naughty child turned out of Church".
showed only five.\textsuperscript{7} A complete reading of the novel reveals that the elder son utters the eponymous biblical phrase when his ward's baby son dies at the end of Chapter 37.\textsuperscript{8} Consequently Holl in his choice of title displayed a much closer knowledge of the book than merely illustrating a scene in the first chapter would suggest. Holl painted it at some time between August and September 1868 with the intention of entering it in the competition for the RA Travelling Scholarship in painting.\textsuperscript{9} He had been encouraged to do so by his fellow student Claude Calthrop (1845-93) in a letter which he received whilst on holiday at Whitby. Although he had not intended to enter until prompted by Calthrop he was nevertheless successful.\textsuperscript{10} The terms of the Travelling Scholarship required the holder to spend a year in Italy, but Holl found Italy uncongenial and resigned the Scholarship and returned to London after only two months. Thereby Holl became the last holder of the Travelling Scholarship in painting until the 1880s.\textsuperscript{11}

\begin{flushleft}

\textit{8.} The most recent account of the painting (\textit{Hard Times}, p.75) did not take the entire novel into account and consequently the full significance of the title was not understood or explained.

\textit{9.} Reynolds, pp.44-7.

\textit{10.} Reynolds, p.45.

\end{flushleft}
The choice of subject for the Travelling Scholarship competition had been Holl's own, unlike his gold medal-winning painting of 1863 Abraham about to sacrifice Isaac (1863, untraced) which was his interpretation of the subject set by the RA Council that year, 'The Trial of Abraham's Faith'. The Lord gave was Holl's first major success at an RA Summer Exhibition and it generally received good reviews. However his technical skill came in for some close critical scrutiny, the Times and the Art Journal noting his developing accomplishment whereas the Athenaeum found the execution "grimy-looking". On the whole the pathos of the scene was not thought inappropriate, but opinions were divided over the young curate's expression, the Times finding it slightly exaggerated but the Athenaeum finding "its pathos profound and genuine. How rarely we are able to write thus". The Times's review also provides a clue to the painting's popular success. Despite the evidence of "a long struggle of education and refinement with the most pinching poverty...the sentiment of resignation softens the pain and suggests its consolations". The reviewer did not come to the conclusion that the resignation was in fact stoical and unquestioning acceptance of the divine ordination of the world, as expressed in the title. Such cir-

12. RA Council Minutes, 23 January 1863, RA Archive.
cumstances were all the more likely to be withstood in mournful silence by a clergyman than a layman. In effect what the painting shows is a communion in remembrance not of Christ but of the parents. The title reinforces the idea that the tragedy of loss which has befallen the family must be borne with uncomplaining endurance just as Job bore God's trial of his faith - although his losses and tribulations were far greater. The family's faith in God has not been diminished or deflected by events. Job's resilience and faith were rewarded with great material wealth. In the 1860s the expected rewards for such suffering were exclusively heavenly and eternal, not earthly and transient.

The Lord gave was bought by F.C. Pawle of Reigate for 250 gns. When Queen Victoria visited the RA she saw The Lord gave, but on learning that Pawle would not give it up she instead gave Holl a commission to paint a subject of his choice for her. This was No Tidings from the Sea (1870, Royal collection, see Chapter 4, Part A). The popularity of The Lord gave is attested to by the replicas (untraced) made of it in about 1876 for Henry Hill, another keen patron, and J.W. Adamson. From the time of his earliest

17. Reynolds, pp.48-9. I have not been able to ascertain whether there is any correspondence relating to this commission in the Royal Archives. My enquiry to the Surveyor of the Queen's Pictures was deflected with a reference to Sir Oliver Millar's forthcoming catalogue of the Victorian pictures (1992).

18. Reynolds, p.130. Hill sale, Christie's, 25 May 1889 lot 138, described as 'a sketch', 21" x 30". Adamson's sale, Christie's, 9 June 1877 (48), described as 'a replica', no other details given. There is a squared-up preparatory sketch in the private collection of Holl's great-grandson, 20" x 29", inscribed in pencil in Holl's hand 'Sketch for my painting of The Lord gave 1868 28 Swinfield [?] Place'.

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successes in the 1860s, Holl tended to replicate compositions or to produce versions of the whole or a part of the painting. Reynolds has claimed that these were not copies but repaintings "from the same models posed afresh and painted from direct". 19

The setting of The Lord gave is similar to that in an earlier work which was sold recently under the title of Difference of Position (1866, with Pyms Gallery, London in 1986). It shows an artist at work in his studio painting a young girl who holds a tray of fruit, echoing the posture of an elderly servant who enters behind her carrying a laden tea-tray. Holl's intention must have been to suggest that the woman is a proleptic reference to the girl's future. The figure of the servant entering down some stairs on the left recurs in The Lord gave.

During the following three years Holl produced two more works with biblical quotations as titles. In 1870 he exhibited "Better is a dinner of herbs where love is than a stalled ox and hatred therewith" at the RA (1870 [42], untraced), the title being taken from Proverbs XV, 17. It was begun in about September 1869 and was purchased that year, before completion, by a friend of Pawle's called Read. 20 It seems to have been similar in character and

19. Reynolds, p.130. This was a standard practice at the time.

20. Reynolds, pp.79-80. Read was brought to the studio by Pawle and bought the work on the spot. It was later in the collection of the great doctor and donor to the City Art Gallery, Manchester, David Lloyd Roberts (1834-1920), on whom see W. Brockbank, Honorary Medical Staff of the Manchester Royal Infirmary 1830 - 1948, (Manchester, 1965), pp.95-8 and the gallery catalogues. His collection
moral content to *The Lord gave*, but in the absence of even a full description of the work, this cannot be confirmed. However, according to the *Athenaeum* it showed the members of a "lean, lugubrious family who are about to eat, with much parade of prayers". Holl's desire was again to show the unquestioning acceptance of suffering - in this case a meagre diet - by his fellow men. In *The Lord gave* Holl presented a scene which expressed both the psychological anguish of loss as well as the dignity which could be retained in the face of mental suffering. In the *Dinner of Herbs* he appears to have shown more immediate, physical hardship and the way in which a family can sustain itself in such adversity. The sale of the work to Read was providential for Holl, who was then in difficult financial circumstances.

The critical reception focused on technical aspects rather than subject matter. The *Athenaeum* found it defective in design, colour and execution in comparison with *The Lord gave* and the execution was also criticised by the *Art Journal*. The latter publication, in a later and more considered overview of Holl's work up to 1876, again noted

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included works by Etty, Frère, Fantin-Latour, Frith, Hicks, Landseer, Rivièrè, Roberts and Stanfield.


22. Borzello, 'Fine Art and the Poor...', p.219 is surely mistaken in her interpretation of this work. It is not as she contended about the virtue of poverty but about familial love.

23. Reynolds, p.80.

the lack of finish.\textsuperscript{25} The \textit{Athenaeum} was one of the first to criticise Holl for his choice of subject matter:

Hunger and grief are not desirable themes for repetition by a young painter. Mr. Holl seems to take a morbid pleasure in them.\textsuperscript{26}

John XI, 25 is the source of the title Holl gave to one of his RA entries of 1872, \textit{I am the resurrection and the life}, which was to his first explicit treatment of death, being a funeral scene. The words of the title are those spoken in the Order for the Burial of the Dead in the Anglican rite. The \textit{Book of Common Prayer} gives the full text of the words which are spoken as the body is brought into the church:

\begin{quote}
I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever believeth in me shall never die.
\end{quote}

For those who have faith in God, death is nothing to be feared and eternal life is promised. The Biblical phrase occurs in the story of the resurrection of Lazarus by Christ, the words being spoken by Him to Martha, Lazarus's sister, to comfort her in her distress at her brother's premature death.\textsuperscript{27} The text might provide some consolation for the bereaved relatives in the painting because the death of the body mattered little to the faithful given the eternal nature of the spirit and the eventual resurrection of the body on Judgement Day.

\textsuperscript{25} J. Dafforne, 'The Works of Frank Holl', \textit{Art Journal}, XV (1876), p.10.

\textsuperscript{26} \textit{Athenaeum}, ibid.

\textsuperscript{27} In this story originated the description of death as sleep, a common euphemism and metaphor in nineteenth-century Britain: see Chapter 4, p.349

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Reynolds claimed that Holl was prompted to tackle the subject when he observed the funeral of an old gamekeeper's wife which took place near to his parents' house at Albury in Surrey. She further stated that Holl got the widower and his grand-daughter to pose for him for the extensive series of studies (untraced) he made for the picture. The churchyard background is said to have been painted from that at Albury in which the original funeral had taken place. Holl also made studies in the studio and the child actress Connie Gilchrist sat for the girl. The inclusion of the grand-daughter diminishes the impact of the scene somewhat by suggesting that the old who die are making way for their young descendents. The poverty of the family concerned is made apparent because the showy trappings which the conventional funeral demanded are absent. As the Art Journal put it:

Here we have the funeral of a person of a condition of life so humble that the procession will be found wanting in the complementary decencies of the occasion.

The superficial aspects of the commemoration of the dead had grown to dominate the religious observance by the middle of the nineteenth century. The employment of excessive numbers of mutes and attendants with pointless functions had long been mocked, for instance by Dickens in

28. Reynolds, pp.91-2. Gilchrist was also a current favourite model of Leighton's: Ormond, Leighton, pp.48, 92, 98, 133.


30. S. Phillips Day, 'How we bury our dead', The Ecclesiastical Art Journal, no.2 (March 1878), pp.46-8; see also no.3, pp.76-7; no.5, pp.140-41; no.6, pp.206-8; and 'How the dead should be buried', no.9, pp.268-69.
Martin Chuzzlewit (1843-44), but their use continued. Cassell's Household Guide to Every Department of Practical Life (1874) reveals that even the simplest hearse and coffin and the fewest necessary attendants would cost £3 5s set against the average labourer's wage of 10/- a week.\textsuperscript{31} An entire system of etiquette for regulating mourning and funeral practices had been built up and was propounded and extended by such publications as the Queen and the Lady's Pictorial. Both were aimed at middle-class female readers but both also appealed to a female lower class readership with aspirations of gentility. The working classes were keen to adopt similar procedures to those of the wealthier classes, forgetting, as one contemporary recorded, that:

\begin{quote}
...during life the condition of the dead was entirely different, and there ought to be consistency in everything belonging to the various ranks of society.\textsuperscript{32}
\end{quote}

As Morley has indicated:

Grief was a pre-eminent feeling; even when there was a cause for grief it seems it often became necessary to force it, and it is quite clear that a show of exaggerated grief became a mark of would-be gentility.\textsuperscript{33}

This Morley describes as one of the "predelictions of Romanticism", the ostentatious display of feelings being a hang-over from the Age of Sensibility.

The family in Holl's painting was unable to keep up the expected appearances, but this contributed to the success of the work:

\begin{quote}
32. Quoted by Morley, p.23.
33. Morley, p.17.
\end{quote}
the absence however of the vanities of the ceremony is amply compensated by its impressive solemnity.\textsuperscript{34}

Critics continued to find an evolution in Holl's technical ability.\textsuperscript{35} His name was, by 1872, well-established whereas Fildes in that year was then exhibiting only his first oil at the RA. It is interesting that one reviewer should mistakenly have assumed that the funeral was that of a child\textsuperscript{36} for just such a scene was painted by Holl a few years later, Her Firstborn.\textsuperscript{37} Before he began work on any other paintings Holl made a drawing of "I am the resurrection" which was engraved for publication in the Graphic in August 1872 when it was accompanied by a poem 'Requiescat' by H. Savile Clarke.\textsuperscript{38} It is likely that the poem was expressly written to accompany the drawing as was the common practice of that publication.

Her Firstborn again represents a funeral scene in a country village, but instead of conveying the composure of the widower, here Holl allowed the distraught mother an exaggerated gesture to express her grief. It is not clear

\textsuperscript{34} Art Journal, XI (1872), p.104.

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{36} Athenaeum, 25 May 1872, p.661.

\textsuperscript{37} Although this work does not have a Biblical title, its title would have recalled the severest of the ten plagues of Egypt, the plague on the first-born as recounted in Exodus XI. Holl would doubtlessly have seen Alma-Tadema's The Firstborn (1873, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum) at the RA in 1873.

\textsuperscript{38} Graphic, 17 August 1872, pp.139, 148-49, 151.
whether this is a genuine reaction or a behavioural convention. One writer quoted anonymously a trite little verse to elucidate what Holl had painted:

\[
\text{Life is real, life is earnest}/ \text{And the grave is not its goal}/ \text{Dust thou art, to dust returnest,}/ \text{Was not written of the soul.}
\]

He suggested that "such philosophy" could be the only consolation to the "anguished soul of the poor peasant woman". Holl, he felt, "never painted better, or made the onlooker sadder".39 According to the same reviewer the child's coffin is strewn with violets and cowslips. In the Victorian language of flowers the violet had connotations of sadness, penitence, humility, faithfulness and, more relevantly, chastity and the death of young children and the cowslip pensiveness and "winning grace".40 The background is said to have been studied from the churchyard at Shere in Surrey, Holl building up the composition by means of studies and oil sketches (all unlocated) including one simply of the landscape background.41

39. Art Journal, XV (1876), p.261. The verse is in fact from Longfellow's 'A Psalm of Life' from Voices in the Night (1839), and the first line should read 'Life is real! Life is earnest!'. The Times (8 May 1876, p.4a-b) thought there was "no suggestion of comfort".


41. Reynolds, p.128. This latter item may be the work (unlocated) sold from the Hill collection, Christie's, 25 May 1889 (144) 'Landscape with cottages' 10" x 18", bt. Richardson £5 15s 6d. However it may have been the background to I am the resurrection. Another signed but undated landscape sketch by Holl, A Homestead, was on the market in 1980 (Sotheby's Belgravia, 16 December 1980 [230]). Its dimensions, 6" x 13", agree with lot 145 in the Hill sale, 5" x 13".
Her Firstborn was exhibited at the RA in 1876 at the same time as Fildes's The Widower. As in 1874 when Fildes's Casuals had appeared at the same time as Holl's Deserted, Fildes's work got more attention. No explicit comparisons of the two works have been found beyond comments such as that made in the Art Journal:

for matters melancholy F. Holl is unquestionably facile princeps. His sway this year may be disputed by Mr. Fildes; but Mr. Holl is pre-eminently the man who preaches to us with perennial impressiveness.

Holl and Fildes were both criticised for their choice of subject matter. Of Holl's work the Graphic wondered who "would choose to live in constant contemplation of such a domestic tragedy", echoing the Times's charge against the Widower that it was not a painting happily to be lived with and that such works were not suitable "to adorn English living rooms". The latter publication continued

42. It has been suggested that the basic idea for the scene was based by Holl on one of his sketching club efforts: Martin Hardie, John Pettie, (London, 1908), p.47 where it is referred to as the 'Child's Funeral'.

43. Art Journal, XV (1876), p.261. A similar point was made by the Times, 8 May 1876, p.9a-b. The fact that both deal with the death of children seems not to have inspired any comparisons.

44. Graphic, 20 May 1876, p.491. Times, ibid. The London Journal, 5 December 1874, p.367 had written that pictures in the home were a

...cheap luxury, a positive means of education...Our homes may be rendered beautiful and attractive to all, and become endeared to our children by being adorned with bright and pretty pictures...Hang pictures upon the walls of your living rooms. They need not be costly oil paintings, or set in elaborate gilded frames; they will be prized just as dearly, if they are less expensive, if they but convey to the mind noble examples and pleasant recollections.
in the same vein, accusing Holl of being "another of-
fender" against the canons of acceptability, and "not for
the first time". The \textit{Graphic} ended by saying that:

\begin{quote}
The choice of such subjects is surely a mistake, and is one far too prevalent just now, to judge by the amount of "agony" piled up in this exhibition.*
\end{quote}

The writer would have had in mind exhibits such as Robert Macbeth's \textit{A Lincolnshire Gang}, (RA 1876 [46], untraced) Hubert Herkomer's \textit{At Death's Door} (RA 1876, private collection) and Fred Morgan's \textit{Whither?} (RA 1876 [492], untraced). A writer in the \textit{Spectator} pursued a different tack by questioning Holl's masculinity in producing such scenes and demanded pointedly:

\begin{quote}
What is the use of paintings like this? Is not this constant harping...on the one string of death and burial somewhat unworthy of a man?**
\end{quote}

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45. \textit{Times}, ibid; \textit{Graphic}, ibid. Presumably the accept-
ability was to middle class taste.

46. \textit{Spectator}, 27 May 1876, p.682. The author of this was probably Harry Quilter who wrote a stern but heartfelt obituary of Holl in the \textit{Universal Review, II} (1888), pp.478-93. Sala in the \textit{Daily Telegraph}, 6 May 1876, p.3e, used William Small's \textit{The Wreck} (RA 1876 [13], untraced) as a pretext to lambast Holl in similar terms, hinting at a lack of masculinity in his work:

\begin{quote}
Every attitude [in \textit{The Wreck}] is dramatically lifelike; but there is no forcing of sentiment; there is no extortion of sympathy from the spectator; there is in particular no weak-kneed, watery-eyed, cambric pocket-handkerchief namby-pambyism, fortified by a quotation from the burial service, such as mars and renders ludicrous the pictorial pathos of Mr F. Holl and his school.
\end{quote}

Sala returned to administer a similar verbal battering on 8 May 1876, p.3a-b. A full discussion of the use of gender-specific terminology in art criticism cannot be attempted here. Suffice to say that masculinity was seen as an essential part of 'Englishness': Phillip Dodd, 'Englishness and the National Culture', in \textit{Englishness: Politics and Culture 1880-1930}, eds. R. Colls and P. Dodd, (London, 1986), pp.5-6.
Despite the opinions of the critics, Holl's work was indubitably successful: he produced a reduced replica of it in 1876 (untraced) a more reduced replica in 1877 (Sheffield, City Art Gallery) and a version of the three central figures in 1876 (private collection).

Graveyard and funeral images whilst not common in British art during Victoria's reign were not unknown. One thinks immediately of David Cox's The Welsh Funeral. One of the best known of the genre is probably H. Bowler's The Doubt - Can these dry bones live? (1855, London, Tate Gallery). This has been related to "an older pictorial tradition, inspired by Grey's Elegy in which a figure is depicted meditating in a churchyard, often leaning on a gravestone". Other graveyard scenes include S.H. Mann's

47. The original measures 42" x 60". The first replica was 23 1/2" x 33 1/2", Christie's, 9 June 1922 (115) bt. Smart £33 12s; this may be the replica recorded by Reynolds pp. 128-29 as being made for William Webster, his sale Christie's, 30 March 1889 (46) bt. Shepherd £199 10s; the second is 13 3/4" x 19 3/4" (Hard Times, no.70) and the version is 21" x 17" (Pym's Gallery, London Rural and Urban Images, October - November 1984 [7]). This latter version was once in the collection of Abraham Mitchell (1824-96) who also owned Holl's Doubtful Hope and Widowed (1879, Melbourne, National Gallery of Victoria): his sale Christie's 1 April 1905 lots 53, 54 and 55. Mitchell was a Bradford industrialist and key patron of H.H. La Thangue (1859 - 1929) as was Isaac Smith (1832 - 1909) who owned Holl's Convalescent after 1889. On these collectors see The Connoisseur Art Patrons and Collectors in Victorian Bradford, ex. cat. Bradford, Cartwright Hall, 1989 and Adrian Jenkins, 'Industrialists as Patrons', Antique Collector, 60 (1989), pp.116-23, to whom I am grateful for advice and information.


49. The Pre-Raphaelites, no.65. Human bones may be associated with other subject types such as the vanitas and the contemplative Magdalen.
The Child's Grave, Charles Perugini's Faithful (1883, Liverpool, Walker Art Gallery), Thomas Faed's God's Acre (1872, Walsall, Art Gallery), Arthur Stocks's Motherless (n.d., Liverpool, Walker Art Gallery) and A.C. Tayler's Not lost but gone before (1886, Birkenhead, Williamson Art Gallery). Mann's painting showed children visiting the grave of their freshly interred sibling. According to Wood, a family trip to the graveyard was a regular occurrence, especially on anniversaries. Therefore churchyards were not objected to in paintings. This is correct - critical objections were made to the appearance of grief and agony in a painting, not to the fact that it was set in a graveyard or to the source of the suffering.

That such scenes were popular with the gallery-going public was recorded by Thomas Greenwood. In his book Museums and Art Galleries he noted the reactions of visitors, especially those he perceived to be working class, to galleries and their contents. He wrote:

How the eyes light up at some picture where 'One touch of Nature makes the whole world kin' and I have more than once seen a wife with a pale


51. Wood, Victorian Panorama, caption to Fig.105.

52. See for example the World, 17 May 1876, pp.8-9. This journal also thought that Holl, like the daughters of Mr. Mould the undertaker in Dickens's Martin Chuzzlewit (1843-4), was fond of "playin' at berryin's". Its serious objection to Holl was that his repetitions were beginning to pall:

...[his] melancholy begins to wear a professional complexion...As we pass by the professional beggar, stirred to no expenditure...by his most artful whine, so we are learning to contemplate with dry eyes the army of widows and orphans the artists are so apt at posing with a view to our pity. (Emphasis added.)
careworn face cling more closely to her husband as some picture of child life was being looked at, or something else suggestive to them, perhaps, of little fingers lying cold in mother earth.*53

Also exhibited at the RA in 1876 was John Morgan's "Sown in dishonour, raised in glory" (RA 1876 [605], untraced). Like Holl's painting of 1872, Morgan took his title from the Anglican Order for the Burial of the Dead. His title comes from the Lesson of the rite when resurrection is described in a lengthy excerpt from I Corinthians XV, 42-4:

[The body] is sown in corruption: it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour: It is raised in glory: It is sown in weakness: It is raised in power: It is sown a natural body: It is raised a supernatural body.

In the preceding verses (35-41) an explicit comparison is made between burial and planting seed. They are the essential prerequisites for future life, resurrection and new growth. So in Morgan's and Holl's work the funereal titles are infact implicit affirmations of belief in the resurrection of the body. The religiously knowledgeable viewer would have apprehended the mitigation these titles provided for the scenes they named. Morgan's painting seems to have been somewhat unusual in showing the actual moment of interment, even if the clergyman and mourners are little more than "figures [in] a very pretty landscape" which happens to have a churchyard in the foreground."54

The device used by Holl, Faed\(^5\) and Mann of placing the figures of children in a graveyard has an obvious meaning; youth and innocence could be contrasted with age and decay. *God's Acre* (1866, untraced) by Emily Osborn shows two attractively windswept young girls beneath a huge broken umbrella carrying a wreath across a snowy graveyard. They appear to be orphans commemorating their parents despite the weather conditions which, in a thoroughgoing example of Ruskin's pathetic fallacy, emphasise the bleakness of their situation.\(^4\) But it was also a reflection of provincial customs. The *Lancet* reported that in Tynemouth children were commonly invited to participate in the funerals of their defunct young friends and relations and the same is true of other areas.\(^5\) Holl and Bramley\(^6\) showed exactly this - young

\(^{55}\) In Faed's *God's Acre* a group of young children peer into the grave as the pall-bearers approach.

\(^{56}\) The engraving of it by H. Bourne (*Art Journal*, VII (1868), opposite p.148) is reproduced by Casteras, *Images of Victorian Womanhood*, p.47, where it is wrongly dated 1879. It is said (by *The Art Gallery*, Vol.2, sec.1. [n.d. but 1884], n.p.) to be set in Germany but there is no internal evidence of that. The term 'God's Acre' is of Saxon origin and describes a consecrated burial ground. It was widely used in the poetry of the nineteenth century, for example in Longfellow's *God's Acre* where he referred to "the field and Acre of our God/This is the place where human harvests grow". It appears as the title of innumerable nineteenth-century paintings, amongst which one may cite those by B.W. Leader (untraced), T.S. Cooper, *Reposing on God's Acre* (1875, FORBES collection), which juxtaposes the gravediggers tools and old, decaying gravestones and by Holl's friend Calthrop (RA 1869 [38] untraced).

\(^{57}\) *Lancet*, 26 April 1884, p.773.

\(^{58}\) Frank Bramley (1857-1915) *For of such is the kingdom of Heaven* (1891, Auckland, City Art Gallery) reproduced in Caroline Fox and Francis Greenacre, *Painting in Newlyn 1880-1930*, ex. cat., London, Barbican Art Gallery, 1985, Fig.21.
girls, the symbols of innocence, carrying the tiny coffins to their resting places.

Another way in which children were placed in proximity to the paraphernalia of death for picture-making purposes occurs in A.E. Mulready's *Our good-natured cousins* (n.d., private collection). Mulready located one of his favourite subjects, a young girl flower-seller, in juxtaposition with a group of middle class promenaders who ignore her as they pass by. Across the street, appropriately on the side in the shade, are pawnbroker's and undertaker's shops. The window of the latter is decorated with small coffins and a notice on the wall above advertises "Funerals Short Term Notice Children £1.10s". In the doorway stand a child and her baby sibling. The door is open hinting at the fate of the urchin flower-seller. 59

Holl had drawn a young flower-seller for the front cover of the *Graphic* in June 1872. 60 It was one of the long-running series of 'London Sketches'. Holl's flower-seller

59. Casteras, *Images of Victorian Womanhood*, pp.43-4 and Fig.22.
60. *Graphic*, 22 June 1872, pp.573, 574. The subject of the flower-seller was one that A.E. Mulready specialised in. He often juxtaposed them with theatrical posters to ironic ends. They are always rosy-cheeked and healthy, their rags clean. See his *The Flower Girl* (1872) in M. Newman Ltd., *London, 19th Century Life*, November 1963, no.42 and *Her first earnings*, Sotheby's Belgravia, 25 October 1977 (145). Flower-sellers have been briefly discussed by Rodee, 'Scenes of rural and urban poverty... ' pp.129-36. Becoming a flower-seller was often considered to be the first step on the road to prostitution, although few women seem to have entered prostitution in that way: K. Chesney, *The Victorian Underworld*, (London, 1972). On this subject in general see J. Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society*, (Cambridge, 1980).
is older than Mulready's, and she is bare foot. She casts her eyes down to her flower basket to avoid catching the eye of the two couples who buy from her. Curiously Holl seems to have given his own features to the male figure seen face-on. Holl surely invited certain specific conclusions to be drawn by including a nude figure, which looks very much like a Venus, on a fountain pedestal behind the flower-seller. Perhaps the relationship between the top-hatted, cigar-smoking men and the flower woman is analogous to that claimed to exist between comparable figures in paintings by Manet such as The Bar at the Folies-Bergeries (1882, London, Courtauld Institute Galleries) or the Cafe-Concert (1878, Baltimore, Walters Art Gallery), that is that the woman represents the class of prostitutes and fallen women and the men represent the class of seducers and clients.

Another Graphic illustration deserves to be mentioned alongside Holl's painted works on the theme of death. Alone was especially drawn for the magazine by Holl but unlike the flower girl there may have been a painted version of it. The simply composed work shows a ragged but

61. Compare the woodcut with the photographs of Holl reproduced by Reynolds opposite p.140 and by Maas, Victorian Painters, front endpaper.

62. However, it does not conform to the pattern of the better-known Venus types.


64. Graphic, 10 February 1883, suppl. n.p.

65. A work of the same title, but dated 1873, was sold at Christie's, 12 June 1908 (113), 29 1/2" x 24 1/2", bt. Lister £39 18s. This may well have been a work originally
attractive child in a completely bare garret looking back over his shoulder at an open coffin covered with a blanket. Near him is a rat which has evidently just startled the child and caused him to drop his candle, at which the rat gnaws. An accompanying note provided a typical Graphic attempt to narrate one of its illustrations:

The mother - probably neither a very wise nor a very reputable mother, but nevertheless a mother - is dead. She lies in the parish coffin, and the poor little thing is stunned by the event. Not that he realises it - he only knows that mother, who the other day could move and talk, and to whom he looked for his scanty supply of food, now lies cold, and silent, and motionless. Here indeed is genuine orphanhood."

This engraved scene is related to a sub-genre of 'last look' scenes. A well-known example of the form is Emily Osborn's For the last time (1864, private collection) in which two young women prepare to enter the death chamber of a parent for a last look. They, however, are middle class and are visibly upholding the appropriate conventions: they wear full mourning costume and the blinds are drawn as an advertisement to the outside world.

There is an interesting low-life parallel to this scene by Maynard Brown called The Last Look (RA 1883 [70], untraced). Fortunately this work was engraved for the

called The Wide Wide World which had the same date and dimensions when sold from the Hill collection at Christie's, 25 May 1889 (133), bt. McLean £333 15s.

66. Graphic, 10 February 1883, p.146.
67. Reproduced in Wood, Victorian Panorama, Fig.103.
by Fildes's collaborator on the illustrations to *Edwin Drood*, Charles Roberts. In this work a woman, a baby in her arms, takes a last look into the coffin of her dead husband with her three daughters around her, as her son looks distractedly off, watching a candle symbolically burn out. In the accompanying note it was claimed that Brown had avoided a trap English artists fell into more frequently than their continental colleagues, that of presenting "an idealised Poverty for the sake of making it picturesque and attractive". By 1883 opinion was turning against the scene of picturesque poverty *tout court*. Although it was soon superceded by the examination of provincial working class life in paintings of the Newlyn school and other regional groups, it still took a long while to die out. In *Middlemarch*, which is set in c. 1830 but which was published in 1872, Eliot had identified the wilful misrepresentation of poverty in art, putting these words into Dorothea's mouth:

"Think of Kit Downes, uncle, who lives with his wife and seven children in a house with one sitting-room and one bedroom hardly larger than this table! - and those poor Dagleys in their tumble-down farmhouse, where they live in the back kitchen and leave the other rooms to the rats! That is one reason why I do not like the pictures here, dear uncle - which you think me stupid about. I used to come from the village with all the dirt and coarse ugliness like a pain within me, and the simpering pictures in the drawing-room seemed to me like a wicked at-

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68. *Graphic*, 29 November 1883, suppl. n.p. It was distinguished from scenes of upper class benevolence by the *Academy* which wrote of the painting that it made a laudable change to images of well-washed church-going cottagers who receive their charitable rewards "from the ladies from the Hall": *Academy*, 12 May 1883, p.335.


70. *Graphic*, 29 November 1883, p.566.
tempt to find delight in what is false, while we don't mind how hard the truth is for the neighbours outside our walls."

The Graphic's account further claimed that Brown had captured an everyday scene amongst the very poor "without diminishing aught of its actual squalor and misery" (although how the anonymous author knew this is not clear)." This rhetorical statement gives the article a spurious authenticity. The anonymous journalist then went on to give a full description of the situation facing the family, an account which, because it treats the scene as typical ("such a family") rather than specific, appears more objective and less pathetic than that given for Alone:

Such a family were doubtless wretched enough even when the bread-winner was alive and able to work: the wretchedness has been intensified during the wageless period which followed while he lay sick: and now the sorrow of the last look

71. George Eliot, Middlemarch, ed. cit., p.424. Of the Dagley's farmhouse it is remarked that:

...an observer, under that softening influence of the arts which makes other people's hardships picturesque, might have been delighted with this homestead.

It is overgrown and distinctly dilapidated but:

...under the quiet light of a sky marbled with high clouds [it] would have made a sort of picture which we have all passed over as a 'charming bit', touching other sensibilities than those which are disturbed by the depression of the agricultural interest. (p.429).

Eliot was knowledgeable about the visual arts and had travelled fairly extensively. She read widely and had evidently studied Ruskin closely because much of what is quoted here has direct parallels in passages in the fourth volume of Modern Painters (London, 1856) such as that which, wandering along the Somme, he was finally forced to ask himself "how many suffering persons must pay for my picturesque subject and happy walk": see Witemeyer, George Eliot and the Visual Arts, passim. Brown's painting is of indeterminate location, either rural or urban.

72. Graphic, 29 November 1883, p.566.
as he lies in the coffin is made the more bitter by the knowledge that henceforth the widow must battle alone with the harsh world.  

The writer displayed an understanding of the effect of such a situation on the members of the family in the days when employment or the workhouse were the only legitimate choices offered to the working classes. The only money a relict might have been entitled to would have been from life insurance, probably organised by a local 'death-club'. But the sum deriving from that would barely have paid the costs of the burial, if the premiums could have been afforded in the first place. It should be borne in mind that the viewing context for such journalistic illustrations would have been predominantly domestic. Therefore the impact of such a scene of domestic tragedy would have been amplified when viewed in the home.

73. Graphic, Ibid.
Part B: Military scenes.

Holl produced a number of paintings and illustrations on military themes. In this smallish group of works he can be seen to have attempted scenes depicting all the key aspects of military debate in the 1870s and 1880s: enlistment, desertion, veterans and overseas campaigns. They also allowed him to utilise certain conventions of genre-painting such as paired scenes of arrival and departure, railway station scenes and contrasts of youth and age. These works were carried out between 1872 and 1885 and reveal a consistently sympathetic approach to the nation's military forces. In painting such scenes Holl may be seen to have opted for less controversial, and more acceptable, subject matter than he sometimes tackled.

British military painting had received a fillip in 1874 when Elizabeth Thomson's The Roll-Call was exhibited at the RA. This she followed up with several others including Balaclava (1876, Manchester, City Art Gallery), The Return from Inkerman (1877, Hull Ferens Art Gallery) and The remnants of an army: Jellalabad, January 13th, 1842 (1879, London, Tate Gallery). It was with the last named that

75. Between 1872 and 1879 Holl produced six works, two paintings and four illustrations. Between 1880 and 1885 the position was reversed with five paintings and only one illustration, indicating the decreasing importance of black-and-white work in Holl's career.

76. These are the categories used by J.M.W. Hichberger in her recent general survey of the subject, Images of the Army.
Holl's widows and orphans were compared in 1879 - and found wanting. The writer hoped that the "Jingoism" of Thomson's work might:

...exercise for a while a salutary influence in matters of art; at any rate the painters who 'doat upon the military' secure subjects removed from the world of languorous sentimentality and low spirits, in which many of our rising artists seek their themes."

