

Battle Painting and Agency: A Study of the Art of Elizabeth Thompson Butler, 1859 to  
1919

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PhD

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History of Art

October 2020

## Abstract

The thesis aims to shed light on counter-intuitive facts about late Victorian battle paintings that have been neglected by the framework of social history of art. It achieves this, through examining works of Elizabeth Thompson Butler (1846-1933), the foremost artist of the genre, employing the anthropological theory of Alfred Gell (1945-1997).

The social history of art's semiotic readings have neglected the individual context of Victorian battle paintings, as they reduce artworks to representations of the general and collective ideologies of the society. In response to this problem, this thesis deploys the investigative method proposed in Gell's *Art and Agency* (1998). This method focuses on the matter of agency, which is concerned with specific factors that have consequence for the immediate social relations around art objects.

This thesis discusses Victorian battle art in terms of such matters as effect, agency, working conditions, and eye-witnessing. The results reveal that Butler's battle paintings were not coherent representations of abstract mindsets. The artist's remarkable success with *The Roll Call* (1874) was more related to its technological ingenuity, which attracted people's attention, than to its ethical implications in contemporary politics. *The Colours* (1898), which has been considered a methodical painting in Butler's oeuvre, is found out to be a genuine artwork that involves unique factors on art-historical and personal levels. The recognition of the agency of working conditions discloses an overlooked affinity between *Butler's Scotland for Ever!* (1881) and Aesthetic landscape paintings by James McNeill Whistler (1834-1903): both artists deployed an analogous mode of observation. Eye-witnessing, in contrast to popular conception, was not a requisite practice for good paintings of war, as its efficacy is questioned by examining Butler's *Evicted* (1890), war correspondent artists' pictures, and her Great-War pictures.

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## Author's Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as References.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

### 1. 1 Defining the Thesis Objectives

#### 1.1.1 Towards a New Approach to Late Victorian Battle Paintings

Historical justice, even when it is genuine and practised with the purest intentions, is therefore a dreadful virtue because it always undermines the living thing and brings it down: its judgement is always annihilating.

—Nietzsche, *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*<sup>1</sup>

Late Victorian battle painting might be one of the most difficult subjects to discuss *unhistorically* in the current age of political activism in which the critical vocabulary of the social history of art has been popularised to the public level. To many modern viewers, the paintings that illustrate fighting British soldiers in imperialistic wars are nothing but representations of contextual meanings of impersonal history that are deemed more essential than the artworks themselves. However, the prevalence of historical context in art appreciation under the roofs of art museums can be seen as what Friedrich Nietzsche called "oversaturation of history," if it completely obscures the fact that Victorian battle paintings had personal relations with individual viewers in the past and obstructs our

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<sup>1</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, ed. Daniel Breazeale and trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 95.

potential to have unique relations with them now.<sup>2</sup> The aim of this thesis is to attempt to redress the balance between the contextual meaning of Victorian battle paintings and the individual dynamism of the art objects. This will be done through a series of focused studies of the works of Elizabeth Thompson Butler (1846-1933), using the anthropological theory of Alfred Gell (1945-1997) in a critical way. Butler is not only the most renowned battle painter in her time, but is also the most cited artist in social-historical research on Victorian battle painting due to the contextual significance of her works. Gell's theory, in its explicit opposition to the meaning of art in an abstract context, is characteristic in prioritising the agency of art in immediate social relations. Using Gell's theory to examine Butler's artworks will be beneficial in elucidating how battle paintings and the relevant factors interacted with each other, rather than foregrounding what the artworks mean to either the Victorians or modern viewers. The knowledge of the operative aspect of the oeuvre of the most contextualised battle painter will enable the modern viewer to overcome the web of meaning surrounding Victorian battle paintings as a whole and to have more open relationships with the surviving artworks.

The introduction consists of three sections. Section 1 introduces the subject of late Victorian battle painting and Elizabeth Thompson Butler and raises a question over the excess of meaning in the field which is under the influence of the social history of art which treats artworks as representations of abstract patterns of thought. The next section summarises Alfred Gell's anthropological theory of art and introduces its reception in art

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 83.

history. It poses Gell's theory as an alternative to the social history of art in discussing battle paintings by its strength to elucidate the action of artworks in their immediate relations. The last section reviews modern researches, and contemporary accounts of Victorian battle paintings and outlines subsequent chapters of the thesis.

### 1.1.2 Butler and Victorian Paintings: A Problem Posed

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the genre of battle painting made a visible mark in the history of British art with a surge in popularity and the notable transition of its guises. The unpopularity of military paintings in Britain in the previous period is reflected well in the frequently cited comment by William Michael Rossetti (1829-1919) in 1862 that "military or battle pictures" were the only branch of art in which British artists were inferior to their French counterparts.<sup>3</sup> Rossetti's remark was true given the fact that, from the victory at Waterloo to the mid-century, British battle art had not roused public enthusiasm, apart from a handful of exceptions. It is only after the middle of the 1870s that a more intensive drive to make battle paintings began to be observed in the British art scene.<sup>4</sup> The chief inspirations of the new British battle art were the recent Franco-

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<sup>3</sup> William Michael Rossetti, *Fine Art, Chiefly Contemporary* (London: Macmillan, 1867), 13.

<sup>4</sup> For the popularisation of battle art in late-nineteenth-century Britain, see J. W. M. Hichberger, "Military Themes in British Painting 1815-1914" (PhD diss., University College London, 1985), 130-131.

Prussian War (1870-1871) and the modern Franco-German military paintings. The works of Alphonse De Neuville (1836-1885) and Édouard Detaille (1848-1912) were considered to be radically different from conventional paintings of panoramic views of grand armies; they represented the visceral combat experience of individual soldiers, seen at close range. In addition to the Continental influence, events in British politics, such as army reforms and colonial wars created an atmosphere favourable to the reception of battle paintings in Britain. Butler and Ernest Crofts (1847-1911) were the earliest British artists who pioneered the new approach for the subject of war.<sup>5</sup> Butler, in particular, gained unprecedented popularity as a battle painter with *The Roll Call* (1874), exhibited at the Royal Academy of Arts in 1874, which depicts British guardsmen mustering in the aftermath of a battle in the Crimean winter. After Butler's ground-breaking success, an increasing number of domestic artists came to establish themselves under the label of 'battle painter' in the British art scene in the 1880s. The common preoccupation of such artists as Richard Caton Woodville Jr. (1856-1927), John Charlton (1849-1917), Robert Gibb (1845-1932), Allen Stewart (1865-1911), Godfrey Douglas Giles (1857-1941) and William Barnes Wollen (1857-1856) was to depict vivid images of British soldiers in battlefields of historic wars, such as the Crimean War (1853-1856) and the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815), and the contemporary colonial

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<sup>5</sup> About the impact of the Franco-Prussian war on the works of Crofts and Butler, see Peter Harrington, *British Artists and War: The Face of Battle in Paintings and Prints, 1700-1914* (London: Greenhill Books, 1993), 181-182. About the influence of French Military painting on the works of Butler, see Paul Usherwood and Jenny Spencer-Smith, *Lady Butler: Battle Artist 1846-1933* (London: National Army Museum, 1987), 160-162.

wars in Asia and Africa.<sup>6</sup> These battle painters, who roughly belonged to the same generation, formed a competitive scene of battle art in Britain for the first time in history. While the individual styles of their paintings varied, they are distinguishable from war paintings of other periods by their emphasis on the experience of common soldiers and the details of battlefields. Late Victorian battle art enjoyed widespread popularity through oil paintings and reproductions before it was increasingly outmoded around the time of World War I, when the aspects of modern warfare radically changed.

It is certain that late Victorian battle painting is qualified to be of art-historical interest. It is akin to an artistic movement on the grounds that a limited number of artists pursued a common artistic goal to visualise battle scenes with a self-awareness of their trade, and within a specific timeline. However, despite its potential to be regarded as an artistic movement in its own terms, late Victorian battle painting is arguably the least popular subject in Victorian art studies compared to other artistic movements such as Pre-Raphaelitism, Aestheticism, British Impressionism, and British Post-Impressionism, which all underwent a stage of art-historical 'revival'.<sup>7</sup> The recuperation of art-historical and curatorial autonomy of Victorian art against the Francocentric modernist historiography is an ongoing process, in motion since its beginning in the 1960s. Yet Victorian battle

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 167.

<sup>7</sup> About the sequence of the rediscovery of the Pre-Raphaelites from the 1960s which is the beginning of the revival of Victorian art history, see Marcia Pointon, ed, *Pre-Raphaelites re-viewed* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), 2-3.



paintings are those which have least benefited from the general revival of Victorian art history. In the 1980s, Victorian battle art was rediscovered by pioneering researchers, and a large retrospective of Butler, featuring works of other battle painters, was held at the National Army Museum in 1987. However, it is questionable whether the recovery of the history of British battle paintings in the 1980s eventually enhanced the art-historical values of the artefacts themselves. It is hard to say that the modern viewer can differentiate between individual and periodic styles of Victorian battle paintings, let alone the names of battle painters, as they can with other Victorian artworks by artists of the aforementioned movements. Consequently, the majority of Victorian battle paintings are not on display at art museums where they belong, but the usual venues for Victorian battle paintings are confined to national and local army museums, in which the paintings tend to be considered as impersonal artefacts representing history rather than individual artworks.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Tare Britain permanently displays John Singleton Copley's spectacular *The Death of Major Pierson, 6 January 1781* (1783) in the eighteenth-century section, but it does not exhibit their collections by Butler and Woodville in the nineteenth-century section. The Manchester Art Gallery does not exhibit Butler's great success *Balaclava* (1876) while it lent it for a foreign exhibition, *Her Paris: Woman Artists in the age of Impressionism* (October 2017- September 2018), which toured Denver, Louisville, and Williamstown in the US. The Walker Art Gallery has paintings of Woodville and Crofts but does not put them on show alongside works of other movements in the same period. One exception is Leeds Art Gallery which exhibits several late Victorian battle paintings, including Butler's *Scotland for Ever!* (1881), at the centre of its nineteenth-century section on a long-term basis. As for the National Army Museum, which has the largest collection of

The cause of the comparative oversight of the artistic value of late Victorian battle art is complex, especially when it comes to the problem of taste. Nevertheless, the modern-day marginalisation of the genre can be explained in relation to the framework of the social history of art, which was embedded in the foundational research in the subject in the 1980s, and which has a lasting impact to the present day. When both Matthew Paul Lalumia and J. W. M. Hichberger researched the neglected subject of Victorian battle paintings in accordance with the method of the social history of art, the choice of the framework was hardly a coincidence, as it agreed with the particular phase of art history after 1968 which is sometimes dubbed as 'the radical art history' or 'the new art history'. The emergence of the radical art history is inseparable from the political orientation of the Generation of '68; it became synonymous with the social history of art in its reaction against the formalist art history of the previous generation.<sup>9</sup> On the surface level, the disciplinary methods of the new art history consist of theoretical approaches of Marxist, Feminist, Psychoanalytic, and Structuralist thought.<sup>10</sup> Regardless of these diverse approaches, new art history can be characterised as a text/context model which situates artworks as 'text' to serve the reading

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Victorian battle paintings in the UK, the independent gallery for paintings came to be realised only after the major redevelopment of the museum finished in 2017.