These sentiments may have had an effect on Holl. The following year Sala was able to write in the Daily Telegraph that he found Holl's production of military scenes a pleasant and surprising departure, even if they did contain shadows of his penchant for the funereal."

Embarkation.

'At a railway station' appeared in the Graphic in February 1872. It was Holl's first contribution to the magazine. It is said to have been made at the suggestion of J.D. Linton who visited Holl's studio in December 1871. Thomas accepted the drawing and invited Holl to contribute regularly. There are four main figures in the scene; a young woman in black, an older woman, a young man and an

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77. On these see Paul Usherwood and Jenny Spencer-Green, Lady Butler Battle Artist 1846-1933, ex. cat., London, National Army Museum etc., 1987-8, nos.18, 25, 26, 31.
78. World, 14 May 1879, p.9.
79. Daily Telegraph, 6 May 1880, p.7h.
80. Graphic, 10 February 1872, pp.128-29. There is a short linked text on p.119.
old man. The latter three figures overlap each other and constitute a group being, presumably, mother, son and father/grandfather. The young man in military uniform is being seen off from the railway station (in the painted version he holds his ticket in his hand) as he embarks on his military career. In the entrance behind two other soldiers, possibly recruiting men, and a uniformed ticket collector can be seen.\textsuperscript{82}

Recruits were predominantly of rural origins until late in nineteenth century and as late as the 1880s the "rural recruit was still ubiquitous in art".\textsuperscript{83} Agricultural labourers were seen as likely to give better service, adapting their peasant-landowner experience to the demands of military discipline and the private soldier-officer relationship. Rural recruits were held to be healthier than town-dwellers and the latter were seen to be prone to insubordination, having been exposed to reformist ideas in towns. Enlistment could take place for a variety of reasons such as to escape urban unemployment or harsh,

\begin{itemize}
  \item Holl produced a number of versions of this scene: the original, signed and dated 1873, 28" x 41 1/2", untraced; a replica, signed, 20" x 30", made for the engraver Virtue (untraced) and a second replica, on panel, approximately 28" x 42", not signed or dated, which is in a private collection. This version may be incomplete; it is very weak other than in the figure of the woman and the old man. There was also a water-colour version of it exhibited at the OWS in 1883 (124), approximately 16" x 24" (untraced).

82. Hichberger, Images of the Army, p.126. This is an abridgement of her useful Ph.D. thesis 'Military Themes in British Painting'. On this point see the thesis pp.240-9.
\end{itemize}
subsistence farming." It is not clear whether Holl's recruit is urban or rural in origin whereas *The Deserter* seems to be a countryman.

Desertion.

In Holl's *The Deserter* (1874, FORBES collection) two bear-skinned soldiers are resting by a cottage for refreshment before again applying the hand-cuffs (which dangle from a soldier's hand) and returning him to his barracks for punishment, either corporal or penal." Holl provided a symbolic gloss on the deserter's situation by placing him near a birdcage. This subject allowed Holl to paint the bright flashes of colour of the uniforms and the flora in an outdoor setting which at that time he tended to prefer.

The composition is not overly successful: the row of figures is organised like a still of a stage production. This may be the result of Holl's technical immaturity, but on the other hand it might be deliberate. Although


85. Whereas until 1871 desertion was punishable by flogging and/or branding and up to four years imprisonment, by 1873 the sanctions had been reduced to about three months with hard labour: A.R. Skelley, *Victorian Army at Home: The Recruitment and Terms and Conditions of the British Regular 1859-1899*, (London, 1977), pp.147-48, 155.
military melodrama had been a very popular genre earlier in the nineteenth century, during the 1860s it seems to have taken a different direction, using colonial rather than domestic settings.

Holl’s painting does not therefore seem to be linked with any theatrical conventions of desertion scenes, but the dearth of contemporary comment on it means that one cannot be conclusive.

Desertion was an immense problem in the Victorian army. It has been estimated that in the period 1872-79 there was an average of 5,000 desertions a year, about a half of the deserters being recaptured or later re-enlisting. The rate of desertion rose between 1862 and 1872, knowledge of which may have influenced Holl in his choice of subject.

Some evidence exists to show that dissatisfaction with conditions in the army was a greater cause of desertion than romantic or homely ties which were often presented as the cause in popular accounts. Desertion was most common amongst younger soldiers, especially those aged under twenty-five and those who had recently enlisted. Failure to adapt to army life seems to have been a common cause of desertion, many absconding after recruitment but before


87. Rebecca Solomon's The Arrest of the Deserter (RA 1861, Tel Aviv Museum) shows the deserter being arrested as he prepares to take to the stage outside a fairground booth: Nunn, 'Rebecca Solomon', pp.3-4.

88. Skelley, The Victorian Army at Home, p.134, Table 3-6. The Gentleman's Magazine, February 1879, pp.249-50 reported that 8,000 desertions had been recorded in the previous year, an unusually high figure given the depressed economic circumstances in Britain at the time.
joining their regiments. Desertion was viewed by the military authorities as especially damaging to national morale because it spread the belief that the rank and file were discontented. There was also an economic aspect: the first year's training of an ordinary private cost between £56 and £115 at 1881 prices. 89

Paintings on the theme of desertion go back at least to the time of George Morland whose series of four works on the theme was painted in 1789.90 However images of desertion painted during the nineteenth century remained few in number. A recent historian of the subject has stated that there were only nine such subjects exhibited at the RA during the nineteenth century.91 Images of desertion tended to be set in a rural environment and to show the absconding soldier in relation to his home or domestic life. One such example is Redgrave's The Deserter's Home (RA 1847, YCBA).92 It shows the reactions of panic and anxiety in the deserter's family when a search party is seen approaching. The soldier can only recently have ar-

89. Skelley, Victorian Army at Home, pp.132, 143, 167, 240.

90. Josephine Gear, Masters or Servants? A study of selected English Painters and their Patrons of the late Eighteenth and early Nineteenth Centuries, Ph. D. thesis, New York University, 1976, (New York and London, 1977), p.27 states that the first three of these are lost (the fourth is in the Holbourne Museum, Bath) but are known from engravings.

91. Hichberger, Images of the Army, p.132. This figure may not be accurate. Holl's Deserter was exhibited at Wallis's French Gallery, Winter Exhibition, 1874 (109) when the Athenaeum (7 November 1874, pp.613-14) thought it "hardly worthy of being called a work of art".

92. Casteras and Parkinson, Richard Redgrave, no.84.
rived home as he still wears his uniform under a rough smock. No reasons for desertion are presented. Hugh Collins's *In close pursuit of a Deserter: the 42nd Highlanders* (RA 1868, Stirling, Smith Museum and Art Gallery) again shows a family cottage. The deserter has hidden behind a chair on the left whilst his wife cowers over their child on the right. His unheroic stance indicates that here the deserter is represented more as a coward and traitor than as a justified escapee. It is significant that popular attitudes to the army changed during the middle of the century. Earlier the army was seen as the refuge of criminals and scoundrels whereas by the 1860s it was widely seen as a patriotic and loyal body of men defending the nation and the Empire. This evolution in appraisal was largely the result of post-Crimean reforms of the army, beginning with the professionalisation of the officer class, and the so-called Cardwell reforms of the late 1860s.93

Later 'deserter' pictures include Thomas Marshall's *Absent Without Leave* (RA 1872 [900], untraced). An accompanying text in the catalogue revealed that the deserter had acted out of "filial love", returning to his rural family home to visit his moribund mother. A similarly entitled work by W.H. Bartlett (RA 1889 [281], untraced) is said to show a deserter who has lingered to attend his dying father being led away, again by Highland captors.94 In 1881 J.H. Hen-

93. On this subject generally see Spiers, *The Army and Society 1815-1914*.

94. *Athenaeum*, 1 June 1889, p.701.
shall exhibited *A Deserter* (private collection) at the RA. It represents the guilty soldier in a railway carriage escorted by two soldiers and his weeping sweetheart. It is an odd work which, as the *Times* recognised, fails to convey any sense of crime or guilt. The key to these works is that the soldiers have transgressed military law, not from cowardice or from another self-serving reason but in response to a moral dilemma, whether to put their military or their familial duty first. Consequently, as paintings, they are as much to do with the Victorian belief in the sanctity and structure of the family as they are directly to do with loyalty to the military and the military's role in Britain at that time. It can be argued that the subjects were chosen for their capacity to engage the viewer's sentiments, rather than to point to a serious problem in military discipline. They function as cyphers of more widespread domestic tensions (fears for family unity, the divided loyalties of the younger generation vis-à-vis the older) and of national pride, because the soldier in British nineteenth-century art commonly signifies the Empire (see below). Holl's painting can be seen to fit neatly within the established formulae of deserter subjects. It is rural, the captors are Highlanders, the cottage may well be the deserter's home and the girl who brings the water his relative.

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96. The prevalence of Scottish troops in paintings is discussed below.
Holl's *Graphic* illustration on the deserter theme (another in the series of 'London Sketches') is a reworking of the subject with much greater originality. It is quite unusual in that has an unmistakeably urban setting - the dim and hazy background to Holl's drawing shows the silhouette of St. Paul's cathedral. It is significantly different to the earlier painting. Instead of looking ashamedly at the ground, the manacled deserter stares defiantly out at the viewer. This look of "pathetic power" was commented on by the author of an accompanying article. The arresting soldiers are in everyday uniform and one cautions a woman, presumably the deserter's female companion, to judge from her expression of anxiety, preventing her from approaching the man. In the foreground a girl inexplicably bends forward. The deserter has evidently been surprised at work, he wears rough workman's clothes and his trousers are tied around with string below the knee, a common practice of urban and rural workers to prevent the unwanted ingress of rats. In the painting the Highland soldiers look towards the girl with the water jug, but in the drawing the soldiers, who are all strong, purposeful and handsome, face forwards, as if advancing at the viewer.


98. *Graphic*, ibid, p.302. The article proposed some explanations of why such courageous-looking men desert and suggested a continental system of compulsory service instead of an army of volunteers.
The Veteran.

In 1877 Holl turned to the subject of the veteran, another long-standing subject-type within nineteenth-century painting. The principal precursor was of course David Wilkie's Chelsea Pensioners (1822, London, Apsley House). The subject had been brought forcefully to the public attention in 1875 when Herkomer showed his painting of an aged veteran in extremis in the Hospital chapel, The Last Muster. Previously, in 1862, Faed's New Wars to an Old Soldier (RA 1862, untraced) had shown a young woman reading news from the Crimea to a veteran of the Egypt campaign. Holl too chose to couch his version of the Chelsea pensioner subject, Going Home (London, Royal Military Hospital, Chelsea), in terms of an age-youth contrast, a subject-type which was common in a variety of forms throughout the nineteenth century. What is actually depicted in the painting is not clear: the pensioner and the young woman advance arm-in-arm along a country lane. He walks with a stick and judging by the mud on his boots has covered some distance. She is well-dressed and carries a bouquet and a bag. Their destination is not clear: perhaps it is the yard of the church seen silhouetted against the evening sky. This mournful hint - that the old

99. This work had been most fully catalogued and discussed by Hamish Miles in Sir David Wilkie of Scotland (1785-1841), ex.cat., Raleigh, North Carolina Museum of Art, 1987, no.23.

100. Like Fildes's Casuals this was developed from a wood-cut in the Graphic (18 February 1871, p.160): see Lee M. Edwards, 'From Pop to Glitz: Hubert von Herkomer at the Graphic and the Royal Academy', VPR, XXIV (1991), pp.71-7 and Hard Times, no.79 and pp.92-3.
soldier is going home to visit a grave for one last time before he enters his own - was noticed by one contemporary who focussed on the artist’s inability to paint any picture which did not have some melancholy suggestion in it.\textsuperscript{101} Spielmann, writing of it a few years later, thought the pensioner was at "the verge of the great Abyss".\textsuperscript{102}

The composition and subject matter are borrowed almost in their entirety from Fred Walker’s \textit{The Wayfarers} (1866, untraced) which shows an old man and a boy walking along a country lane.\textsuperscript{103} There is an evident debt too to Walker’s \textit{The Harbour of Refuge} (1872, London, Tate Gallery). Holl may have known Walker (1840-75) through their \textit{Graphic} connections and is very likely to have seen Walker’s work. On another occasion Holl produced a work deeply indebted to Walker, a rough water-colour painted at a sketching club meeting and derived directly from Walker’s \textit{The Lost Path} (1863, Makins collection), which was engraved in the \textit{Graphic’s} Christmas number for 1869.\textsuperscript{104} Again, the appeal

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{101} Art Journal, VI (1877), p.270.
  \item \textsuperscript{102} Graphic, 30 July 1888, p.693.
  \item \textsuperscript{103} This work existed in at least three versions: a large oil (1866, untraced) a small watercolour (n.d., untraced) and an engraving (c. 1866). Holl has followed the engraving for the proximity of the man and boy and the oil for the fact that the man is in uniform. The large oil can be seen in the background to Holl's portrait of William Agnew (1883, Thomas Agnew & Son Ltd.): R. Treble, \textit{Great Victorian Pictures}, ex. cat., ACGB, 1978, no.22.
  \item \textsuperscript{104} Graphic, 25 December 1869, p.85. It was accompanied by an anonymous poem in which the wandering woman is finally rescued by her husband. This is a complete reversal of the meaning of the poem, 'Love in Death' by Dora Greenwell which commemorated a woman who died in a snowstorm in Vermont, her child surviving wrapped in the mother’s clothes, which the design had originally been produced to accompany: Good Words, III (1862), pp.184-5.
\end{itemize}
of Holl's painting can be attested to by the fact that at least two replicas (both untraced) of it were made.\footnote{105}

\textbf{Discipline and Dissipation.}

In April 1879 the \textit{Graphic} published one of Holl's most interesting military scenes, 'Discipline and Dissipation'.\footnote{106} It shows a railway carriage in which a scruffy man is slumped asleep opposite an alert soldier who has broken off reading his newspaper to look disparagingly at the dozing figure. Here Holl has chosen one of the commonest settings for scenes in graphic illustration, the railway carriage. It was especially popular for setting cartoons in because of the proximity into which opposing types could be brought.\footnote{107} There are also a number of paintings which use this setting.\footnote{108} The accompanying article\footnote{109} claimed Holl had set out to "illustrate the

\begin{itemize}
\item \footnote{105}{Hill sale, Christie's, 25 May 1889 (137) 17 1/2" x 23 1/2", "a sketch" bt. Isaacs, £267; Teesdale sale, Christie's, 13 March 1886 (179), "a small finished replica", dated 1877, bt. Tooth £110 5s.}
\item \footnote{106}{Graphic, 22 April 1879, pp.416-17.}
\item \footnote{107}{This was recognised by the \textit{Art Journal}, V (1876), p.11 when it published an engraving of Holl's \textit{Leaving Home}.}
\item \footnote{108}{One thinks immediately of Abraham Solomon's paired scenes \textit{First Class} (1854, Ottawa, National Gallery of Canada) and \textit{Second Class} (1855, Canberra, National Gallery of Australia) (there are several other versions of these works), Egg's \textit{The Travelling Companions} (1862, Birmingham, City Art Gallery) and Charles Rossiter's \textit{To Brighton and Back for 3/6d} (1859, Birmingham, City Art Gallery).}
\item \footnote{109}{Graphic, ibid, p.412.}
\end{itemize}
bracing and beneficial effects of military discipline". It quoted the artist to the effect that the scene was based on observed reality (but I doubt that Holl ever travelled third class). He is quoted as describing the worker as "an idle tramp, living an existence of begging from one place to another, idling, drinking and sleeping away an existence". The soldier however, "might possibly have shared the same existence" were it not for the "regular duties and training" which keep him a straight and "useful as well as ornamental member of the community". A second editorial paragraph demanded greater obedience and subordination in modern society, in which it was felt to be woefully deficient. It went on to advocate the "regulative system of the Middle Ages" under which "we should not only have fewer crooked legs and round shoulders, but more cheerfulness and contentment". 110

Until the post-Crimean reforms no such comparison would have made sense. Public perception of the military was largely negative and a soldier could not easily have stood as a positive example. Moreover Holl was deliberately adapting the title of James Northcote's (1746-1821) engraved series of 1796 called 'Diligence and Dissipation'. The series illustrates the lives and fate of two girls, one virtuous and one wanton, in a shallow attempt at Hogarthian satire. 111 Holl altered the gender of

110. Graphic, ibid.

111. E.D.H. Johnson, Paintings of the British Social Scene, (London, 1986), p.85. It is almost a female repetition of Hogarth's 'Industry and Idleness' series of 1747, the title and theme of which have similar connotations to Holl's drawing.
the subjects and changed "Diligence" to "Discipline" thus subtly altering Northcote's title, to make it fit its more 'male' purpose. This was presumably done to make the drawing seem to be part of a long-standing pictorial-narrative tradition and secondly to allow him to amplify his theme of the beneficial effects of military service. In making allusive use of Northcote's 'Diligence and Dissipation' series Holl was following near-contemporaries such as Augustus Egg whose indebtedness to one of Northcote's scenes in the second part of his so-called Past and Present triptych (1858, London, Tate Gallery) has already been noticed.\(^\text{112}\) It is significant that Northcote was evidently influenced by Hogarth both directly and indirectly via Greuze.\(^\text{113}\)

Embarkation and Return.

In January 1879 the Graphic published 'Summoned for Active Service'.\(^\text{114}\) The image and the accompanying text\(^\text{115}\) were both exhortations to the military man to do his duty, despite the responsibilities he must leave behind. It

\(^{112}\) Edelstein, 'Augustus Egg's triptych...', pp.206-7. It is conceivable that Holl also had in mind a temperance catchpenny ballad of the period entitled the 'Railroad to Hell, from dissipation to poverty, and from poverty to desperation. This line begins in the Brewery [and] lands in the Kingdom of Hell': see Victor E. Neuburg, 'The Literature of the Streets', in The Victorian City, Vol. 1, p.195.

\(^{113}\) Brookner, Greuze, pp.151-3.

\(^{114}\) Graphic, 11 January 1879, pp.32-33.

\(^{115}\) Ibid, p.36.
wrote that the call to arms should have "a bracing and inspiriting effect". Not only did foreign service offer a change from "mimic warfare" and "dull, monotonous barracks life" but also experience and adventure and "the prospect of booty and promotion" - even the Victoria Cross. In strong contrast to this is the feeling of the soldier's wife in whose ears the trumpet of war can be a funeral knell. Her sentiments are those of the poet of 'To Men o' State':

How can your flinty hearts enjoy/ The widow's tears, the orphan's cry? 116

The article mentions the wife, the sweetheart, the "poor old mother" all of whom may be present in the drawing, reminding the viewer that the soldiers will be fighting to protect the nation's colonial interests which by extension are the interests of the women and children.

The central motif of the determined-looking soldier who looks directly out at the viewer as he grasps his wife's hand is oddly isolated from the bustle of the figures around them. This pair seem to have been freely adapted from the foreground group in Hogarth's so-called March to Finchley (1746, London, Thomas Coram Foundation). 117 In

116. Ibid.

117. This connection was also made by in a different context by the Daily Telegraph, 6 May 1889, p.7h, when reviewing the painting Holl derived from this illustration:

"[The] veritable and unsentimental aspect of the departure of a regiment was perchance never more adiquately rendered than in a picture called 'The March of the Guards towards Finchley' painted 135 years ago by one William Hogarth".
the latter the soldier is caught between the rival claims of two women, one pregnant and imploring, the other angry and aggressive. Hogarth's aims were incompatibly different to Holl's. But Holl, like Hogarth, placed a couple of figures in front of a mass of other figures from which they are detached, in Hogarth's case by the way in which the scene is lit, and in Holl's case by seeming frozen and monumental whilst all behind is animated.

An advertisement for the Daily Telegraph in the background of the drawing bears the headline 'The Afghan War... Rumoured...'. This is carefully included to make the illustration self-explanatory, but it is hardly likely that any contemporary reader would need to be reminded of the latest of Britain's almost constant military-colonial exploits. It is interesting to compare Holl's image with one which appeared the following month in the Graphic, 'The Afghan War - A Sister of Mercy' by W.C. Horsley (1855-1904). This shows one British soldier who has quit a column of troops being given water by bare-breasted native women. This, presumably, is one of the "exciting adventures" in one of the "strange countri[ies]" the Graphic mentioned in relation to Holl's drawing. Horsley's drawing is strongly reminiscent of Biblical water-giving scenes such as Christ and the woman of Samaria or Judah and Tamar, both of which were common subjects in art in the nineteenth century. Therefore the soldiers' mission

118. Graphic, 22 February 1879, pp.176-77. A version of this subject in oil was exhibited by Horsley at the RA in 1880, (398) untraced: Henry Blackburn, Academy Notes, (London, 1880), p.37.
is elevated by its depiction in the idiom of a religious (Biblical) image. It thereby awards a spurious divine sanction to that mission whilst also suggesting that some natives approved of and supported the British action. It also has colonially exploitive erotic undertones.

In 'Discipline and Dissipation' and 'Summoned on Active Service' Holl was seen to have had a certain reliance on eighteenth-century sources - Northcote and Hogarth. In his scenes of the departure and return of soldiers Holl was able to draw on more recent examples. For instance the success of H.N. O'Neill's paired scenes Eastward Ho! August 1857 (1858, private collection) and Home Again (1859, private collection) must have been in Holl's mind when


120. Heleniak, Mulready, p.249 n.37 has remarked that "Pathetic scenes of soldiers' and sailors' 'returns' were quite popular with English artists in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries" and returned to popularity at about the time of the Crimean war.

121. There are a number of versions of these scenes: Great Victorian Pictures, no.40 and National Art Collections Fund Review 1989, p.161. The paired scene is another popular nineteenth-century type which relies on an Hogarthian model such as the two pairs of Before and After (both c.1731, Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum and Malibu, The J. Paul Getty Museum). Armitage issued an amusing warning to young artists about to attempt paired scenes:

...there is a sort of poster or advertisement flavour about the work, reminding one a little of "What I was, and what I am" in connection with Mrs Allen's hairwash, or of "Before and after using anti-fat". Lectures on Painting, p. 214.
In 1880 he exhibited *Ordered to the Front* (untraced) at the RA, which was based on 'Summoned for Active Service'.\(^{122}\) The painting was bought for £500 by a well-known collector, Sir Thomas Lucas (1822-1902), who commissioned a sequel, *Home Again* (1881, Melbourne, National Gallery of Victoria). The narrative method of Holl's pair is not dissimilar to O'Neil's, but Holl focusses on fewer figures and whereas O'Neil's troops disembarked by sea Holl's are about to leave by rail. In adapting 'Summoned for Active Service' to become *Ordered to the Front* Holl opened up the pictorial space, giving and gave more room around the figures which are placed further back from the picture plane. He retained the sense that the soldiers and their companions are advancing towards the viewer. There are various alterations to the figures but the composition is basically the same:\(^{123}\) Holl's was one of three paintings on this theme in the RA Summer Exhibition of 1880, as the cartoonist Gordon Thomson realised, producing a group parody of the three.\(^{124}\)

\(^{122}\) There is a version of this subject belonging to the Walsall Art Gallery which in 1989 was hung in the Mayor's Parlour at Walsall Town Hall. It measures 30 1/4" x 25" and is dated 1880 and may once have been owned by the Bradford collector Mark Stainsby. It is a reduced replica of the original, also dated 1880, (untraced) which measured 52 1/2" x 42 1/2". When the original was sold at Christie's (Lucas sale, 7 June 1902 [88]), its dimensions were mistakenly given as 44" x 36".

\(^{123}\) For example the young girls on the left point to where we suppose the train to be instead of at each other, the positions of the hands of the woman holding the baby are different, the widowed mother on the right clasps her son's forearm instead of her own forehead and the soldier's kilts are of a different tartan. In the painting the contrapposto of the central soldier is more competently achieved.

\(^{124}\) *Fun*, 12 May 1880, p.188. The other two works are Charles Green's *The girl I left behind me*, (1880, Leicester, Museum and Art Gallery) and a work of the same
The majority of Holl's military scenes show kilted Highland soldiers. They function as an expression of loyalty to Britain. Scotland, particularly the Highlands, was known to be a favourite place of Queen Victoria. Scottish loyalty, like the kilt and clan tartans, was a comparatively recent invention, and the origins of it were soon mystified in the mythology of Scotland. Indeed, as Trevor-Roper has neatly shown, it was only the establishment of Highland regiments after the Jacobite rebellions which kept the tartan industry alive and made the kilt a fixture of "Highland" dress. Whilst ordinary Highlanders were banned from wearing Highland costume by various post-Jacobite laws (and to all intents and purposes such costume was extinct by 1780) a system of regimental differentiation based on tartans emerged. It was the visit of King George IV to Edinburgh in 1822 which stimulated an interest in national costume. The visit neatly coincided with a clever programme of commercial exploitation by Wilsons of Bannockburn, the greatest of the tartan weavers.

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127. For example, what was fraudently certified as the
The popularity of Highland troops was owed largely to their success at the Battle of Waterloo. In the subsequent years the fashion for kilts was promoted by the public appeal of the Highland regiments and the enduring popularity of Walter Scott's Waverley novels.\textsuperscript{128} One of Daniel Maclise's great fresco contributions to the decoration of the Royal Gallery in the newly-built Houses of Parliament was The Meeting of Wellington and Blücher after the Battle of Waterloo (1859-61, London, Palace of Westminster) in which prominent positions are given to several Highlanders, both dead and victorious.\textsuperscript{129}

In 1882 Holl repeated the motif of the widowed mother sending off her son in Ordered to the Front and entitled it Ordered Off (untraced). This work was sold to Holl's principal dealer Arthur Tooth for about 250 gns.\textsuperscript{130} It did not receive much attention when it was shown in Tooth's spring exhibition.\textsuperscript{131} It was engraved in the ILN tartan of the clan Macpherson had previously been known as "no. 155", then as "Kidd" because it was bought in bulk by a Mr. Kidd to clothe his West Indian slaves: Trevor-Roper p.30.

\textsuperscript{128} Trevor-Roper, p.28.

\textsuperscript{129} Richard Ormond and John Turpin, Daniel Maclise 1806-1870, ex. cat., London, National Portrait Gallery, 1972, no.117 identifies the majority of the figures in the scene.

\textsuperscript{130} Reynolds, pp.213-14.

\textsuperscript{131} Tooth's, Spring Exhibition, 1882 (18).
alongside a short article extolling the virtues of British soldiery and of the long-suffering relatives they left behind.\textsuperscript{132} It was in the ILN that Holl's \textit{Home Again!} had been engraved in 1881.\textsuperscript{133} The notice published with it compared the sacrifices of the volunteer corps and of the regular army. It emphasised the Scottish element in the painting and the Scottish contribution to the defence of colonial territory. Interestingly on both occasions the same 'Scottish' poem was quoted:

\begin{quote}
Oh where, and oh where, is my Highland laddie gone? / He's gone to fight the French, for King George upon the throne! / And its, Oh, in my heart, that I wish him safe at home.\textsuperscript{134}
\end{quote}

Shortly before \textit{Ordered Off} was printed in the ILN, Holl contributed 'Did you ever kill anybody, Father ?' (RA 1884 (671, untraced) to the RA summer exhibition. This work shows a young girl sitting on a military greatcoat holding a sword and absorbedly asking the eponymous question.\textsuperscript{135}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{132.} ILN, 13 September 1884, suppl. n.p. and p. 251.
\textsuperscript{133.} ILN, 3 September 1881, suppl. n.p., article on p.234.
\textsuperscript{134.} ILN, ibidem. It seems that the Scots were and still are used to do the military dirty work of the British. During the Gulf War in 1991 much concern was voiced about the inordinate numbers of Scottish troops being sent to the region.
\textsuperscript{135.} It resembles a work by the French painter Gustave Jacquet (1846-1909) \textit{Jeune fille tenant une épée} (1872, untraced but published by Goupil in 1874): Bailey, \textit{Van Gogh in England}, no.50. Holl's work is said to have been derived from an incident which occurred when Holl was at work on his portrait of the general, Lord Wolseley, in 1883. Holl's daughter Nina (Madolin b. 1874) entered the studio, picked up the sword left by Wolseley and asked her father "Did Lord Wolseley ever kill any body with this, Father ?", Reynolds pp.228-29. This story resembles that told of the genesis of Joseph Noel Paton's 'I wonder who lived in there ?', (RA 1866, private collection). Paton, who had a collection of armour, entered his studio one day to find his son contemplating a helmet and who asked the question in the title: Alfred T. Story, 'The Life and Work of Sir Noel Paton RSA', \textit{Art Journal}, new
\end{flushleft}
Reynolds stated that the painting was to have been Holl’s diploma work to mark his election as an RA in 1883, but as it was not described as such in the catalogue it could not be given. Holl’s painting is a curious work: a family anecdote has been worked up into an account of paternal protection of the family and by extension, male protection of the (female) state. It would have reminded a contemporary audience of the soldier’s foreign service to safeguard the interests of the state, in particular the maintenance of the Empire.

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series (1895), p.109. A version of the Wolseley portrait (untraced) was in the collection of Holl’s daughter until 1911 (anon. sale, Christie’s, 9 June 1911 (106) painted in 1883, 56” x 37 1/2”) and a smaller, later version (signed and dated 1886, 44” x 33”) was presented to the National Gallery of Ireland by Wolseley’s widow in 1919. A copy of the latter version and of the same dimensions by C. Johnson is at the United Services and Royal Aero Club.


137. In Laurel Bradley’s reading of Millais’s Cherry Ripe she claims it: ..became a potent emblem of the British Empire’s strength in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. Crucial to Cherry Ripe’s function as imperial propaganda is a paradox: the British Empire, built with masculine soldierly and administrative expertise, turned to sweetly sentimental (i.e. feminine) images of childhood to represent its highest ideals. The girl child symbolized all that was prized, all that the manly soldier pledged to protect.

'From Eden to Empire...', p.192, see also p.195. This interpretation complements entirely my reading of Holl’s work.
Critical reaction however was mixed and the work seems not to have invited close critical scrutiny. Cosmo Monkhouse writing in the Academy thought it depicted "an unhealthy looking boy".\textsuperscript{138} When it was re-exhibited at the Holl memorial exhibition in January 1889, the Artist took the opportunity to note that the work, whilst "innocent and bloodless enough", still referred to murder, putting it into the same category as Holl's other, numerous morbid subjects.\textsuperscript{139}

The last of Holl's military subjects was a portrait-like image of a Chelsea pensioner painted in 1885 and called One of the six hundred (untraced), the title associating the pensioner with the survivors of the Charge of the Light Brigade. The work was retained by Holl's widow and it was hung over the hall fireplace at the Three Gables.\textsuperscript{140} One of the six hundred was a late attempt by Holl to paint colour and character: his skill in the latter when it came to portraiture was unquestionable by 1885, but his grasp of the former was, in contemporary opinion, often deficient. In the absence of the work no firm opinion can be advanced.

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\textsuperscript{138} Academy, 17 May 1884, p.355.
\textsuperscript{139} Artist, X (1 February 1889), p.51.
\textsuperscript{140} World, 21 December 1887, p.7. A work of the same title was owned by J.C. Williams who lent it to the Whitechapel exhibition of 1889 (33) and to the Franco-British show in 1908 (27) as \textit{A Chelsea Pensioner}. It is likely to have been one of the replicas Holl made of \textit{Going Home}.
\end{flushright}
Holl's military paintings, then, took a variety of forms and drew on already established subjects. However, his emphasis was on the domestic consequences of service, rather than the heroism of the individual.
A continuity in British rural imagery, particularly cottage scenes, from Gainsborough to Wilkie to Collins to Faed has been identified by Rosemary Treble.¹ This might easily be extended to include Fildes and Holl, Forbes and Bramley, all of whom were working in the same tradition of peasant imagery. Eighteenth-century paintings treated the cottage as the natural focus of all the assumed rustic virtues. However, in the work of David Wilkie (1785-1841) can be seen some of the first suggestions in British paintings that the peasant was not invariably virtuous, subservient and healthy and that his life was not always ordered and natural. Consequently, these works occupy a pivotal position. Firstly, they enjoyed an enduring popularity throughout the nineteenth century, and they were as commonly used as a yardstick to measure the merit of genre scenes, as Hogarth's work was.² Secondly, because such paintings as Distraining for Rent (1815, Edinburgh, NGS) began to undermine the fantasy of rural existence they served as important evidence of a division within rural imagery. As has been noted above, the country cottage was often nostalgically constituted by town-dwellers as the site of a preferable form of exis-

¹ Treble, 'The Victorian Picture of the Countryside', The Victorian City, Vol.1, pp.166-75.
tence, an idyll of harmony and balance with nature. However this view was increasingly challenged in the nineteenth century and the cottage came to be constituted in two contradictory ways: firstly as the enduring pastoral haven (exemplified in the water-colours of Miles Birket Foster [1825-99] or Helen Allingham), and secondly as the rural analogue of the industrial slum. An opposition emerged to the dominant view of the countryside of health, hard work and stability, as in Fildes's *Village Wedding* (1883, private collection), in the form of the countryside of poverty, disease and displacement, as in Fildes's *The Widower, The Doctor* and Holl's numerous cottage interiors.

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4. Kay Dian Kriz, 'An English Arcadia Revisited and Reassessed: Holman Hunt's *The Hireling Shepherd* and the Rural Tradition', *Art History*, 10 (1987), pp.475-91, puts forward a cogent reading, showing how Hunt's work was perceived (rather than intended) as an attack on prevailing social and artistic values.

The question remains as to how and why Holl decided to go to Cullercoats, a small fishing village at the mouth of the Tyne. It was already something of a magnet to artists in the 1860s and grew in artistic popularity towards the end of the century. It had regularly been the subject of paintings from the early nineteenth century onwards, firstly in the work of two local artists who are both credited with initiating the artistic exploration - and later exploitation - of the village. John Wilson Carmichael (1799-1868) has been described as the first to see "the potentialities of Cullercoats as an artistic working ground" whereas Thomas Miles Richardson (1784-1848) is claimed to have discovered the "pictorial capabilities" of the tiny fishing community in about 1820.6 Richardson's claim seems to be the stronger as Cullercoats scenes by him from c.1820 survive such as a large oil, Cullercoats, in a private collection.7 The earliest traceable scene by Carmichael showing Cullercoats is of 1835.8 When Richardson and Carmichael were at work there it was also a fashionable bathing place too.

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Writing in the *Art Journal* in 1887 Lillias Wasserman lamented that Cullercoats had grown rapidly in the preceding few years and regretted that it had ever been discovered to be a healthy and convenient resort for neighbouring Newcastle.

It was two artists of the same generation as Carmichael and Richardson who first really began to concentrate on the village as a source of subjects. Henry Perlee Parker (1795-1873) produced works such as *Cullercoats, with figures* (1828, private collection) which shows a fishing family sorting the catch on the beach. Henry Hetherington Emmerson (1831-1895) continued the process of popularising the village in the 1860s. Cullercoats scenes were commonly shown in the major Newcastle exhibitions from the 1820s onwards and appeared at the Royal Academy and elsewhere in London from the 1860s.

In the period immediately before Holl's visit to Cullercoats the *Graphic* published a number of wood-cuts which may have roused his interest in the village. The fledgling magazine - which Holl did not begin to contribute to until late in 1871 but which he probably knew from its inception - had reproduced scenes such as that by J.D. Watson which showed the captain of the Cullercoats volun-


teer lifeboat in action. This was one of many maritime images it presented in its earliest issues. More importantly Holl's friend of several years' standing William Quiller Orchardson had visited the village in 1869. There, in the studio of H.H. Emmerson which he was invited to share, he began to paint Toilers of the Sea (1869-70, Aberdeen Art Gallery) which he exhibited at the RA in 1870. The connection between Cullercoats and the Graphic can only have been strengthened by the fact that its art editor, John Scott, was married to Mary Carmichael, daughter of the J.W. Carmichael mentioned above. Therefore Holl is likely to have had two sources of information about the village at his disposal, direct personal recommendation from Orchardson and the images of the village by others.

It is clear that Holl only went there after he had visited Whitby, the northern equivalent of Clovelly, where he combined a family holiday and a painting expedition in July 1868. It was presumably on this occasion

12. Reynolds, p.43.
13. W.H. Gerdts, 'Winslow Homer in Cullercoats', Yale University Art Gallery Bulletin, 36 (1977), pp.18-35; where he points out that Miles Birket Foster who was born nearby at North Shields, and the two Victorian specialists in sea and coast scenes Thomas [sic] Hook and Charles Napier Hemy (1841-1917) also painted there. Gerdts was unaware of the connection between Holl and Orchardson.
that Holl began *Up a court at Whitby* (c. 1870, unlocated) which was shown at the Society of British Artists exhibition in Suffolk Street in late 1870.\(^{17}\) This does not seem to have been a scene which focussed on the fishing activities of the town but was rather a pathetic genre piece of a "gutter child".\(^{19}\) At Suffolk Street in 1866 Holl had exhibited *A Boulogne Fish Child* (1866, private collection) although it does not seem that Holl had then visited France.\(^{20}\) In 1876 Holl sold a small sketch of a sailor lad at Clovelly (unlocated) to his friend and patron Captain Henry Hill of Brighton.\(^{21}\) Again it is not clear whether Holl actually visited the north Devon village which had, like Whitby and Cullercoats, become a regular haunt for artists. Holl would also have seen fishermen's and others' cottages in north Wales on many occasions during the 1860s, but from the sparse existing records it does not seem that he painted any scenes with a specifically piscatorial element in that decade. The life of the sea and its attendant incidents and tragedies had long been a subject in English art as would be expected of a maritime nation.\(^{21}\)

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19. *SBA, Spring Exhibition, 1866* (241), 45 gns.


Holl went to Cullercoats in June 1870 and stayed for about a month, returning to London on the day the Franco-Prussian war was declared, 19 July. Again the visit was a combination of family holiday (Holl and his wife now had two young daughters) and an opportunity to paint. The latter factor seems to have been of greater importance to him although it is not clear whether he had access to a studio there or intended to paint only out of doors. Reynolds remarks that the wild Northumberland coast was "quite new ground" to Holl who "hoped to find abundant material for work" there. In her account of the people and the area Reynolds seems to be repeating received opinion on the lives of fishermen and their families i.e. the 'primitive' nature of their existence is emphasised as are the risks, dangers and perils of their work. As an article on the village published in the Magazine of Art in 1886 revealed, it was precisely the lack of sophistication and riskiness of the lives of the Cullercoats fishermen which made them so picturesque:

It is [the] tragic element, underlying their life, which adds an interest to all its phases, deeper and more enthralling the more you know of it...And still more striking even than this undercurrent of tragedy is the spirit of the people, which enables them to rise superior to its influence.

Holl was not disappointed in his hope to find some new extremity of human misery to record, refine and reproduce.

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23. Reynolds, p.83.
The family lived close by the beach the better to observe the life and work of the fishermen. "Daily associated with these primitive fisher folk, [Holl] found plenty of material to inspire him". Holl was evidently following Orchardson's example of close observation over a period of time. As has already been conjectured it is likely that Holl also had in mind the example of the Dutch artist Josef Israëls who sought inspiration in the "daily lives of primitive fisherfolk, living among them to observe their ways". Israëls had become popular in England following the success of his Fishermen carrying a drowned man (1861, London, National Gallery) at the London International Exhibition of 1862, and he exhibited at the Royal Academy between 1871 and 1878. The scale of the work, 51" x 96", may have had consequences in the scale on which English 'social realism' was so often painted. The influence of Israëls on Holl grew increasingly strong during the 1870s and can best be seen in the cottage interiors discussed below.

What is unmistakeably evident from his deliberate pursuit of new ground is Holl's intention to turn his back on his work of the 1860s. As Treuherz has implied, Holl's resignation from the RA Travelling Scholarship may have provoked a complete reassessment of his work in the

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27. Hard Times, no.33.
winter of 1869-70 which may have redirected the artist away from the mainly urban and middle-class themes he had favoured in the 1860s."

Holl was "more than once an unwilling spectator of domestic calamity" as he went freely in and out of the cottages, sketching incessantly. One particular event is said to have struck him especially. One day, after a storm during which the fleet of small fishing cobles had been out at the fishing grounds, Holl was painting in one of the cottages where the "inmates were discussing the chances of those who had not yet come home". Suddenly a woman, "half mad with suspense and misery" burst in "muttering and moaning abstractedly". She was soon followed by men carrying the "dripping burden" of her husband's remains. Holl was disturbed by the sight of her grief, "terribly primitive in its intensity", and it haunted him for days. Eventually he was able to resolve his shocking experience into the conception of the painting No Tidings from the Sea (1870, Royal collection).

The painting shows the interior of a rough fisherman's cottage in which a woman has slumped down is watched anxiously from the background by an older woman to whose skirts a young girl clings. The woman has evidently conducted an all-night vigil for her husband's return: there is a dimly burning lamp on the right but the cold light

29. Reynolds, p.84.
30. Ibid.
of dawn penetrates the gloomy room, illuminating the unslept in family bed. A young boy plays with a toy boat in the dim background: the boat and the two small fish on the flagstone floor beside him provide an ironic comment on his father's presumed fate and his likely future profession. But hope for a safe return persists, the teapot is kept ready by the stove. As will be seen in relation to Holl's Welsh cottage interiors the teapot was, for Holl, a symbol of enormous potency, representing the security of the home and the unity of the family in the face of adversity. It is worth pointing out that Holl did not choose to show the activity of fishing itself as Orchardson and others had done, nor did he show a landscape identifiable as Cullercoats or the mouth of the Tyne. The painting is not about Cullercoats specifically, it is a generalised scene which portrays an event common in all fishing communities. In ignorance of the title and the history of the painting's creation, the viewer may still read the contents accurately, precisely because of the symbolic function of the toy boat and the fish allied to the gestures and expressions.

There is no evidence for Reynolds's claim that the painting was based on a real incident. Although fishing accidents were a common occurrence they were usually reported in the papers. No such accidents are recorded in Tyneside newspapers for June and July 1870, that is for the period when Reynolds says Holl was there. Images

31. For instance an accident in April 1871 was reported over several weeks by both the Newcastle Weekly Chronicle
similar to Holl's had long appeared in the major exhibitions and the subject in various forms remained popular into the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{32}

*No Tidings from the Sea* had been painted as a commission from Queen Victoria (see above, Chapter 3, Part A). The *New York Times* explained how a royal purchase gave a "patent of nobility which cause[s] loyal Britons to pay pounds rather than shillings with small regard to the question of artistic merit".\textsuperscript{33} Another writer, Samuel Benjamin had earlier remarked in his sadly overlooked book *Contemporary Art in Europe* that a royal purchase would secure the future of any artist,\textsuperscript{34} not least of a

\begin{itemize}
\item \textit{Hard Times}, p. 76 n.17 mistakenly says five.\)
\item These were *The Missing Boats* (166) by A.H.Marsh, *Waiting for the Boats* (383) and *The Fisherman's Courtship* (434) by T.J. Watson and J.D. Watson's *Saved* (281). The RA catalogue for 1871 gave Marsh's address as 22, King Henry's Road, from which address Fildes sent his RA entries for 1871-76. Unfortunately I have no more information on this point. There is one painting sold recently with an attribution to Holl which shows children fishing by a river (Kunsthaus am Museum, Cologne, 22 June 1979 [15421, signed and dated 1875, reproduced in the catalogue). As this work resembles Holl's genuine oeuvre so little it is not worthy of further comment.
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{33} New York Times, 4 August 1888, p.4d.

\textsuperscript{34} S. Benjamin, *Contemporary Art in Europe*, (New York,
young man such as Holl. The painting was completed in October 1870 and delivered to Windsor. The Queen paid Holl 100 guineas for it.\(^{35}\)

The likelihood of future commercial success was tempered with mixed reviews for the work itself. The *Athenaeum* whilst giving the painting a modest welcome as a "grimly mournful picture...the pathos of which is agonising, but certainly not overstrained" pointed out the inadequacies of Holl's method by means of a telling comparison with Israëls's *How Bereft* (RA 1871 [1038], untraced). This was a large canvas which showed a coffin being carried through the door of a fishing cabin as a woman and child looked on. It was found to be superior for its chiaroscuro, colour, treatment, design and motive. Holl was thus measured against one of his key influences and found wanting, although the "agonies of fruitless expectation" were found more "pitiable than those of accomplished doom".\(^{36}\) Campbell writing in the *Art Journal* in 1889 found Holl's figures "distinctly ill-drawn" and poorly proportioned and his story-telling capacities markedly inferior to those of Frank Bramley\(^{37}\) who had recently emerged as one of the pivotal figures of the Newlyn school which was

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\(^{35}\) Reynolds, p. 87.

\(^{36}\) *Athenaeum*, 10 June 1871, p. 726.

\(^{37}\) Gertrude Campbell, 'Frank Holl and his Works', *Art Journal* XXVIII (1889), pp. 55-6. This was published at the time of his memorial exhibition at the RA.
much concerned with imagery of fishermen and peasants.  
This comparison is instructive because it underlines the 
fact that Holl's work presaged much of what was painted 
at Newlyn. Although no such point seems to have been made 
explicitly at the time, the idea was recognised long 
before now. Yet at the time of its first exhibition the 
Art Journal had found it one of the "few capital genre-
pieces [to] command attention" and reviewed How Bereft 
dissmissively. Evidently Holl's Dutch-influenced scenes 
were superceded in popularity by the francoform efforts 
of the Newlyn artists.

English scenes of maritime disaster were never as ex-
explicit as those painted on the continent. Whilst Holl, 
Bramley and others would paint funerals and the 
psychological effects on wives and children of the fear 
of loss and actual loss of husbands and fathers, they did 
not produce works which were as explicit as Israëls's 
Fishermen carrying a drowned man or Virginie 
Demont-Breton's Les Tourmentés (n.d., untraced) which

38. On Bramley and the rise of the Newlyn school see 
Painting in Newlyn, pp.8-27; 73-5 and nos.38-41. The 
deleterious comparison with Bramley may have been made 
because of his rapid rise to prominence following the 
enormous success of Hopeless Dawn (1888, London, Tate 
Gallery) at the RA in 1888 which meant that Bramley was a 
current public and critical favourite.

39. Hard Times, p.80 makes a similar point about Holl and 
Newlyn. Claims that Holl might be seen as the 
grandfather of the Newlyn school had been advanced as 
early as 1912. See the review of Reynolds's biography by 
C. Lewis Hind in the Daily Chronicle, 29 March 1912, 
p.6c. When Fildes exhibited the Doctor in 1891 he too was 
linked with Newlyn: see below Part E.

40. Art Journal X (1871), p.177-78.

41. 1859-1935, daughter and pupil of Jules Breton.

shows women and children on a wind-swept beach next to three loosely shrouded corpses. Holl obviously knew what would be acceptable in metropolitan taste-forming circles. His work had already been criticised for its bleakness and pessimism. As mournful scenes grew in popularity from the 1860s to the outbreak of the first World War, so the journalistic backlash against them grew too. In 1891 one writer, realizing that such scenes were somewhat cliched, was moved to remark of the predomination of morbid scenes of fisher life: "A kind of artistic influenza seizes on a young painter so soon as ever he sets up his easel in a fishing haven". As early as 1866 another writer was heartily wishing that painters would abandon Clovelly in Devon and look elsewhere.

43. Athenaeum, 16 February 1866, pp.210-11.
Part B: The Widower.

From Holl's study of the fear of death we move on to Fildes's study of the reality of death. Fildes said that the idea for the *Widower* (1876, Sydney, Art Gallery of New South Wales; reduced replica, c.1902, Liverpool, Walker Art Gallery) was based on an event he observed whilst preparing the *Casuals*. The labourer who posed with his child for the figure to the right of the top-hatted man in the *Casuals* was one day resting in the studio when Fildes noticed him lovingly nursing his child. The image stuck in his mind and became the motive for the *Widower*. It would seem that Fildes began work on the painting in the summer of 1875, or possibly earlier. He realised that he needed to produce another large painting to maintain the reputation the *Casuals* had created in 1874. His only contribution to the RA in 1875 had been a small picture of an attractive country girl holding a milking stool known as both *Betty* and *The Milkmaid* (untraced). This had been politely welcomed but was seen as a disappointment compared to his previous work.

Adopting a procedure similar to that used in producing the *Casuals* Fildes made a number of preparatory sketches, this time in oil rather than in pen or pencil.

44. IV 1893 p.124; LVF, p.25 says Fildes made a sketch of the scene immediately.


46. Some of these are reproduced in Thomson pp.3, 4, 6. That given on p.4 (right) is fully catalogued in *Hard Times*, no.75.
stated that Fildes worked on the cottage setting at an unidentified country location and completed the work in the studio during the winter. As it neared completion and sending-in day, rumours began circulating about Fildes's new work and the studio received a stream of interested visitors who could be relied upon to publicise the work ever more widely before its appearance at the RA. Amongst the visitors was W.P. Frith who praised the work highly in a letter of congratulation to Fildes.

Like the Casuals the Widower met with public acclaim but a mixed journalistic response. Those who were appreciative praised it highly and those who disapproved execrated it. There were of course many on the middle ground too. The Widower was held to be the picture of the year. Its capacity to elicit emotional responses was generally recognised. The development of Fildes's technique was widely commented on, often detrimentally and the Daily Telegraph thought that each of his RA entries had been in a different manner. Popular esteem and

47. LVF, p. 38.
48. LVF, pp. 38-9. Fildes was befriended by Frith. They were united for many years by their loyalty and service to the RA. In 1896 Frith wrote to Fildes asking him to help out at Mrs. E.M. Ward's "ladies art school", filling the gap left by the death of Millais: 29 July 1896, NAL, 86 PP 7.
49. Times, 8 May 1876, p. 9a-b.
51. ILN, ibid; Athenaeum, 13 May 1876, p. 672; World, 3 May 1876, pp. 9-10.
52. Daily Telegraph, 11 May 1876, p. 3c.
critical opinions were often widely divergent and some critics took Fildes to task for precisely the same thing that most appealed to the public, the subject matter.

There were several points on which a number of writers agreed. Firstly that Fildes's work resembled that of Thomas Faed too closely being, in the words of the Manchester Courier, "a coarse plagiarism of Faed writ large". Secondly it was agreed that the painting was too large for the subject (at 65" x 96" it was as wide as, and a foot taller than, the Casuals) and thirdly that the subject should not have been painted at all.

The comparison with Faed is interesting because it reveals an Anglophilic element. The Athenaeum suggested that the subject was unsuitable, and the depiction inaccurate, because Fildes claimed to portray an English cottage scene:

Mr. Faed has shown us that genuine Scottish grime and grief may go together; Mr. Nichol has given the agonies of filthy Irish cotters; the nasty ways of both have not ruined the pictures in which they were depicted, but Mr. Fildes's dirty English brats are dirty and quarrelsome and nothing more, unless it be that they are not well drawn.

53. Punch, 13 May 1876, p.188; Art Journal, XV (1876), p.189; Saturday Review and the Manchester Courier quoted in 'On some recent art criticisms' in the Art Monthly Review, 31 May 1876, pp.58-9; Morning Post, 29 April 1876, p.6a.

54. Athenaeum, 13 May 1876, p.672.

55. Times, 8 May 1876, p.9a-b; Manchester Courier quoted in AMR, ibid.

So whereas Irish or Scottish squalor was acceptable in art, suffering nearer home was not. The English country cottage was still the rural idyll to much of contemporary metropolitan society, and its constitution as a site of healthy calm and virtue which the Athenaeum would not allow to be easily transgressed. This paradox - or hypocrisy - had been apparent much earlier to Charles Lamb, who, in his essay 'On the Genius of Hogarth' had claimed that the same people who objected to Hogarth's 'Gin Lane' (1751) would "perhaps have looked with complacency on Poussin's... the Plague at Athens". This was because "Disease and Death and bewildering Terror in Athenian garments, are endurable, and come, as the delicate critics express it, within the 'limits of pleasurable sensation'". What was acceptable if kept remote in time or geography, or mediated through picturesque treatment, was unacceptable when presented as contemporary or local: hence the popularity at the RA during the nineteenth century of picturesque Italian and Spanish beggars."

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...he managed to bring more dirt and rags into the Academy than anyone else. It is the glory of his heroes that they are unwashed. They belong, in fact, to the class to whom the new reform bill transfers the government of the city. They probably however will remain of more value to the pictorial than to the exclusively political world.

Art Journal, V (1866), p.167. This a rare reaction to a painting in mentioning politics (the franchise) specifically.


58. I am thinking of the work of such artists as John Phillip RA (1817-67), F.W. Topham (1803-77) and F.W.W. Topham (1838-1924). See also Richard R. and Caroline B. Brettell, 'The Northern Artist and the Italian Peasant,
However the Saturday Review indicated that only the "motive and manner" belonged to Faed and that the "pathos is differently intoned". Punch thought it a "rather good Faed, gone big" but still squalid and made the point that "the loaf on the table is not what a working-man would eat: that would cost twopence more than he would give". Only the Art Journal made a direct comparison in noting that "there has not been such an intense piece of sentiment in the Academy since Thomas Faed's From Dawn to Sunset". This work had been exhibited at the RA in 1861 when the Art Journal and the Times had agreed that it was the picture of the year. It shows a cottage interior where a man sits in tired and silent reflection at the death of an unseen figure in a nearby bed. Around him young children play obliviously - as they do in the Widower - and behind him older children are warned to be silent as they enter. The title refers to the ages of the participants, from the youngest in the cradle to the

1820-1900', Painters and Peasants in the Nineteenth Century, (Geneva, 1983), pp.13-27. Holl (who was a relative by marriage of the Tophams) produced one Italian peasant scene, now in rather poor condition (1871, panel, 23 1/2" x 44 3/4", private collection).

59. Saturday Review, 27 May 1876, p.682. In 1874 the same publication had linked Faed's Forgiven (RA 1874 [227], untraced, study, London, Guildhall Art Gallery) and Holl's Deserted for their espousal of "the shadow side of nature": 23 May 1874, p.654.

60. Punch, ibid.

61. Art Journal, XV (1876), p.189. From Dawn to Sunset is in a private collection and is reproduced by McKerrow, The Faeds, p.107. The Pictorial World, 29 April 1876, p.135, agreed that Fildes had surpassed this work by Faed, "which made him an Academician".

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oldest now about to enter the grave. Hence one description of it as a "domestic reading of Shakespeare's 'Seven Ages of Man'". There is no evidence that Fildes knew this particular work by Faed, but he would have seen his annual contributions to the RA. As noted above, Faed had been one of the first to congratulate Fildes, via Thomas, on the success of 'Houseless and Hungry'.

The second area of critical overlap — that Fildes's canvas was too large — was part of the ongoing debate about the hierarchy of the genres, in particular what constituted "high art" in terms of subject, handling and scale. The Manchester Courier thought it unnecessarily large, "made so purposely to attract attention" and reproached Fildes's attempt at a genre picture in "the heroic vein". At half the size and with twice the care it might have made a "good and successful commonplace work" rather than an "egregious error". The Times thought the large scale a mistake which made the lower elements more prominent but did not enhance the pathos of the "sadder and deeper ones". The Observer claimed that "everybody agreed" that the painting lost through its size, but stated that, were it smaller, it could be lived with.

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63. Quoted in the AMR, 31 May 1876, p.59. The AMR itself (29 April 1876, p.39) stated that there was nothing new in either the subject or the treatment and that "the artist who fails to see that a genre subject cannot be treated in heroic size, runs a very great risk of ruining himself".
64. Times, 8 May 1876, p.9a-b. The Graphic, 29 April 1876, p.415 agreed.
Misgivings about the dimensions of the work probably lay behind the comments of Macmillan's Magazine when it described the painting as "one of those painful works, not so much of art, as of sentiment, which one would rather see in an exhibition than in one's own home".

The Art Journal praised Fildes's achievement and excused him for painting an obvious genre scene on a life-sized scale claiming that "his genius...has lifted it into the region of high Art". This claim was made at the conclusion of an article devoted to a comparison of Fildes's and Leighton's contributions to the RA in 1876. It juxtaposed the Widower and the Daphnephoria (1876, Port Sunlight, Lady Lever Art Gallery) which "represent the two opposite schools of art, the one classic and academic, the other domestic and realistic". The writer is here referring to two things, style and subject matter: by "classic" he means in the classical, academic European tradition and by "domestic" he means of the British school. The Art Journal's satisfaction in the present state of British Art was unalloyed since the "classicism of Mr. Leighton [is] complemented by the familiar and realistic modernism of Mr. Fildes". Here the enduring legacy of the Reynolds/Hogarth tension in

68. Ormond, Lord Leighton, no.237, 89" x 204".
69. Art Journal, ibid. The Queen, 6 May 1876, p.303, made a similar point to the Art Journal when it gave Leighton's work first place and Fildes's second in the rank of that year's exhibits.
the orientation of the British school (described in the first chapter) can be seen. The Times produced a similar contrast, but one with different results, when it found Leighton's work and Poynter's Atalanta's Race (1876, formerly London, Christopher Wood Gallery)70 most characteristic of English art and Fildes least characteristic of it.71 Like the Times, the World saw the apparent diversity of the "English school of art" as a weakness not a strength. It questioned whether there was such a thing as an "English school", given the widely different goals aimed for by Academicians.72

The Art Monthly Review sardonically advanced one possible explanation of the artist's decision to work on a large scale, wondering whether "'collectors' were taking to purchase by the square foot". The same writer questioned whether Teniers or Ostade would still be remembered if they had used Rubens-sized canvases. The tendency, it wrote:

...to "go in for something big" not in art, but in inches, needs strong repression, and the relationship between size and subject, more consideration than it now-a-days obtains.73

70. Reproduced in Joseph A. Kestner, Mythology and Misogyny: The Social Discourse of Nineteenth-Century British Classical Subject Painting, (Madison, WI, 1988), Fig.4-5, 58" x 174".

71. Times, 8 May 1876, p.9a-b.

72. World, 10 May 1876, p.441. It also wondered aloud what the Academicians really thought of each other, which would be fascinating to know.

73. AMR, 29 April 1876, p.39.
Both the AMR and the Manchester Courier took their dislike of the work to the point where they questioned how it had been selected for hanging at all. Both attributed Fildes's success to the (highly successful) programme of pre-exhibition publicity and rumour stimulated by the visitors to his studio during March. The AMR held that "if it had not been so much talked about out of doors [it] would probably have made way for a better [painting]". The Manchester Courier agreed:

It had been most widely paragraphed in the papers, had been lauded loudly by the loiterers in studios, and public expectation had been roused about it - and so far this was wise, for had it not been thus heralded, without doubt it would have been rejected, and justly so too."

The Times also made some perceptive observations. It thought the subject not happily chosen and regretted that the Widower confused two points; firstly, that the man had been left in charge of his family and secondly his agony at the death of his child which he is impotent to prevent. A mother, it noted, would have been equally helpless. Thus the widower's "embarrassment" interferes with the "father's grief". The reviewer also made an observation recalling Renaissance ideas of artistic decorum:

The painter...is under a mistake who brings big, dirty boots, squalling and scrambling children, parental and sisterly love, and the pathos of an innocent's death-struggle into such close contact."

74. AMR, ibid; Manchester Courier quoted in the AMR, 31 May 1876, p.58.

75. The inception of decorum is discussed by Anthony Blunt, Artistic Theory In Italy 1450-1660, (Oxford, 1940), pp.35-8.

76. Times, 8 May 1876, p.9a-b.
That Fildes should have adhered more closely to the tenets of decorum and suitability is expanded upon in a subsequent paragraph:

It is a great pity that painters do not bear more in mind the fact that their pictures are meant to adorn English living rooms, and that intense painfulness, overstrained expression, and great vehemence of momentary action or short-lived attitude are all qualities that make pictures unpleasant to live with. 77

77. Times, ibid, q.v. the Observer and Macmillan's quoted above. How a work of such dimensions was to be fitted into an English living room was not explained. To have painted it on a cabinet scale would have meant Fildes relinquishing any 'High Art' pretensions for his work as it would have been of standard genre dimensions. This sort of comment was not new of course. There had been objections, on the grounds of decorum, to the work of Michelangelo, Veronese and Caravaggio. Earlier in the nineteenth century James Northcote had made a strikingly similar comment when he said that it was a sad mistake to think that subjects such as the massacre of the innocents or St. Agatha "will do in private houses". They would be acceptable in the churches for which they had been painted where they would make the intended solemn impression but "they won't do when they are transplanted into an English gentleman's breakfast-room, or into an exhibition where people go to be amused and to be merry": Conversations of James Northcote RA with James Ward, ed. E. Fletcher (London, 1901), p.246. In 1848 Blackwoods Magazine had posed the rhetorical question (in relation to "doleful, uncheerful subjects, that are out of the rule of love and pity"):

Is the man of business, in the weary turmoil of the daily world, to return to his house, after his labour is over, and see upon his walls nothing but scenes of distress, of poverty, of misery, of hard-heartedness - whence he should indulge his sight and mind with everything that would tend to refresh his worn spirits, avert painful fears...and should tune himself, by visible objects of rational hilarity, into the full and free harmonies of a vigorous courage, and health of social nature ?.

Quoted by Edelstein, 'Who shall paint...', p.28. One is also reminded of Ruskin's objections to William Mulready's The Widow (1823, private collection) and other works which he thought "unfit for pictorial representation" on which see Marcia Pointon, 'William Mulready's "The Widow"', Burlington Magazine, CXIX (1977), pp.347-51. Ruskin's words were closely echoed by the Spectator, 9 May 1874, p.597, when it wrote of the Casuals that it doubted whether "mere misery like this is a fitting subject for pictorial treatment".
Writing about Herkomer's *Eventide* two years later, the *Daily Telegraph* advanced a similar sort of objection, albeit with a new twist, finding it offensive that scenes of poverty should be made into a "show"."

Thoughts such as that quoted from the *Times* would seem to confirm the fears expressed in the 1820s by B.R. Haydon (1786-1846) that debased public taste would have a deleterious effect on art. He had viewed the spreading popularity of historical genre paintings of cabinet size as indicating the demise of 'High Art'. He warned that pictures:

> ...will be bound more and more to point no moral that is too grand or too stern for the atmosphere of a drawing room and to admit only so much of the heroic as can be congruously brought into juxtaposition with the indoor life of the nineteenth century."

The critical reference to the function of paintings is important. All of Fildes's "English subjects of importance" (as he called them)" were either commissions or

78. *Daily Telegraph*, 15 May 1878, p.3a-b:*

[Eventide is] a topic...almost wholly foreign to the attributes of a painter. Pauperism, even in its least repulsive form, is virtually a curse and opprobrium to Society; and it is scarcely fitting that humanity in one of the lowest stages of degradation and dependence should be even graphically made into a show, to be hung in luxuriously furnished drawing-rooms and to be complacently gazed upon by well-dressed people with plethoric balances at their bankers.


80. LVF, p.108.
were sold before completion. All were painted with private ownership in mind except the Doctor which was destined for a public gallery.\(^{81}\) Before sending it in, Fildes sold the Widower for £1,890 to Thomas Taylor who already owned the Casuals and had once owned Fair, Quiet and Sweet Rest.\(^{82}\) For an unknown reason these low-life scenes appealed to him. He seems to have avoided the fate feared for the owner of the Casuals by the Academy that such a work was calculated to "drive its owner melancholy mad".\(^{83}\) The appeal of such lugubrious scenes had been partially explained by the Manchester Courier in 1874:

> We like to take our pleasures sadly, and there is an undercurrent of melancholy running through the British mind which responds readily to the slightest pressure.\(^{84}\)

However Fildes was not likely to have been put off by charges such as that of the Academy and doubtlessly realised that because such charges had long been levelled they were largely lacking in conviction and had no direct bearing on public appraisal of his efforts.

\(^{81}\) It may not have been destined for a public gallery when very first commissioned. Tate first approached Fildes in 1887 at exactly the time when he was having a new picture gallery built at his south London mansion, Park Hill at Streatham: Builder, 24 September 1887, p.448. Tate may initially have intended to add Fildes's work to his collection there.

\(^{82}\) Fildes's MS accounts, 'Income for year ending 31st March 1876', NAL, 86 PP 9.

\(^{83}\) Academy, 2 May 1874, p.500.

\(^{84}\) Manchester Courier, 6 May 1874, p.6e. In 1859 the Athenaeum, 30 April, p. 587, had remarked in relation to Faed's Sunday in the Backwoods that "the hard world likes to be made to shed tears".
Critical Responses.

Reviews of *The Widower* identified its debt to melodrama, returning us to the earlier discussion of the importance of theatre to nineteenth-century British painting. The reviewer of the *Times* noticed both "vehemence of momentary action" and "short-lived attitude" in the paintings. These are both references to theatrical devices of the sort popular theatre of the period relied on for certain effects. Awareness of theatricality is also apparent in the account of the picture given in the *Manchester Courier*. It thought the *Widower* a "pathetic bit of grief which easily tickles the groundlings," that is, that it had an immediate appeal for the least discriminating viewers. The article continues by saying that in so doing, Fildes was like the many others who resorted to easy means "to create a sensation", that is to elicit rapid and unmistakable responses and thereby to incur popular esteem. As the *Daily News* phrased it, Fildes appealed "to a sentiment that readily responds".

85. *Times*, 8 May 1876, p.8a-b.

86. Quoted in the *AMR*, 31 May 1876, p.59.

87. "Groundlings", in its use for instance in *Hamlet* (III 11 12), means the poorest and most ignorant theatre-goers, spectators of inferior taste.

88. Using the word in a different sense the *Queen* (6 May 1876, p.303) thought it had no "touch of unworthy sensationalism" (emphasis added).

The Examiner agreed that paintings of domestic tragedies extorted praise "from the vulgar" and permitted the painter to cultivate "the paradoxical conviction that the biggest storms are really found in teacups, and that the profoundest tragedy lies in the sickness and death of babies." 90

To return to the comments made in the Times, the writer acknowledged that his opinion of Fildes may have seemed harsh, but he had focussed on him because his was the "cleverest and largest example of the painfully pathetic" in the exhibition.91 There is an implicit admonition of Fildes in this that he ought to have known better. The Saturday Review also thought that given his undoubted

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90. Examiner, 17 June 1876, p.691. An earlier and tellingly phrased example of this sort of criticism can be found in the article by Atkinson cited above (Ch. 2, Part B) where he wrote of Solomon Solomon's Drowned! Drowned! that, unlike Emily Osborn in her Governess (RA 1860, Royal collection):

[He] sacrifices sincerity and simplicity in the startling effect of melodrama...Mr Solomon in his well-known picture "Waiting for the Verdict" has already shown himself master of tragic intensity, and his present work is, in like manner, cleverly conceived for popular sensation and stage effect...We believe that pictures of this class tell [sic] for much more than they are really worth; that their pathos and poetry are got up in the studio at comparatively little cost of brain and heart; and that if writers and painters will but condescend to the easy trick, a noisy reputation may, after this fashion, be cheaply bought.

'The Royal Academy and Other Exhibitions', pp.68-9, emphasis added. This aspect of the Blackwood's article was not directly touched upon in the recent account of the painting by Nead, Myths of Sexuality, pp.182-91, who was more interested in consumption than production.