<sup>9</sup> For the introduction of the radical art history in relation to social history of art, see Jonathan Harris, *The New Art History: A critical introduction* (London; New York: Routledge, 2001), 6-9.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 7.

of the wider social 'context'.<sup>11</sup> In this text/context model, artworks are expected to be symptomatic entities that "reflect" and "epitomize" the economic and ideological bases from which they originate.<sup>12</sup> In the social history of Victorian battle painting, too, artworks are treated as visual symptoms or evidence to diagnose or prove the existence of specific patterns of thought in the given period of time: for Lalumia, Victorian battle images are evidence of the "democratic sentiment" of the time, whereas for Hichberger, they are expressions of imperialism which were part of the period's "ruling-class ideologies."<sup>13</sup> Despite these different conclusions, both studies share the same type of framework that treats Victorian battle paintings as transparent windows to see the matter more essential to them than the artworks: the mindset of people in the past. This framework has merits when contemplating the history of ideology through a selected group of artworks, but it downplays the individual specificity of the artworks by making them subordinate products of the collective and abstract concerns that are assumed to be real in the period. In the social-art-historical framework, Victorian battle paintings remain as materials of secondary importance whose existence is only justified by reference to collective and abstract notions.

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 26-27.

<sup>12</sup> Vernon Hyde Minor, *Art History's History* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1994), 145.

<sup>13</sup> Matthew Paul Lalumia, *Realism and Politics in Victorian Art of the Crimean War* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research, 1984), 151; J. W. M. Hichberger, *Images of the Army: The Military in British Art 1815-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 4.

Yet the social history of art persists as the major framework for the subject in successive studies.

In the social history of Victorian battle paintings, Butler is the most distinguished figure for many reasons. She has acquired her art-historical status by being the most successful battle painter in her time, but also through the fitness of her work to prove points of ideological explanations. Unlike other battle painters who were generally silent over the social context of their artworks, Butler was conscious in defining the meaning of her artistic activities in conjunction with the social context through substantial publication. She and her supporters wanted her artworks to be read in terms of 'humanitarianism,' 'realism,' and 'heroism,' as if they foresaw later studies that discuss her works as embodiments of 'democracy' and 'imperialism'. In this framework, Butler's career is privileged by virtue of its significance in the context of ideology, but, at the same time, the richness of the artist's oeuvre risks being reduced to a few concepts useful for answering some teleological questions. This serious deduction is common to all Victorian battle painters, and to alleviate such heavy generalisation, it is necessary to unfold alternative discourses on Butler's battle paintings, not as apt specimens for teleological interpretations, but as effective artworks that operated under their own circumstances.

The activity of interpreting meanings of artworks according to one's ideological orientation, be it Marxism or Feminism, is a distinctive trait of the development of radical art history, as it is part of the political activism of the generation of art historians after May 1968.<sup>14</sup> In

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<sup>14</sup> Harris, *The New Art History*, 3.

this type of art history as activism, art objects are often treated as hazardous objects whose ideologically unsound connotations need to be exposed by clinical examinations, and then need to be contained or sanitised. This critical attitude towards art objects has been practiced within the broad intellectual movement of Postmodernism. The re-evaluation of Victorian and Edwardian artworks also emerged in line with postmodern new art history, as it advocated the unique values of the artworks that were formerly ignored by modernist prejudice.<sup>15</sup> However, the relationship between postmodernists and Victorian artworks certainly has many variants, which are not always agreeable. From the perspective of the political activism cultivated by the radical art history, many of the Victorian artworks with disturbing political connotations need to be vanquished rather than to be valued. The public statues branded as imperial memorials, for instance, statues of Cecil Rhodes in Cape Town and Oxford, became vulnerable to political antagonism of the postcolonial and anti-imperial population.<sup>16</sup> As for paintings, the most signalling political action in recent times was made against John William Waterhouse's *Hylas and the Nymphs* (1896) at the Manchester Art Gallery in 2018; the painting was temporarily removed from the wall of the

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<sup>15</sup> Tim Barringer, *Reading the Pre-Raphaelites* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 19-21

<sup>16</sup> Justin Parkinson, "Why is Cecil Rhodes such a controversial figure?," *BBC*, April 1, 2015, accessed January 10, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-32131829>; Nadia Khomami, "Over the third of Oxford students want Cecil Rhodes statue removed," *The Guardian*, January 15, 2016, accessed January 10, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2016/jan/15/oxford-students-cecil-rhodes-statue-removed>.

gallery as part of the curatorial project that involved the artist Sonia Boyce (b.1962). Boyce claimed that the act of removal intended to prompt dialogues about gender, race, and class issues: the typical contexts of the critical social history of art. However, the attempt to politicise the presence of mythological picture at the art gallery was unsuccessful, as the museum had to place the painting back in its original spot within a week under the pressure of the public that regarded the painting as an apolitical object to cherish, not an uncomfortable object to retire.<sup>17</sup> Boyce and other political activists would conclude that the twenty-first-century public has grown to be more conservative and reactionary than in the previous century. However, this reaction also reveals the downturn of the text/context model of the social history of art, which is losing its edge, having become a conventional reaction unimpressive to many people who do not see artworks as dry texts subordinate to ready-made contexts.

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<sup>17</sup> Sonia Boyce, "Our removal of Waterhouse's naked nymphs painting was art in action," *The Guardian*, February 6, 2018, accessed April 22, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/feb/06/takedown-waterhouse-naked-nymphs-art-action-manchester-art-gallery-sonia-boyce>. BBC, "Victorian nymphs painting back on display after censorship row," February 2, 2018, accessed April 22, 2019, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-42917974>. Jonathan Jones, "Why have mildly erotic nymphs been removed from a Manchester gallery? Is Picasso next?," *The Guardian*, January 31, 2018, accessed October 10, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2018/jan/31/hylas-and-the-nymphs-jw--waterhouse-why-have-mildly-erotic-nymphs-been-removed-from-a-manchester-gallery-is-picasso-next>.

In exhibiting Victorian battle paintings, the political context is still considered as the primary factor, which overwhelms other considerations of the paintings, and the social history of art as the canonical framework for battle paintings appears to result in stalemate, as in the *Artist and Empire* exhibition at Tate Britain (2015-2016). The exhibition offered a rare opportunity to see Victorian battle paintings in one place by devoting a whole corner of a section to the subject. This temporary Victorian battle gallery at the Tate was one of the most impressive sections that could have revised and redrawn the subject at scholarly and journalistic levels. However, there was no attempt to see the paintings outside of the usual social-art-historical framework. The three-day international conference celebrating the exhibition (24-26 November 2015) was heated by debates among the curators, speakers and audience over non-militaristic objects, and the show was controversial to attendees from former British colonies, but none of the speakers discussed the Victorian battle paintings in detail, as if their meaning was already slotted under the label of hard-line imperialism. The press utilised the battle paintings as eye-catching images for their reviews but generally dismissed them as propaganda images, discussing them in terms of "jingoism," "imperialism," and military triumphs."<sup>18</sup> Despite these generic responses, the

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<sup>18</sup> Jonathan Jones, "Artist and Empire review – a captivating look at the colonial times we still live in," *The Guardian*, November 23, 2015, accessed April 22, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2015/nov/23/artist-and-empire-review-tate-britain>. Laura Cumming, "Artist and Empire review – illustrations minus the narrative," *The Guardian*, December 6, 2015, accessed April 22, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2015/dec/06/artist-and-empire-review-tate-britain>. Mark Hudson, "Artist and Empire, Tate Britain, review: 'just not good enough',"

Tate attempted to formulate a revisionist perspective on the image of all imperialistic Victorian battle paintings, in which Butler played a crucial role in association with the word 'humanitarianism'. Butler's *The Remnants of an Army* (1879) (plate 1) was a considerably different type of battle painting from others in the exhibition, which portrayed the British soldiers against the overwhelming native attackers in the moment of 'last stand'.<sup>19</sup> *The Remnants* depicts an episode during the First Anglo-Afghan War (1839-42): two survivors of the British retreat from Kabul in the winter of 1842 - the assistant surgeon William Brydon (1811-1873) and his gaunt horse - arrive in Jalalabad, leaving behind thousands of soldier and civilian casualties, dead or captured. As a beautiful oriental landscape, the painting has a distinctive appearance from other, belligerent, last-stand paintings. This

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*The Telegraph*, November 23, 2015, accessed April 22, 2019, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/art/what-to-see/artist-and-empire-tate-britain>. Mark Brown, "Artist and Empire at Tate Britain: cryptic paintings of violent Imperialism," *The Guardian*, 20 July 2015, accessed April 22, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2015/jul/20/artist-and-empire-tate-britain-elizabeth-butler-cryptic-imperialism>.

<sup>19</sup> The list of the Victorian battle paintings at the exhibition as followed: *The Remnants of an Army: Jellalabad, January 13th, 1842* (1879) by Butler, *The Last Stand at Isandlhula* (1885) by Charles Edwin Fripp, *The Death of General Gordon, Khartoum, 26th January, 1885* (1893) by George William Joy, *To the Memory of Brave Men: The Last Stand of Major Allan Wilson at the Shangani, 4th December 1893* (1897) by Allan Stewart, and *The Last Stand of the 44th Regiment at Gundamuck, 1842* (1898) by William Barnes Wollen. See Alison Smith, David Blayney Brown, and Carol Jacobi, *Artist and Empire: Facing Britain's Imperial Past* (London: Tate, 2015).



visual specification, the knowledge of artist's intention to criticise the Second Anglo-Afghan War (1878-1888) through the painting, and her association with a "liberal Catholic circle," complete the image of Butler as the figure of reconciliation the Tate wanted to emphasise.<sup>20</sup> The Tate's revisionist history of Victorian battle art is presumably understood as a narrative of the survival of the conscientious few against the imperialistic many. Yet such an ethical dichotomy can be questioned by the very prevalence of the last-stand paintings in the show because Butler was not only known for her sympathetic illustrations of war, but also her *Quatre Bras* (1875) popularised the theme of last stand as a "compositional type" in Britain.<sup>21</sup> Had *Quatre Bras* been at the show instead of *The Remnants*, the Tate's emphasis on Butler's liberalism would not have been persuasive (plate 2). Furthermore, the temporal relationship between the two pictures hardly explains any kind of change of political opinions in the artist's consciousness. Different themes of war images are distributed through the artist's oeuvre without order: Butler painted the sympathetic *The Roll Call* a year before *Quatre Bras*, and she was working on *The Defence of Rorke's Drift* and *Scotland for Ever!*, which can be interpreted as thematically belligerent paintings, at the same time as *The Remnants*. To conclude, the thematic types of the artist's paintings, whether violent or sympathetic, cannot be equated with the artist's political opinions in any categorical sense. The *Artist and Empire* exhibition reveals the limit of the

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid. 110.

<sup>21</sup> J. W. M. Hichberger, *Images of the Army: The Military in British Art 1815-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University, 1988), 77.

social history of battle painting, whose perfunctory method cannot be justified by further accumulations of interpretations.

It is true that text/context model sets up a workable framework to involve a wide range of factors that are associable with artworks. Yet the richness of social factors is often flattened in a social history of art that prioritises the discovery of patterns of historical development. The discovery of latent meanings of artworks has been regarded as the most prized achievement for the art historians innocent about the "poverty of historicism."<sup>22</sup> However, the majority of interpretations of artworks will lose their significance when there is an excessive accumulation of meanings. In spite of its less illuminated status, Victorian battle painting seems to be no exception in garnering an excess of interpretations. Therefore, this thesis will not add another interpretation of Victorian battle paintings but will discuss them as if they are anthropological objects from a distant civilisation, whose political meanings do not need to be our primary interests. This does not mean that this thesis enlists itself in the discipline of anthropology as whole; it means to examine Victorian battle paintings by using the anthropological framework of Alfred Gell whose awareness of the excess of meaning in art theory agrees with mine.

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<sup>22</sup> My stance on historicism largely concurs with Karl Popper's criticism of the idea that is asserted in *The Open Society and Its Enemies 1* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1971) and *The Poverty of Historicism* (Milton Park: Routledge, 2002).

## 1.2 Methodology: Alfred Gell's Framework and its Reception

### 1.2.1 Alfred Gell's Anthropology of Art

Alfred Gell (1945-1997) was an anthropologist famed for his original theory of art in *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (1998).<sup>23</sup> Gell asserts the necessity to develop a "distinctively anthropological theory of art" in opposition to the contemporary proposals within anthropology to found "culture-specific aesthetics" for what can be termed as primitive or ethnographic art objects.<sup>24</sup> According to him, aesthetics are "evaluative schemes," that account little for the supposed focus of anthropology, such as "the social context of art production, circulation, and reception."<sup>25</sup> Gell views that the prospect of formulation of "indigenous aesthetics" does no more than to add "descriptive accounts about other cultures," that are only useful for the expansion Western viewers' aesthetic sensibility, and such an "appreciative" approach has little use for an anthropology of art that should concentrate on social relationships between "persons or social agents."<sup>26</sup> Apart from the aesthetic approach, Gell's anthropology of art was made to oppose the semiotic

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<sup>23</sup> For the biographical information about Gell, see Alan Macfarlane, "Alfred Gell (1945-1997)," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 120 (2003): 123-147.

<sup>24</sup> Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). 2.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, 3.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, 3-5.

approach within anthropology, such as that of the anthropologist Howard Morphy's, which was set against the institutional theory of art by Arthur Danto that defines art as something endorsed by the representatives of the "institutionally recognized art world," such as critics, dealers, and collectors.<sup>27</sup> Danto's definition of art is problematic to anthropologists, as it makes art as an inherently metropolitan phenomenon whose environment considerably differs from where ethnographic art objects are made and used. Hence, Morphy proposes to define art objects in terms of "having semantic and/or aesthetic properties that are used for presentational or representational purposes."<sup>28</sup> Gell criticises the idealistic trait of Danto's theory which views art as a system of belief in "Vogel's net: traps as artworks and artworks as traps" (1996), but Morphy's proposition, intended to favour primitive and ethnographic objects, is equally unsatisfactory to him. Ruling out the anthropological significance of aesthetic, Gell maintains the position to not to see the work of art as a language-like institution and to avoid discussion of the symbolic meanings of art objects in any intrinsic sense. Gell insists that art is "a system of action, intended to change the world," and his alternative framework focuses on "*agency, intention, causation, result, and transformation,*" and "the practical mediatory role of art objects in the social process."<sup>29</sup> His framework defines art by the virtue of its "function of the social-relational matrix in

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 5.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 5.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 6.

which it is embedded," while serving to study "social relations in the vicinity of objects mediating social agency".<sup>30</sup>

Gell's theory of art focusing on agency, rather than beauty or meaning, consists of unique concepts and terms whose introduction is necessary to understand the 'Art Nexus' and the entailing diagrams proposed in *Art and Agency*. The foremost concept in Gell's theory is 'agency' whose definition is interrelated to 'person' and 'personhood'. According to Gell, agency is a causal factor that initiates particular "causal sequences" of events in social settings.<sup>31</sup> Since it cannot be established without particular "social agents" or "persons" to exercise it, agency can be equated with the "mind or will or intention" of the agent that makes "actions" and changes in the physical world.<sup>32</sup> Gell admits that the causal relation between intentions and actions can be questioned in philosophy and sociology; nevertheless, he maintains that his notion of agency pertains to the 'folk' society whose reasoning is different from Western rationalism, which requires objective explanations of causality. According to him, what is pivotal in the emergence of social agency, in a folk sense, is the psychology by which an event is actually caused by the intention "lodged" in a social agent.<sup>33</sup> These persons with agency do not need to be traditionally accepted entities such as human beings, but things such as artefacts can also be persons, in so far

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 16.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 16.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 17.

people "attribute intentions" to them in particular social actions.<sup>34</sup> This radical definition of 'person' reflects anthropology's familiarity with people's response to cult objects such as idols that play agent roles alongside the sentient beings. However, it should be noted that Gell's concept of personhood is not contrived to equate idol worship in tribal societies with art appreciation in modern Western societies. What is vital for being a person is the matter of exerting agency which is 'indexed' and 'distributed' in material forms, and consequently 'abducted' by the individual recipients in time and space. In this regard, the definition of a person can be transferred beyond individual objects, as Gell suggests even the "events in the milieu" can be persons by the matter of their exerting the agency onto patients.<sup>35</sup> The agency of a person does not only have an effect in a single sequence of agent/patient relation, but is also able to multiply the uniform effects with "distributed personhood," even when it is detached beyond the physical-boundary: Gell found the best example of distributed personhood from the action of Khmer Rouge soldiers during the Cambodian genocide under the regime of Pol Pot (1975-1979).<sup>36</sup>

Gell's claim that the folk notion of agency is adequate to explain 'art-like situations' both in Indigenous and Western societies is backed by his explanation of its semiosis by borrowing terms such as 'index' and 'abduction' from semiotics. In Gell's framework, an art object is classified as an index. The definition of index was coined by Charles Sanders

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 17.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 7; 222.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, 20-21.

Peirce (1839-1914), who uses the term to explain the human behaviours concerning natural signs or 'indexical signs' in causal events. Its usual example is "visible smoke," whose agency may not be a fire, but nevertheless it induces people to make actions based on their hypothesis that it was caused by a fire; another example is a "smile" whose intention may not always be kindness.<sup>37</sup> Whether they are smoke or art objects, indexes 'trigger' people to make inferences in real life, and such a type of inference is "abduction" in semiotics, which is a mode of inference employed for dealing with the "grey area" where "semiotic inference" merges with "hypothetical inferences."<sup>38</sup> Gell emphasises abduction as the chief mode of inference in art-like situations to avoid making the equation between art and language.

In a sense, Gell's adaptation of the semiotic abduction of sign as the anthropological abduction of agency promotes the status of formal and decorative effects of art works to the same level of importance as the symbolic meanings of art objects. This arrangement makes the assessment of the psychological effectiveness of art objects an important task in the anthropology of art. Gell puts much effort into explaining how visual features of artefacts might "motivate" the abduction of agency, by largely relying on the method of 'Gestalt psychology' developed by Rudolf Arnheim.<sup>39</sup> Gell describes the motivation of the abduction of agency as "captivation" or "enchantment," and explains its mechanism by the

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid, 13.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 14.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 67. See also Ibid, 43.

notion of the “enchantment of technology”: fascination caused by the animacy of art works triggered by the technical virtuosity of the artist and the complexity of decorative patterns whose effects are realised based on their social efficacy.<sup>40</sup>

Having explained Gell’s concepts of agency, it is possible to review the Art Nexus (plate 3). According to Gell, this is a table enables one to “order and classify” the possible social relations between the four players in ‘art-like situations’: the ‘Artist’ is the manufacturer of the ‘Index’ which mediates agency; the ‘Prototype’ is the model used for making the Index; and the respondent to the Index is the ‘Recipient’.<sup>41</sup> These four terms are to put in the two positions of ‘Agent’ and ‘Patient’ according to their roles in particular social relations; as mentioned above, any ‘thing’ can be an agent in regard to living human beings by virtue of their motivational power to trigger the abduction of agency. Some of the twenty cases in the table can be cited here: the prototype is an agent in relation to the artist as a patient, as it “controls artist’s action,” as it is the case in the Realistic art; in the typical case of patronage, the patron or recipient is an agent in relation to the artist as a patient; the inherent quality of the material “dictates to” artist’s forms when the Index is an agent in relation to the artist as a patient (plate 3). In Gell’s formula, these cases are represented with the suffixes -A and -P and an arrow sign: the first instance mentioned above is to be

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 68-75. See also Alfred Gell, *The Art of Anthropology: essays and diagrams*, ed. Erich Hirsch (Oxford: Berg, 2006), 163.

<sup>41</sup> Gell, *Art and Agency*, 27.



expressed as Prototype-A → Artist-P; the second one is Recipient-A → Artist-P; the third one is Index-A → Artist-P.