91. Times, 8 May 1876, p.8a-b.
talent and proximity to real success." Fildes ought to be more self-critical and provide a "little less of clap-trap, and a little more of art"." The Pall Mall Gazette too regretted that "the enthusiastic acceptance by the public" of works such as Fildes's was "apt to obscure the higher possibilities of painting". It thought that in:

...the present condition of English taste this...is not the most useful kind of art for a young painter of talent to take up...and possessing...a great respect for Mr. Fildes's ability, we cannot but regret that he does not choose for its exercise another field."4

Notwithstanding that:

Mr. Fildes's art exhibits a decided advance in style upon that of many other English painters who have chosen similar topics but it is to be regretted that an artist of so much talent should throw his energies into a kind of work that has produced nearly all the worst vices of the English school."5

The last phrase needs some elucidation. The particular vices the writer had in mind were the sacrifice of technique to pathos and the manner in which expression rather than subject had come to predominate. A close parallel to this can be found in contemporary literary criticism. As noted in Chapter I, one of the prime claims made against Sensation Novels was that they were a second-class and inferior mode, being works of incident rather than

92. Fildes had been proposed for election ARA in August 1875 (LVF, p.37) and his imminent election was widely rumoured in 1876.
93. Saturday Review, 27 May 1876, p.682.
95. PMG, ibid. The Saturday Review, 23 May 1874, pp.653-4, was in accord with these sentiments, feeling that "the pictorial sin is aggravated by the genius brought to its consummation".
character and which sacrificed too much to the exigencies of an eventful plot. Because the plots were so often of an extreme, exaggerated and highly coincidental nature they could not be thought of as at all 'realist'. For many writers on art in the period it was precisely the exaggeration and emphasis provided by the large scale on which the 'social realism' of Fildes, Holl and Herkomer was presented that prevented its superficial authenticity from being treated as 'realism' and turned it instead into melodrama. The Sensation Novel like 'social realist' painting exploited its content for an immediacy of effect. Of course plot and character or subject and treatment are "differing functions of a single narrative enterprise". 96 In 'social realism' contemporaries sometimes found both subject and treatment exaggerated. By referring to the way in which expression had displaced invention the PMG's correspondent was pursuing the discussion of the purpose of art "released from the control of beauty" 97 referred to above in relation to the Casuals.

Another "vice" was also discussed by the Examiner, although it did not refer to it as such. It lamented that the disposition of English art to painting "manners" since the days of Hogarth had not "in modern times...extended to the elevation or distinction of the

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97. PMG, 2 June 1874, p.2075.
British school. It claimed that English artists were not exercising restraint but instead were possessed by the belief that:

...it is [their] duty to touch the heart of the spectator and harrow up the affections, that [they] cannot be content with the mere enjoyment of those lighter and more delicate truths of character which the painter of genre may fitly express.  

This comment implicitly puts Fildes back into the category of genre painter to whom elevated themes and the history painting scale were denied. Deeper emotions and moral stimuli should be reserved for the vehicle of appropriate subject matter and not tackled by mere genre painters.  

There was however one viewer who remained unmoved by the painting, Fildes's old friend the cartoonist Gordon Thomson. He contributed regularly to the humorous journal *Fun* and each year would lampoon the most popular works at the Academy, going most savagely for the work of his friends. In Thomson's lampoon of the *Widower* the workman's boots have been enlarged greatly, the children swill beer and smoke pipes and the fond gesture of kissing the child's hand is focussed on in the title 'The Widower, having kicked his wife to death proceeds to devour his child'. This mockery, which may have been an 'in joke' between Thomson and Fildes (although there is no record what-
soever of Fildes having a sense of humour), brought to life the protective instincts of a sensitive writer in the *Era*. He thought the *Widower* a wonderfully dramatic and touching episode and felt that the "brutal lash of the vulgar caricaturist" unleashed upon it was proof that nothing could be taken seriously anymore and was an example of the "coarseness and brutality of English taste".101 However, Thomson's cartoon had picked on an element in the painting which had been realised elsewhere. The *Morning Post* felt that the father figure's love for his child was displayed as a physical appetite, writing that he kissed the child's hand "with a voracity of love as though he could eat it".102

The *Daily Telegraph*103 published a lengthy account of the painting as it had done of the *Casuals*. This analysis provides excellent evidence of the way in which a brief, lachrymose response to such a situation continued to be felt to be adequate. It wrote that the viewer could almost see the tears swelling from the widower's eyes and after a while of looking, "it will be found that the tears have an embarrassing habit of trickling down the spectator's cheeks". However, there is the hope that

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102. *Morning Post*, 29 April 1876, p.6a. The *Daily Telegraph* (11 May 1876, p.3b-c) noted that the widower "devours" the child's hand with kisses.

103. 11 May 1876, p.3a-b.
"Lady Bountiful" and "Dr Goodenough" will soon arrive to help, the former with a basket of arrowroot, Liebig's extract and "the very strongest calvesfoot jelly". The Doctor is presently getting out of his chaise down the lane and will soon write a "life-warrant" for the child. The writer even believed that the widower would soon find another wife to cook for him, to care for the children and to clean up the cottage - at least he hoped that was the moral of the picture, but noted that "whatever the manner in which the painter wishes to be read" his picture may be hailed as a "manly, conscientious, soulful piece of work, unrestrained, undefaced by maudlin sentiment, but exquisitely touching". 104

The reference to "Lady Bountiful" is interesting because it shows how the writer could only approach The Widower by relating it to an earlier pictorial convention of charitable scenes in which philanthropic acts were seen to be done. 105 It is noteworthy that between about the 1830s and the 1870s painted scenes of poverty exhibited in Britain show a marked evolution. Whereas earlier the

104. Emphasis added. This is in sharp contrast to the Spectator's verdict on Holl's entry that year, Her Firstborn, which as discussed above, it found "somewhat unworthy of a man": 27 May 1876, p.682. The PMG, 20 May 1876, p.1911, supported the Telegraph's point: "Fildes has a masculine character that does not fail him even in the treatment of themes that tempt to sentimental weakness".

emphasis was on scenes of private, individual charity, later these became less common as the responses to poverty became more institutionalised and as the need for individual acts of benevolence was superseded by state provision of forms of poor relief. Consequently paintings in the later period tend to be of those institutions (the workhouse, the foundling home, the ragged school, the almshouse for example) rather than of scenes of altruistic donation in the street or cottage. That is, that the benefactors disappear from the paintings and are replaced by an emphasis on the results of poverty, not its resolution.  

The Telegraph went on to make a literary parallel, specifically a Dickensian one, stating that the widower must have an urban brother called Bob Cratchett (sic) and his ailing child a cousin called Tiny Tim. Fildes was not allowed to escape his association with Dickens and these references to characters in A Christmas Carol (1843) indicate that Dickensian echoes were still sought in his painting, although less thoroughly than had been the case with the Casuals.

Depictions of widowers are rare in nineteenth-century British painting. The sleeping vagrant with his sickly child on his lap in Marcus Stone's Silent Pleading (1859, Halifax, Calderdale Museums) may possibly have been

106. This was recognised by Rodee, 'Scenes of urban and rural poverty', pp.101, 149.
known to Fildes who was a friend, rival and neighbour of Stone's and with whom he shared the distinction of having illustrated Dickens. The Widower by J.J. Tissot (c.1876, Sydney, Art Gallery of New South Wales) was painted in the same year as Fildes's but was not exhibited until 1877. It is vastly different in conception to Fildes's work, showing a middle-class father holding his daughter aloft to pick fruit from a tree in a pleasant garden. Nearby are irises and flowering rhubarb, which, in the Victorian language of flowers meant "message" and "advice" respectively, suggesting a possible interpretation of the painting, that the father is giving his daughter some advice.

Therefore Fildes's work can be seen to have been fairly unusual in subject matter and treatment, although the cottage interior as the site of peasant tragedies had a long history in painting. This combination of convention and innovation may have added to the success of the work. Fildes's next works were presented in a more conventional way.

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108. Wentworth, Tissot, Pl.122.


110. Although Fildes's painting was sold to Australia in 1883, its popularity in Britain was prolonged by means of an etching after it by Léopold Flameng which was published in November 1883. Indeed the work was sufficiently well-liked for Fildes to paint a small replica as late as 1902/3 (Liverpool, Walker Art Gallery): Hard Times, no.76.
Part C: The Return of the Penitent and The Village Wedding.

In 1876 Fildes received a commission from Holbrook Gaskell (1813-1909), an important industrialist and equally important collector and patron. The genesis of the work Fildes produced, The Return of the Penitent, is obscure and it is not known how Fildes came into contact with Gaskell. In the summer of 1877 Fildes was making studies in various Thames valley villages on the Oxfordshire-Berkshire border where he had been in previous summers. It may have been at that time that he lighted on what was to become the subject of Gaskell's commission. It is reported that whilst sketching one day he saw a young woman walking anxiously down the road. It was explained to him that she had recently been released from Reading jail having had a baby (presumably illegally) which had "died". This story, allied to the sight of an empty cottage in the village, suggested to Fildes the idea of a girl who returns, after a period of prodigality, to find her family home deserted. Fildes decided to include a prominent landscape element too, illuminated by an evening sun. His later correspondence hints at the difficulties he found in completing the work.

111. See Appendix 4.

112. Gaskell's business was based at Widnes, near Warrington where Fildes had attended art school. It is possible that the Lancashire connection served Fildes, but Gaskell was wealthy enough (his estate was valued at £150,000) to employ any willing artist.

113. LVF, p.45; Fildes to Woods, 28 October 1876, NAL, 86 PP 7.

114. LVF, pp.42, 49-50.
between 1876 and 1879.  

Fildes was painted by Woods at work outside his makeshift country studio (private collection) which work was also purchased by Gaskell and which suggests that much of the early work on the canvas was carried out *en plein air*.

Fildes's progress on the work was slow. His election as ARA in January 1879 meant that when the work was finally finished it would be even more important to his career than it had seemed when commissioned. Analysis and criticism of it would inevitably include discussion of whether or not the work justified his election. This was perceptively recognised by the artist Louise Jopling (1843-1933) who wrote to Fildes on the occasion of his election saying "How glad you must be that you kept your picture back. It will be a splendid one to commence with as Associate". The title had caused some difficulty too. Fildes had considered several possibilities before Gaskell dictated the title it has. Jopling was right, the painting was generally well received but some critical voices were heard such as that of the Academy which thought it lacked any sense of beauty. The *Morning

115. For example Fildes to Woods, 23 October 1881, NAL, 86 PP 3.

116. Fildes to Woods, 8 October 1878, NAL, 86 PP 7, mentions that Gaskell had recently been to see the work in progress and wanted Woods to alter his work, bringing Fildes nearer the viewer, making his portrait larger and clearer.

117. LVF, p.55.

118. Ibid. Fildes rejected "The Prodigal" and the suggestion of Archibald Forbes, the writer and journalist, "Outcast".

119. Academy, 21 June 1879, p.549.
Post commented on Fildes's skill in depicting the saddest and most tragic phases in country life - the story "of a village beauty who stooped to folly" - in a way which made him akin to the poet Crabbe. The writer presumably had in mind 'Ellen Orford' from the poem The Borough (1810) by George Crabbe (1754-1832). This includes neglect, seduction and abandonment and ends with multiple deaths and blindness. The Daily Telegraph praised Fildes's "third style" and also harked back to the earlier generation, comparing Fildes's work with that of William Collins, A.W. Callcott (1779-1844) and George Morland, purveyors of images of rural peace and contentment.

There was no clear hint in the picture which would serve to explain the reasons for the woman's absence. In the catalogue the title was accompanied by a stanza from Byron's The Giaour (1813):

Every woe a tear can claim
Except an erring sister's shame.

This was interpreted to mean that the woman was a Magdalen rather than the infanticide of the germinal story, thus accommodating the painting within an established genre. The Morning Post specifically referred to the woman as a Magdalen whom the heartless and censorious villagers had come to stare at - following through the

120. Morning Post, 3 May 1879, p.6d.
121. This poem has also been associated with Redgrave's diploma work The Outcast (1851, London, Royal Academy of Arts): Casteras and Parkinson, Richard Redgrave, no.106.
122. Daily Telegraph, 3 May 1879, p.3a-d.
123. Morning Post, 3 May 1879, p.6d.
sense of the quotation from Byron's poem. Other comments suggested that basic human forgiveness would soon intervene and the woman would be comforted and accepted back into village life. It is revealing that this element of mitigation - which the painting does not hint at - should have been found by a critic. Just such evidence is usually found in other penitent scenes such as H.N. O'Neil's The Return of the Penitent (1855, private collection) (which shows the returned penitent slumped against the headstone of her parents' grave with her child sleeping beside her as, in the background, an elderly woman persuades an elderly man to help her) or Faed's Forgiven, in which the father departs tactfully from the room as the mother moves to comfort her daughter and her illegitimate child. It may have been Fildes's intention to break with this convention and stick literally to the quotation from Byron and thereby amplify the pathos of the scene by suggesting that there could never be succour for the errant woman in his painting.

The Observer found "the principal incident in danger of being obscured" by the composition and the supernumery figures, although it acknowledged that the years of preparation involved and Fildes's election as ARA had in-


125. This sub-genre seems to have had a long life. At the RA in 1902 Harry Watson showed a similar scene called The Dead and the Living, and a life to redeem, (untraced). This shows a young woman in black sitting on an old gravestone in a country churchyard as another young woman passes in the background supporting an elderly man: reproduced in Pictures of 1902, Pall Mall special number, (London, 1902), p.74.
vited exaggerated expectations. The *Penitent* lacked the force and truth of the *Casuals* which had been "a pregnant social fact" wherein "reality alone sufficed" and "no artistic intervention" had intruded.126 The *Penitent* was found by this reviewer to be more dramatic and narrative than the *Casuals*.127

Fildes had some coincidental competition at the RA. Catherine Amyot showed her version of the same theme, with the same title, (RA 1879 [550], untraced) but this was set in an eighteenth-century Breton cottage and was clearly indebted to Greuze.128 The *Times* found Amyot's work theatrical129 and the *Graphic* found it necessary to defend Fildes's work from similar criticisms. It was not "stagey", he wrote: "any painter who aims at telling a story must be prepared for this charge".130 The *Graphic* also recognised that Fildes's work dealt with a long established subject. However, Fildes's painting is quite hard to read unless the viewer is acquainted with certain

126. Many others denied the last contention: see above.


128. Repr. in the *Art Journal* XVIII (1879), p.246. This painting was discussed by James Reid in *Academy Paintings and Their Moral Teaching*, pp.75-82 where the reader is reminded of the words he attributes to Jesus "To err is human, to forgive is divine". The phrase is actually from Pope's *Essay on Criticism*, (1711).

129. *Times*, 2 May 1879, p.5c.

130. *Graphic*, 17 May 1879, p.490. The open-air setting of Fildes's work is far less stagey than the enclosed cottage interior of Amyot's. The *Graphic* and *Times* notices were probably both written by Tom Taylor.
conventions of representation, particularly of the distressed woman slumped in dejection outside a dilapidated cottage. Therefore its impact on the contemporary audience and its interpretation is largely dependent on the familiarity of that audience with the conventions used. The fact that these penitential returns are set in a rural context is an essential part of their meaning. Firstly, an accepted truism of the nineteenth century was that innocent, single women of rural origins would be corrupted, degraded and abandoned in the city. Secondly, a shameful return to the rustic haven of the family home would be seen as a reinforcement of the division already described between the vice and unhealthiness of the city and the virtue and stability of the country. Exactly those latter qualities were emphasised in Fildes's next large "English subject of importance".

The Village Wedding.

A completely different sort of countryside image was produced by Fildes when he painted The Village Wedding. It is exceptional amongst Fildes's "English subjects of importance" as he called them for a number of reasons.

131. For example one of Helen Paterson's illustrations to Mrs. Oliphant's (Margaret Wilson 1828-97) Innocent: A Tale of Modern Life, in the Graphic, 1 March 1873, p.197 shows just such a scene.


133. Draft of a letter from Fildes to Henry Tate, 4 May 1887, NAL, 86 PP 10, partly in LVF, p.108.
Firstly Fildes did not think of the work as being part of the same group as the Casuals, the Widower and the Penitent. Secondly its use of historical rather than contemporary costume distinguishes it from the other works. It was painted as a deliberate change from what Fildes called his "potboilers" of both English and Venetian subjects, mainly beautiful women flower-sellers, which had sold well in 1879-81. Fildes had made his first visit to Venice in 1874 and he returned there in 1881 in an effort to get something ready for that year's RA. The year 1880 had been devoted largely to black-and-white work, producing thirty half-page illustrations for Amelia Edwardes's Lord Brackenbury which was being serialised in the Graphic. The drawings themselves were sold to Holbrook Gaskell, who had commissioned the Penitent in 1876.

134. Ibid.
135. LVF, p.67.
136. LVF, p.41.
137. LVF, p.68. This was Fildes's most important trip to Venice because the success of the paintings he produced there set his subject painting on the path it was to follow for the next twenty or more years. His Venetian scenes are beyond the scope of this thesis.
138. LVF, p.42. Gaskell sale, Christie's 24-25 June 1909, lot 194, thirty drawings bt. Agnews, £ 31. 10s. Sketches by Phiz for Little Dorrit and A Tale of Two Cities, lots 130 and 131 in the same sale, fetched £1,071 for fifty-nine items; see the annotated sale catalogue in the NAL. In 1878 Fildes hoped to sell Gaskell the original drawings for the illustrations to a new edition of Men's Wives (1843) by Thackeray for £150, having already received £378 from the publishers; Fildes to Woods, 8 October 1878, NAL, 86 PP 7.
After a summer rowing trip up the Thames to Oxford with his artist friends H. Stacey Marks (1829-98) and Keeley Halswell (1832-91), Fildes began to think about his next large work. He must already have decided on the subject and the setting because he took the opportunity of the trip to begin scouting for locations in the Berkshire countryside. Fildes had painted at Streatley between Reading and Oxford in 1876\textsuperscript{139} and so had some knowledge of the general area which was very popular with landscape painters such as Vicat Cole (1833-93).\textsuperscript{140} Fildes first selected Blewberry but could not get accommodation there and so chose Aston Tirrold instead. Fildes may have painted at Aston Tirrold as well as lodging there: his letters are ambiguous on this point. By the middle of August Fildes had made a rough design which would allow him "lots of opportunities for good character painting" as he wrote to Woods.\textsuperscript{141} A few days later he wrote an extremely revealing letter to Woods which gives much information on Fildes's attitudes to art and to the local villagers. He disclosed that his original intention was to paint the Village Wedding scene "quite in modern costume" but soon rejected that idea, finding the local attire most unattractive:

\begin{quote}
It is so ugly and nasty I cannot bring myself to do it. I don't mean the people in their everyday clothes - they are just passable - but
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{139} LVF, p. 42.


\textsuperscript{141} Fildes to Woods, 14 August 1881, NAL, 86 PP 3, partly in LVF, pp.71-2.
I mean those in their wedding attire,—all Reading and Wallingford slop goods degrading in every aspect. 

Fildes went on to say that somewhere, perhaps in Shropshire or Cornwall, "there may be left some trace of the old world style of dress" but he could not make speculative and potentially useless visits to find out. In a later paragraph Fildes admitted that he had no real liking for everyday clothes either. His family was lodged:

...in the midst of the most beautiful scenery and villages with rustics who dress pictorially worse than the denizens of Scotland Road and Vauxhall in Liverpool! And when I say that I have exhausted my contempt for them as an artist. Its like eating stones and sawdust after my fare in Venice.

Fildes was already resigned to the fact that he would have to use historical costume from fifty or no years previously if he could not get "good authority for something not absolutely odious in modern dress". He seemed implicitly pleased at this prospect, thinking that in the older period "everything is most paintable". This


143. Fildes to Woods, 24 August 1881, ibid. Scotland Road and Vauxhall were notorious slum areas. The former had a child mortality rate of 22% as late as 1902: see Smith, People's Health, p.69; Behlmer, Child Abuse and Moral Reform, p.49 and Jordan, Victorian Childhood, p.240.

144. Fildes to Woods, ibid. When Fildes appeared as a witness for the plaintiff in the well-known Romney authenticity case of 1917, he described his enthusiasm for and knowledge of eighteenth-century painting: Times, 17 May 1917, p.4a-b. He may well have had a similar affection for painting of the early nineteenth century too: his sale by Christie's, 24 June 1927, included two works attributed to Richard Wilson and others by Constable and Etty (lots 46, 49, 50, 65) as well as various Old Masters. The entrance hall of his house is said to have been hung with "...proof engravings from some of Sir Joshua Reynolds best-known pictures": [Joseph Hatton], 'Progress in English Art...Luke Fildes', p.1g.
statement contrasts sharply with reports of Fildes's critical remarks on other occasions, particularly in relation to the Regency costume paintings of his friends and artistic rivals Marcus Stone and Val Prinsep.¹⁴⁵ Neither should it be forgotten that Fildes's earliest Academy successes were in early nineteenth-century dress.

On the 28 August Fildes was again writing that he had finished the design:

It promises to be much the most agreeable picture I have yet done - It lacks of course strong interest or subject & I, of course, can't take so big a canvas out of doors to paint the real thing nor can I get much of the real thing to sit & if I could I might be able to paint it so well that lack of subject would in no way be felt.¹⁴⁶

Woods's response was to encourage Fildes to go back to the period before the introduction of the crinoline and issued a broadside against "infernal fashion" which prevents the enjoyment of "the painting, expression and colour...because we see horrible bonnets and frilled crinoline skirts". Woods regretted that whereas all earlier artists had to do to tell a story was to paint it well, now:

...one has to search everything for rags and bits of colour to put in. If you want plain sailing as a figure painter there's nothing for it but Charles the first and earlier. Later, folks know just enough to pick holes in our pictures and we don't know enough to stop them up.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ See LVF, p.74. The fact that Fildes's painting was produced during a period of agricultural depression raises the possibility that it may be seen as evidence of nostalgia for a seemingly more stable time.

¹⁴⁶ Fildes to Woods, 28 August 1881, NAL, 86 PP 3, partly in LVF, p.73.

¹⁴⁷ Woods to Fildes, 4 September 1881, NAL, 86 PP 3, partly in LVF, p.73.
Fildes encountered difficulties in painting the background but these were compensated for by the growing realisation that the subject was becoming fixed:

It is in quite a different vein to anything I have done - I think it will be considered mildly humourous - by the world generally and possibly vulgar by the "utter".148

Fildes went on to make a remarkable statement about the work in progress:

The picture won't have a scrap of what is considered my 'forte' viz. Sentiment. This may be unwise, but if I hate anything, I hate manufactured sentiment, so I am going in for just what I think likely to happen and paint an episode in a quiet little village somewhere in my own head, the quiet little village life with the coarseness and ugliness of immediately modern times pressed out of it, and yet not put back far enough for people to say I am not painting my own time.149

His objective in doing this was to convey the impression "that it is a genuine record of something experienced by the artist".150

He realised that by going back to very old costume what he would be gaining in "the picturesque I should certainly loose in naturalness". Therefore Fildes had opted for "what I remember when a youngster among the people I used to know" rather than for historically accurate dress. Fildes stated his reason for deciding this was

149. Ibid.
150. Ibid.
that "all costume pictures convey to me that the painter has been more influenced by what he has seen in other pictures". 151 Fildes remained consistent in this opinion. In 1898 he told an interviewer of his objection to artists relying on pictures of historical subjects as suggestions for their own work, whilst rather inaccurately stating that "the tendency of my own work...is undoubtedly to deal with life as I find it around me". 152 In the letter to Woods, Fildes confessed his fear that ordinary dress would be too ugly and "too dreadful to paint large. It would be all very well in a Graphic drawing, but a large picture, No!". 153

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151. Ibid.
152. IV 1898, p. 227.
153. Fildes to Woods, 17 September 1881, Ibid. The World, 16 May 1883, p. 10, found:
...a suspicion of unnecessary vulgarity, such as one does not find in Wilkie's illustrations of village life, haunts the scene, the peasant in his Sunday clothes forfeits his picturesqueness, and the swaggering life-guardsman brings too strong a flavour of the canteen into the celebration".

Henry Blackburn, 'English Art in 1883', National Review, September 1883, p. 52, found it "true as a record of English life at the close of the nineteenth century...Fildes has given us facts". Unlike the World he compared it favourably with Wilkie, writing that even if it lacked the grace and sentiment of Mason's Harvest Moon or the poetic rendering of Millet's Village Scene, then at least it was a reminder of Wilkie or Gainsborough. He liked the detail such as the bride's "new side-spring boots" but thought the bride lacked the delicacy and grace of the bride in Greuze's L'accordée du village (1761, Paris, Louvre). The comparison with Greuze, although apparently superficial, is important because it indicates that works such as Fildes's were being measured against eighteenth-century French paintings of sensibilité, as well as against native contemporaries. Blackburn could not resist one jibe at Fildes's artistic origins: the "grouping and chiaroscuro", he wrote, "from an illustrated newspaper point of view, are skilfully managed". Joseph Hatton, writing anonymously in the New York Times, thought Fildes had "...a good deal of the feeling for domestic subjects that Wilkie had, with the broader inspiration that might be expected as the outcome
It is not surprising to find Fildes adhering to established opinion on the admissability - or inadmissability - of certain subjects in certain media. There is some evidence to show that he was a conservative person and by 1881 he was already an ARA. In 1874 Fildes had had nothing to lose; in 1876 he already had an artistic reputation; by 1879 he was already an ARA and in 1881 he had full Academicianship to pursue. He was rapidly becoming one of the senior worthies in the RA hierarchy and no longer had any interest in startling the bourgeoisie. He was mentally well adapted to working within the conventions of the art institutions once he had established himself through an unusual route. The completion of the Village Wedding marked the point at which Fildes consciously opted for "the safe business" in future (see below). The last comment in the letter of 17 September was to direct more vituperation toward the Berkshire villagers:

I shall not be able to do anything from figures here - they are the most hopeless race of people that God ever made for an artist.\(^\text{154}\)

The countryside Fildes found was not the one he sought, preferring the nostalgic construct to the reality. For the urban audience of such paintings the myth of the rural haven could not be sustained if evidence of the intrusion of urban attitudes was visible. Fildes's choice of the study of such writers as De Foe [sic] and Dickens": 'Progress in English Art', p.2a.

of ante-dated dress allowed him to deny - or at least to avoid revealing - the absorption of urban values, and all that they connoted, by rural communities. Fildes was far from unique in this - one thinks of Constable or Stanhope Forbes. In 1894 Forbes recorded his fear that "old-fashioned and paintable things" such as distinctive fishermen's attire were passing away in favour of modern costume. He also lamented the invasion of modern builders who swept away "quaint old houses" and "picturesque corners" to build charmless modern houses. Fox and Greenacre state that in the 1890s "More and more Forbes began to see his past work as a visual record documenting changing scenes and customs". Nostalgic views of the countryside may have become more widespread towards the end of the nineteenth century, because it was in that period that the distinctions between the rural and the urban were being most rapidly eroded. As travel became easier and leisure time more widely available, the free and rapid dissemination of metropolitan values and activities was encouraged. Slightly earlier, visual rural imagery was perceived as an important means of perpetuating the rustic ideal. A passage in Atkinson's Blackwood's review of the RA Summer Exhibition of 1860 has been remarked upon by Nead in this context. It described the virtues of:


...rural peasant-life of honest poverty, long sung by our English poets, and though a little out of date in these spasmodic days, it still lives, and we hope may long live in the pictorial romance of our painters...Our artists, indeed, take a much more healthful view of the wants and welfare of our labouring classes than our politicians. Painters dream not of anything so unpictorial as extended suffrage and vote by ballot. They go into the lanes and rural homes of what once was, and still is, happy old England; and as long as an interesting mother dotes on her lovely infant - as long as the husband is prosperous in his work and happy in his pipe and ale...what cares the painter or peasant for the politician's suffrage ? - What can the statesmonger add when kind nature has given her all ?

Here the painter and the peasant are made complicit in the divorcing of rural life from everyday political realities. However, when Henry Blackburn saw Fildes's painting in the studio, he approached it a significantly different way (which presaged Forbes's feelings about his own work) thinking Fildes's a contemporary piece which would be prized in the future for what it told of the past i.e. that it was an authentic record.

Fildes ended his letter to Woods of the 17 September by saying that the work would be better in ante-dated dress. He expected to stay on at Aston Tirrold for another month completing studies and finishing the background. In a departure from his usual technique Fildes had not made an oil sketch of the overall composition but had started directly onto his 60" x 100" canvas. As he would have made alterations as he transferred the design from the

158. Atkinson, 'The Royal Academy and Other Exhibitions', p.70.
160. Fildes to Woods, Ibid.
sketch to the main canvas anyway, there was no point.
Writing to Woods a month later Fildes expanded on his
decision not to produce a final sketch "I have done very
few separate studies as I find it better if one can to
work on the actual canvas though it may be roughly
done". There is strong evidence that this was true;
whereas oil sketches and studies for the Casuals, the
Widower, the Penitent and the Doctor were all still in
Fildes's studio when he died, there were none for the
Village Wedding. Despite inevitable delays and the
simple fact that it had been begun too late in the year,
Fildes was confident that the painting would be finished
in time for the RA Summer Exhibition of 1882. He has high
hopes of its eventual success despite having thirty to
thirty-five figures yet to commence. He intended to do
these back in the studio from which he had been excluded
for some of that year by building work, namely the en-
largement of the studio windows.

Fildes worked consistently on the Village Wedding during
the winter of 1881-82. Early in January he described to
Woods how he was employing two or three models a day, in-
cluding Sundays, and confidently expected the painting to
be one of his successes. (Up to that point he had been

161. Fildes to Woods, 24 October 1881, NAL, 86 PP 3,
partly in LVF, p.74.

162. Fildes's studio sale was conducted by Christie's 24
June 1927; see lots 2, 4, 5, 6, 18, 20, 22, 26.


164. Fildes to Woods, 9 January 1882, NAL, 86 PP 3,
partly in LVF, p.77.
fortunate in having no outright failures.) McLean, the prominent dealer who had helped Fildes to establish himself by buying his first oil Fair, Quiet and Sweet Rest in 1872, offered £1,600 which was rejected. In February Fildes's second son Paul was born. This addition to his family might have contributed to the delays to the picture which by the end of that month, Fildes said, overwhelmed him. He now realised that it required another three months' work and he doubted that it would be ready in time. It seems that soon afterwards Fildes decided that he would not have the painting ready for sending in that year and therefore abandoned it temporarily, returning to it in the summer during the absence of his family at Lowestoft. Instead Fildes finished a number of Venetian works needing the money from the ready sale such works would find. He was represented at the RA that year by one such painting Nina ((268), untraced) a simple painting of a Venetian girl. McLean is said to have bought five similar works at an average of £200 each and Agnews bought another Venetian subject for £650. He was still at work on it.

165. LVF, p.77.
167. LVF, p.82.
168. A sketch which may be for this work is reproduced by Thomson, p.14.
169. LVF, p.80. Agnews stock-books indicate that Fildes sold a major work to them at about this time called Roba di Venezia (untraced). This they soon sold on for £1,050 to Holbrook Gaskell, who had commissioned the Return of the Penitent. Agnews Indexed Picture Stock Books, 1853-1881 and 1871-1882, entries dated 1st, 2nd, 28th and 29th April 1881. Microfiche in the Book Library, Courtauld Institute of Art, fiches 5 and 15.
in March, having in January claimed to be "putting the top coat on". Fildes lamented the fact that no buyer had yet emerged fearing that his "sacrifices of time and money" would be for nothing. Although Agnews initially refused to come and see the work they eventually bought it for 2,500 guineas, the highest price Fildes had yet received. Fildes had written to Woods on 19 March: "Of course I do not want you to mention the fact to any one but I am afraid it is a fact that no one will consider the question of buying so large a picture". The picture seemed to be an "enormous favourite - Everyone is in a small way beginning to talk about it but no one comes to buy". Fildes had almost given up hope of selling it before the RA opened:

Well! It will be a lesson for me. I have fully made up my mind not to paint any more large pictures unless they are commissions. I cannot stand the risk and anxiety I have had over this one. I shall now go in for what every body else does, viz: the safe business. I have done my share of the big things. I have worked desperately hard and I think the picture is an artistic success, and I feel disappointed at the total absence of encouragement.

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170. The tone of his letters is even more self-pitying than usual in this period. Fildes to Woods, 31 January and 19 March 1883, NAL, 86 PP 3, partly in LVF, p.85.
172. Fildes to Woods, 19 March 1883, ibid, emphasis added. It is not clear whether this is just a bit of self-pitying drama, or genuine disappointment or a combination of the two. Given the path Fildes's career as an artist took after 1883, in particular his commencement of highly profitable portrait-painting in about 1886, and his non-production of any more "English subjects of importance" (except the special commission from Tate for The Doctor in 1887-91) his statement that he would adhere to the "safe business" seems to be accurate.
Given Fildes's description of how difficult he was finding it to sell the work as late as March 1883, it is curious to find Agnews' stock book entry for the painting, referred to as "A rustic wedding", dated "Xmas 1882". The dealers sold it to E.K. Harrison for 3,000 guineas in November 1885, his larger than usual profit margin being partly explained by the time the work had been on his hands.\(^{173}\)

Although the painting was received with praise at the RA,\(^ {174}\) both the *Times* and the *ILN* questioned Fildes's use of a large canvas for such a subject.\(^ {175}\) It was undoubtedly popular and was published by Agnewz in a photogravure measuring 18 1/2" x 31" in December 1884 in an edition of unknown size.\(^ {176}\)

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173. Agnews Picture Stock Books, Ibid. The usual dealer's margin was 10%. For a vigorous discussion of dealers' commissions and their untrustworthiness see *World*, 5 May 1875, p.17 and 12 May 1875, p.20.


176. G.W. Friend (ed.), *An Alphabetical List of Engravings...*, (London, 1892), p.397, records:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Artists' proofs</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>6 gns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian prints</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>3 gns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plain prints</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>2 gns.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The two missing figures would be the most interesting to know. A parody of it by Thomson was published in *Fun*, 19 May 1883, p.196, in which the elderly man at the rear of the wedding party was given the features of Gladstone.\(^ {94}\)
As Casteras has said, painted scenes of courtship and marriage were common in British nineteenth-century painting, but there were fewer rustic scenes than middle-class metropolitan ones. However, it is rural wedding scenes which are most widely reproduced today: works such as Charles's *Signing the Marriage Register* (n.d., Bradford, City Art Gallery) or John H. Bacon's *A Wedding Morning* (RA 1892, Port Sunlight, Lady Lever Art Gallery), are ubiquitous, the imagery of the 1890s being as attractive to the modern consumer as the imagery of the 1830s was to Fildes in the 1880s.