As the binary relations classified in the Art Nexus cannot refer the bulk of art-like situations that happen between more than three players, Gell's formula elucidates the complexity of agency within an index by dividing the agent into the primary and the secondary according to the responsibility for the recipient's action, which is indicated by longer and shorter arrows. The most comprehensive examples Gell uses to explain his method are the cases of two paintings by Leonardo Da Vinci (1452-1519) and Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792). In art-like situations made in the vicinity of the *Mona Lisa* (c.1503-1506), the artist is the primary agent due to the excessive fame of Leonardo Da Vinci to the recipients, while the likeness of the sitter is the secondary agent, subordinate to the artist. This is the case when the issue of artistic genius is dominant, and in this formula, the artist is placed in the leftmost as the primary agent, while the prototype is the secondary agent:

[[[Artist-A] →Prototype-A] →Index-A] → Recipient-P<sup>42</sup>

Another case is *Doctor Samuel Johnson* (c.1772) by Reynolds (plate 4). Due to the Johnson's fame as an extremely achieved man of letters with a strong character, "the compelling aspects" of Johnson's appearance would be the primary agent for the viewer's reactions, while Reynolds, whose esteemed status in British art history and virtuosity might

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid, 52.

not be recognised by many, plays the role as the secondary agent. This case, which is applicable to realistic paintings, can be expressed as:

[[[Prototype-A] →Artist-A] →Index- →→ A] Recipient-P<sup>43</sup>

Gell develops his linear formula into more complicated tree-structure in order to fully map out simultaneous abductions of agency within the possible relations formed with the four terms. Gell demonstrates the application of the tree structure through several cases including school room artworks, the surrealist works of Salvador Dali, and Michelangelo's statue commissioned by Pope Julius II, but the most successful application of the structure is demonstrated to the case of Diego Velazquez's *Rokeby Venus* slashed by Mary Richardson in 1914. According to Gell, multiple levels of abductions of agency are 'involved' through the social relations among the two artists (Velazquez and Mary Richardson), the two prototypes (Venus and Mrs. Pankhurst), the two indexes (the Rokeby Venus intact and slashed), and the two recipients (Mary Richardson and the outraged public) (plate 5).<sup>44</sup>

Gell's method of tracing the hierarchical flow of the abduction of agency by using the Art Nexus and formula, based on the assessment of the psychological operation of the index, is the most comprehensive and distinctive feature of *Art and Agency*. However, when Gell deals with the notion of the 'distributed object' in the last two chapters of the book, he

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 52-53.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 64-65.

ceases to use the Art Nexus, and devises a new way to diagrammatise the social relations between things in temporal dimensions. Such a diversion can be considered as an alteration of the initial aim of Gell's project; hence a brief introduction of the term is needed.<sup>45</sup> According to Gell, a distributed object is none other than a "corpus" of artworks with a "tenuous unity," whose agent is either a collective or an individual. In the penultimate chapter, Gell carefully discusses what the elusive unity of a corpus is in terms of the style. He primarily opposes F. Allan Hanson, who regards certain features in Maori patterns as reflections of their specific patterns of life, based on the assumption that a Maori artwork is a "synecdoche" of Maori culture.<sup>46</sup> According to Gell, the stylistic unity of art objects is not evidence of the "unity of the thought" of a given group of people, which means there is no stylistic unity as such, but only a cognitive saliency, made by the morphological transformation of artefacts caused by "immanent injunctions" within "inter-artefactual relations"; he tries to prove this through long meticulous formal analysis of the artefacts documented in the Marquesan corpus made by the ethnographer Karl von den Steinen (1855-1929).<sup>47</sup> In the last chapter, the concept of distributed object is explained more straightforwardly, as the corpus of an artist, and as a depository of collective experience. The former is exemplified by the works in Marcel Duchamp's oeuvre: Gell explains the

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<sup>45</sup> Robin Osborne and Jeremy Tanner, ed., *Art's Agency and Art History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 22.

<sup>46</sup> Gell, *Art and Agency*, 160-161.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, 162-163; 217.

inter-artefactual relations within the biography of Duchamp graphically thorough the table made by employment of the concept of 'retention and protention' of Edmund Husserl's phenomenology.<sup>48</sup> Gell discusses the latter through the case of Maori Meeting Houses researched by Roger Neich. The meeting houses are not symbolic objects, but the objectification of collective agency by having an organic structure with many parts, and which is both "prospective and retrospective" at the same time due to its innovative aspect in competition with another community and the objectification of the living spirit of ancestors.<sup>49</sup> Gell's discussions on distributed objects in the last two chapters can be seen as a diversion from the book whose title eludes a sole focus on agency. However, the concept is not a last-moment contrivance, as it is in fact a recapitulation of Gell's earlier works, such as "The Network of Standard Stoppages" (c.1985) and *The Anthropology of Time* (1992). Nevertheless, it offers a useful framework for the studies of both individual artists and collective movements by the idea that any works in a corpus can be discussed in terms of their inter-artifactual and temporal significance.

### 1.2.2 The Reception of Gell's Theory in Art History

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 239-247.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, 232-256

Gell's anthropological theory of art expounded in *Art and Agency* has drawn much attention from various disciplines within the social sciences and humanities.<sup>50</sup> Yet three works are worth mentioning in this thesis as far as art history is concerned. *Art's Agency and Art History* (2007) is the most notable work as an art-historical response to Gell's theory. Edited by Robin Osborne and Jeremy Tanner, the volume is a proficient review of Gell's theory, which also demonstrates the application of his methods for the fields of anthropology, archaeology, and art history. Its critical introduction acknowledges the value of Gell's theory as a meaningful shift of emphasis from "meaning" to "agency" in art.<sup>51</sup> Yet it maintains a certain degree of reservation from hailing Gell's framework as an alternative to existing art theory. Other contributors to the volume also seem to share their editors' reservation, as they borrow methods and concepts from *Art and Agency* but apply them for their research areas, and not without modifications and refutations. For instance, in the case of Mesopotamian artefacts, Irene J. Winter points out Gell's indifference to linguistic and aesthetic conventions of societies that are determinative in deciphering agent/patient relations, as they are "marked" by cuneiform inscriptions.<sup>52</sup> Osborne acknowledges the efficacy of Gell's methodology which "sharpens our perception of what a work of art is

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<sup>50</sup> Liana Chua and Mark Elliott, ed., *Distributed Objects: Meaning and Mattering after Alfred Gell* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2013), 1.

<sup>51</sup> Osborne, *Art's Agency and Art History*, 23.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, 42-43.

doing to us.”<sup>53</sup> However, he also stresses that its singleness might obscure us from seeing an “unmappable variety of possible worlds,” as it is predicated on the uniform abduction of the indexical signs, which will vary and change over time.<sup>54</sup> Whitney Davis’s criticism of Gell is much stronger than other commentators, as he points out Gell’s reduction of art objects to mere effectual objects whose agency is readily abducted by the recipient. To Davis, Gell’s framework is not analytically viable, as it wants considerations for the particularity of fine-art and aesthetic objects whose agency is not transparently ‘abductable’ to the recipients, due to its characteristic cognitive ‘uninferability’, unlike that of common artefacts.<sup>55</sup>

*Distributed Objects: Meaning and Mattering after Alfred Gell* (2013) is another volume dealing with Gell’s theory published following a symposium held in Cambridge in 2008 which reflected on the first ten years after the release of *Art and Agency*. Edited by the social anthropologists Liana Chua and Mark Elliott, the book is more affirmative about Gell’s theory than Osborne and Tanner’s. It regards *Art and Agency* as “unfinished business,” which is not to be celebrated as a “heroic” effort, but to be discussed as a genuine contribution to “foster new debate and insights.”<sup>56</sup> Apart from the usual course of summarising the content of *Art and Agency*, its introduction recounts both the critical

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid, 194.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, 196-197.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, 217-218.

<sup>56</sup> Chua, *Distributed Objects*, 3; 21.

responses against *Art and Agency* in the field of anthropology, which they accuse of the “selective incorporation of insights of non-anthropological disciplines,” of “flippant cherry-picking,” and those responses that acknowledge “analytical and conceptual” utility to greater disciplinary fields.<sup>57</sup> The volume aims to be both “forward-looking and retrospective” reflections on *Art and Agency* whose agency is abducted for exploring each contributor’s subject.<sup>58</sup> One of the most notable features of the book is the publication of Gell’s previously unpublished article “The Network of Standard Stoppages” (c.1985) which discusses Marcel Duchamp’s *Network of Stoppages* (1914) in terms of Husserl’s phenomenology of time. Some of contributing pieces are notable by virtue of their relevance to this thesis. Simon Dell, who discovered Gell’s unpublished article, does not hesitate to point out the limit of Gell’s view that sees Duchamp’s oeuvre as an “instance of the phenomenon of temporal transformation” in an autonomous sense; According to Dell, Duchamp’s oeuvre is heavily influenced by institutional settings, such as “new viewing conditions” created by such as the decline of academic establishments and the rise of the small private galleries favouring one-man shows in early twentieth century France.<sup>59</sup> Dell’s point is particularly valuable as a caution for the application of Gell’s theory to Victorian and Modernist artworks; in spite of its promise to elucidate the performative aspect of art, *Art and Agency* does not offer clear theoretical definitions for “specific interactive settings,”

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid, 16-17.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, 18.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, 115; 122.

that are crucial factors for the Modernist artworks due to their rapid transitions in the given period.<sup>60</sup> Warren Boutcher makes another point that is beneficial for the application of Gell's anti-semiotic and folk notion of art for the discussion of Western art. He regards "texts" as "functioning objects" having "social lives," and suggests that we see texts as "literary artefacts" that stimulate recipients' behaviour from the "conversational to the political."<sup>61</sup> Boutcher endeavours to prove his point through examining Early Modern British accounts of the idea that text is also a technique to enchant, which would expand the definition of language in Gell's theory and strengthen his framework that intentionally avoids the association between art objects and language. Boutcher's insight is useful in discussing Victorian battle paintings whose shapes are heavily conditioned and specified by their social relations with published or unpublished texts.

The last work to be mentioned is Caroline van Eck's *Art, Agency and Living Presence: from the Animated Image to the Excessive Object* (2015), which is a significant volume by virtue of being a monograph implementing Gell's framework, as well as being a response to *Art and Agency* outside of Anglophone countries. Van Eck's work applies Gell's notion of personhood and enchantment in her review of the reception history of Baroque artworks. As a single volume devoted to demonstrating Gell's framework for a subject in Western art history, Van Eck's work is akin to the present thesis. However, both works take different paths from the same crossroad. Van Eck is more interested in proving the centrality of the

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid, 120.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, 159-161.



irrational reception of art in Western art history by utilising Gell's framework, which is evident in her expressions, such as "the statue as a living being," "a matter of physical cause and its psychological effect," and "breathing body that aroused [one] sexually."<sup>62</sup> It seems that Van Eck's work is more akin to the radical trend in art history following David Freedberg's *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (1989) which pioneers the significance of "psychological and behavioral responses" of people towards art objects in European art history that had been overlooked in the discipline.<sup>63</sup> Apart from Freedberg, the significance of the irrational and emotive aspects of art appreciation in Western art history has been highlighted by an increasing number of scholars including Georges Didi-Huberman, W. J. T. Mitchell, and Michael Fried, and such an intellectual current is certainly citable as it converges with Gell's folk notion of art.<sup>64</sup> Yet Gell's framework should not be confined to that category, as the abduction of agency in social relations in the vicinity of artworks is the gist of the folk notion of art, whose utility is wider than vindicating the visceral reception of art objects in both Western and ethnographic art.

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<sup>62</sup> Caroline Van Eck, *Art, Agency and Living Presence: From the Animated Image to the Excessive Object* (Leiden: De Gruyter, 2015),14-15.

<sup>63</sup> David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), xix-xx. Osborne, *Art's Agency and Art History*, 8.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, 9. See also Van Eck, *Art, Agency and Living Presence*, 23-25.

This thesis takes advantage of Gell's theory to resist the pursuit of finding symbolic meaning of art objects with political judgement in accordance with the convention of the radical art history. Slotting Gell as an antithetical figure to the radical art history's overinvestment in politics and meaning is not a far-fetched idea; Gell was markedly critical of "the rise of political correctness," which was associated with the pervasion of structuralism and Marxist cultural theory in his time.<sup>65</sup> Nevertheless, what is more important than Gell's presumed political orientation is his work's significance as an attempt to revise the long-standing tradition of art history that has privilege the meaning of art since the time of Erwin Panofsky (1892-1968).<sup>66</sup> It should be noted that the basic semiosis of the framework of the recent social history of art might not be so novel apart from its element of activism. As Keith Moxey points out in his assessment of the method of T.J. Clark, the cultural study of the New Left, in the end, is not far from cultural representation theory whose roots trace back to the Kantian epistemology, and is in the same line with that of Erwin Panofsky who claims to "see through culture to the mind of the period".<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> For Gell's own remark on political correctness, see Gell, *The Art of Anthropology* 12. For a biographical account on Gell's opposition towards these two thoughts, see Macfarlane, "Alfred Gell (1945-1997)," 123-147. For the implication of the idea of political correctness with the new art history, see Harris, *The New Art History*, 25.

<sup>66</sup> Osborne, *Art's Agency and Art History*, 2.

<sup>67</sup> Keith Moxey, "Semiotics and the Social History of Art," *New Literary History*, Vol 22. No 4. Papers from the Commonwealth Center for Literary and Cultural Change (Autumn, 1991), 992-993.

The method Panofsky put forward under the heading of 'iconology' came to have currency as an authoritative hermeneutical method. Often without noticing its authorship, his three-strata method of interpretation has long been popularised in art history classes with the usage of the triple terms, 'form', 'content', and 'context'. Panofsky's iconology regards the highest goal of the art historian as to diagnose "intrinsic meanings" of the symbolic forms in art that are supposed to express the "general and essential tendencies of the human mind."<sup>68</sup> Gell's framework is antithetical to Iconology in several points: it does not see meaning as "an essential property" of art; and it is not concerned with general patterns of the collective mind during the course of history, but aims to "make sense of behaviour in the context of social relations."<sup>69</sup> The opposition between Panofsky and Gell cannot be suggested more strongly than the kind of knowledge each claims to reach: Panofsky believes that art historians' "synthetic intuition," provided by their knowledge of literary sources and their practical experience with artworks can enable them to diagnose the symbolic meanings of art, whereas Gell believes that his diagrams can lead us to elucidate the unexpected "counter-intuitive" images of the world.<sup>70</sup>

It should be noted that Gell's framework is not a categorical refusal of the tradition of cultural representation to which the present social history of art belongs, and there is a

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<sup>68</sup> Erwin Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes In the Art of the Renaissance* (New York: Icon, 1972), 15-16

<sup>69</sup> Gell, *The Art of Anthropology*, 17; see also Gell. *Art and Agency*, 11.

<sup>70</sup> Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology*, 15; Gell, *The Art of Anthropology*, 25.

converging point between his theory focusing on action and theories prioritising meaning. In the end, the word 'agency' is not a neologism patented by Gell. At a basic level, it refers to all the causal factors contributing to the emergence of art in social and material settings, which are not neglected but are meticulously examined in the works by Clark and Rosalind Krauss.<sup>71</sup> Linda Nochlin is aware that a certain social history of art fails to substantiate the actual mediation of ideology by art in social settings.<sup>72</sup> Marcia Pointon is also wary of the simplistic notion that artworks naturally reflect ideologies, that might undermine the integrity of the social history of art. Hence, she emphasises the importance of the reception history of artworks in their original settings.<sup>73</sup> In his speculation of agency, Gell also did not completely scrap the currency of the symbolic meanings of art and its communicative function.<sup>74</sup> These parallels might be indicative of the weakness of Gell's theory to be an exclusive doctrine. However, both thoughts are directed to fundamentally different objectives – action, and meaning- so these parallels can be seen as favourable ground in which Gell's theory works as a comprehensive alternative to the social history of art in the present form.

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<sup>71</sup> Harris, *The New Art History*, 49.

<sup>72</sup> Linda Nochlin, *The Politics of Vision* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991), XV.

<sup>73</sup> Craig Clunas, "Social History of Art" in *Critical Terms for Art History*, ed. Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff (London: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 467.

<sup>74</sup> Gell, *Art and Agency*, see also Osborne, *Art's Agency and Art History*, 7.

This thesis aims to be an art-historical study of Victorian battle painting as part of the study of Victorian art, not an anthropological study of Victorian art objects, in consideration of its primary recipients who are to be art-historians. Moreover, to discuss Victorian battle paintings in Gell's framework is not to submit this thesis to his theoretical system, as it has already introduced some criticisms of the framework that make one unable to take Gell's anthropology of art as a social-scientific rule with positive calibres.

However, Gell's vigilance against the conventionalised view of seeing artworks as representations of more complete and essential entities, whether content or context, is particularly valuable, as individual battle paintings tend to be subsumed under abstract notions. Gell prioritises the social relations generated by individual workings of artworks, rather than their symbolic meanings in a linguistic sense. Such an attitude offers scope to see artworks in terms of contingency and autonomy, not in terms of historical significance. When artworks are not by-products of a system of meaning, but a system of action, the aspect formerly overlooked as being mechanical, not serving to strengthen the depth of ideas, could be reinstated as the operative aspect, of which the examination is essential for discussing Victorian battle paintings afresh.

Apart from as an antidote to the oversaturation of meaning in art history by enabling one to discuss the operative aspect of art, Gell's attitude to his studies is attractive in the age of diverse and changeable truths. According to Gell, he does not regard his intellectual works as contributions to the "on-going march of science," but rather "examples of a particular kind of intellectual performance" which lead one to "counter-intuitive

discoveries."<sup>75</sup> By embracing this intellectual attitude, this thesis hopes to add counter-intuitive discussions into studies of Victorian battle paintings that are already abundant with intuitive meanings.

### 1.3 Literature Review and Thesis Overview.

#### 1.3.1 Modern Studies of Victorian Battle Painting and Elizabeth Thompson Butler

In the study of Victorian battle painting, foundational work has been done by Matthew Paul Lalumia who employed the method of social art history to interpret the meaning of images of the Crimean War in his doctoral thesis "Realism and Anti-Aristocratic Sentiment in Victorian Depictions of the Crimean War" (Yale University, 1981) and its revised publication, *Realism and Politics in Victorian Art of the Crimean War* (1984). Treating battle paintings as windows to identify the general sentiment and political concessions in society, Lalumia argues that there was an "abrupt transition" in war images during the Crimean War, in which the "heroizing modes of traditional battle art" were no longer accepted by Victorian viewers who came to acquire more "realistic" and "anti-heroic" visions of war.<sup>76</sup> To Lalumia, such a shift was the sign of 'anti-aristocratic' and 'democratic' sentiments of

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<sup>75</sup> Gell, *The Art of Anthropology*, 24-26.

<sup>76</sup> Lalumia, *Realism and Politics in Victorian Art of the Crimean War*, xxi.

the time that were caused by two social circumstances. Firstly, the unprecedented publication of articles and images made in close proximity to the battle fields enabled the domestic artists to recognise "the true nature of war." Secondly, the war was the "least popular war" due to the incapacity of the commanding officers.<sup>77</sup> After the Crimean War, the "pictorial schemas and motifs" specifically devised for painting aristocratic war heroes in previous periods were "rejected," while common soldiers rose as the new protagonists in war images.<sup>78</sup> Lalumia views Butler as a significant figure to prove his point by associating the artist's initial success with *The Roll Call* with the "democratic" reforms of the British army in the 1870s under the Liberal government.<sup>79</sup> Lalumia's approach to war images demonstrates a generic social history of battle paintings which privileges the nominal projects of institutions and the assumed opinions of groups of people. It also assumes pictorial images are transparent reflections of abstract notions such as democracy and anti-aristocratic feelings, while disregarding the importance of the production and agentive aspects of the artworks as physical materials.

This thesis intends to refute Lalumia's view and method, but not without acknowledging the merit of his work. Most of all, Lalumia's work is pioneering in formulating the foundation of the history of British war images itself, consisting of a corpus and a timeline, which is more valuable for later scholars than his claim to have decoded the meanings of

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, xxii.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, 140-141.

the artworks. Attesting to the shift of the general opinions over war and class reflected in Crimean war images, Lalumia does not only investigate a long list of representations of the war in illustrated newspapers, commercial prints, photographs, and paintings, but he also surveys a wide range of war images from long before the Crimean War. For instance, to explain what the aristocratic representation of war in mid-nineteenth-century Britain is, he examines the "international mode of battle art" in seventeenth-century Europe, whose invention is credited to the collaboration between Charles LeBrun (1619-1690) and Adam François Van der Meulen (1632-1690) at the court of Louis XIV in France.<sup>80</sup> Lalumia also discusses the development of the authentic pictorial formula in Britain by Benjamin West (1738-1820) and John Singleton Copley (1738-1815), which is an application of the formal language of Grand manner painting onto the portrayals of the heroic deaths of high-ranking modern soldiers.<sup>81</sup> As an extensive survey of art works concerning the subject of war accompanied by the sequence of military, political, and art-historical events over the time, Lalumia's work does not only narrate the history of Crimean war paintings, but also attempts to recount a general history of European war paintings with regards to British battle paintings, which is as valuable to later researchers as it is unprecedented.

Lalumia's ground-breaking work is shortly followed by the work of J. W. M. Hichberger which was first submitted as the doctoral thesis titled "Military Themes in British Painting, 1815-1914" (University College London, 1985) and revised and published as *Images of the*

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid, 2-4.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, 16-19.