There are certain similarities between the paintings by Holl in this category and those in the section on death. Many of the cottage interiors are pregnant with doom and fear, mainly of the husband's death, and the real death of young children are the cynosures of this group of works. Holl's concentration in some of these works is on the physical and psychological reactions of women and children to their emotional and personal vulnerability in the absence of the husband and father. The absence can be either short-term, when the man is away at sea fishing, or long-term when he is dead or feared to be. The bleakest possible case is sometimes presented as in *Despair* (1881, Southampton, City Art Gallery), which shows a widow mourning her dead child. Such works might be seen as a continuation, after a gap of about six years, of the theme Holl first explored in *No Tidings from the Sea* (1870) discussed above.

There was a lengthy hiatus in the production by Holl of cottage interiors between about 1871 and 1877. During that period he painted the urban scenes discussed above. But in July 1876 Holl returned to his old habit of the

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178. *Despair* is in fact the work initially exhibited as *Bereaved* at Tooth's Gallery, Winter Exhibition, 1881 (no catalogue traced but see e.g. the *Artist*, III (1882), p.5) and engraved in the *Graphic*, 29 April 1882, suppl., n.p. under the latter title. It was retitled at some stage in order to create a pair with *Hope* (1883, Southampton, City Art Gallery), the original title of which may have been *No Tidings*: see below.
1860s of summering in north Wales, going in that year to Criccieth which like Clovelly and Cullercoats, was very popular with painters, perhaps more so than with ordinary tourists. It was on this trip that Holl discovered a "most inspiring model" when he sheltered from the rain one day in a dilapidated, isolated cottage, occupied by a widow and her two young children. Reynolds says he was inspired by this first coincidental meeting to paint Waiting (c.1876, untraced) which he began immediately and finished back in London in the studio. Waiting showed a woman looking out of her cottage window with a child at her side, awaiting the return of her husband's fishing boat. The basket, or creel, at her side would be used to carry the catch from the beach or quayside to the area reserved for gutting and cleaning. Women carrying such loads form the subject of Walter Langley's The Woman's Part (RA 1905 [228], untraced) and women at work cleaning the catch are shown in Edgar Bundy's The Herring Season, Yarmouth (RA 1910 [669], untraced). Then they would be

179. Reynolds, p.130.


181. Reynolds (pp.134, 170) is not clear on this point and her description may refer to two paintings on the theme or to one begun in 1876 and worked on again and finished in 1879. The work reproduced by P.G. Hamerton, The Graphic Arts, (London, 1884), opposite p.362, may be one of these. It was engraved in stipple by Holl's father, Francis Holl senior, an engraver ARA.

182. No earlier versions of these subjects have been traced. The Langley is reproduced in a Pall Mall special number, 'Pictures of the Year', (May 1905) p.64 and the Bundy in Ibid, (May 1910), p.53.
taken either to the home for consumption or carried on
the woman's back as she went selling door-to-door in the
area. Its subject and composition may have been sug-
gested to Holl by Israëls's Anxious Family (1869, unlo-
cated) which was then in the collection of Holl's friend
and patron F.C. Pawle. 183

Holl's Welsh model recurs in several later cottage inte-
riors, just as the dark-eyed model first seen in Doubtful
Hope, and perhaps earlier, appeared in many of the
metropolitan paintings of the mid-1870s. Waiting is the
archetype to which many of the later images refer. Indeed
the sequence of cottage interiors seems to have had some
importance for other artists of piscatorial life such as
Walter Langley (1852-1922) 185 and Percy Craft
(1856-1934). 186

Waiting resembles a group of versions of a work known al-
ternatively as Besieged or Times of Fear. Holl's habit of
making replicas, and dealers' tendencies to retitle
replicas to disguise their origins and enhance their

183. Louise Hamer, The Cullercoats Fishwife, ex. cat.,
Newcastle, Laing Art Gallery, 1984, pp.6, 10, 11, 28.

184. Pawle sale Christie's, 20 March 1925 (74). Pawle had
purchased this and another work by Israëls (75) directly
from the artist according to the sale catalogue.

185. For example For men must work and women must weep
(water colour, 1883, Birmingham, City Art Gallery) seems
to be indebted to both Holl and Israëls: see Painting in
Newlyn, no.20 and Hard Times, no.92.

186. For example The Empty Chair (RA 1888 [100],
untraced), reproduced in Blackburn's Academy Notes,
value, makes the sequence of works hard to disentangle. Besieged is the title given to a work dated 1880 in the Baroda Museum and Picture Gallery, India, and to a smaller work, also dated 1830, sold at Christie's in 1981. L'Ennemi (n.d., untraced), referred to in passing by Reynolds, might be synonymous with Besieged and the the smaller work is likely to be the painting called Times of Fear by Reynolds. A sketch for Times of Fear, now lost, was once in the collection of Alexander Young, a London accountant and one of the greatest collectors of British and continental art in the late nineteenth century. Both Times of Fear and

187. It measures 39 1/2" x 33". This fascinating gallery is rich in British art especially of the Victorian period, much of which was collected at knock-down prices in the early twentieth century. See E. R[imbault] D[ibdin], 'The State Gallery of HH The Maharaja Gaekwar of Baroda GCSI', Connoisseur, LVI (1920), pp.139-52; pp.219-24 and LVII (1920), pp.13-20. The collection was catalogued by Ernst Cohn-Wiener, Baroda Picture Gallery: Catalogue of the European Pictures, (Baroda, 1935). The collection includes works by Landseer, Watts, Frith's Race for Wealth series, Faed, Millais, Leighton, Poynter, Clausen and Solomon. I am grateful to the curator, Dr. S.N. Pandey, for an informative letter and for supplying a copy of the catalogue.


190. A photograph of this sketch is in the Witt Library. The Young collection was sold at Christie's 30 June and 1 and 4 July 1910. The Holl was lot 377 (13 1/2" x 9 1/2") on the final day, under the title of Anxiety. Young owned the large work by Israëls Fishermen carrying a drowned man mentioned in the section on Cullercoats as well as many other Dutch school works. See C. Dumas, 'Art dealers and collectors' in The Hague School, p. 126 and E.G. Halton, 'The collection of Mr. Alexander Young', The Studio XXXIX (1907), pp.3-32, 99-110, 193-210 and 287-306. Israëls was widely and well reviewed in English exhibitions of the 1860s and 1870s but his work was not reproduced or discussed in art periodicals before the early 1880s (e.g. 'The Orphans of Katwijk', Magazine of
siegèd show a shabbily clad woman watching through her
cottage window as troops march past. In the latter she
watches anxiously over her shoulder as her barefoot
daughter buries herself in her mother's skirts and a baby
feeds obliviously at a table. In the former the woman
watches the soldiers more directly from her position near
the window. The title of the latter suggests that the
soldiers are from an invading army. They appear to have
pointed helmets and Holl may have had the Franco-Prussian
war of 1870-71 in mind. The former is open to similar in-
terpretation, although it is possible that the troops may
be returning from abroad in this work, and the woman's
fear is that her husband will not be amongst them. This
was the case in a later work by A.C. Cooke The Price of
Victory (RA 1909 [380], untraced) in which a woman clumps
at a cottage table, beside her a cot. Her husband is not
amongst the troops seen through her cottage window and
she is now widowed and her child fatherless. Cooke was
evidently indebted to Holl in the conception of his work.
A much lighter work which conforms to the same composi-
tional pattern is Robert Wright's The Passing Column
(1886, private collection) in which a woman and three
children watch excitedly through a cottage window as a
column of troops marches past.

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Art, V [1882], pp.xviii-xix, 283-84, cited by Rodee,
'Scenes of rural and urban poverty', pp.73-6). In her ex-
tension of Dumas's essay, Frances Fowle over-emphasises
the importance of Scottish patrons of Hague School art-
ists to the detriment of English patrons: 'The Hague
School and the Scots: A taste for Dutch pictures',

191. Reproduced in Pall Mall special number 'Pictures of
the Year', (May 1909), p.74.
In the works by Holl listed above, compositional features and objects which are constant in his other cottage interiors are evident. The small brown-glazed earthenware teapot which first was seen in *No Tidings from the Sea* usually appears near the small cottage window or on the round folding Pembroke table. A cheap coarse plate is commonly propped against the wall and a long bread knife frequently appears. These objects are included to lend the scene authenticity and are curt statements of homeliness. The composition is usually arranged to include the deeply-recessed cottage window and the thick wall it is set in at one edge, usually the left, of the painting to give a strong directional light source within the work. This would allow the dramatic lighting effects and sharp chiaroscuro contrasts Holl liked to employ, taking his cue from Rembrandt and Israëls, which must have appealed to his patrons. Holl’s interest in Dutch art was underlined by Reynolds who wrote that “Rembrandt in a great degree, but contemporary art like that of Israëls most of all, showed him his artistic path”.

Treuherz has indicated that the cottage interior, the deep window recess, the cradle, the female figure and the half-hidden faces of weeping women which Holl so often painted are all found in earlier works by Israëls. It was not until 1880 or 1881 that Holl first went to Holland, on which occasion he was in a party with the family of Fred Pawle. He may have known Israëls’s work from

194. Reynolds, p.197.
the various London exhibitions to which he contributed from 1862, most notably the six works he sent to the RA between 1871 and 1878. In 1869 Holl had visited Belgium en route for London after resigning the Academy scholarship when he studied the work of Rubens and the Flemish seventeenth-century genre painters presumably meaning artists such as Adrian Brouwer and David Teniers. Cottage interiors of the type they produced had evidently been studied by Holl, perhaps in Belgium. In London the National Gallery and the Wallace Collection, which was displayed at the Bethnal Green museum for a long period in the 1870s, both offered rich selections of such scenes. In the latter collection a work such as Esaias Boursse's (1631 - 1672) Interior: Woman Cooking (1656) seems particularly relevant to Holl's work, showing a woman and a child in a cradle in an oddly lit cottage interior. Coincidentally this work was in the RA Old Masters show in 1889 which coincided with the Holl retrospective exhibition.

In 1877 the Holl family returned to Criccieth to allow Holl to pursue the ideas he had formed the previous year. He completed three works that year, two of which are now in the Tate Gallery having been part of the Tate

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196. The Peel collection of Dutch pictures had been bought for the National Gallery in 1871: see Christopher Brown, 'The Dutch Phase', Apollo, CI (1975), pp.368-73. Although the DNB talks of the Holl family's German origins, Reynolds (p.203) says they were Dutch. I have no evidence to offer on this point.

197. Reynolds, p.146.
In the first of this pair of scenes a poor cottage woman and her daughter are watching over a cradle. In the second the mother has one hand over her eyes as the older child stands uncomprehendingly by and we presume that the child in the cradle is now dead. The mournful nature of the subject is expressed in drab muted colours which for once lack even the smallest flash of colour which Holl generally included in his lugubrious scenes. The crudeness of the cottage, its contents and its inhabitants' lives is suggested by the bold brushwork, rough and scratchy in the table, floor and walls but suggestive of softer textures in the woman's shawl. Israëls's Expectation (1874, New York, Metropolitan Museum), which was exhibited at the RA in 1874, should be mentioned as a possible influence on - rather than source of - Holl's paintings of women and cradles in cottage interiors, although the scale of that work (71 1/2" x 54") is much greater than that of Holl's works of 1877. The mourning mother in a cottage interior, seen in Despair and Hushed, may also rely on a Greuzian type, exemplified by an anonymous work after Greuze, Weep Not, (n.d., Dublin, National Gallery of Ireland).

198. The third, The Fisherman's Wife, is probably the work now in the Director's study at Shuttleworth College, Old Warden, Beds. It measures 13 1/2" x 9" and must have come from the Hill collection, Christie's, 25 May 1889 (142). It simply shows a woman looking out of a cottage window. Hush ! and Hushed, which both measure 13 1/2" x 17 1/2", may well depend on Greuze's Silence! (Salon of 1759, Royal collection), which ultimately has a Dutch source.

199. The Dublin work may be related to a recorded drawing by Greuze, Jeune mère pleurant son enfant mort listed by Camille Mauclair, Jean-Baptiste Greuze, (Paris, 1908), no.404.
The influence of Israëls is seen particularly strongly in Holl's *Eventide* (private collection) which seems almost to be an essay by Holl in the Israëls manner. It shows an old woman sitting at a table as a young woman beside her reads aloud, presumably from the Bible. They are fishing folk, the creels used for carrying the fish beside them on the ground. The quieter mood of the painting and the smoother handling and finish make the work rather unusual in Holl's oeuvre. The work is not dated and it is possible that the strength of Israëls's influence may indicate a date around 1881, that is when Holl went and studied his work in Holland and when Holl had been more exposed to Israëls's influence than he had been in c.1868, to which year the work has previously been dated.200 Holl's friend (and later his neighbour in Fitzjohn's Avenue) the Scottish artist John Pettie had produced a pair of scenes in 1859-60 called *Evening Prayers: The Fisherman's Family* and *Morning Worship: Reading the Bible: The Convalescent* (both untraced).201

200. Christie's, 26 July 1974 (182), photo in the Witt Library. It is so different to Holl's work of the 1860s, both in technique and subject matter, that I do not think it can date from that decade. Having said that, its format (23 1/2" x 19 1/2") is one that Holl used throughout his career, but most often in the 1860s, and its air of gloomy religiosity is found in his work of the 1860s and 1870s.

201. Reproduced in the *Art Journal*, n.s. (1907), pp.100,101. They were engraved by J. Stephenson and reproduced in *Family Worship* (Edinburgh, 1864). Pettie was on increasingly friendly terms with Israëls from about 1871: Hardie, *John Pettie*, p.92. Could Holl possibly have met the one through the other? The subject originates in seventeenth-century Dutch genre painting but may have been better known through engravings after such versions of the it as Greuze's *La Lecture de la Bible* (Salon of 1755, private collection), a version of which, by Waagen's time, was already in a British collec-
The latter shows a family gathered around a table as the father reads from the Bible. This work may have been known to Holl when he was painting *Eventide*. Israëls's *Ida, the fisherman's daughter* (1858, Antwerp, Royal Museum), also known as *The Knitting Girl*, has the same subject matter - a young girl knitting - as two early works by Holl, *Knitting* (1865, untraced) and *Industry* (1863, untraced).

*Widowed* (1879, Melbourne, National Gallery of Victoria) was also painted at Crickieeth during the summer of 1879 and was finished in the studio during the autumn. It was bought by Tooth along with three other Welsh works. It failed to attract much critical notice. Holl was probably at the peak of his popularity as a subject.

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203. SBA, *Spring Exhibition*, 1865 (343), 35 gns, bought by Albert Levy, a significant collector whose paintings were sold at Christie's, 31 March 1876, *Knitting* being lot 181.

204. This early work seems only to have been exhibited at the Holl memorial exhibition at the RA in 1889 (184) when one reviewer described it as a "girl in [a] pinafore, knitting and looking down at the child by her side": *The Cosmopolitan*, new series IV (1889), p.181.

205. Reynolds, pp. 170-71. The others were *Waiting* (1879, Göteborgs Auktionsverk, 18 November 1986 [2651, approx. 35" x 46"], *Haymaking* (1880, private collection, 29" x 38") and *Resting by the Way* (1879, private collection, 15" x 19"). Tooth exhibited *Widowed* at his Winter Exhibition (113) where it hung near Holl's *The Daughter of the House* (51).

206. Short notices appeared in e.g. *Athenaeum*, 1 November 1879, pp.568-9 and the *Academy*, 8 November 1879, p.343.
painter at about this time. In the catalogue of Tooth's exhibition an unidentified verse was appended to the title:

Death rides on every passing breeze
He lurks in every flower.

Set in the now unmistakeable Holl cottage interior, a woman sits, her head on her hands at a table by the window, a cradle beside her and a young child looking on. It was praised for its evocative lighting and chiaroscuro and for its author's technical accomplishment. Widowed is an important work in Holl's oeuvre because it is apparently one of the few in which his working method can be studied, thanks to the survival of a small watercolour preparatory sketch (c. 1879, Edinburgh, National Gallery of Scotland). In the sketch the position of the child has been fixed but in the oil the woman has been moved to the left, presenting more of a profile. Some of the objects on the table are different and the cradle has been brought into prominence in the oil. A strong contrast with Widowed is provided by The Fisherman's Home (1881, Liverpool, Walker Art Gallery). This is unique in Holl's cottage interiors because the man of the family is present. He sits at the typical,


208. I am grateful to Lindsay Errington for telling me that the sketch was once in the collection of Tom Graham (1840-1906), another member of the sketching club to which Holl belonged. This raises the possibility that it is in fact one of the works rapidly dashed off at club meetings, rather than a preparatory sketch. It is impossible to be sure. Oil sketches survive for "The Lord gave" (private collection) and Deserted (private collection), but Holl's watercolours are rare.
folding 'Pembroke' table still wearing his oilskin hat and boots. He has apparently just returned and his wife prepares some food at the table by the window. The omnipresent breadknife - which the wife now holds - can now be seen to be a symbol of the woman's domestic duties to her husband and family.

The most dismal of circumstances are painted in *Despair*. When it was exhibited at Tooth's Gallery in 1881 as *Bereaved*, the *Times* thought that the woman's child had just died, but this is not readily apparent in the painting. The *Graphic* repeated this suggestion when an engraving by Charles Roberts of the painting was published in its pages in April 1882. The way in which the woman's left hand is given prominence is deliberate because it allows the glint of light on her wedding ring to be emphasised, suggesting that her sadness for the loss of her child is made more acute by the fact that her husband is already dead. The emphasis on her wedding ring also serves to indicate the woman's respectability, thereby allowing pure maternal grief to be conveyed without any other moral question intervening. The *Graphic*'s engraving was accompanied by a poem immediately beneath the reproduction:

By hope unsoothed, by comfort unbeguiled,
The widowed mother mourneth o'er her child,
Talk not of joys the world may yet confer,
That tiny babe was all the world to her.

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209. *Times*, 1 November 1881, p.3d.

It is impossible to know whether the poem was written specifically to go with the picture, but if that were the case it would doubtlessly have had Holl's approbation. The verse has not proved traceable to an entire poem or a particular author. Because no copy of the original exhibition catalogue has been found, it is not possible to say whether the verse was then appended to the title, as was the custom. It is only by reference to it that sense can be made of the interpretations published in the *Times* and *Graphic*.

In 1883 Holl painted what has been turned into a companion piece to it, *Hope*. Although the works are of similar dimensions, Holl does not seem to have painted them as a pair and such a status was achieved only changing their titles. It seems likely that *Hope* was originally exhibited under another title, but in the absence of a full set of dealers' catalogues and other contemporary details it is impossible to identify it with complete accuracy.\(^{211}\)

\(^{211}\). *Hope* with *Despair/Bereaved*, was in the collection of F.W. Amsden. His sale was at Christie's, 2 April 1898, the two works being lots 77 and 78. He owned a third Holl, *The Young Mother* (1880, 18" x 13 1/2", untraced) lot 79. The two cottage scenes were bought by B. Lewis for £252 ("Despair") and £357 ("Hope") and both were later in the collection of Isaac Lewis who also owned *Deserted*. His sale was conducted at his estate, Bedegbury, near Goudhurst, Kent, by Knight, Frank and Rutley 12-19 May 1919, lots 93 and 108. Lewis's London home from about 1884 was opposite Holl's in Fitzjohn's Avenue (*Kelly's London Suburban Directory (Northern) 1884* etc.) and Holl painted his portrait (untraced) in about 1887; Reynolds, p.264.
Another work marketed through the dealer Tooth was *No Tidings* (1882, private collection) which, as the title indicates, was a partial reworking of *No Tidings from the Sea* (1870) and which is not to be confused with the work of 1883 now called *Hope*. In this work the wife and mother looks dejectedly out of the window whilst her four children gather in the gloomy room behind her. By 1882 the cottage interiors were beginning to pall with the artist. Since 1879 Holl had been concentrating increasingly on portraits and had perhaps not given enough thought to his subject pictures, preferring to stick to tested formulae. Between 1882 and 1885 Holl’s output of subject pictures gradually dried up and he seems not to have produced any, and certainly did not exhibit any, during the last three years of his life. Critical reaction too was turning against Holl in relation to these scenes. Of *No Tidings* the Times remarked that it was:

> only one more of the same Welsh cottage and Welsh peasant woman that he has painted many times before; extremely clever of course, but not a favourable example of the artist’s talent.\(^{212}\)

The fact that Holl repeated the same interior and often replicated those repetitions seems not to have concerned the art-buying public for a long period:

> This continual making of replicas was forced on [Holl] principally by the dealers, who were eager to secure a Holl at any price almost, and as a means of procuring them, commissioned pictures of certain subjects, mostly harping on old ideas.\(^{213}\)

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213. Reynolds, p. 185.
This suggests strongly that the dealers' exploitation of the demand which existed for Holl's cottage interiors, and of Holl, eventually sated the market (and overwork certainly contributed to Holl's early demise).\footnote{Reynolds's explanation suggests that Holl was his own victim, being either weak-willed or suffering from creative inertia. Perhaps he simply realised that his good fortune would not last and therefore pursued popular genre subjects repeatedly before switching entirely to portraiture. There can be no doubt that Holl was well rewarded for his subject paintings, no matter how disagreeable he may have found them to produce them:}

The Welsh cottage pictures had in this way proved a veritable goldmine, and the dealers not only sold them as fast as they could be procured, but were besieged with commissions for others of a similar nature.\footnote{Holl was not the only one to profit from the cottage interiors. Other artists produced bowdlerised versions of the theme, some of which, such as C.A. Smith's \textit{The New Baby} (water-colour, 1885, private collection) are unmistakable plagiarisms of Holl.}

\footnote{214. Other cottage interiors include: \textit{Peeling Potatoes} (n.d., YCBA), \textit{After baby's bedtime} (1875, Phillips, 6 July 1981 [148]), \textit{Lullaby} (1880, private collection) and \textit{Suspense} (1881, Shuttleworth College).}

\footnote{215. Reynolds, p. 185, emphasis added. At the time of his death Holl's annual income was reckoned to be about £10,000, rather than the £30,000 of the rumour-mongers. He left estate valued at £36,180. See \textit{Pall Mall Gazette}, 2 August 1888, p.6 and 5 September 1888, p.9.}
Rustic Life.

A distinct contrast to Holl's middle-class convalescent scenes is provided by his scenes of rustic life. These were painted in Wales and in the studio and derived from sketches made on numerous visits from 1863 onwards. According to Reynolds Holl produced a total of about thirty works on trips made in 1863, 1864, 1867, 1876, 1877, and in 1879. There may also have been other unrecorded visits. The skimpy details we have of Holl's life suggest that he concentrated on figure subjects rather than landscapes of which he seems to have painted very few. The painter Thomas Danby (1817? - 1887) who was a friend of Holl's father and a regular exhibitor of Welsh landscape scenes at the RA, may have encouraged Holl to go there. The works Holl produced from Welsh motifs in the 1860s seem to have sold well. Holl

216. Reynolds, p. 23 and passim.

217. None of Holl's landscape sketches for larger works has come to light. Two small landscape works have been traced: A Homestead (undated, Sotheby's Belgravia, 16 December 1980 [230]) and An Eastern Market or View In Spain (c. 1889, Sotheby's Belgravia, 21 July 1981 [224]). There is a water colour of a Welsh mountain stream in the VAM (E 375-1932) attributed to Holl but which is much likelier to be by his father-in-law the watercolourist Charles Davidson. It does not resemble the limited number of authentic Holl watercolours.

218. These include Knitting, The Mountain Child (1865, untraced) British Institution exhibition 1865 (219) 15 gns. unsold but purchased at the Liverpool Academy exhibition in 1865 (224) for 15 gns. by Peter Stuart, in whose collection it was seen by F. G. Stephens, 'The Private Collections of England LXXXVII', Athenaeum, 3 September 1887, p. 316, and The Fern Gatherers (1865, untraced) which was selected by an Indian subscriber to the London Art Union's lottery for 1865 who had won £40 towards its 50 guinea price: see Art Union of London Annual Report 1865, (London, 1865), pp. 39, 96. On Stuart's
usually returned from Wales with three or four partially complete works which were finished off in time for the commercial winter exhibitions or for the RA the following year. Unfortunately most of these works are untraced and are known only from descriptions and their titles.

One Welsh rustic scene which is fully recorded and has been traced is *Haymaking* (1867, Richard Green Gallery, London in 1986), which shows a peasant girl raking hay. This was originally exhibited at the Dudley Gallery in 1867 where it was noticed only by the *Art Journal* which commented on its "broken harmony of colour which is quite delicious" and described Holl as "abounding in promise". In 1879, according to Reynolds, Holl sold a work of the same title which he had painted at Criccleth that summer to the dealer Tooth. Not all Holl's works in the earlier period were sold immediately. *Dym Sasseneg* (1866, untraced) was exhibited at Wallis's gallery in 1866 but was returned unsold to the painter.

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222. Reynolds, p.170. It did not appear in the 1879 Winter Exhibition catalogue and a copy of the Spring 1880 catalogue has not been located. This work is now in a private collection and is actually signed and dated 1880. Holl probably began it in 1879 and finished it the following year.

Holl enjoyed a close business relationship with the dealer Arthur Tooth to whom he first sold paintings in 1866. In that year he bought both of Holl's exhibits at the SBA Spring Exhibition, A Boulogne Fish Child ([241] 1866, private collection) for 45 gns and Is it a purse or a coffin ? ([112] c. 1866, untraced) for 25 gns. Although Holl sold Tooth many works over the next twenty years it was only after the artist had consolidated his reputation (by about 1878 when he was elected ARA) that this dealer would take any of his Welsh works. There are no ready explanations of this.

Only two finished works from the 1850s have been traced, but a number of oil sketches are still in existence. One was recently sold under the title Rustic children leaning on a gate (1867, with Pyms Gallery, London in 1985), which is very likely to have been painted in Wales; Holl was staying at Beddgelert that year. It does not seem to correspond to any documented work, but in the absence even of descriptions of works known to have been completed that year, such as The Goose girl (untraced) and Stepping Stones (untraced) it is impossible to be sure.

224. Pyms Gallery, London, Impressions and Realities, November 1985, no.3. Holl was married to Annie Davidson in May 1867 and spent six months at Beddgelert between May and October 1867. Reynolds pp.35, 42.
Holl also painted English rural genre scenes such as Winter (c. 1869, with Christopher Wood Gallery, London in 1987), painted near his parents' home at Elstead in Surrey during Christmas 1869. According to Reynolds Holl painted out of doors, getting frost-bite in the process. The subject was seasonally appropriate, a young girl pulling along a bough of holly, the sickle with which she has cut it down in her hand. There are considerable pentimenti around the head, evidence of later studio reworking. The figure looks rigid and inadequately articulated and is not well integrated into the setting indicating Holl's lack of technical maturity. In comparison with Holl's later cottage interiors, the early rustic scenes, and Winter in particular, can be seen to be highly conventional, both in subject matter and treatment, indicating that Holl was able to work in a less mournful idiom than that which made him famous. Rodee has associated Winter with Frere's work in the 1850s but it fits into a much older pattern of eighteenth-century origin, represented by a work such as Wheatley's Winter (1793-4, on loan to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art) which shows a boy and a girl carrying bundles of sticks through the snow. This subject type ultimately derives from

225. Reynolds, pp.80-1. It was exhibited at the RA in 1871 (1086).
226. Rodee, 'Scenes of rural and urban poverty', p.100.
227. Webster, Wheatley, no.103. This forms a pair with Spring (1793-4, on loan to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art), Webster, no.104.
Gainsborough whose influence underlay what has been termed the "cottage style"\textsuperscript{228} of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.\textsuperscript{229} Holl's cottage interiors were numerous but Fildes painted only two, \textit{The Widower} and \textit{The Doctor}. The latter was undoubtedly his most popular work and it will next be examined in detail.

\textsuperscript{228} Burke, \textit{English Art 1714-1800}, p. 394.

\textsuperscript{229} See Gear, \textit{Masters or Servants?}, pp. 67-8.
Part E: The Doctor.

On 21 June 1890 the Times published a list of fifty-seven paintings which Henry, later Sir Henry, Tate (1819-99) intended to donate to the nation. The last two works on the list were described as "now being painted by Luke Fildes RA and Sir Frederick Leighton PRA". No titles were given, nor was any idea of the subject matter of either man's work. Fildes's work however was The Doctor and Leighton's was And the sea shall give the dead which were in it (1892, Tate Gallery). It is important to bear in mind the fact that the Doctor was the only 'social realist' work by Fildes to be composed and painted specifically for a public gallery. Therefore it was not subject to the demands of vendability that earlier works had been. This also bears out Fildes's resolution discussed above never again to paint large English subjects except on commission. Tate provided Fildes with the opportunity to produce a show-piece example of his work for display in a new and highly publicised gallery of national art. Fildes's endeavours to produce a work worthy of its intended location (then the National Gallery of British Art, now the Tate Gallery) were recognised by the Pall Mall Gazette which described The Doctor as "emphatically [a] gallery picture".

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231. Ormond, Lord Leighton, no.354.
232. Pall Mall Gazette, 2 May 1891, p.3.
In a letter of 4 May 1887 to Tate, Fildes recalled how the patron had first approached him "a few years ago" offering a commission. This letter was written in reply to a renewed approach offering "generous conditions". Tate had specified an "English" subject, as opposed to the Venetian ones which predominated in the painter's work at that time - and which were immensely popular with nouveau-riche patrons who had commonly derived their wealth from industry. But, as Fildes explained, it was a long while since he had painted such a scene. It was, he wrote, "a long time since the Casual Ward, the Widower, and the Return of the Penitent series". Fildes continued that he already had many portrait engagements for the coming year and he was adamant that he would not dash anything off for reasons of finance or exhibition. "My strong desire is to paint again a picture of a familiar character with the added experience I have gained", he explained. Evidently Tate's initial approach had not been forgotten. Fildes wrote:

Some time ago a subject occurred to me that I thought would do well but it was not my intention to speak with you on the matter until I had advance my idea to some practical form, sufficiently so at all events to submit the idea to you with some confidence as to the result. But you have anticipated me by your kind letter which brings me to the definite consideration of the subject sooner than I expected.

233. Fildes to Tate, 4 May 1887, NAL, 86 PP 10, partly in LVF, p.108. This is apparently a draft although Fildes himself endorsed it "Copy of letter given to Mr Henry Tate, 6 May, 1887".

234. I have in mind such patrons of these works as Sir John Aird (1833-1911) who commissioned Venetian Life (1884, Christie's 24 November 1989 [91]) and Lord Leverhulme (1851-1925) who owned An Al Fresco Toilet (1889, Port Sunlight, Lady Lever Art Gallery).

235. Fildes to Tate, ibid.
Fildes wanted more time to consider his options thoroughly and to work at his commission methodically:

I want to do it for reputation's sake and to satisfy my own peculiar desire to work at it at my own time and not to force it to a conclusion because of exhibition reasons or monetary ones.236

Fildes - unsurprisingly - had at the back of his mind the problems encountered whilst completing The Village Wedding early in 1883. Obviously Fildes wanted to be convinced of his patron's sincerity and his attitude was coloured by his desire for any eventual work to be a success. The gaps between the production of what Fildes himself termed his "English subjects of importance" were becoming longer. If The Village Wedding is excluded from the category, eight years had passed since the exhibition of his previous work in the idiom, The Return of the Penitent. Reading between the lines of the letter it is apparent that Fildes realised that financial and social success were inadequate compensation for popular success (symbolised by the protective railing erected around the Casuals) and artistic challenge. Influential critics were becoming increasingly bored by his production of repetitious Venetian fripperies.237 Fildes had been inundated with requests for portraits following the successful exhibition of portraits of his wife (Liverpool, Walker Art Gallery) and Mrs. W.L. Agnew (private collection) at the RA in 1887 which encouraged him to take up

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236. Fildes to Tate, ibid.

237. See for example the Athenaeum, 3 May 1890, p.573.
portraiture for the rest of his career. Consequently there was an unmistakeable element of reluctance in Fildes's acceptance of Tate's commission.

It is interesting that Fildes should have combined the decisions on his price and the subject matter, issues which he touched on twice in the letter of May 4. Firstly he stated:

"My design is not advanced enough to enable me to give you the price of the picture just yet but this I trust you will not mind for a while. As soon as I have decided I will inform you."

Towards the end of the letter he stated: "...without binding you to anything I will work out my idea by the time I have decided on the price." Fildes then went on to explain that by the time he had reached those decisions, he would also have finalised the "subject, treatment and size" of the work. Although Fildes seemingly already had some idea of his subject and perhaps treatment, the scale he anticipated working on was not large: "With respect to the [size] question my endeavour will be not to err on the side of bigness". This intention stemmed from Fildes's difficulties in selling *The Village Wedding*. It was size that Fildes thought had impeded its sale. If he was going to be left with a work on his hands, better that it should be small than large: thus it would represent less work wasted.

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238. Fildes to Tate, ibid.
239. Fildes to Tate, ibid. As the letter I have worked from is a draft, one of the sentences may have been omitted from the final correspondence.
240. Fildes to Tate, ibid.
The theme Fildes chose for the work was derived from an event in his own life. He had been greatly impressed by the professional devotion of the Dr. Murray who had attended Fildes's young son Philip at his death on Christmas morning 1877.\textsuperscript{241} Of course perinatal and infant mortality rates were high in the nineteenth century and child death provided a popular theme in both literature and art of the period. It is worth noting that in an unpublished letter from Fildes to Woods the former described how his nephew and niece, aged seven and four, had recently died from scarlet fever within ten days of each other.\textsuperscript{242} It is arguable that the strongly personal nature of Fildes's eventual painting accounted for some of its success and allowed for the injection of some originality into what is otherwise an apparently conventional scene.\textsuperscript{243} It is not likely that the audience of Fildes's painting was aware of these personal details.