*Army: The Military in British Art, 1815-1914* (1988), as part of the series of *Studies in Imperialism* by Manchester University Press, which was under the editorship of the scholar of cultural imperialism John Mackenzie. Hichberger's work was the first attempt to write a history of military art in nineteenth-century Britain, unlike Lalumia's which intended to focus on images of a particular war. Nevertheless, it is clear that Hichberger intends to refute Lalumia. Hichberger does not see the transition of images of war paintings as a reflection of democratisation of the time, but as products to "negotiate" the "ruling-class ideologies about the army, war, and the empire" within the society.<sup>82</sup> Not seeing artworks as direct reflections of ideas, Hichberger is more cautious than Lalumia, but she still sees Victorian battle paintings, including Butler's *The Roll Call*, as symbolic entities to promote the interest of the 'imperialistic' regime of the time.<sup>83</sup> Hichberger's approach to see Victorian battle paintings as propaganda images serving a system of meaning relating to a single concept of imperialism corresponds to the editor Mackenzie's sociological framework to see "popular culture," which certainly includes battle paintings, as the arena in which "the world view" of the Victorian public was "communicated."<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Hichberger, *Images of the Army*, 2-4.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid*, 77-78.

<sup>84</sup> John M, Mackenzie, ed., *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), 9; this volume also contains "Up Guards and at Them! British Imperialism and Popular art, 1880-1914," a chapter devoted to accounting the pictorial images of war during Victorian and Edwardian periods, written by John Springhall. See, *Ibid*, 49-72.

The works of Hichberger and Lalumia seem to disagree each other, but they are homogenous in many aspects as they use the same method. Like Lalumia, Hichberger chronicles the institutional patronages of the military paintings, the careers of British battle artists, and social and military events from the early nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, in accordance with the general scheme of a social history of art. Both scholars are content with the method of juxtaposing the political accounts and the battle paintings of the period in proving the ideological implications of the paintings, without elucidating the personal and immediate relations that took place in the vicinity of the artworks. As to their diagnoses, one might argue that the process of democratisation and the emergence of imperialism are not contradictory to each other, as they are the two phenomena commonly observed in the formation of a modern national army.

After the works of Lalumia and Hichberger, Roger Thomas Stearn wrote a doctoral thesis "War Images and Image Makers in the Victorian Era: Aspects of the British Visual and Written Portrayal of War and Defence c.1866-1906" (King's College in London, 1987). Stearn's thesis reviews the artistic and journalistic media concerning the subject of war in Britain, from the 1860s to the Edwardian era. The work gives detailed accounts of the careers of British battle painters such as Thomas Jones Barker (1815-1882), Richard Caton Woodville (1856-1927), and Robert Gibb (1845-1932). With regards to Butler, Stearn disagrees with Lalumia's view that her works are related to the anti-aristocratic consciousness of the people against the high officers on the grounds that they only

emphasise "the horror of war" in the context of "sacrifice" and "heroism."<sup>85</sup> To Stearn, the Russian military artist Vasily Vereshchagin (1842-1904), who was familiar to the British viewers, was more "sincere" and "realistic" in dealing with the "horrors of war" than the British battle painters, including Butler.<sup>86</sup> However, like Hichberger, Stearn refutes Lalumia's diagnosis without questioning the cultural representation framework, by which he views Butler's works as expressions of the "dominant view of war" at that time.<sup>87</sup>

Stearn's work has merit in surveying the careers of the individual artists working on military subjects, including those of the war artists or 'special artists' of the period, who were distinguished from battle painters by the contemporaries, as they were sent to the battlefields to sketch battle scenes in person.<sup>88</sup> Such a division of identities is somehow blurred in the twenty-first century, which induces one to speculate upon the agentive role of the special artists' working procedure that is privileged under the term of 'eye-witnessing.' Stearn's introduction of the details of the careers of special war artists, such as Melton Prior (1845-1910) and Frederic Villiers (1851-1920), certainly paves the ground to think about such a problem, regardless the framework in which he discusses the subject.

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<sup>85</sup> Roger Thomas Stearn, "War Images and Image Makers in the Victorian Era: Aspects of the British Visual and Written Portrayal of War and Defence c.1866-1906" (PhD diss., King's College in London, 1987), 68.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid,141.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid, 70.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid, 7-28.

Paul Usherwood is the most significant scholar who extensively works on Butler as a single artist. He was a significant contributor to the large retrospective of Butler, *Lady Butler Battle Artist 1846-1933*, that was held at the National Army Museum, the Durham Light Infantry Museum, and Leeds City Art Gallery from May 1987 to February 1988. Its catalogue, written by Usherwood and Jenny Spencer-Smith, is the most important volume on Butler apart from the artist's own biography, as it gathers detailed accounts about most of her works, and matches them with biographical information, and the political and military issues of the period. Apart from this monumental catalogue, Usherwood wrote several articles on Butler, and it is no doubt that he is the expert in the historical details of the artist and her works. However, in terms of methodology, he seems to faithfully follow that of the social history of art in the 1980s, which believes that works of art should be defined in terms of conceptualised words such as jingoism, feminism, chauvinism, and so on. In his article, "Elizabeth Thompson Butler: A Case of Tokenism" (1990), Usherwood exposes the conservatism of the male-centred Royal Academy of Arts that uses Butler as a token of their weak reformation: he examines a case in which the Royal Academy of Arts did not elect her as one of its forty privileged members, despite placing *The Roll Call* in the most favourable spot at the annual exhibition in 1874, and later nominating the artist as a candidate for full membership.<sup>89</sup> Butler's success in the 1870s was meteoric especially for a female artist in her time, and it must have alarmed many established artists in Britain.

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<sup>89</sup> Paul Usherwood, "Elizabeth Thompson Butler: A Case of Tokenism," *Woman's Art Journal*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (Autumn, 1990 - Winter, 1991), 14.

Thus, Usherwood's speculation on the causal relationship between the political orientation of the institution and Butler's election defeat is likely to be correct, except the margin of the vote was only two, as he himself informs.<sup>90</sup> The problem is that Usherwood seems to be obliged to confer structural meanings to every occasion in the case to substantiate his conclusion. For instance, to him, the martial idea which is deemed to be projected in *The Roll Call*, is "consistent" with the "self-image" of the Academy, which is also supposed to be masculine. He also suggests that Butler's later works, obviously depicting male soldiers at the battlefields, and her negative opinions on Aesthetic paintings exhibited outside of the Academy attest her unchanging faith in the (male) values of the institution as a whole.<sup>91</sup> Such intuitive readings of the relations between social entities sound far-fetched, especially to a reader who does not believe the universal circulation of meanings without actual mediations.

The necessary task of chronicling the history of British battle paintings in a linear timeline alongside corresponding social and military issues is fulfilled by Peter Harrington's *British Artists and War: The Face of Battle in Paintings and Prints, 1700-1914* (1993). Harrington is a military historian who utilised his extensive knowledge of military history as explanations for the battle images. He catalogues hundreds of paintings of war made by British artists for more than two centuries as well as recounting the history of war and especially the changing public opinions about each different war. Harrington's method

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid, 16.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid, 14-17.

does not try to prove the development of any fixed ideology within society through discussing the images, as he was mainly interested in the reciprocal relations between the battle artists and the public demand for images of war. In this regard, Harrington is more relaxed with the problem of meaning in battle art than his predecessors. However, his work retains tendencies towards the contemporary social history of art, assuming the existence of the "mind of the average Briton" and battle paintings' chief function as manipulation of this general mind.<sup>92</sup> Harrington's choice of the generalising framework is understandable, for his work means to be a corpus of British battle paintings, not an art-historical thesis, while it reflects his intellectual background as a major contributor to Osprey, the popular publisher in military history.

The accumulation of studies of Victorian images of war from the 1980s to the 1990s is followed by Ulrich Keller's *The Ultimate Spectacle: A Visual History of the Crimean War* (2001), which is similar to Lalumia's initial effort in terms of its focus on the images of the Crimean War. Yet Keller's approach is more post-modern compared with Lalumia's in the 1980s. Lalumia appeared to believe that the seemingly realistic depictions of the Crimean War by the special artists have particular qualities attributed to the single objective reality of the war, as they are "products of direct observation rather than imaginary visions."<sup>93</sup> Keller refutes this understanding of the realism of Crimean images by embracing the ideas of the French philosopher Jean Baudrillard (1929-2007): Keller saw the Victorian production

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<sup>92</sup> Harrington, *British Artists and War*, 8.

<sup>93</sup> Lalumia, *Realism and Politics in Victorian Art of the Crimean War*, 53.

of Crimean images as the "procession of simulacra," which does not have an essential link with reality.<sup>94</sup> For Keller, the images of the historical event were exposed to "a series of conventions and manipulations," which were bound to serve the constitution of the "Society of Spectacle."<sup>95</sup> Keller reviews various types of media for his argument, such as photography, print, newspaper, reportage drawing, music show, panorama and painting. Keller's achievement was to consider Crimean images as a subject of media studies by highlighting their development within individual media. With regards to battle paintings, he closely examines the works of Thomas Jones Barker and Edward Armitage (1817-1896); due to his chosen period, he did not discuss the late Victorian battle paintings, but the last section of the chapter, written for Crimean War paintings, was devoted to a lengthy analysis of *The Roll Call* in the terms of its significance as in the history of war paintings. Keller contends that Butler's reflective work, against the traditional heroic images of war, was the "last word" of paintings regarding the subject of war; this, according to him, means that no "history painting" can exert such "authority" over the general memory of war again after *The Roll Call*, since photographic technology was so highly developed as to surpass the effect of any paintings.<sup>96</sup> Such a diagnosis sounds surprising to anyone who does not believe in his historicism which assumes, as in the history of industrial technology, that a

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<sup>94</sup> Ulrich Keller, *The Ultimate Spectacle: A Visual History of the Crimean War* (London: Routledge, 2001), ix.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid, x.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid, 249.

newly invented medium eventually takes over the place of older medium in art, and plays the role of forging the general image of war of an epoch. Keller's research is significant in seeing the genre of battle painting as an independent medium with its particular concerns. However, Keller's method is not in the same line with Gell's, as he still insists on the method of interpreting the overflowing meanings of individual artworks.

Dorothy Nott's doctoral thesis "Reframing War: British Military Painting 1854 to 1918" (University of York, 2015) is the direct inspiration to this thesis, as a focused study of Victorian battle paintings discussed in a wholly different framework from those of the previous studies. Nott discusses artworks to tackle the art-historical problems unique to studies of British art, namely modernity and canonicity. Many of the British artworks made during the last quarter of the nineteenth century to the first quarter of the next century are seen as markedly conservative and historically discontinuous and do not fit into the modernist narrative of the progress of style from realism to abstract art. In the modernist criteria formed by selected specimens of Continental artworks in the period, a bulk of British artworks in the same period, including battle paintings, is neither modern nor historically significant. Nott endeavours to refute this modernist prejudice against Victorian and Edwardian artworks in her thesis; she views Victorian battle paintings as artworks reflecting "modernity" or the modern experience of radical social change in the particular period, following David Peters Corbett's suggestion to see British artworks in terms of their



"responses" to experience of modernity, not their relations to modernist style.<sup>97</sup> Nott argues that battle painters are the artists who "first highlighted the suffering of the ordinary soldier," before the modernist war artists of World War I, and paved a way to a more "humanitarian" approach to the depictions of the war experience in later generations.<sup>98</sup> To Nott, Butler is a particularly important figure to prove her point, for the artist's major works such as *The Roll Call* and *Balaclava* (1876) do not only depict the hardship of individual soldiers sympathetically, but also "indicate" the artist's progressive understanding of "post-traumatic stress disorder" beyond that of the average Victorian audience, even before such a "psychological impact of war" was conceptualised.<sup>99</sup> Although Nott treats battle paintings as her major subject, her thesis accounts for a wide range of genres and media representing battle images in the period, including photography and juvenile literature, and her thesis is particularly strong in the reception history of battle paintings.

My thesis is greatly indebted to Nott's as a consecutive study on a similar subject done in the same university, and it agrees with Nott's intention to demystify the modernist prejudice against Victorian art by finding the unique value of Victorian battle art in terms of modernity, which can be translated into agency in Gell's framework. However, my thesis

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<sup>97</sup> Dorothy Nott, "Reframing War: British Military Painting 1854 to 1918," (PhD diss., University of York, 2015), 19; David Peters Corbett, *The modernity of English art 1914-30* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 14.

<sup>98</sup> Nott, "Reframing War," 20.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid*, 64; 69.

disagrees with Nott's in two aspects. First, it has to disagree with Nott's approach to underline a specific ethical quality such as humanitarianism in Butler's oeuvre. I do not view an artist's oeuvre as a product of a homogenous agenda, but a collection of artworks entailing separate art-like situations in which the artworks often operated, without conforming to the artist's ethical considerations, or reflecting her perceptiveness to a psychiatric syndrome unknown in her time. Secondly, this thesis does not intend to follow the usual format of a social history of Victorian battle art that has persisted since the work of Lalumia. Nott seems to have been obliged to follow to the typical format of treating the same details of social and military histories of the period as essential background knowledge of the subject. By doing so, Nott might have proved her qualification to study the subject which is not familiar to art historians. Yet such a challenge seems to divert Nott from focusing on Butler's works, which appear to be her primary fascinations, given her extensive account of Butler's reception and exhibition histories. My thesis intentionally avoids the format of the social history of art by finding that personal relations to her artworks can be more significant than the impersonal history in certain situations.

The last contributor to studies of Butler and Victorian battle paintings who is worth mentioning here is Catherine Wynne, who wrote Butler's biography, *Lady Butler: War Artist and Traveller 1846-1933* (2019), which is a collection of existing accounts of Butler's life and works. Wynne's framework to Butler's paintings is better articulated in her earlier article "From Waterloo to Jellalabad: the Irish and Scots at war in Elizabeth Thomson Butler and W. F. Butler" (2011). In speculating on the artist's political orientation regarding the Irish and Scottish problems of the time, Wynne seems to make a balanced diagnosis between

Lalumia's and Hichberger's. The role of Scottish and Irish soldiers as both the avant-garde of British imperialism and the subjugated people to the English domination is ironic, and Wynne finds its representations in Butler's *Listed for the Connaught Rangers: Recruiting in Ireland* (1878), and *Scotland for Ever!* (1881). According to Wynne, in these paintings, the artist was able to evade uncomfortable questions over the social realities of the soldiers by celebrating the Celtic soldiers' "patriotism" and representing the pathetic "human cost of war" at the same time.<sup>100</sup> Wynne's approach to Butler's art differs from Lalumia and Hichberger's, as she does not treat the artist as an impersonal figure mirroring the ideas of her time, but an individual whose personal life is implicated in the subject she depicts, being married to a high ranking Irish officer. However, Wynne's method is deeply semantic, as she treats Butler's works as a kind of painterly literature, whose meaning is elucidated in comparison with contemporary literature such as that of Arthur Conan Doyle (1859-1930), reflecting her background as a scholar in English literature rather than an art historian.

### 1.3.2 Contemporary Accounts of Victorian Battle Paintings

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<sup>100</sup> Catherine Wynne, "From Waterloo to Jellalabad: The Irish and Scots at war in Elizabeth Thomson Butler and W.F Butler," *Journal of European Studies*, 41 (2), 2011, 154.

To introduce contemporary accounts of battle paintings and Butler, the relative abundance of records of Butler's artwork should be considered first. Most significantly, Butler published *An Autobiography* (1922), which was written based on her diaries kept from a young age. Butler's autobiography is an invaluable historical source, as it conveys detailed descriptions of her visual experience, personal feelings and opinions on contemporary military and political issues, and artistic considerations and intentions regarding her works. Butler was not the only British battle painter who published a full-length autobiography. For instance, Woodville published *Random Recollections* (1914), before Butler, but the book offers fewer accounts of his experience as a visual artist, and focuses more on episodes from his social life. Apart from *An Autobiography*, Butler published two illustrated travelogues *Letters from the Holy Land* (1906) and *From Sketchbook and Diary* (1909) that contain more accounts that were not included in *An Autobiography*.

As a battle painter, Butler was exceptional in the extensive personal accounts that she left. However, what is more exceptional is that she had her family as an intellectual circle to speak for her art. Her sister Alice Meynell (1847-1922) was a poet, and art and social critic, who was a regular contributor to *The Magazine of Art*, *Art Journal*, *Merry England*, and *St Nicholas*. Meynell did not only observe Butler's artistic activities from a close distance, being the only sibling of the artist, but she also shared the fascination over the emerging genre of battle painting, as she wrote articles introducing contemporary French and German military painters such as Jean-Louis Ernest Meissonier (1815-1891), Alphonse de Neuville (1835-1885), and Anton Von Werner (1843-1915) for *The Magazine of Art*. Meynell views battle painting as the most significant genre in the development of 'realist'

art of her time. In "The Age of Anecdote," which was written for the Catholic journal *Merry England* in 1886, Meynell sums up "anecdote," which means accidental experience intimate to individuals, as the key element to define realist art which is in opposition to the "grand style" art.<sup>101</sup> In the article, she names specific artists across diverse forms of media as model artists for the new anecdotal or realist art: Robert Browning (1812-1889) for poetry; Henry James (1843-1916) for novel, Richard Wagner (1813-1883) for music and for painting, and she introduced the portraitist Frank Holl (1845-1888). Nevertheless, she designates "battle painting" as the "noble division of art" that benefited the most from the development of anecdotal art, as it came to recognise the "individuality" of the soldier who had been generalised as "a class" in panoramic grand style battle paintings.<sup>102</sup> It is likely that Meynell had her sister in her mind as the British example of the new type of battle painting without mentioning Butler's name, as her descriptions of the new type of battle art correspond to what Butler's artworks were known for: representing the hardship of soldiers, not the glory of war.

Alice Meynell's husband, Wilfrid Meynell (1852-1948) shared his wife's framework regarding Butler's art as part of the development of realist art of the period. As a publisher of *Merry England*, Meynell widely contributed to magazines such as *The Art Journal*, *The Athenaeum*, *The Magazine of Art*, *The Academy*. He wrote a series of introductory articles to the contemporary artists including Butler, in *The Magazine of Art*, which was compiled

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<sup>101</sup> Alice Meynell, "The Age of Anecdote," *Merry England*, July 1886, 206.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid*, 208.

as a book of *Modern Artists and Their Work* (1883). However, Meynell's most notable work on Butler is *The Life and Work of Lady Butler* (1898), published as part of *The Art Journal's Illustrated Biographies of Artists* series. This monograph was only thirty pages long and only 250 copies were printed, but it was the most comprehensive material to help understand the artist's career and principles before the publication of Butler's autobiography. In the booklet, Meynell's view on Butler's art is synonymous with his wife's, as he emphasises the same realist quality defined by his wife, comparing Butler's works to Rudyard Kipling's soldier stories, while he calls his sister-in-law a "representative of her time," whose art is part of "Humanitarianism" of the nineteenth century.<sup>103</sup> Meynell's framework of seeing the artist and battle paintings as symptomatic entities to the symbolic meanings unique to a period foresaw the dominance of the social-art-historical framework dealing with them in the next century.

Outside of the circle, it is hard to find a focused review of either Butler or the genre in general. Nevertheless, it is possible to find abundant accounts on Butler's works in the 1870s when she had sensational successes with *The Roll Call* (1874), *Quatre Bras* (1875) and *Balaclava* (1876). John Ruskin (1819-1900) thought highly of *Quatre Bras* in his *Academy Notes* as he calls the painting "the first fine Pre-Raphaelite" battle painting with

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<sup>103</sup> Wilfrid Meynell, *The Life and Work of Lady Butler (miss Elizabeth Thompson)* (London: The Art Journal, 1898), 31.

an impressive technical achievement in colour and shade.<sup>104</sup> The general accounts of battle painters apart from Butler are scattered in various magazines and newspapers. It is possible to observe that the accounts on battle paintings are concentrated in the period between 1874 and 1900, which can be regarded as the heyday of Victorian battle paintings. However, it is also possible to see that the status of battle paintings was less esteemed than the works of renowned Victorian artists such as John Everett Millais (1829-1896), Frederic Leighton (1830-1896), Lawrence Alma-Tadema (1836-1912), Edward Burne Jones (1833-1898), and George Frederic Watts (1817-1904), as battle painters' works were generally outside of the focal points of contemporary art reviews. Although Battle painting became a substantial genre in late Victorian Britain, contrary to Rossetti's pessimistic prospect of it in the 1860s, British battle painters were still not as esteemed as their French counterparts. Contemporary art historian Walter Armstrong's article "Victorian Fine Art" (1887) observes the unstable status of battle paintings in the Victorian art scene: recollecting the diverse artistic movements that had emerged up to the year from the beginning of the reign of Queen Victoria, Armstrong was unsure about the prospect of the upstart "school of battle painters" due to the society's insufficient support for the genre.<sup>105</sup> Armstrong's view on battle paintings indicates the conception that battle painting was a minor genre compared to more traditional genres such as history painting and landscape.

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<sup>104</sup> John Ruskin, *Academy Notes*, ed. E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (London: George Allen, 1904), 308-309.

<sup>105</sup> Walter Armstrong, "Victorian Fine Art," *Art Journal*, June 1887, 176.