There is an unfortunate gap in Fildes's correspondence with Tate. Nothing has been traced which dates from after May 1887 and before May 1890. The artist does not seem to

\textsuperscript{241} LVF, p.46. The article by Jean Kenward ('A Victorian Masterpiece', Country Life, CXXXIV (25 July 1963), p.202) is completely inaccurate. It was described by Fildes's son as a "joke": Paul Fildes to F. Gordon Roe, 28 December 1969, NAL, 86 PP 9.

\textsuperscript{242} Fildes to Woods, 1 December 1874, NAL, 36 PP 3.

\textsuperscript{243} Smith, People's Health, p.136 shows that scarlet fever peaked in London in 1870, causing 18.8% of deaths in that year. The period of greatest vulnerability was between the ages of four and eight, but the highest death rate was amongst those less than one year old.
have commenced work on the Tate commission in a sustained way until after the opening of the 1890 RA summer exhibition. In the earlier letter however Fildes had suggested that whilst his arrangements would "not permit me to do more than think it out this year" he expected that "the following year I trust to be able to give almost entirely to it". The two following years (1888-9) were in fact spent on more portraits and Venetian subjects and Fildes's RA diploma work, *A School Girl* (1888, London, Royal Academy of Arts), which was exhibited at the RA in 1888 when it was his only entry.

By May 1890 Fildes seems to have decided at least on the setting for his work, choosing to repeat the shabby cottage interior which had served him so well in the *Widower* in 1876. At this stage he was still far from finalising the composition. In May he was planning to meet up with Woods at Whitby to sketch the fishermen's cottages there. But his friend and neighbour Valentinel Frinsep told him about a small fishing village on the south Devon coast called Hope. As Fildes wrote to Woods:

Prinsep...gave me the most rapturous description of a delightful fishing village called Hope near Salcombe...which from what he says of the interiors quite fulfills my expectations for my picture...Prinsep says it is delightfully primitive and beautiful and strongly recommends trying it.

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244. Fildes to Tate, ibid.

245. Fildes to Woods, 19 May 1890, NAL, 86 PP 3.
He went on to explain that even if it were unsuitable for his picture, he would not mind spending a week there, as he had always wanted to visit Devon. It was an equally balanced decision between the two locations, the one being about as far from London as the other.246

It is extremely likely - although it is not provable - that Fildes had visited Whitby in the 1860s. At the Dudley Gallery Watercolour Exhibition of 1867 Fildes made his London exhibiting debut showing Old Whitby (untraced) and A dull day near Whitby (untraced).247 The latter may have been sold for the £10 it was priced at in the catalogue and the former seems not to have been sold until some time between May 1872 and May 1873, according to a set of scribbled accounts kept by Fildes, when it brought him the £30 initially asked.248 It will be recalled that in 1868 Fildes's friend Frank Holl had painted at Whitby and in 1870 further up the coast at Cullercoats as described above. It is not known whether the friendship which existed between Fildes and Holl in the 1870s and 1880s existed as early as the 1860s.249

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246. The Graphic had published a feature on another south Devon village called Beer which included a page of illustrations by Percy Macquoid - but none of them were interiors like Fildes's work: Graphic, 9 May 1874, pp.442, 452.

247. SBA, Third Annual Watercolours Exhibition, 1867 (572) and (580).

248. 'Income from 1st May 1872 to 1st May 1873', NAL, 96 PP 9.

249. LVF, pp.96, 102.
Provincial fishing villages were long-established in the canons of art, and some of those in Devon were, like Cul lercoats, especially popular in the mid- and late nineteenth century. C.N. Hemy RA (1841-1917), for instance, had painted on the north Devon coast in the 1860s, and Holl may have been there too in about 1876. As Fildes commented to Woods, J.C. Hook RA (1817-1907) had already worked at Hope and it would seem Prinsep had too. Generally speaking the north Devon coast was more popular with artists than the south.

Fildes's excursion to Hope provided him with enough material to produce a first sketch. This must have been the work now lost and known only from its reproduction in the Art Annual for 1895, a volume devoted to Fildes.

In a letter to Woods Fildes wrote that he had concluded his arrangement with Tate:

I worked up the sketch rather more and at last submitted it. I fancy he was pleased with the idea and when I told him I should require £3,000 he assented and letters have passed to that effect.


253. Fildes to Woods, 6 July 1890, MAL, 86 PP 3.
Fildes then made some revealing comments:

It is, of course, a very large sum to ask for a picture with so little work in it. Still, it will give me a great deal of trouble. It is a very difficult subject to paint by lamp and dawn effect and quite prevents me taking up anything else while it is in progress. I should probably make more money by portraits - which I have to entirely give up - after making a success to go on with his commission. So with one thing and another, the price, from my point of view, is not excessive ...I have had several applications for portraits but have been forced to decline [them].

Fildes ended by saying that Tate "does not permit me to finish the sketch I have made". This can be interpreted to mean either that any compositional alterations had to be presented in a second sketch (as they were) or that Fildes could not work up the sketch for sale. What the patron and the painter understood by the phrase is open to conjecture. A reduced version of The Doctor appeared at Sotheby's in 1976. Its dimensions, 20 1/4" x 29 1/2", were exactly the same as those of the etching after the painting by Léon Salles (1868-1934), for whose guidance it may well have been produced. Fildes had a curious attitude toward his preparatory oil sketches. In 1886 he wrote to an unidentified correspondent, refusing to lend any sketches for exhibition, claiming they were for his personal use only and that he had never had one "mounted" (i.e. framed): "such things would not be liked, nor would I care to show them".

254. Fildes to Woods, ibid.
255. Ibid.
256. Sotheby's, 16 November 1976 (78).
257. Fildes to Anon, 20 February 1882, NAI, 86 HH Box IV.
From a letter in the Tate Gallery archives it is known that Tate saw the first sketch in late June 1890. Before he came Fildes warned him "not to expect to find anything beyond what refers to the idea or the subject of the picture". The sketch was vague, he wrote, to allow him as much freedom as possible, but the subject and the composition were now settled in his own mind. Tate obviously found the sketch acceptable, hence his agreement to pay Fildes £3,000 for it. Fildes immediately embarked on a second phase of development, telling Woods that he planned to travel in pursuit of more ideas - and two months later he described his visit to fishing villages in Scotland. This second period of research and modification, perhaps incorporating ideas contributed by Tate, resulted in the second sketch, now in Pennsylvania. A comparison of the two sketches reveals the obvious changes Fildes made. He swapped the sofa for two mismatched chairs and he lowered the light levels, emphasising the fall of the lamplight on the doctor, the child and the father's face. The sick child was shown propped up on the chairs to allow it to be brought nearer centre stage. Poor families such as that shown in

258. Fildes to Tate, 22 June 1890, Tate Gallery archive.

259. Fildes to Woods, 28 September 1890, NAL, 86 PP 3. During this trip Fildes was also discussing portraits with a Mrs. Jedbergh and the Duchess of Sutherland, presumably Mary, the second wife of the third Duke (Ibid). So his claim to have abandoned portraiture for the duration of Tate's commission was not true.

260. At the Robert Packer Hospital and Guthrie Medical Centre, Sayre: Hard Times, no.77. A sketch of a cottage fireplace (n.d., collection of Malcolm Cormack, brought to my attention by Julian Treuherz) may have been painted as part of Fildes's pictorial research.
Fildes's painting lived in small, one or two roomed cottages, which usually had a shared bedroom if not a communal bed.²⁶¹ Hence the child is isolated to prevent the spread of infection and is brought where the doctor can more readily observe the symptoms.

The stage of preparation Fildes had now reached— that of a finished and accepted oil sketch— is problematic, because the number and the ownership of the oil sketches is not known. There were definitely two, and possibly more, sketches of the whole composition as well as oil studies of component parts, such as the oil study of the cottage interior in a private collection which may have been for The Doctor. To summarise, there was the assumed first sketch, now lost, and the second sketch now in Pennsylvania. The latter may well be the sketch of the Doctor which was sold at Fildes's studio sale in 1927, although the connection can only be made on the grounds of identical dimensions.²⁶² It is possible that the first sketch was identical with the work listed as 'The Doctor (study)' bought from Fildes by Agnew's in 1900 and later sold on to Sir Henry Tate (1842-1927), Tate's son and heir.²⁶³ Henry Tate the elder, who had been created a baronet in June 1898 in recognition of his public benefaction, had died on 5 December 1899, an event which

²⁶² Fildes studio sale, Christie's, 24 June 1927 (4) as "sketch for The Doctor, 26" x 36" .
²⁶³ Agnew's Indexed Picture Stock Books, entries for 2 October and 13 November 1900 (fiche 23). It is assumed that the presumed first (lost) sketch, when reproduced by Thomson was still in Fildes's possession.
presumably released Fildes from one of the terms in the agreement he had made with Tate whereby the artist was not permitted to "finish the sketch I have made". The first sketch, or another, soon changed hands again, Agnew's buying "The Doctor sketch" from Mrs. J. Stern in July 1905 and immediately reselling it to the Marquis of Northampton. It has not proved possible to identify these works, nor to tie up their provenances beyond these few details.

The next stage of Fildes's preparation of the work was to use the oil sketches and the preparatory drawings he had made in Devon and Scotland to design and construct, in his studio, a full-size mock-up of a cottage interior. This procedure was recorded in a drawing by Reginald Cleaver of Fildes at work in the studio in front of his set which was published in the Graphic. Propped against the leg of a chair in the background of the drawing is a large portfolio: Fildes evidently kept his drawn studies close at hand for reference even after finalising the composition and its setting.

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264. Ibid, entry dated 10 July 1905 (fiche 29). The present Marquis has no knowledge of the work.

265. I have not been able to identify the precise date of publication. The drawing may have been an unindexed supplement.
In an interview published in the *Strand Magazine* in 1893, Fildes recalled his use of the studio set and commented: "It was a most substantial structure - even the massive rafters were there - and I painted a great cloth to look like a flooring of red bricks".\[266\]

At exactly this time Fildes's friend Herkomer was also using a large mock-up to paint his group portrait known as *The Directors* (RA 1892, institutional collection, New York) which process he described in the second volume of his autobiography.\[267\] The method is typical of Fildes's painstaking procedure and extensive preparatory work. Even his graphic illustrations were compiled from innumerable studies, many of which survive in the Department of Prints and Drawings, Victoria and Albert Museum. Having built the studio set Fildes decorated it with objects bought especially for the purpose such as the cup and basin.\[268\] Having dressed his set, Fildes directed his 'actors' - a male and a female professional model - to pose for the figures of the mother and father, the man also posing for the doctor.\[269\] According to his son, the painter had himself photographed in the pose he required for the guidance of his model.\[270\] The pose of the doctor

\[266\] IV 1893, p.126.


\[268\] IV 1893, p.126.

\[269\] Ibid.

\[270\] LVF, p.118.
might have been influenced by Rodin's *The Thinker*. It and other elements of *The Gates Of Hell* were exhibited in Paris in June 1889.271 Fildes went to Paris at the end of April 1889 to hang the British section of paintings at the Grande Exposition and returned there in the summer with his wife once the RA Summer Exhibition had opened.272 When he painted the pose of the doctor, Fildes said he combined elements from five or six friends, including Prinsep, for the facial appearance and expression.273 Notwithstanding this the doctor does bear an unmistakeable resemblance to Fildes himself. The child was painted from his son Geoffrey and the curly golden hair from his daughter Phillis. Fildes's first intention was to paint the child face down (as in the first sketch) her hands under her chin. The changes were adopted when his sleeping model fell into the different pose one day. Fildes said he found the new position so "exquisite, so pleading and pitiful" that he decided immediately to use it.274 However, the pose of the child bears a distinct resemblance to that of the child held by its mother in the bottom left-hand corner of Raphael's *Massacre of the Innocents* (c. 1511), as engraved by Marcantonio Raimondi.

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272. LVF, pp.114-5.

273. IV 1893, p.126; IV 1898, pp.226-7; LVF, p.121.

274. IV 1893, pp.114-5.
The fact that Fildes had planned the work so thoroughly enabled him to finish it on time for the RA of 1891 despite the persistently bad light in the winter of 1890-91. As he wrote to Woods:

Nobody will ever know the frightful difficulty I have had this winter with the darkness... I have seen nobody else's work this year, for I have no time. All accounts agree that it will be a poor RA this year - nearly every important picture has been given up through the perpetual darkness. 275

It has been claimed that despite the size of the work and the artistic problems inherent in it the Doctor was one of the easiest and quickest to complete of his large English scenes. 276 The one major difference between the two known sketches and the finished work is the reversal of the composition, which has never satisfactorily been explained. Evidently the reversal was decided on after the sketches were completed and Treuherz has come near the truth by suggesting that Fildes needed to align the window in the set with one of the real studio windows. 277 But as contemporary photographs reveal, the studio had windows in three walls and Fildes aligned the set quite deliberately with the north-facing window. 278

276. LVF, p.118.
277. Hard Times, p.89.
In the interview cited earlier, Fildes described how he intended to emphasise the role of the doctor: "He should be the actor in the little drama I had conceived, father, mother, child should only help to show him to better advantage". Fildes's terms were well-chosen, given the highly theatrical nature of his procedure. In another interview with Fildes published in the Temple Magazine in 1897 under the title 'How I painted The Doctor', the artist explained retrospectively his motivation in greater detail. In this interview Fildes stated that in painting The Doctor, he was making a deliberate statement about an aspect of the life of his times as he saw them. He said: "My idea was certainly to put on record the status of the Doctor of my own time". Hence Fildes's intention to make the doctor the central figure. In earlier works doctors had never dominated so thoroughly the domestic setting. For example, Thomas Faed's The Doctor's Visit (1889, Belfast, Queen's University) the doctor is still at the margins of the scene, about to enter the cottage door. In this work the doctor is visiting a sick adult. Sick children were usually shown being watched over by the mother as in Mrs. Alexander Farmer's An Anxious Hour or occasionally by the father as in Faed's earlier work Worn Out (1868, FORBES collection).

279. IV 1893, p.126.
280. IV 1898. Recent research has failed to touch upon this interview. However the information it contains is significant and it will be referred to closely. I am grateful to Dr Bill Brock for bringing it to my attention.
281. IV 1898, p.227.
282. Exhibited at the RA in 1889 (317) as Hush! let him sleep.
Sometimes the mother is joined by a priest as in Thomas Brooks's *Resignation* (1863, FORBES collection), but rarely by a doctor. One of the few examples of such a scene is Joseph Clarke's *The Mother's Darling* (RA 1872 (357), untraced) which is reported to have shown a child hiding in its mother's skirts from the doctor who stoops over it as its father looks on.\(^2\) The families who are most commonly joined by doctors tend to be gypsies as in Rankley's *The Doctor's Coming* (RA 1864 (347), untraced), Charles Gregory's *The Doctor* (OWS 1883, untraced) and William Small's *The Good Samaritan* (1899, Leicester, City Museum and Art Gallery). The latter is strongly dependent on Fildes's painting. In *Victorian Conventions*, John Reed has shown how gypsies occupied an ambivalent place in Victorian society, being constituted as both melodramatic stereotypes of shiftlessness and criminality and as idealised representatives of an alternative way of life, akin to the nostalgic view of rural existence.\(^3\)

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283. *Times*, 27 May 1872, p.5a; *Athenaeum*, 25 May 1872, p.659. Interestingly, the *Times* made a point of noting that the "details of cottage furnishing [are] accurate and thorough". Clarke's (1834-1926) earliest RA exhibits had been *The Sick Child* in 1857 (616), untraced) and *The Doctor's Visit* in 1858 (Sunderland, Museum and Art Gallery): this shows a doctor watching over a boy who has been propped up on pillows in an armchair at the fireside as his grandmother or elderly mother looks on. They were written up in the *Times* in a way which suggested that they were story and sequel: *Times*, 18 May 1857, p.9a and 1 May 1858, p.5d. *The Sick Child* was a medal-winning exhibit at Philadelphia in 1876. Clarke also painted a work called *The Sick Chicken* (RA 1875 (1164), untraced) which I would dearly like to see. In 1865 the *Times* (6 February 1865, p.5d) thought Clarke had failed to live up to his promise as the Frere of the English school.

284. Reed, Ch. 14.
Although Fildes said he was committed to showing the modern medical man, the means he chose are greatly at variance with those adopted for instance by the American painter Thomas Eakins when he came to paint his portrait of Dr Gross, known as The Gross Clinic (1875, Philadelphia, The Jefferson Medical College of Thomas Jefferson University). In this work Gross is presented as the personification of medical and scientific exploration and as a teacher. Fildes's doctor evinces a different kind of heroism, that of the dutiful service of the general practitioner. Indeed Fildes's modern doctor post-dates other important images of the doctor as the embodiment of scientific knowledge and medical discovery. For example Léon Lhermitte painted Claude Bernard in his laboratory at the Collège de France (1889, Paris, Collège de France) and Henri Gervex painted Dr Péan operating at the St. Louis Hospital (1889, Paris, Musée de l'Assistance Publique). In comparison Fildes's is a sombre, backward-looking domestic image, designed to prescribe certain professional obligations rather than to present the doctor as a scientist.

Further on in the Temple Magazine interview Fildes propounded a sort of artistic ethos which, even if it is not at all original, deserves to be quoted at length because it is the painter's only recorded statement of the sort:

Certainly my own tendency is to paint pictures dealing with my own times, and to treat subjects with which most of us are quite familiar. There must be an advantage to the artist in this. It must enable you better to get at the truth, at the very heart of the subject. In dealing with historical subjects, events which took place in times other than your own, you must necessarily rely on other pictures as suggestions for your work; and, though it would be utterly absurd to lay this down as a principle which should guide anyone else, I merely mention it as explaining the tendency of my own work, which is undoubtedly to deal with life as I find it around me. Even the conventional black coat and the humblest surroundings need not frighten one into the idea that one's work will therefore be wholly unpicturesque. The idea is as old as the hills. The interest of your commonplace subject, and the value of your picture, depends upon the sincerity of your treatment, and the strength of your feeling about it.26

Therefore Fildes's choice of subject can be seen to derive from a desire to express certain quintessential values which he found inherent in late nineteenth-century society. Two points need to be made about what Fildes said. Firstly, his claims to be getting at the truth, as we have seen in relation to the Village Wedding, are absolutely untrue. Secondly, his claim to deal with life around him as he found it is untrue. He did not paint the world as such, but compiled elements, arranged to a deliberate plan and produced an artificial and constructed representation which corresponded with his preconceptions of what was real and authentic.

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286. IV 1898, pp.227-8.
The terms Fildes used to explain himself were fairly standard amongst British artists and critics when discussing modern life subject matter. It is interesting that Fildes should particularly comment on modern costume — "the conventional black coat". The suitability of modern clothing in painting had been much debated in both England and France during the nineteenth century. Baudelaire, of course, had been very much in favour of it, but in England men such as Millais and Frith expressed doubts. Millais, in his well-known comment to Dr. Urquhart said:

Artists have to wrestle today with the horrible antagonism of modern dress; no wonder, therefore, that few recent portraits look really dignified. Just imagine van Dyck's Charles I in a pair of check trousers.

Frith began work on his sketch for Ramsgate Sands (1854, Royal collection) in 1851, keen to paint modern life, as he put it, "with all its drawbacks of modern dress".

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289. Frith, My Autobiography, Vol. 1, pp. 243-45. One is reminded here of the alleged deficiencies of the British artist in painting history made at the time of the competitions for the decoration of the new Palace of Westminster, and in particular of F.W. Fairholt's series of articles on British costume in the Art Union (later the Art Journal) in 1842 and subsequent years. These were designed to provide the artist with "historically accurate sources": see Debra N. Mancoff, 'Samuel Carter Hall: Publisher as Promoter of the High Arts', VPR, XXIV (1991), p.19 note 12.
In the interview of 1893 the question of modernity was not brought up, but Fildes's interviewer, Harry How, made an interesting comment. He wrote that Fildes:

...strives to paint history - history in its most artistic up-to-date aspect. 'The Doctor' is the medical man as he was at the end of 1890...[He] is the doctor of 1890.290

How clearly meant to put Fildes forward as a modern history painter. He may however have had in mind an article written by Frederick Wedmore in 1888. This curiously old-fashioned piece (it mentions the acceptability in art of steam ploughs and factory chimneys in landscape painting) ended with the statement that modern art, in its character-painting, has shown already "that it is not hard to be interested in the modern physician, in the man of business, in the woman of society".291

The Doctor: Sources and Influences.

The composition as finalised combined elements of two well-known and easily identifiable subject-types which emerged in English genre painting in the mid-century but which both had deep historic roots. Firstly Fildes drew on the 'fondly gazing' image exemplified by the eponymous work of 1861 by George Smith (1824-1914).292 The 'fondly

290. IV 1893,p.117.


gazing' scene depicts a mother watching over her sleeping or playing child—usually a very young child—evoking the emotions of maternal love. It is a pictorial idiom directly derived from scenes of the Virgin watching over the Christ child. The transition from a purely religious significance to the sort of thing Smith or C.W. Cope in *Mother and Child* (1852, London, VAM) or W.Q. Orchardson in *Master Baby* (1889, Edinburgh, NGS) painted was achieved through the innovation in the eighteenth century of the 'secular adoration' by artists such as Benjamin West in *The Artist's Family* (1772, New Haven, YCBA) or Joshua Reynolds in *Mrs Richard Hoare and her son* (c.1767, London, Wallace Collection). Fildes had produced a work in the idiom, an illustration to a section of Victor Hugo's poem, 'Feuilles d'Automne', which was published in translation in *Once a Week* in 1867.

293. The genre was satirised in a series of cartoons in *Fun* as 'The 'Kiss Mammy' School', 1 October 1879, p.136.


295. As Edward Morris has noted there was a renewal of interest in later eighteenth century painting between the 1870s and about 1914. This can partly be explained by the inauguration of loan exhibitions of Old Master paintings at the RA in January and February of each year from 1871 (the so-called "Winter Exhibitions"): *Lord Leverhulme...A Great Edwardian Collector and Builder...*, ex. cat., London, Royal Academy of Arts, 1980, pp.17-25. I have not been able to consult the Ph.D. thesis by Laurel Bradley, 'Evocations of the Eighteenth Century in Victorian Painting', New York University, 1986.
The second subject-type Fildes used was the scene of the sick child being watched over, usually by the mother, as in the works by Farmer and Brooks mentioned above or in Thomas Faed's *Mother's first care* (1873, private collection). These two subject-types were common across Europe in both literature and painting. Continental examples of the genre which Fildes is likely to have been familiar with include works by Frère, William Bouguereau (1825-1905) and Israëls. For example, Bouguereau's *Le Vœu* (1867, Philadelphia, Museum of Art) was in various English collections between 1867 and 1887, twice passing through the hands of the dealer Wallis.

296. *Once a Week*, n.s. IV (7 September 1867), pp.285-6. One stanza, heavy-handedly using sleep as a metaphor for death, runs:

Sleep on, my darling, sleep and dream/ Rest thee my lovely one/ Thou art now on life's rapid stream/ Like the dark, helpless weed upon/ The breast of ocean; hours and moments chime/ The passing march of time.


298. Robert Isaacson, 'Les collectionneurs de Bouguereau en Angleterre et en Amerique' in Louise d'Argencourt (ed.), *William Bouguereau 1825-1905*, ex. cat., Paris, Musée du Petit Palais and Hartford, The Wadsworth Athenæum, 1984-85, pp.104-13, especially pp.105-6 and no.46. See also nos.39 and 47. Frère benefitted from the favour of Ruskin in the 1850s and he was often held as an example to English painters, for example by the *Times*, 2 May 1863, p.11c. See also Weisberg, *The Realist Tradition*, nos.69, 76 and p.290. Israëls's *Expectation* (although not showing a sick child) was found by the Academy, 30 May 1874, p.614, to be "somewhat akin to that of Mr Fildes [the Casuals] in sentiment and in style of work".
Both subject types express the benefits and duties of respectable motherhood. Their principal affective sources lie in the Age of Sensibility (as described in Chapter 1, pp.42-54) when the sympathetic emotions of readers or viewers were engaged by means of blatant and lachrymose manipulation, generally focussed on 'natural' victims of hideous natural and human disasters - defenceless women, aged men and women, helpless children and so on. It is to that Age that an archetypal Victorian characteristic can be traced, the facile, superficial and vacuous indulgence of feelings, the meaningless expressions of sympathy which became the omnipresent substitutes for real involvement in a problem or the promotion of remedial action. By the 1850s it was as if one's moral worth was directly proportionate to the extent which one was visibly moved by pathetic imagery. Of course the negative reaction had set in long before, but mawkishness endured in literature and art and was only curtailed by the magnitude of the horrors of the First World War.

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299. Todd, Sensibility, passim.
300. Kaplan, Sacred Tears, pp.16-7, 56.
301. Kaplan, p. 7 and passim.
302. That the twentieth century emphasis on sexuality is a modern displacement equivalent to Victorian sentimentality is cogently argued by Howard W. Fulweiler "Here a captive heart lies busted": From Victorian Sentimentality to Modern Sexuality' in Sexuality and Victorian Literature, ed. Cox, pp.234-50. See also David Cannadine, 'War and Death, Grief and Mourning in Modern Britain' in Mirrors of Mortality, ed. Whaley, p.187, where he points out that the nineteenth-century obsession with death and taboo of sexuality have been reversed in recent times.
Another source of these types of scenes might have been photography. Composite "pictorial" photographs such as Fading Away (1858) by Henry Peach Robinson (1830-1901) were enormously popular.\textsuperscript{303} Although in the particular case of Fading Away a somewhat older child is shown, Robinson used the same emblematic and metaphorical means as contemporary painters did to give their scenes a narrative content.\textsuperscript{304} Where Fildes in The Doctor uses the creeping light of dawn to suggest hope, Robinson used a black cloud to suggest despair. The meanings of these scenes, the levels on which they would strike their audiences, lay in the excessive and easily elicited emotional responses of that audience: their market, their destination, was determined by this meaning. Specifically, "fondly gazing" and sick child scenes played on cross-class fears through their explicit and implicit references to child mortality, the prevailing rates of which were usually high. Rates of child death were rarely lower than about 12\% in the nineteenth century and would escalate during the winter or epidemics. Death rates of children aged 0-4 years were ten times greater than for those aged 5-9 years.\textsuperscript{305}

\textsuperscript{303} Grace Seiberling, Amateurs, Photography, and the Mid-Victorian Imagination, (London, 1986), p.144; Margaret Harker, Henry Peach Robinson, (Oxford, 1988), pp.26-7 and Pls. 45-7. Robinson's younger brother Herbert was married in 1876 to Agnes the youngest daughter of Henry Tate. Robinson is said to have advised Tate on his collection of paintings: Harker p.54.

\textsuperscript{304} Interestingly Robinson's photograph was criticised in the same way as Fildes's work of the 1870s and of 1891: "it is a picture no one could hang up in a room and revert to with pleasure" Journal of the Photographic Society, 1 January 1859, quoted by Harker p.27.

One final compositional influence needs to be mentioned, one of Fildes's own illustrations to Amelia B. Edwards's novel *Lord Brackenbury* which was serialised in the *Graphic* during 1880. In the scene in question several elements are present which recur in *The Doctor*, notably the elegantly dressed man in the rough cottage and the slumped and weeping mother.\(^{306}\)

Themes of Sickness and Death in Literature.

Themes of sickness and death had a long history in art and had grown to prominence in the 1840s and 1850s as modern rather than historical scenes.\(^{307}\) In literature, novelists described death and sickness in great detail and with great frankness. Particularly favoured were child victims. One need think only of the pathetic death of Little Nell in Dickens's *Old Curiosity Shop* (1840), "a

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307. Apart from mythological and biblical scenes of death, there is a long history of morbid scenes with a personal relevance to the artist such as the Fulham stoneware effigy of his dead daughter by John Dwight (c.1674, London, VAM), *The Dead Child* (n.d. private collection) by Samuel Cooper (1609-72), *Sketch of a dead child* (n.d. Edinburgh, NGS) by Allan Ramsay (1713-84) and *Head of Gertrude Grimshaw on her death-bed* by Atkinson Grimshaw (1874, Leeds, City Art Gallery). The genre was not isolated in England: one thinks too of such oft-painted scenes as Titian painting his dead daughter and Monet's painting of his dead wife Camille (1879, Paris, Musée d'Orsay). See the general discussion by Nochlin, *Realism*, pp.60-3.
lovely smile upon her face", never murmuring or complain-
ing, finally fading "like the light upon a summer's eve-
ning" (Ch. 72). It has been observed that deaths such as that of Nell and Paul Dombey "set an entire column of equally lovable boys and girls in motion towards their graves". Many of the most pathetic scenes in Dickens's novels were soon given pictorial expression. Because infant mortality rates were so high in the nineteenth century, and were much higher in especially deprived areas or during epidemics, death was often treated in a diffident manner. In Mrs. Craik's novel The Head of the Family (which provided the source for Holl's "The Lord gave"; see above Chapter 3, Part A) a doctor is called in to examine a sick child:

The doctor looked grave, though not very grave; most people think so little of the deaths of infant children.

Child burials were so common that one writer commented that the world:

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308. The pathetic juvenile death had become such a cliché by the time that Dombey and Son was published (1847-8) that Henry Hallam was moved to remark that "I am so har-
dened as to be unable to look on it [the death of Paul Dombey] in any other light but pure business". Another critic thought that in The Old Curiosity Shop Dickens "spoons and stirs the subject of grief". Both quoted by Kaplan, Sacred Tears, pp.47-8. Ruskin summed up Nell's demise thus: "Nell...was simply killed for the market as a butcher kills a lamb": Works, XXXIV p.275 n.


310. On paintings of scenes from Dickens, see Gordon, British Paintings of Subjects from the English Novel 1740 - 1870. Dickens was rivalled closely as a source only by Goldsmith.

311. Mrs. Craik (Dinah Maria Muloch), The Head of the Family, (1852) Vol.3, p.274.
...cannot linger even to look at the small new hillocks where they lie so thick and close together all over the land.312

'Fondly Gazing' scenes as 'Secular Adorations'.

By painting such scenes artists were pointing to a threat levelled against the pivotal organism of Victorian society, the family. Given that the relative positions of the mother and child in a 'fondly gazing' scene approximate to those of Mary and Jesus in a Nativity or Adoration scene, and if Victorian attitudes to womanhood which emphasised the mystical nature of child-bearing are taken into account, then it can be seen that scenes of child sickness and death had profound resonances for a contemporary audience, resonances which were beyond the ability of cliché to dull.313 Indeed 'fondly gazing' scenes were recognised in the mid-nineteenth century as secular adorations, fit to be treated as domestic altar-pieces. Of one such scene, C.W. Cope's Rest (RA 1860 [140], untraced), J.B. Atkinson wrote:

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313. Writing on the subject of 'Some pictures of children' in the Magazine of Art, VII (1884), p.136, Cosmo Monkhouse noted that:

Any one can excite pity for a child. In a poem or picture very slight skill will produce a very great effect on a very large number when the subject is a child in distress. The pet lamb yielded to the butcher, the empty bird-cage, the blind father led by a pretty daughter, will always draw spectators and their tears. Such pathos is so "cheap", as the phrase is, that it requires to be treated with great reserve and simplicity.

Emphasis added.
Child, rest on thy mother's breast, clasped in the arms of love. Tender hands cradle the infant's sleep, while a mother's beauty keeps an angel's watch. Such pictures in our day not unworthily take the place of "Holy Families" painted by the great masters, and might well be hung as altar-pieces in the shrine of domestic affection. English art, indeed, is greatest when it is simplest and tenderest - when it is most true to that English home, which is not only a castle, but a fireside, and a family circle, and a sanctuary, and a house where grace is said before meals, and the day ended by prayer...home has ever been dear to our English art. 314

Fildes's subversion of convention.

When Fildes painted The Doctor he took the two well-established subject-types I have described and subverted them. Whilst retaining a focus on the child, Fildes virtually excluded the parents giving, as he said, the dominant role to the doctor, the outsider deferred to under extreme circumstances. 315 This subversion was deliberate. As Fildes stated in the interview of 1893, his aim was to stress the doctor and make the other figures "show him to better advantage". 314 To achieve

314. 'The Royal Academy and Other Exhibitions', p. 69.

315. It is a feature of 'fondly gazing' scenes that the child is almost never gazed at by the father. Among the few examples I have found of the male 'fondly gazing' scene are Landseer's Prince Albert with the Princess Royal (c.1840, Royal collection), although this of course is a portrait, and a drawing by Hicks reproduced in his Studies of the Human Figure, (London, 1868), Part 6, plate 4. The original drawing, known as "Family group with new baby" is in the FORBES collection: R. Allwood, George Elgar Hicks: Painter of Victorian Life, ex. cat., London, Geffrye Museum, 1982-83, nos.53, 64-8. The father as nurse, with or without the mother, is found more often as in Faed's Worn Out, Fildes's The Widower and Hicks's Every cloud has a silver lining (1890, FORBES collection).

316. IV 1893, p.126.
this aim the doctor had to dominate. The parents, in particular the mother, are relegated to the dim background. Whereas in earlier sick child scenes they would have been equal participants, they are now bystanders, observers as Science, in the person of the doctor, intrudes and takes over. Where faith would once have been in God - manifested in the presence of a priest as in Brooks's *Resignation* or in direct supplication as in Bouguereau's *Le Vœu* - now man takes over. Here Fildes is closely reflecting the then current philosophical notions of human endeavour, that positivist scientific discovery would finally triumph where firstly supernatural and secondly metaphysical abstractions had previously held sway. The assumption was not one of abstract intellectualism, but had a distinct practical component. For scientific advance to be morally worthy it had to include a range of concrete benefits such as the elimination of physical suffering. Fildes's doctor is the embodiment of faith in scientific knowledge, and science's ascendancy over theology: faith can be seen to implant itself in human efforts rather than in religious or philosophical belief. However, The Doctor is far from being a 'man of science' as portrayed by Eakins, Bernard or Lhermitte.

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The Doctor as Professional Icon.

The figure of the doctor was heralded as an icon of professional devotion and prompted one doctor to lecture his medical students on the merits of Fildes's image. He is reported by the British Medical Journal as saying:

what do we not owe Mr. Fildes for showing to the world the typical doctor, as we would all like to be shown - an honest man and a gentleman doing his best to relieve suffering? A library of books written in our honour would not do what this picture has done and will do for the medical profession in making the hearts of our fellow men warm to us with confidence and affection...Above everything, whatever may be the rank in your profession to which you may attain, remember always to hold before you the ideal figure of Luke Fildes's picture and be at once gentlemen and gentle doctors. 316

This statement is of great significance: it could not have been made, nor could The Doctor have been painted, in the same form in the mid-century. The medical profession in general, and the general practitioner in par-

318. British Medical Journal, 8 October 1892, pp.787-8. This passage has been quoted out of context by LVF p.118 and, surprisingly, by both Treuherz, Hard Times, p.89 and Gillett, Victorian Painter's World, p.120. Far from being a simple encomium of Fildes's work, it is part of a speech on 'Doctors in Literature: Old and New', given to medical students of the Yorkshire College, Leeds, by W. Mitchell Banks, surgeon, of the Liverpool Royal Infirmary. He compared the depiction of the doctor of 1892 and of 200 years before in a play, a novel and a picture from each period. He said that much was owed to Molière for his monitory presentation of quackery in his day, and as much was owed to Fildes for his laudatory contemporary image of the doctor which, the BMJ editorialised, presented the correct popular conception of the modern medical man:

[He is a] modest, unpretending man of science, who, while working wonders for his patients, would have them believe he is a medical agnostic; the devoted servant of the deserving poor, whose appeal to the charity of the representative modern doctor is never made in vain; the typical, honest and gentle man, doing his best to relieve suffering. (ibid, p.807).
ticular, did not then enjoy the public confidence and concomitant status that it did by 1890. Medicine was rife with incompetence and corruption until two crucial pieces of legislation were passed which turned it into a properly regulated profession. The first of these was the Medical Act of 1858. It ended the out-dated two-tier system of physicians and surgeon apothecaries, replacing it with the tri-partite system, still in operation, of specialist physicians and surgeons (consultants), general practitioners and apothecaries (pharmacists). Each has a peculiar sphere of interest and a complicated system of etiquette prevents any overlap of influence or activity. The 1858 act also set up a proper system of training, examination, registration and discipline.319

The second Medical Act of 1886 codified the twenty smaller acts passed between 1870 and 1881 and established the principles on which a practitioner could properly be considered qualified. The result of these acts were to limit the number of legally-entitled practitioners, ensuring that those who remained were appropriately and adequately trained, and thereby increasing their income and prestige. The acts also had the deleterious effect of increasing the doctor/patient ratio.320

319. It is remarkable that Fildes's painting should recently have been singled out for praise again by a doctor as a paradigm of professional devotion. Writing in the period when Aids was the subject of widespread myth and rumour, Lawrence K. Altman MD used Fildes's image as a rebuke to the many physicians who "...lack the compassion and possibly the courage to try to alleviate the suffering among the tens of thousands ill with AIDS...Too few physicians are trained or able to provide the comfort that was the chief elixir offered by Fildes's doctor": 'AIDS Recalls Earlier Time', New York Times, 15 July 1986, p.C3a-f.
Given this background an hypothesis presents itself. If we accept that the doctor in Fildes's painting is aged about fifty or fifty-five, then he could be seen as a representative of the first generation of doctors to have qualified under the new system introduced in 1858. So not only could the public have confidence in his evident dedication and professional honour, but also in his skill and training. That could not have been generally true earlier, although there were many competent men active in the medical sphere. The doctor in the painting is representative of scientific knowledge and the epitome of professionalism.

Despite his evident professionalism the doctor appears helpless. As mentioned in relation to Doubtful Hope, medical ability to diagnose had outstripped the available treatments. Consequently rather than provide alleviation or cure the doctor could only optimise the circumstances for nature to work its course. Unlike Fildes's interviewer in 1893 who thought that the doctor was wondering "how science can meet the little one's needs" the reviewer in the Times paralleled Watson's explanation by


321. Selfless devotion to duty had been the theme of Heywood Hardy's Duty (1888, London, Guildhall Art Gallery) which shows a doctor battling across a windswept moor on horseback to reach his patient.

322. IV 1893 p. 117.
stating that the doctor was waiting for the moment when "if nature is but kind, it may be possible for...science to do something to help". 323

Some Nineteenth-Century Paintings of Doctors.

Returning to Fildes's comments in the interview of 1898, it will be recalled that he said that his intention was to record the status of the doctor in his own time. He followed this by saying:

[The doctor] has never been, it seems to me, quite fairly treated in literature. From the earlier writers to the present time, he has generally been treated, as in the comedies of Moliere, as a subject for humorous rather than serious treatment. 324

These comments are not terribly accurate. Fildes omitted to mention doctors in painting and referred only to Moliere's satirical figure rather than to contemporary works. Whilst the doctor was not a very common subject in painting, there are certain examples exhibited in London between about 1864 and 1890 which Fildes might have known. His comments on humorous treatment would have been truer in relation to H.S. Marks's *Doctors Differ* (RA 1864 [326], untraced) than it would have been to contemporary novels. Marks's work, an example of his humorous histori-


324. IV 1898, p.227. Fildes's comment must have been derived from the speech given by Banks and mentioned above.
cal genre in which three medical men, including a "fat and a lean son of Esculapius" argue about the case while the "patient is presumably 'in extremis'". At the same exhibition Alfred Rankley's work *The Doctor's Coming* (RA 1864 [347], untraced) was one of the few examples to express a sense of medical urgency. According to reviewers, it showed a gypsy girl running to tell her parents, who hold a sick child by a camp fire, that the doctor is arriving. Like the doctor in Faed's *The Doctor's Visit*, Rankley's is still at the margin of the scene: he can be seen on his horse in the distance. The artist's interest was really in the firelight illuminating the father's "set but tearless gaze into the child's face" which is "happily contrasted with the wilder grief of the mother". Fildes may have recalled Rankley's work when planning *The Doctor*. He was interested in contrasting parental reactions and in the lighting of his scene, having set himself the task of painting the mingling of natural dawn light and artificial lamplight. In that he was evidently indebted to *Hopeless Dawn* by the Newlyn artist Frank Bramley which he would have seen at the RA in 1888 and perhaps even to Faed's *Worn Out*. John


327. His success in this particular was widely praised, for instance by the *Magazine of Art*, XIV (1891), p.220.

328. Given the controversy over the purchase of this work by the trustees of the Chantrey Bequest it is even likelier that Fildes knew it. In an advance notice of the RA in 1891 one journal went so far as to state that Fildes had "been poaching on Newlyn preserves and in his 'Doctor's visit to the Fisherman's sick child' must surely have robbed at least a trio of Cornishmen of their next year's subjects": *The Artist*, XII (1 April 1891), p.361.
Burr's *The Village Doctor* (RA 1877 [483], untraced) showed a rustic crone providing traditional remedies for a sick child who sits on his mother's lap in a dingy cottage.\(^{329}\) Charles Green's *A Consultation* (RA 1879 [377], untraced) simply provided the artist an opportunity to paint three curious physical types in an elegant interior, rather than to present a narrative.\(^{330}\) One of the commonest ways of presenting a serious theme was by including it as a children's game. For instance F.D. Hardy's *Playing at Doctors* (1863, London, VAM) shows six children playing: one is the patient, one is the doctor, one the apothecary and three are his assistants.

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p.120. The link with Newlyn was also noticed by D.S.M(acColl) in the *Spectator*, 2 May 1891, pp.625-6 and 9 May 1891, pp.660-1.


The Doctor in Literature.

In literature George Eliot used Dr Lydgate in *Middlemarch* (1872) to express ideas on modern life, both medical and social. There are plentiful other examples Fildes might have known such as Trollope's *Doctor Thorne* (1858) or Mrs. Gascoigne's *Doctor Harold* (1866). It is from these and other novels that additional information and opinions about doctors can be derived to add an extra dimension to our understanding of Fildes's work. The painter was keen to set himself the artistic challenge of painting the mingling of natural and artificial light. This was also his way of showing that the doctor has sat up all night caring for his patient. It was a point of modern medical professionalism that the doctor should be available twenty-four hours a day. Often his presence counted for as much as any treatment he could offer - as in Fildes's painting. This aspect of the doctor's work was noted by Thackeray in *Pendennis* (1850). He wrote:

> It is not only for the sick man, it is for the sick man's friends, that the doctor comes. His presence is often as good for them as it is for the patient, and they long for him yet more eagerly...How we hang upon his words, and what a comfort we get from a smile or two, if he can vouchsafe that sunshine to lighten our darkness.


332. See Brightfield, *Victorian England*, Vol.2, p.209. In William Collins's *Fetching the Doctor* (RA 1845, untraced) a doctor was shown answering his door at night and contained a "good effect of candle light thrown through the door": *Times*, 6 May 1845, p.6e.

The types of visit a doctor could make were divided into three categories. These were: the necessary visit which entailed alleviation or cure; the sympathetic visit for comfort and support and the visit for the sake of professional form, but unnecessary. The visit in *The Doctor* is evidently of the second kind.

Critical Reactions.

The critical reaction to *The Doctor* is illuminating. Long before the opening of the RA in 1891 rumours were circulating about Fildes's new work. These rumours were stimulated by advance publicity for the painting, such as the drawings of Fildes at work on the canvas in his studio. One by Cleaver was published in *The Graphic* and another by Raven-Hill appeared in the *Art Journal*. Accounts emanating from the large number of visitors to the studio who saw the work in progress must also have prompted interest. It is revealing that in a letter to Woods in March 1891 Fildes should have stated that Tate saw nothing of the work until it was quite nearly finished. In the letter, which is couched in typically self-deprecating terms, Fildes wrote:

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The picture promises well. Of course it is far short of what it ought to be and what I know I could do - but there, it will have to go. Nobody will ever know the frightful difficulty I have had this winter with the darkness. Mr. Tate saw it for the first time last week and I believe he likes it.337

Any lingering doubts that Fildes harboured must have been eradicated by the private, public and critical response the painting enjoyed. For the Times it was unquestionably the picture of the year.338 Both the Magazine of Art and the Art Journal noted that Fildes had resumed what the artist himself had once called his "series" of English subjects. The former explained that "Mr. Fildes has returned to his first love, the distress of the English poor" and the latter recorded that The Doctor marked Fildes's return:

to the class of work with which [he] first earned his spurs - pictures of domestic genre and of that section of life where the failures just exist by the philanthropy of others.339

Both reviewers made a point of commenting on Fildes's innovation in emphasising the doctor. The Art Journal stated that "the interest of the picture centres not on the sick child but on the doctor" and the Magazine of Art noted that:

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337. Fildes to Woods, 23 March 1891, NAL, 86 PP 3, partly in LVP, p.121.

338. Times, 2 May 1891, p.14a. The Artist published two lists of the seven top pictures of 1891, Fildes ranking no. 2 on one and not at all on the other. Only Sargent appeared on both lists: Artist, XII (1 May 1891), pp.166, 170. A similar poll in 1887 in the Pall Mall Gazette of the forty Academicians (reported in the Artist, VIII (1 November 1887), p.339) had placed Leighton first, Holl fifth, Herkomer seventh and Fildes twenty-second.

...in such a scene — where parents despair for the life of their little one — [that] the cogitating doctor should be the principal figure, is a stroke alike original and dramatic...and the fact that he at once, rather than the other *dramatis personae*, commands the sympathy of the spectator is a testimony to the success of the artist in the realisation of his conception.\(^\text{340}\)

Some reviewers approached the *Doctor* in the theatrical context outlined in Chapter One. For example, the *Academy* felt that the emphasis on the mental suffering of the parents verged on melodrama and its obvious pathos excluded it from the category of high art.\(^\text{341}\) The *Spectator* agreed that "the cheap melodrama of the accessory figure might well be omitted".\(^\text{342}\) These features were also commented on negatively by George Moore in the *Speaker*, who also detected heavy theatricality in the work.\(^\text{343}\) D.S. MacColl in the *Spectator* did not like the work at all but thought that the observation of character in the doctor's face "worth giving in black-and-white,"\(^\text{344}\) thereby sug-

\(^{340}\) This emphasis, it later noted, was highly novel: *Magazine of Art*, XIV (1891), p.253.

\(^{341}\) *Academy*, 9 May 1891, p.448.

\(^{342}\) *Spectator*, 9 May 1891, p.660.

\(^{343}\) *Speaker*, 2 May 1891, pp.519-20.

\(^{344}\) *Spectator*, ibid. He likened Fildes's work and that of the Newlyn artists to laborious photographs (ibid), having earlier decried: "the tiresome freaks of the average Academician, the huge depressing photographs of funerals, meetings, and medicine bottles from Newlyn and elsewhere, and all the other irritating performances known as Pictures of the Year."

*Spectator*, 2 May 1891, pp.625-6. Ruskin (*Works*, XXII p.348) wrote that the "ruder and more elementary work" of wood-engraving appealed to "blunter minds", thereby dismissing one of the most popular forms of reproduction of the century. In his *Academy Notes* of 1875 (*Works*, XIV p.291) he had dismissed Herkomer's *The Last Muster* as being merely an elaborate wood-cut, which originally it had been: see Kristine Ottesen Garrigan, "The splen-
gesting that Fildes had not progressed far since his days as an illustrator in the 1860s. MacColl also thought the size and medium a mistake, a point taken up in the Pall Mall Gazette which described The Doctor as belonging "to a class of pictures which are emphatically gallery pictures, and by no means, except to persons of lugubrious tastes, works to be lived with", thus repeating a criticism regularly made of Fildes. That the painting was readily comprehensible pleased the Pall Mall Gazette - "the immediate anecdotic intention can be read at a glance" - and The Artist preferred the clear narratives of Fildes, Tuke, Forbes or Kennington to the complexities of Faed or Prinsep.

Several reviewers approached the work as if it were literally true. The Daily Telegraph wrote that the doctor was one of the devoted band of men who would never achieve distinction but devoted themselves to "their Master's business":

... alleviating pain and saving life, confronting fever and pushing aside pestilence and always labouring, descending into the charnel house to extort from dissolution and corruption the secrets of health and longevity.

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345. PMG, 2 May 1891, p.3.
347. Daily Telegraph, 2 May 1891, p.3a. These achievements were made, it continued, despite being: ... harried sometimes by hypochondrial paying patients and exigent non-paying ones; now badgered perhaps by a board of guardians, now overhanded by the Foresters or Oddfellows lodges for which he prescribes by contract. This is an informative and accurate list of provincial GPs' activities.
The *Builder* described the picture as "absolutely realistic" in contrast to the "purely ideal works" of Leighton but, finding that the moral interest overrode the artistic, denied that it was a picture in the true sense of the word, echoing the comment from the *Academy* quoted above. The *Graphic*, which Fildes could generally rely on for supportive comment, thought it "entirely free from exaggeration and false sentiment, and conveys a strong sense of reality". The *Lancet* found it "singularly truthful" and the *British Medical Journal* was unsurprisingly sympathetic to it.

The *Times* felt that Fildes had brought dignity to an episode of common life in the way that Millais had dignified common landscape. This reviewer also felt that to have two such scenes in one year's exhibition was excessive, for that year Frank Dicksee showed *The Crisis* (1891, Melbourne, National Gallery of Victoria). This work shows a sick young woman being watched over by a middle-aged man, variously described as her father, her husband and her doctor. The *Times* was not alone in thinking that Fildes came out far ahead in any comparison. Indeed these two works, in combination with Bramley's

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For of such is the kingdom of heaven and Herkomer's On Strike, led the New York Times to characterise a trip around the exhibition as a "maudlin pilgrimage". Fildes himself seems to have ignored Dicksee's work. In the 1898 interview he self-effacingly stated that he would be interested to see other painters' interpretations of the subjects he had tackled. The anonymous interviewer gave this precis of the artist's views:

There must be a hundred different methods of treating [the doctor] and many different types of medical man, so that twenty different pictures might well be painted dealing with the same subject and the different treatment would interest one much in the same way as the varying treatment of a particular subject by the old masters.

Fildes's statement here is consistent with an episode in late 1874 when he was briefly living in Paris. Woods had written to him explaining that Holl had completed a subject Fildes himself was considering. He replied:

I got yours about the "Holl" but it does not put me out in the least to know that he had done the same subject, for when I care to paint it I should do it. He and I would look very differently at the thing I am sure.

The work in question is likely to have been The Deserter which Holl exhibited at Wallis's Gallery in the winter of 1874-75.

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353. IV 1898, p.228.
The Doctor as a Sermon.

Fildes's work had an influence on other painters, and its influence also reached the pulpit. Late in 1891 three sermons on themes derived from paintings shown at the RA in 1891 were published. The pictorial starting points were Maurice Greiffenhagen's An Idyll (1891, Liverpool, Walker Art Gallery), P.H. Calderon's The Renunciation of St. Elizabeth (1891, London, Tate Gallery) and The Doctor. The sermons were delivered by the Rev. T.W.H. Lund of the Chapel of the Blessed Virgin Mary for the Blind, Liverpool - an ironic location for sermons derived from paintings. Lund's intentions were to use the paintings as moral exemplars with religious parallels. In the case of The Doctor, the doctor is seen as a vicarious priest and Saviour. Lund's booklet is useful because it confirms certain contemporary interpretations of paintings. Lund pointed out that the death of a child could rend the heart of a labourer and a Pharoah alike: one widely held attitude to Fildes's work was that "it would appeal with equal force to those of high and low degree". He was keen to underline the Victorian convention that certain

355. For example William Small's The Good Samaritan, referred to above.

356. Sermons based on paintings were not rare, but tended to be on religious paintings rather than secular ones.


358. Queen, 9 May 1891, p.759. The reference to Pharaoh may indicate a recollection of a child death scene by Alma-Tadema Death of the Firstborn (RA 1873, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum).
emotions and reactions, especially pathetic ones, were universal: in a favourite cliche of the period, "one touch of Nature makes the whole world kin". Lund found the scene to be a modern equivalent to Euripides' tale of Hercules wrestling with Death for the life of Alcestis: the doctor wrestles with the fever for the life of the child. The illness has reached crisis-point, he wrote, it is dawn "when vitality is said to be at its lowest ebb and the sick are most liable to die", the point at which no more may be done but to remain still and watchful. The doctor has brought with him a some brandy, decanted into a small medicine bottle, administered with a spoon after dilution in a cup. It serves to stimulate the heart and helps nature "to tide over the threatened collapse of vitality". Lund recognised what the medical profession knew and various reviewers also identified - that the doctor's skill lay in knowing when science should intervene in nature's works.

Lund also discussed the painting in terms common to Victorian art criticism asking what was the use of such a work and whether there was not enough pain in life without repeating it in art. He thought the painting had


361. A similar point was made by the *Lancet*, ibid.

362. Lund, pp.45, 46.

363. Lund, p.47. For example the *Artist*, XII (1 May 1891), p.131
an "elevating character", and that a "moral impulse" to one of the "highest phases of voluntary service" was inherent in it. Pain, Lund replied to his question, is present in life and therefore should be a legitimate subject in art "provided it is calculated to cleanse and enoble our feelings, just as tragedy may do, when wisely handled."

Lund recognised that there were two probable responses to the painting. Firstly, the sickly sentimental sort:

...likely to arouse feelings that evaporate without action; inoperative feelings, which send us away full of the conceit that we are moved by true sympathy and ardent philanthropy, because we are temporarily touched to tenderness and tears which lead to no practical result in our conduct.

Or, secondly, the preferred response, a rebuke to barren sentimentalism and a fresh impulse to real work which "shames the luxury of maudlin emotion, and spurs to all manly effort on behalf of the world's needs". This opposition encapsulates exactly the nineteenth-century tendency (which, as described in Chapter 1, had endured since the eighteenth century) to make either superficial or rhetorical gestures in response to the representation of social problems in contemporary painting.


365. Lund, p.49. Here he is following an Aristotelian path of catharsis detailed in the section on Sentimentality above.

366. Lund, p.49.

367. Lund, p.50.
Despite the religious intentions of Lund's sermon, he mirrored the purely philosophical concept mentioned above, that human salvation might be allied to scientific progress. Lund suggested that the benefits of the modern world should continue to be used to make the world better for all. He ended by praising the bravery of those who were prepared to "step down into the arena of filth and fever" to defeat death, and those who, in an age of sordid competition, give freely of themselves to help others by making a Christ-like sacrifice. Although Lund saw The Doctor as a "great sermon upon canvas", he denied that it was a work of art and rejected it as a picture to be lived with. Rather, he said, it was a work which should serve as an example to virtuous conduct, that is a work to be lived by. How it could function as an example if kept at a distance is not clear. Perhaps Lund would have joined with the Pall Mall Gazette in considering The Doctor suitable only for exhibition in a gallery - where it could be locked up and forgotten - rather than as a domestic adornment.

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368. Owen Chadwick, The Secularisation of the European Mind in the Nineteenth Century, [1975], (rpt. Cambridge, 1991) discusses these and allied issues in his Chapter 7, where he points out that the 'Science vs. Religion' debate was of limited significance to the general public.

369. Lund, p.89.


371. Lund, pp.52-3.
In the second part of the sermon Lund went on to criticise insanitary metropolitan conditions and the unhealthy wealth, minds and souls to be found there too. The cures he advocated for those conditions were unexceptionable: the law, education and the law of God and, more radically, the proper distribution of wealth - "patronage and petting are no cure for the poor".  

Lund was not alone in making *The Doctor* the subject of a sermon. In 1891 the Rev. Thomas Hooper, a Congregational minister from Camberwell Green in south London, followed the pattern he had adopted the previous year by delivering a sermon to coincide with the RA which referred to various RA exhibits. Of *The Doctor* he said "as long as we have a picture such as this to set forth the noble heroism of the medical man, we shall have something to remind us of the devotion of the Lord Christ".

The Popularity of *The Doctor*.

The popularity of the painting cannot be underestimated and it grew even greater when the etching after it by Léon Salles (1868-after 1934) was published in August 1892. However Fildes fell into some kind of a dispute.

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with Agnew's, the publishers of the plate, the nature of which cannot be identified. Fildes wrote to Woods in September 1891 saying he would sell them the copyright for at least £500, in addition to which he would receive a supplementary payment should it prove a great success. The potency of the Doctor also lasted for many years. As late as 1911 it formed the basis of a cartoon by Bernard Partridge (1861-1945) in Punch satirising Lloyd George's National Health Insurance Bill which,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Price</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before Letters</td>
<td>100 at 5 gns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India Prints</td>
<td>--- at 3 gns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plain Prints</td>
<td>--- at 2 gns.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The absence of figures for the latter two categories - which would have been by far the largest - means the size of the edition cannot be calculated. Fildes's "English subjects" were always published in larger editions than his portraits or Venetian scenes: see Friend, An Alphabetical List..., pp. 5, 393, 397, 416. The most profitable publication after a work of 'social realism' may have been the mezzotint after Herkomer's the Last Muster, declared in October 1878: Friend, ibid, p.201. Although many of his portraits were engraved, it seems that Besieged was the only of Holl's subject works to be published commercially.

375. See Fildes to Woods, 21 August 1893, NAL, 86 PP 4: Fildes had had several approaches to engrave his portrait of the Princess of Wales:

"The Agnews are very eager after it but I have not forgotten 'The Doctor' - and their conduct over that - it would have paid them better to be straighter - however that may be my negotiations with them over "The Doctor" established a distrust which makes me desire not to do business with those who are in the category of 'friends'."

It is highly likely that the dispute was over money. It was very surprising to find that many of Agnews' records from this period, including their correspondence with Fildes, had been deliberately destroyed: letter from Agnews' archivist, Mrs A.M. Winter, 20 January 1989.

376. Fildes to Woods, 7 September 1891, NAL, 86 PP 4: "These are a long way the best terms I could get with anyone", he added.
the medical profession thought, would be its ruin. In 1891 the Doctor had, as usual, been parodied in Fun by Fildes's friend Thomson. The painting has also been reproduced on two stamps, the 3 cent maroon of 1947 in the USA and the 8 cent multicoloured in Dominica in 1970.

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Although the originality of Fildes's handling of an apparently customary scene can readily be seen, it must be said that it is accomplished within the absolutely conventional framework of a scene of working class poverty. Like many contemporaries and predecessors, Fildes concentrated on the working classes as victims of fate and ill-fortune. Neither The Widower nor The Doctor was conceived of as a stimulus to remedial action, but rather in terms of their picturesque potential. For Fildes, the

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378. Fun, 16 May 1891, p.186. I am grateful to Brenda Tracy for telling me that The Doctor was the source of a cartoon by Nicholas Garland on the theme of the Maastricht treaty published in the Daily Telegraph, 15 September 1992.


poverty and suffering presented in *The Doctor* were simply another aspect of the rural picturesque. As William Bell Scott had said in 1861, "beggary is the most picturesque condition of social life" and Dickens had admitted "what fast friends picturesqueness and typhus often are".\(^{381}\) Fildes's opinion could have been little different. There is no evidence to suggest that Fildes or Holl were politically active on behalf of the groups in society their work depicted.\(^{382}\) Although one or both of them may have been reform-minded, which the *Casuals* strongly suggests in the case of Fildes, the evidence which survives indicates that artistic objectives were of the greatest importance to them.

Fildes's interest in urban themes was limited - *The Casuals* is a collection of urban types and is far from being an authentic record. He avoided the city garret explored by Kennington, Holl and many others and the industrial brick terrace of Herkomer's *On Strike*. It is noteworthy that in 1891 Fildes and Herkomer should both have returned to the 'social realist' themes which had brought them to prominence two decades before, Herkomer for his RA diploma work and Fildes for his contribution to Tate's incipient gallery of British art. One cannot

\(^{381}\) Both cited by Smith, 'Savages and Martyrs', p. 17.

\(^{382}\) Thus distinguishing them completely from the continental artists discussed by Eugenla W. Herbert, *The Artist and Social Reform, France and Belgium 1885-1893*, (New Haven, 1961).
help feeling that Herkomer's work, which measures 90" x 50"", was intended as a rebuke to the RA's traditionalism and that Fildes's work was produced by a man who, rather like an aged crooner, had been bribed into doing one more time something which he had long since abandoned doing seriously. It was fortunate for Tate that The Doctor turned out to be Fildes's masterpiece.

The Doctor must be seen as an artificial carefully assembled construct rather than as anything documentary or authentic. It was prescriptive and not descriptive of the role of the modern doctor. It is as if Fildes's aims were to present an iconographically propagandistic portrayal of the doctor. Fildes's paintings were shaped by three factors; his beliefs, about which little is known; the beliefs of his patrons and the exigencies of the market. He moved in middle-brow vaguely conservative circles, but his personal politics remain obscure. But his comments vis à vis his models for The Village Wedding strongly suggest arrogant contempt for ordinary people. Therefore his motivation in selecting his subject matter remains open to question. Was Fildes keen to explore modern life subject matter for its own ends in the way he described or was he willing to let it serve his professional (careerist) purposes? The answer must take into account the fact that Fildes was determined that The Doctor should be as much of a success as he had been determined that the Casuals should be. His reluctance even to undertake the commission - witnessed by his procrastination over several years before beginning the work - strongly
suggests that he was not brimming over with excitement at the prospect and that he was concerned about his ability to see such a work through. Therefore in pursuit of his twin goals of artistic and popular success Fildes selected a subject which he calculated would have the greatest chance of success. It was picturesque (in the Pricean sense i.e. a scene made superficially attractive in its physical presentation) and attention-grabbing in having a narratable content which could engage the viewer with minimal impediment. The two factors were essential in a 'social realist' work. In the context of Fildes's career in 1890-91 they were of overwhelming importance because of the conspicuous nature of the commission.

Fildes, as quoted above, explained that the artist should not fear being unable to find the picturesque in commonplace subject matter. His comments resemble points made by the writer Wyke Baylis in 1880. He had argued that the commonplace was layered with strata of truths, narrowing from the type to the individual, the skilful and passionate depiction of which "enlarges, or corrects, or strengthens our vision". But what Fildes achieved in The Doctor can best be described as a further stage in what has been termed the "aestheticisation of rural poverty". The technical accomplishment with which the work was produced can only confirm that The Doctor is a late-nineteenth century picturesque endorsement of the

384. Bermingham, Landscape and Ideology, p.75.
status quo: that is, it is a scene of common suffering removed from its context and divorced from its causes and presented to an audience in full awareness of their shallow responses. Indeed it was designed to exploit those responses, which were not expected to focus on the wider issues involved. For example the doctors whose comments on the work were recorded in the *British Medical Journal* and the *Lancet* did not take Fildes's painting to be a cry in favour of accelerated medical research to fill the diagnosis/cure gap identified by Watson in 1868. Rather, they used it as an icon to reinforce the self-esteem of a profession which had only recently acquired professional status. 385

Fildes wrote to Woods when he was about to start work on *The Village Wedding*. He was having trouble in thinking up a suitable subject ("I can't drop on any subject that I care about") and was considering going to Venice just to produce some pot-boilers, because, as he said, "I am too conscientious to fake up the picturesque". 386 This was not true when it came to his English subjects.

385. Doctors had only comparatively recently thrown off their historic association with shop-keeping sawbones. The profession was desperate for recognition equal to that accorded the Law or the Cloth: Peterson, *Medical Profession*, Ch. V. It is possible that the painting contains a parallel claim to professional distinction on Fildes's own behalf: Gillett, *Victorian Painter's World*, p.120.

Conclusion.

Fildes's and Holl's works in the 'social realist' mode seem to have constituted almost a parallel path beside their production of straightforward genre paintings and portraits. 'Social realist' works constituted only a small portion of each artist's output. Having made his reputation with a work of 'social realism' after nearly ten years as a professional artist, Fildes returned to the form when a work of significance was planned. He said to Tate that he would only accept his commission for The Doctor "for reputation's sake"¹ although as he worked on it he seems to have enjoyed the artistic challenge of painting contrasting effects of light.

Holl and Fildes were fortunate in being at the peak of their professions whilst relatively young and each was doubly fortunate in reaching the peak of popularity in his own lifetime. The professional and social status each managed to achieve is evident from the fact that Holl was put forward for a baronetcy in 1888 but died before it could be conferred² and that Fildes was knighted in 1906 and installed as a Knight Commander of the Victorian Order in 1918.³ However, Holl's early death meant that he

¹ Fildes to Tate, 4 May 1887, NAL, 86 PP 10, partly in LVF, p.108.

² Reynolds, p.264. I have not been able to confirm this report.

³ Campbell-Bannerman (the Prime Minister) to Fildes, 26 June 1906, NAL, Royal correspondence 1902-10, 86 PP 8; F. Ponsonby to Fildes, 29 May 1918, NAL, Royal correspondence 1915-18, 86 PP 8. Herkomer was knighted in 1907.
did not have the misfortune of living to see his reputation decline as did Fildes, Frith, and Hicks. Holl was fortunate to die at the zenith of his second career, one of Britain's most sought-after portraittists. Fildes, on the other hand, quite simply outlived his artistic usefulness: he exhibited at the RA every year from 1868 to 1927 (with only three exceptions). The last thirty years of his life, throughout which period he continued to produce portraits and Venetian subjects, saw him become an increasingly marginal figure. He was grieved when in 1922 *The Doctor* was put into storage at the Tate Gallery, believing this to be a slight on himself and the period in which it was painted, rather than a result of the need to circulate the collection. However, Fildes seems to have understood the changes occurring in the art world and apparently did not resent the way in which the Establishment, of which he had become a pillar, was criticised and rejected by younger artists. Indeed Fildes seems to have used his position within the RA, on whose Council he

The awards to Holl and Fildes may have been for their successful portraits of members of the Royal family. See also the discussion of titles by Gillett, 'The Rewards of Professionalism', *Victorian Painter's World*, pp.53-68.


6. See Allwood, *George Elgar Hicks*, p.63 (price lists). Hicks seems to have painted little and exhibited nothing during the last eleven years of his life. His withdrawal from painting may be attributable to the fact that he seems to have had a substantial income from investments: Allwood, p.14.

7. LVF, p.223.
often served, to encourage reform and modernisation. For example, in 1899 he allowed a mixture of reform-minded younger artists and Academy worthies to meet in his studio to discuss their objectives in reforming the RA schools. Fildes was on friendly terms with M.H. Spielmann, one of the chief advocates of reform of the Academy and in 1921 he agreed to hang an exhibition of work rejected from that year's RA in a so-called British Salon des Refusés held at the Guildhall Art Gallery.

We come back to our starting point: what exactly did Fildes and Holl contribute to the evolution of the British art world of the 1870s and 1880s? 'Social realism' is generally treated as a short-lived aberration in the overall progress of British art. In such an

8. Arthur Hacker to Fildes, 8 and 12 February 1889; S.J. Solomon to Fildes, 21 February 1899; Fildes to Alma-Tadema, 20 February 1899; NAL, 86 P P 6, VII,1,2; XVIII; XIX. Those interested in attending were listed by Solomon: Arthur Hacker (1858-1919), Edwin Abbey (1852-1911), J.S. Sargent (1856-1925), George, later Sir George, Frampton (1860-1928), George, later Sir George, Clausen (1852-1944), John Macallan Swan (1847-1910), James, later Sir James, Shannon (1862-1923), Alfred Parsons (1847-1920), H.H. La Thangue (1859-1929), Solomon J. Solomon (1860-1927), Lawrence, later Sir Lawrence and OM, Alma-Tadema (1836-1912), Frank, later Sir Frank and PRA, Dicksee (1853-1928), A.C. Gow (1848-1920), G.D. Leslie (1835-1921), J.S. Lucas (1849-1923), Marcus Stone (1840-1921) and Stanhope Forbes (1857-1947), all of whom were later full Academicians. Thus all of the painting and life class visitors for 1899 would have been present.

9. LVF, p.219. No avant-garde works were involved, but this incident indicates that Fildes was still prepared to defy the Academy. See the articles and correspondence in the Times, 3 May 1921 - 17 June 1921, passim and the lengthy account in the Glasgow Herald, 11 June 1921, p.6f. A letter of thanks to Fildes, dated 9 June 1921 and signed by thirty-five of the participating artists, is in the NAL, 86 P P 6, XXVI.

analysis 'social realism' can have made little difference. But a clue to the enduring significance of the genre can be found in the references given above which associated works by Fildes and Holl with works by younger contemporaries, specifically Newlyn artists. Fildes and Holl (and others including the artist-teacher Legros) paved the way for the Newlyn and New English Art Club styles which emerged in Britain during the 1880s, whilst simultaneously being seen as representatives of a British tradition or school. This was achieved by helping to remove some of the rigidities from what was acceptable to patrons, critics and to the selectors of the RA Summer Exhibition, particularly in the sense of subject matter (first essayed in a journalistic context as Treuherz has said) and scale. Having prepared the way, Fildes and Holl were left behind by the younger generation. Artists such as Frank Bramley, Arthur Hacker, George Clausen and H.H. La Thangue all produced paintings which were reliant on works by Fildes or Holl or Herkomer. Although it is now a convention that Courbet was the key figure in bringing new subjects on an unusually large scale before the public, this would not have been recognised in nineteenth-century Britain. However, come the 1880s, French influence plays a significant role, almost to the point of dominating the British avant-garde towards the end of the century. The origins of this situation go back


12. This is implicitly recognised by Kenneth McConkey, *British Impressionism*, (London, 1989), p.52: see also his plates 45, 46, both of which stand comparison with seventeenth-century Dutch genre painting as filtered through Holl.
into the 1870s when collectors such as Hill had contributed to the process of diminishing the insularity of British art by hanging works by Degas alongside those by Holl: evidently he felt they shared certain qualities, and *L'Absinthe* has evident affinities with British 'social realism'.

British 'social realism' had no higher motive, nor deeper rationale, than the choice of the individual artist: it was not a group activity like early Pre-Raphaelitism or Impressionism and it had no manifesto or programme. The principal works of 'social realism' are limited in number: their most important facet is their relationship to the contemporary world which they simultaneously refer to and mythologise. When the motives behind the paintings are identified (as far as is possible) they are seen to have been artistic and professional rather than remedial or sociological. Although 'social realist' paintings were sometimes seen as calls for reform or as sources of information on hidden social problems they were in fact primarily *entertainments* which operated as vehicles for catharsis (or "machines for evasion" to use Conrad's words) akin in form and function to similar literary and theatrical vehicles.

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Appendix 1: Chronologies.

Frank Holl.

1845 4 July Francis Montague Holl born in Kentish Town, London, second child and eldest son of the engraver Francis Holl ARA (1815-84) and Alicia nee Dixon (1820-99).

1854-58 Attended Mr. Rae's school, Hampstead, where Holl showed an early interest in drawing.

1858-60 Attended University College School. Received first painting commissions.

1860-63 Attended the Royal Academy schools.

1861 Won RA silver medal for drawing from the antique.

1862-63 Produced first oil painting which was exhibited in London and sold for £40.

1863 Won RA gold medal competition for his painting 'Abraham about to Sacrifice Isaac'.

Makes first of many visits to north Wales.

1864 Exhibited for the first time at the RA Summer Exhibition. Exhibited there every year, except 1875, until his death.

1865 Exhibited for the only time at the British Institution.

1865-70 Exhibited at the SBA.

1866 Visited Italy with Frank Topham RI (1838-1924), a relative of his future wife's.

1867 May Married Annie Laura Davidson (1842-1931) daughter of Charles Davidson (1820-1902) the watercolourist. They spent six months' honeymoon at Beddgelert.

Moved to 30, Gloucester Road, London.
mid-1860s Joined a circle of slightly older Scottish painters, whose sketching club he joined, including John Burr (1831-93), Peter Graham (1836-1921), Thomas Graham (1840-1906), John Mac-Whirter (1839-1911), W.Q. Orchardson (1832-1910) and John Pettie (1839-93), all ex-pupils in Edinburgh of R.S. Lauder (1803-69).

1868 Daughter Ada Mabel (1868-c.1950), author in 1912 of his biography, born.

Entered and won RA Travelling Scholarship competition with The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away which was sold to F.W. Pawle, who became important friend and patron.

1869 Travelled across Europe, but resigned Scholarship when its usefulness to him failed to become apparent.

Began painting portraits as private commissions and not for exhibition.

Made first sale to Henry Hill of Brighton, a friend and key patron.

1870 Visited Cullercoats and painted No Tidings from the Sea for Queen Victoria.

1871 Daughter Olive Gertrude (1871-1930) born.

1872-80 Contributed to the Graphic illustrated paper.

1874 Illustrated Trollope's Phineas Redux in the Graphic.

Daughter Madolin (Nina) (1874-1963) born.

Discussed turning to portraiture with Henry Weigall (1829-1925), the portrait painter.

At Oban in Scotland with Pettie, Tom Graham and C.E. Johnson (1832-1913).

1876 Visited Wales with family of Weedon Grossmith, (1852-1919).

1877 March Moved to 4, Camden Square, London.

June Elected ARA.
1878 Exhibited commissioned portrait for the first time. Advised to stick to portraiture by his father.

1879 Exhibited portrait of Samuel Cousins RA (1801-1887) to great acclaim. Holl's turn to portraiture confirmed. Visited Wales, meeting up with B.W. Leader (1831-1923), the landscape artist, and others.

c.1879 A son born, who died at birth.

1880-88 Exhibited portraits at the Grosvenor Gallery.

1881 June Elected RA.

Autumn Visited Holland and Belgium with the Pawle family.

1882 Became a founder-member of the Society of Painter-Etchers, but only exhibited in 1882, a portrait of Heywood Hardy.

1882 May Daughter Phillis (1882-?) born. Holl now at the height of his career, producing 24 portraits and five subject works in this year. Elected associate of the OWS.

October Moved to house designed by Richard Norman Shaw (1831-1912) at Fitzjohn's Avenue, London (demolished c. 1965).

1883 Exhibited for the only time at the OWS. Painted HRH The Duke of Cambridge, Holl's first royal portrait commission.

1884 Visited Italy again, meeting up with MacWhirter, Topham and Colin Hunter (1841-1904). Invited to contribute a self-portrait to the Uffizi collection of artists self-portraits, but died before it was produced.

1885 Holl's country retreat at Burrows Cross, Surrey, built by Norman Shaw. Produced last recorded subject work.

1886 It is rumoured that Holl will paint Queen Victoria.
1888

April

1889 January

Exhibited for the only time at the New Gallery.

Visited Spain briefly with A.C. Gow (1848-1920).

Died at home after a short bout of a recurrent illness. Holl's death widely attributed to over-work.

Buried at Highgate cemetery, scores of artists, former portrait-sitters and friends in attendance.

Retrospective exhibition at the Royal Academy comprised of 30 portraits and 21 subject works

Auction prices of Holl's work begin to drop.

Memorial to Holl by Alfred Gilbert paid for by subscribers set up in the crypt at St. Paul's Cathedral, London.


1853 At about the age of ten was adopted his grand-mother Mary Fildes (c.1790-1876) a prominent Chartist, and taken to live in Chester.

1857-60 Attended art classes at local Mechanics' Institute. Received help and advice from Alfred Sumner, a local watercolourist.

1861-63 Attended Warrington School of Art, where he met Henry Woods (1846-1921).

1863 October Won scholarship to study at South Kensington to train as an industrial artist.

1865 Decided to turn to book-illustration.

1866 Resigned scholarship to enter RA schools, undertaking engraving hack-work to survive, having met William Luson Thomas (1830-1900), the head of an important workshop.

1866-69 Established himself as an illustrator.

1868-1927 Began to exhibit at the RA, initially contributing watercolours. Was represented every year except 1878, 1880 and 1904.

1869 December 'Houseless and Hungry' in the first issue of the Graphic made Fildes an overnight success.

1870 Illustrated Dickens's Edwin Drood.

1871 Turned to oil painting.

1872 Exhibited and sold first large oil painting.

1874 Applicants for admission to a casual ward shown at the RA to great acclaim. Travelled across Europe, visiting Venice for the first time.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1874</td>
<td>15 July Married Fanny Woods (c. 1845-1927), the sister of Henry Woods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1875-7</td>
<td>Norman Shaw built a large house for Fildes in Melbury Road, Kensington.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1876</td>
<td>Received large inheritance from Mary Fildes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. 1876</td>
<td>Began exhibiting at commercial galleries such as McLean's and Tooth's.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1879</td>
<td>January Elected ARA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>Began to contribute Venetian scenes to the RA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1887</td>
<td>Portrait of his wife at the RA marks change of career.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>Elected RA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>Exhibited last and greatest subject piece, <em>The Doctor</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1892-1927</td>
<td>Pursued portraiture almost exclusively.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>Became a director of <em>The Graphic</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895-6</td>
<td>Stated unwillingness to succeed Millais as President of the RA, if elected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1899</td>
<td>Gave help and advice to younger artists who wanted to reform the RA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>Commissioned to paint state portrait of Edward VII.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>State portrait of Queen Alexandra.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>Knighted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>State portrait of George V.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td>27 February Died at home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>January Fildes memorial exhibition at the RA.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2: The Political Orientation and Readership of Selected Nineteenth-Century British Newspapers and Journals.

The following abbreviations are used:

Type and Frequency:
- N Newspaper
- R Review
- H Humorous
- I Illustrated
- M Magazine
- J Journal
- A Art
- D Daily
- E Evening
- W Weekly
- F Fortnightly
- M Monthly

Readership:
- m middle class
- u upper class
- f female

Politics:
- con conservative in outlook, not necessarily in politics
- Con supported Conservative party
- Ind Independent
- lib liberal in outlook, not necessarily in politics
- Lib supported Liberal party
- Tory supported an earlier style of Conservatism
- Whig opposed to Tory

Art Critic:
- NRAC no regular art criticism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Readership</th>
<th>Politics</th>
<th>Art Critic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academy</td>
<td>R/F</td>
<td>Educated m &amp; u</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>See note 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art Journal</td>
<td>A/M</td>
<td>Art world, m and u</td>
<td>con</td>
<td>J. Dafforne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athenaeum</td>
<td>R/W</td>
<td>Educated m &amp; u</td>
<td>Ind</td>
<td>F.G. Stephens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgravia</td>
<td>M/M</td>
<td>Genteel f &amp; m, low to fair education</td>
<td>N/K</td>
<td>NRAC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blackwoods</td>
<td>M/M</td>
<td>upper m to u</td>
<td>con</td>
<td>NRAC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cornhill</td>
<td>M/M</td>
<td>m to u</td>
<td>Lib</td>
<td>NRAC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily Tel.</td>
<td>N/D</td>
<td>lower m to u</td>
<td>Lib</td>
<td>G.A. Sala 1860s to 1890s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examiner</td>
<td>R/W</td>
<td>m and u</td>
<td>Lib</td>
<td>J.F. Robertson 1874.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fun</td>
<td>H/W</td>
<td>lower to lower m</td>
<td>to left of Punch</td>
<td>NRAC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Words</td>
<td>J/W</td>
<td>lower to upper m</td>
<td>N/K</td>
<td>NRAC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graphic</td>
<td>I/W</td>
<td>lower m to u</td>
<td>Ind</td>
<td>T. Taylor ? - 1880, M.H. Spielmann c1882 -c1914</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILN</td>
<td>I/W</td>
<td>m to u</td>
<td>con</td>
<td>NRAC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London Jnl</td>
<td>J/W</td>
<td>lower to m, f, low education</td>
<td>con</td>
<td>NRAC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macmillans</td>
<td>M/M</td>
<td>m to u</td>
<td>Lib</td>
<td>Not Known</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mag. of Art</td>
<td>A/M</td>
<td>art world, m and u</td>
<td>con to lib</td>
<td>R.A.M. Steven- son 1880s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manch. Cour.</td>
<td>N/D</td>
<td>m and u</td>
<td>Con</td>
<td>Spielmann (?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morn. Post</td>
<td>N/D</td>
<td>'beau monde' and rural u</td>
<td>Tory</td>
<td>Not Known</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observer</td>
<td>N/W</td>
<td>upper m &amp; u</td>
<td>Whig</td>
<td>NRAC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Once a Week</td>
<td>J/W</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>lib</td>
<td>NRAC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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2. Where possible I have given each publication's self-definition.

3. i.e. author of exhibition reviews. I have not taken articles into account. I have concentrated on authorship in the period between 1869 and 1891, which dates constitute the parameters of this thesis.

4. This periodical had a large number of contributors in the period under review:
   W. Bell Scott 1870s
   G.A. Simcox 1870s, occasional
   W.H. Rossetti 1873-8
   F.T. Palgrave 1874
   F. Wedmore 1878
   J.C. Carr 1878-9
   Emilia Pattison 1872, 1883
   C. Monkhouse 1881, 1883, 1884
   C. Phillips 1884, 1886, 1889, 1891

5. Depending on editorship.
<table>
<thead>
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<th>Art Critic</th>
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<tr>
<td>PMG</td>
<td>N/E</td>
<td>educated m to u</td>
<td>Lib to Con</td>
<td>J.C. Carr 1870s W. Armstrong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>c1880-2, Spielmann 1883-90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Robertson 1874</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Not Known</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>W. Armstrong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>c1880-2, Spielmann 1883-90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Robertson 1874</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Not Known</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pict. World</td>
<td>J/W</td>
<td>lower m to m</td>
<td>Lib</td>
<td>Atkinson 1865-after 1875,</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Stevenson 1880s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>G. Moore 1891-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punch</td>
<td>H/W</td>
<td>m to u</td>
<td>Lib to Con</td>
<td>J.L. Roget</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queen</td>
<td>J/W</td>
<td>lower to m</td>
<td>Con</td>
<td>early 1870s, H. Quilter 1876-86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>low education</td>
<td></td>
<td>D.S. MacColl 1890-96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>m to u</td>
<td>mainly con</td>
<td>Taylor 1857-80, Quilter 1880-1,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sat. Rev.</td>
<td>R/W</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>T.H. Ward c1881-1890s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaker</td>
<td>R/W</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>Lib</td>
<td>NRAC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spectator</td>
<td>R/W</td>
<td>upper m to m</td>
<td>Lib</td>
<td>G.B. Shaw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Times</td>
<td>N/D</td>
<td>educated m &amp; u</td>
<td>Con but widely read</td>
<td>1885-9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
HOUSELESS AND HUNGRY

This miserable people whose portraits are given on another page are well-known to Londoners: for the sort of group they form may be seen outside certain police stations at a regular hour every evening throughout the year. They are some of the homeless poor for whom Refuges are supported by the charitable, and on whose behalf Mr. Charles Villiers, when President of the Poor Law Board, brought forward the measure known as the Houseless Poor Act. It is by virtue of that Act that the group before us will obtain food and shelter to-night. Before it became law, they would have slept on the strip of pavement by the workhouse of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, or burrowed beneath the dark arches of the Adelphi, or looked out separately for some door-step with a covered porch, where they would have remained until morning, or until they were moved on by the constable on his rounds. As it is, they present themselves at a police station and ask for a ticket for admission to the casual ward of a workhouse. This is always given them, unless it happens that the inspector on duty chances to know that they are not in the urgent necessity they pretend; for the fundamental principle of the Houseless Poor Act is, that the destitute shall not spend their nights in the streets, and its provisions are no longer evaded as they were when it first passed into law.

The figures in the picture before us are portraits of real people who received the necessary order for admission on a recent evening, and whose names and last sleeping-place are all entered in the police-books. They have nothing in common except hunger, destitution, and rags, and are fair types of the classes who drift into our casual wards night after night. The poor woman with a baby in her arms, and a ragged boy and woebegone girl running at her side, is the wife of a dock labourer who is now undergoing three weeks' imprisonment for assaulting her. Already owing a heavy score at the general shop, and far behind hand in the weekly payments for the wretched room, which she together with her children and husband shared with others, the conviction of the family bread-winner was the signal for her being turned into the streets. It was clear that he could not earn money in prison, the creditors considered they had been forbearing enough, and had no inclination to increase their losses; so there was a summary ejectment, and four souls were cast destitute on to the world. Hating the thought of separation from her children and becoming an inmate of the workhouse, the poor mother is on her way to Essex, where she has friends who she expects will help her. Her case serves to explain the unwillingness to prosecute, so often observed among wives who have been brutally ill-used, and which is sometimes commented on as inexplicable. But signal punishment for the husband means starvation.

The old man with thin worn features and a tall hat, who has just received his ticket and is slowly leaving the police office, has only been in London three days, and purposes to leave it in the morning. An unsteady son, who from being vicious has become criminal, is the cause of his being here at all, and the father having given his deluded boy every penny of the slender sum he brought with him, carries nothing but a heavy heart back to his native village. The two men who come next in rotation, and whom the policeman on duty is on the point of signalling to come in, are vagabonds. One calls himself "an odd man on the look-out for a job," the other avers that his health does not allow him to work, and that he subsists mainly upon what "ladies and gentlemen who are good to him" choose to give. The policeman will tell you that this man is a well-known beggar, who must have been unusually unlucky in his vocation to-day, or he would not condescend to the meagre fare of the casual ward. Those folded arms, that shrinking mien, those legs clinging together as if to strengthen each other's weakness, that face and chin buried as they are in the shrugged shoulders, combine to form a tableau, the artistic merit of which seldom fails to make the public pay tribute. Very different is the bearing of the odd man, who assumes a sturdy, rough-and-ready air, as if burning with anxiety to undertake some heavy labour, such as a railway-cutting, or the manufacture and transport of a load of bricks. This is another form of pretence. He is always out of work, always professing a readiness to be employed, and is one of the most accomplished shirkers in the labour-yard, where all these people are called upon to perform a prescribed quantity of work before leaving in the morning, in return for their shelter and food.
The wretched lad crouched on the pavement has, literally, no history. He never knew his father, and his mother got married and went to America as soon as he can remember. He was bred in the gutter, and he lives in the streets, sometimes hawking fuses, oftener hanging about cabstands, always without friends, and without a definite calling. There are thousands of such boys in London. The Chichester training-ship is full of recruits who have been preserved from just such a life as the poor creature before us is leading; and not a night passes in which the casual wards would not supply scores of lads who are willing and eager to be reclaimed, and who, as experience shows, would develop into useful citizens if they could be once taught the rudiments of a decent life.

The middle-aged man with the bulbous nose and the quasi-respectable air, who rears himself against the wall and keeps his hands firmly in his trouser-pockets, with a half-humorous air of philosophic resignation; this man is a character. It is unnecessary to say he has seen better days, or that he has sacrificed comfort and position to drink. There is a rich huskiness in his voice, and a twinkle in his bleary eyes, which speak forcibly of tap-room eloquence and pot-house celebrity. Outcast as he is, this casual pauper is a keen politician, and will denounce the perfidy of ministers, and proclaim the decadence of England to any one who will listen. Supply him with gratuitous drink, and he will fawn upon you, bless you, borrow of you, and curse and abuse you, in rapid succession; telling all the while of the shameful conspiracies of which he has been the victim, and how impossible it is in this effete old country for a man of genuine talent to rise, or hold his own.

The mechanic who nurses his sleeping child so tenderly—a child whose comely features are full of girlish beauty—and the bowed and gaunt woman, his wife, are looking out for work. He has been ill, and was never very expert, so he found his place filled by one younger and more skilful than himself on receiving his discharge from the hospital; and he is now plodding his way to the neighbourhood of a distant town, where, as he has been told, such services as he can render are in demand. Of the two youths in the corner, one has been respectable, and the other belongs to the same type as the crouching boy: several additional years of vagabondage have passed over the head of the other, however, and he is past reclaiming. He has already graduated in petty larceny, and is now boasting of a successful raid upon "a jolly green old lady as ever I see," to the youth by his side, who is far too much occupied in pitying himself to heed his companion's stories. There is a lurking grin on the face of the hardened young speaker in the Scotch cap which is very characteristic; while the air of despairing woe with which the more gently nurtured youth peers into vacancy, makes one feel that he bitterly repents the folly which has brought him to his present pass.

All these people, with many others, received tickets, and were admitted into the casual ward of one of our great workhouses a few minutes after this sketch was taken. After submitting to a warm bath, they were each supplied with clean sleeping gowns; the clothes of the vagabonds and of the mechanic and his family being taken away from them for the night, and placed in a hot oven to destroy the vermin with which they were infested. A hunch of dry bread and a basin of water-gruel were given them for supper, and another hunch of bread and a supply of drinking water constituted their breakfast in the morning. When they had performed their allotted task of work, they were discharged; some to carry out their professed intention of seeking work, or of returning to the country, others to spend another idle, shiftless day in the streets or parks, and to present themselves next night at another metropolitan police office, to be examined and certificated, and subsequently bathed, sheltered, and fed.
Appendix 4. Some patrons of 'social realism'.

Interest in the patronage and collecting of art in nineteenth-century Europe has recently expanded. This is quite right since the debate over patronage in its various forms, and the uses to which it could be put, was vigorously conducted throughout the nineteenth century.¹ Parallel to that debate existed a enthusiasm for detailing a wide range of private collections of painting, sculpture and the applied arts, for example F.G. Stephens's 'The Private Collections of England' which appeared in ninety instalments in the Athenaeum between 1873 and 1884.² A number of articles and books have recently been published containing overviews and specific case studies, either of individual patrons or of patronage in a geographical area.³ Frank Davis's book⁴ was invaluable because it reminded a modern readership


that art is always subject to a commercial system. In
nineteenth-century Britain there were a number of high-
earning artists, but the age also saw some of the
greatest entrepreneurial dealers - such as Victor Flatow
and Ernest Gambart - at work. 5

One of the areas of British patronage most closely
studied is that of the Pre-Raphaelites. 6 It was unfort-
unate that the Hard Times catalogue was written without
using the methods developed - and sources unearthed by -
writers on Pre-Raphaelite patronage. The sponsorship of
works such as Newgate or The Doctor is an essential part
of their meaning: this is even more striking when it is
realised that the patrons and collectors of 'social
realism' fall into two groups of individuals who, within
either group, resemble each other closely in social - and
even geographic - origins, wealth, political outlook and,
inevitably, artistic taste. The first group consisted of
hugely wealthy men (patrons of 'social realism' were
rarely women) who had derived their wealth from industry
or manufacturing, rather than from, say, banking or by

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5. See Jeremy Maas, Gambart, Prince of the Victorian Art

6. For example Mary Bennett, 'A Check List of Pre-
Raphaelite Pictures exhibited at Liverpool 1846-67, and
some of their Northern Collectors', Burlington Magazine,
CV (1963), pp.486-95; Paintings from the Leatheart Col-
lection, ex. cat., Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Laing Art
Gallery, 1968; Judith Bronkhurst, 'Fruits of a
Connoisseur's Friendship: Sir Thomas Fairbairn and Wil-
liam Holman Hunt', Burlington Magazine, CXXV (1983),
p.586-97; Caroline Arscott, 'Employer, husband, spec-
tator: Thomas Fairbairn's commission of The Awakening
Conscience', in The Culture of Capital: art, power and
the nineteenth-century middle class, eds. Janet Wolff and
John Seed, (Manchester, 1988), pp.159-90.
inheritance. The second group was of less wealthy, but still well-off, upper-middle class 'professional' men. The principal difference which is found in the collections of the two groups is that the former tended to own a large number of large works housed in purpose-built galleries in mansions but with only one or two works by each artist, whereas the latter owned fewer, smaller works in total but commonly had a large number of paintings by one or two particular artists. For example Henry Hill owned about eighteen Holls, a mixture of sketches and finished works, and scores of sketches and finished works by Philip R. Morris (1838-1902) whereas Edward Hermon had only one large work by Holl. This strongly suggests that Hill had an affection for the works of those artists whilst Hermon merely wanted a substantial example of a fashionable artist's output - one that also happened to be visually striking. Fred Pawle was friendly with Holl from the late 1860s until his death but Hermon built up his collection in a short space of time, with the desire to amass a collection seemingly his main motive.

Although it is generally possible to situate a work in a reconstituted collection, irrefutable evidence of what motivated particular collectors is rare. Therefore an understanding of the appreciation of 'social realism' by those who owned examples of it might be attempted by analysis of what their entire collections contained to see what patterns of ownership emerge. For example, because owners of works by Holl also tended to possess works by both Israëls and Frère, it is tempting to assume
that the patron was merely buying works by fashionable artists, the authorship of which was more important than the subject matter. A different explanation, more complimentary to patrons, might also be advanced, that they found some similarity in the work of Holl, Israëls and Frère: this was certainly true of some perceptive nineteenth-century critics, as noted in the text above.

The patrons of Holl.

Newgate was sold to Edward Hermon M.P. for 1,000 guineas before the RA Summer Exhibition of 1878 opened. This was the highest sum Holl ever obtained for a subject painting. Hermon (1822-1881) was an interesting figure. He sat as Conservative M.P. for Preston from 1868 until his death. He is said to have been an enlightened employer, conciliatory to labour and sympathetic to workers' grievances: in 1878 he resisted wage reductions and refused to cooperate in an employers' lock-out. He was a generous benefactor in the Preston area. In 1849 he inherited £25,000 from his father and despite prodigious expenditure on art and building his country seat, Wyfold Court, he still managed to leave £588,000 "one of the largest fortunes made in nineteenth century textiles".

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7. Reynolds, p.146.
Like Taylor, Fildes's patron, Hermon was a textile manufacturer, Hermon at Preston and Taylor at Wigan. They are likely to have known each other because of their shared business concerns in Lancashire and also because they had country estates within a few miles of each other in eastern Oxfordshire. The two men died in successive years and their collections were sold off in successive years too.

Hermon built up his collection in the 1860s and 1870s, housing some at his London residence, Wilton Place. The bulk was hung at Wyfold Court near Henley which Hermon had built between about 1872 and 1878. Its gallery ran the entire depth of the eastern front being 100' long. Hermon's collection was sold at Christie's on 13 May 1882 realising more than £34,000 and on this occasion nine works including Newgate were purchased for Thomas Holloway. These are all still at Egham and include Long's Babylonian marriage market (1875) which reached the highest price paid at auction for work by a living artist when bought by Holloway for £6,615.

9. In this they were both conforming to the pattern identified by Wiener in *British Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit* of industrialists who assumed the lifestyle of upper-class land-owners.


12. The Holloway collection has been catalogued by Chapel, *Victorian Taste*: see nos. 10, 20, 29, 40, 41, 43, 44, 45, 59. Over the years Holloway's collection has been much studied, Taylor's a little (Charlotte J. Weekes, 'The Pictures at Aston Rowant', *Magazine of Art* V (1882)
In contrast to Hermon stands Captain Henry Hill (c. 1812-1882) of Brighton, an enthusiastic collector of Holl's work over a period of many years. In 1874 Holl made his most substantial sale to Hill who bought Deserted for 800 gns, probably the second highest price Holl ever obtained for a subject work. Just before the RA Summer Exhibition of 1874 opened, the Holls, in the company of the Petties and the Orchardsons, went to Brighton where the incipient friendship with Hill grew strong. Hill, who emerged as a major patron and collector in the 1870s, eventually owned about eighteen works by Holl (amongst which were many straightforward genre scenes), as well as works by Pettie and Orchardson. In particular Hill owned Orchardson's RA entry for 1874 Hamlet and the King (untraced) and a sketch for Pettie's RA diploma work Jacobites (c. 1874, Liverpool, corporate collection). One cannot help feeling that the sales and the trip were connected.

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pp. 309-14) and Hermon's not at all, although many of Holloway's paintings came from those two collections.

13. When Pettie's own collection was sold at Christie's, 27 May 1893, five works by Holl were included (lots 34 [double lot], 35, 36, 73), the first four of which were bought by "Orchardson" for 2 gns each, according to the named and priced catalogue in the NAL. These were: two sketches (i.e. preparatory drawings for engraved reproduction in the Graphic), 'The Life Guards' Band' and 'The Deserter'; 'Christmas - a sketch'; 'The Sketching Club' (possibly the watercolour now in the British Museum) and an otherwise unknown oil, Remorse, dated 1858 and bt. Murray, 21 gns.
As well as collecting work by established and youngish British painters, documented in a series of articles in the Magazine of Art, Hill was also one of the earliest British enthusiasts of Impressionism. He owned Degas' L'Absinthe (1875-6, Paris, Musée d'Orsay) as well as works by Fantin-Latour, Corot, Millet and three fishing-related scenes by Israëls. In 1880 Holl painted Hill's portrait (later bequeathed to the Brighton Art Gallery and Museum) and Hill's brother Edward was married to Holl's sister Ada. The Hill collection was dispersed at two sales at Christie's, 25 May 1889 (16 Holls) and 19 February 1892 (1 Holl).

Hill was a military outfitter with premises in Old Bond Street — handy for the RA and other exhibitions. He was known as Captain because of his long association with the local militia, the First Sussex Rifle Corps. The local organisations with which he was most closely associated however, were the Brighton School of Science and Art, known as the Institution, and the Fine Art Gallery run by the local council. Hill was involved in running the

14. Hill's avant-garde tastes are described by Ronald Pickvance, 'Henry Hill: An Untypical Victorian Collector' Apollo, LXXVI (1962), pp. 789 - 91. The series of articles on his collection by Alice Meynell appeared in the Magazine of Art, V (1882), 'A Brighton Treasure-House', pp.1-7, 'Pictures from the Hill Collection', pp.80-4 and 'The Hill Collection', pp.116-21. Hill's collection of works by Morris included his RA 1880 success Sons of the Brave (untraced) and works by other friends of Holl's such as C.E. Johnson, Claude Calthrop, Fred Walker and C.N. Hemy were also to be found in Hill's house at Marine Parade, Brighton.


16. Brighton Observer, 7 April 1882, p.8d.
gallery and served as its chairman until ill-health forced him to retire (at an unknown date), but not before he had inaugurated its exhibition system.  

F.W. Pawle (dates not known), a Reigate stockbroker and J.P. had a long-standing friendship with Holl and his family. He was a keen collector of modern painting and was an active promoter of cultural activities in Surrey. He later owned a number of other works by Holl including *The Lord Gave* (1868) which he bequeathed to the Guildhall Art Gallery, *Hush!* and *Hushed* (both 1877). In 1869 he gave Holl one of his earliest portrait commissions, for a double portrait of his two young daughters known as *The Sisters* (1869, private collection). Pawle's collection when it was sold off in 1925 still contained three Holls, *The Sisters*, *The Gifts of the Fairies* (1878, RA 1879 [160], untraced), the original oil version of a subject later engraved in the *Graphic* Christmas number 1878 and an undated sketch (in oil?), *A girl reclining in a cornfield* (untraced).

17. *Brighton Guardian*, 5 April 1882, p.5c, 12 April 1882, p.2e.

18. *The Holmesdale Fine Arts Club* of which Pawle was President sometimes benefitted from the presence of Holl on their sketching excursions: see *Artist's Critical Record*, I (1882), p.189.

19. Christie's, 20 March 1925 lots 71, 72, 73.
This brief account of these collections substantiates my point about the two types of collector. Fildes, however, had a different sort of appeal and no-one seems to have collected his work extensively.

Patrons of Fildes.

One of Thomas Taylor's businesses was based in Warrington where Fildes had been an art student from about 1861-63. It is possible that Taylor, who had a keen interest in the communities in which his businesses were based, knew of Fildes from that period - Fildes had won many prizes during his short period at Warrington where he had first practised oil painting. Taylor, who owned the mills shown in the background of Eyre Crowe's *The Dinner Hour*, Wigan, had an extensive collection of significant contemporary works of the British school, several of which are now alongside the *Casuals* at RHBNC.

20. On Taylor see his obituary in the *Wigan Examiner*, 19 March 1892, p.8a-b. On Fildes's prize-winning see the *Warrington Guardian*, 30 November 1861, p.5d, the *Warrington Standard*, 30 November 1861, p.4e and the *Warrington Advertiser*, 28 November 1863, p.4d. (Copies of these papers for 1862 were not available.) These references indicate that the *Magazine of Art*, XVI (1893), p.130, was simply wrong when it wrote that *Fair Quiet and Sweet Rest* was Fildes's first attempt at an oil painting and Gillett, *Victorian Painter's World*, p.107, is wrong too when she states that the *Casuals* had been painted "without previous formal training in the handling of oil paints".


22. Weekes, 'The Pictures at Aston Rowant'. Those now at Egham are catalogued in Chapel, *Victorian Taste*, nos.3,
Fildes's *The Return of the Penitent* was commissioned by Holbrook Gaskell (1813-1909), a Merseyside industrialist and newspaper-owner. Gaskell is the only figure mentioned in this Appendix to have owned works by both Fildes and Holl. In addition to the *Return of the Penitent* he owned Fildes's *Hours of Idleness* (1876, private collection), *Rosa Siega* (1876, private collection) and *A Venetian* (1881, untraced) and a version of Holl's *Gone* (1877, untraced) referred to as *The Emigrant's Departure* (1878, private collection). Moreover his is the only collection discussed here to have been visited by F.G. Stephens.

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23. It was Gaskell's *Liverpool Daily Post* which published a lengthy encomium (cited above) of Fildes's *Village Wedding* whilst in progress in 1882.

24. For Gaskell see *DBR*, Vol. 2 (1984), pp. 499-500. Gaskell's sale at Christie's on 24-25 June 1909, 249 lots, realised more than £100,000, and his total estate was valued at £450,000.

25. Christie's, 24 June 1909, lots 23-26, 47. He also owned two works by Fildes's brother-in-law Woods (lots 109 and 110) and one by Fildes's wife Fanny (lot 27).

Working from the sparse evidence we have, it would seem that Fildes did not inspire the same kind of collector loyalty as Holl. However, we must take into account the fact that Fildes was less productive than Holl, the latter producing perhaps six or more smallish works in the time Fildes would spend on one or two large ones, so there was effectively less scope for a collector to acquire a number of examples of his work. In addition it can justifiably be said that whereas Holl tended to be on friendly terms with some of his patrons, Fildes seems not to have cultivated his patrons in this way, preferring the company of members of the Agnew family and other artists. 27

27. There also exist records of other collections which included works of 'social realism' and other paintings by Fildes and Holl, but extensive listing of them would add little to the general points made here.
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