The problem of ascertaining the contribution of 'eye-witnessing' in the works of battle painters and war artists was considered by war correspondents after the late 1880s. John Edwin Hilary Skinner (1839-1894), in "War Artists and War Pictures," in *The Magazine of Art* in 1892, points out the discrepancy between the seemingly realistic battle paintings and what can actually be observed in the battlefield. Skinner's article privileges eye-witnessing in painting battle scenes which promotes the status of war artists over battle painters. In "Battle Pictures," published in the same magazine in 1896, Charles Frederick Williams (1838-1904) posed the opposite view, questioning the authority of war artists as eyewitnesses of battles by hinting that war artists' works are not always based on actual observations. In the wake of the Boer War (1900-1901), the conception emerged that the chief condition of being a war artist was having shared the physical hardship and danger in battlefields with soldiers, rather than having ocular observations of battles as prototypes of specific pictures. In a patriotic fervour, Robert Machrory (1857-1946) asserted drawing a distinction between battle painters and war artists on the grounds of whether the artist had experienced the soldier's hardship or not, through his article "A Group of Battle Painters and War Artists" for *The Windsor Magazine* in 1900. These articles show that the matter of direct observation of the real battlefield became a significant problem for the genre of battle painting in the late nineteenth century.

From the early twentieth century, the genre of battle painting noticeably began declining in its popularity, and only sporadic negative articles on it could be observed until World War I, when the genre was eclipsed by the war paintings of British Impressionist and



modernist artists. These negative assessments of battle paintings are useful as they reveal the key characteristic of the passing genre to contemporaries. "The Painting of War," published in the *Lotus Magazine* in New York in 1916, articulates this view best: it argues for the realism of nineteenth-century battle paintings as "external realism," telling stories opposite to "psychological realism" of the war paintings of the Old Masters, such as Leonardo Da Vinci and Diego Velasquez.<sup>106</sup> This view corresponds to the Modernist art critic Clement Greenberg's assessment of the genre as representative of unsophisticated paintings. In "Avant-Garde and Kitsch" (1939), Greenberg made his criticism against battle painting after reading an article by Dwight Macdonald (1906-1982) that reported that the popularity of battle paintings among the Russian masses at the State Tretyakov Gallery.<sup>107</sup> While misidentifying the battle painting described by Macdonald as that of Ilya Repin (1844-1930), Greenberg censures the painting which was loved by the Russian peasants as an "unreflective" artwork which was based on narratives and its sensational visual "effect" in its interest of robbing time and money of ignorant viewers.<sup>108</sup> These criticisms are valuable for this thesis regardless of the original intent, because they inadvertently sum up

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<sup>106</sup> Anonymous, "The Painting of War," *The Lotus Magazine*, 8, no.1 (October 1916) 28-29.

<sup>107</sup> Dwight Macdonald, "Soviet Society and its Cinema," *Partisan Review*, winter 1939, 87.

<sup>108</sup> Clement Greenberg, *Art and Culture: Critical Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), 14-15.

the visual effect and narrative as the primary attractions of Victorian battle paintings, whose autonomous values can be discussed in a positive light in Gell's framework.

### 1.3.3 Thesis Overview

Having postulated the necessity of employing Gell's anthropology of art for conducting a study of Victorian battle paintings in Chapter 1, the rest of the thesis can be outlined. Chapter 2 re-examines the realism of Butler's *The Roll Call* in 1874 which has been read as a political comment or a representation of ideas or sentiments, in terms of Gell's notions of 'technology of enchantment' and 'artworks as traps'. In viewing effect as a crucial foundation of the popularity of the works of Butler and other battle painters, the chapter recognises '*vraisemblance*' as the keyword to understand the realism of Victorian battle paintings whose effectual mechanism is elucidated by the semiotic theory of Roland Barthes and my own term 'fidget'. Chapter 3 tracks down the agents of Butler's lesser known work *The Colours* (1898), which can be specified in its relation to specific works from the Victoria Cross Gallery of Louis William Desanges (1822-1887) and the personal agenda of the sitter Robert Loyd Lindsay (1832-1901). The revealed fact that the propagandistic appearance of Butler's minor work was more of a result of personalised agents, rather than of collective and ideological concerns of the time, is a kind of counter-intuitive discovery attesting the efficacy of Gell's framework. Chapter 4 discusses the agentive role of working condition in cases of Butler's *Scotland for Ever!* and James McNeill

Whistler's *Nocturne* series. According to her biographical account, Butler appears to be a proponent of the critic John Ruskin's aesthetic standpoint, which is opposed by Whistler's at the famous lawsuit in 1878. Yet my counter-intuitive recognition of the particular problem of painting moving objects as the most imminent challenge to both Butler and Whistler, over any ostensible artistic credo, will blur the demarcation between battle art and avant-garde art drawn by art-historical construction in service of its historicism. This speculation may not directly refer to Gell's theory, but it can be a potential development of Gell's approach, in a similar way to Simon Dell's contribution, which highlights the agentive role of the shift in the contemporary exhibition condition in the emergence of solo-shows of avant-garde artists (see 1.2.3.). Chapter 5 questions the intuitive belief in the primacy of eye-witnessing in picturing battlefields which was used as a basis of criticism against Butler and other homebased battle painters, who mainly worked without having direct observation of their prototypes. The conception that the eye-witnessing of the supposed prototype ensures the higher artistic quality of the resultant artwork can be debunked by using Gell's method, which is immune to the ideological confidence in the act of eye-witnessing in painting war, for specifying the primary agents of the relevant examples, such as Butler's *Evicted* (1890), the only painting based on eye-witnessing in the artist's oeuvre, the works of war artists, published in illustrated newspapers, and Butler's wartime pictures during the time of World War I.

## Chapter 2: The Technology of Enchantment in *The Roll Call* (1874): A Methodological Reflection on a Victorian Battle Painting

This chapter examines the remarkable success of *The Roll Call* (1874) by Elizabeth Thompson Butler (1846-1933) by using anthropological concepts suggested by Alfred Gell (1945-1997) that enable us to recognise the painting's technical efficacy as the crucial factor in its social significance. This diverges from existing readings that acknowledge the symbolic meaning as the primary source of its success. The high level of success of the painting at the 1874 annual exhibition of the Royal Academy of Arts was unparalleled for a battle painting. Furthermore, the painting was not a single-shot success of an individual artist, as it was followed by the formation of the substantial scene of battle painting in Britain which had never been realised before. As the seminal success of late Victorian battle painting, *The Roll Call* has been a subject of art-historical investigations in the light of two frameworks. The biographical framework is reflected in the biographical accounts of the artist and regards the painting as an embodiment of the artist's ideas. The social histories of Victorian military paintings view the success of painting as the proof of the currency of certain ideologies in society. This chapter refutes these two models by highlighting the fact that *The Roll Call* was a technically fascinating object to the artist and the viewers; its mechanism can be best elucidated by Gell's methodological concepts such as 'technology of enchantment,' and 'artworks as traps' as they construe *effect* as the essential quality of art.

## 2.1 The Success of *The Roll Call*: An Art-Historical Problem

### 2.1.1 The Great Success of *The Roll Call*

*Calling the Roll after an Engagement, Crimea (The Roll Call)* (1874) (plate 6) is a horizontally elongated canvas painting depicting a band of Guardsmen mustering after a battle during the Crimean War (1854-1856). The painting has a simple compositional scheme. More than a half of the space is filled with continuous rows of grey figures in greatcoats, wearing massive bearskins. In front of these soldiers, a mounted officer is slowly moving from the left of the frame to the right, keeping pace with a sergeant on foot who is checking the names of soldiers on the roll. In parallel with these figures, the scenic elements are reserved. Unlike those seen from the history paintings of the previous generation in Britain, there is no tempestuous sky and exotic settings, but only snow-covered mountains and the pale sky, which contrast with the dark line made by the figures.

The picture is simple but not dull. Without violent action, the details and movements of the soldiers create a subtle vibrancy. The guardsmen are lined up, but they are not standing still. The only soldier standing at attention is the beardless figure at the centre who is responding to the sergeant's call (plate 7). Other figures are engaged in various individual activities. In the right corner, a soldier is quenching his thirst from a water bottle handed to him by another figure on the front row. One is caring for an exhausted figure leaning

his body on his rifle. Another soldier is tending his wound with a bandage in a disinterested manner (plate 8). There is a collapsed figure who is possibly dead, but is still holding his fists tight with an undying resolution (plate 9). The next figure is absent-mindedly looking outward (plate 10). Some are talking, and another is tying a shoelace. This variety of individual expression has an inherent effect of liveliness which does not need secondary explanations.

A narrative can be formed by the combination of the painting's title and visual specification. The given title identifies that this is not an ordinary roll call in the everyday life of the army, but a specific roll call, undertaken in the aftermath of a battle, whose severity is suggested by details such as the damaged regimental colour, ragged uniforms, wounded bodies, and spilt blood. A battle requires the presence of an opposing army, but there is no enemy. Instead, there are little dots in the right corner that represent the Russian soldiers that are being routed. The cannon balls and the bloody cavalry helmet allude to how the battle unfolded, as they identify two branches of the army other than the infantry. The crows in the sky seem to imply the unseen casualties of the battle. It is unmistakable that, to modern and Victorian spectators, the painting would be read as a roll call of British troops after a battle in a Crimean winter.

When *The Roll Call* was exhibited in May 1874 at the Royal Academy of Arts, the public reaction to the work was spontaneous and instant. Butler (*née* Thompson) was a young female artist whose talent had not been recognised by the institution the previous year when she submitted *Missing*, a painting depicting two French soldiers cast adrift during the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871). However, with regards to *The Roll Call*, the hanging

committee of the Academy immediately acknowledged the quality of the work, and it placed the painting "on the line," which was traditionally the most privileged place at the annual exhibition.<sup>109</sup> The Prince of Wales made a special comment on the painting at the Academy banquet. The painting was brought for private viewings to Queen Victoria, and to Florence Nightingale (1820-1910), the bedridden heroine of the Crimean War. The crowds of viewers in front of the painting called for police surveillance and the installation of an iron rail. The painting was the focal point of almost every review of the exhibition in that year; the critic Francis Turner Palgrave (1824-1897) recounted "the chorus of "Wonderful!" rising all day around this work."<sup>110</sup> A correspondent of *The New York Times* rather exaggeratedly described the success as one "without a parallel in history of art."<sup>111</sup> The artist gained celebrity status at the age of 27. The press detailed her biographical information, while approximately 250,000 copies of her photographic portrait were sold to the public.<sup>112</sup> The painting toured northern England in October of that year, and it eventually came under the possession of the most prestigious collector, Queen Victoria,

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<sup>109</sup> About the Royal Academy's authentic display device, see David H. Solkin, ed., *Art on the Line: The Royal Academy Exhibitions at Somerset House 1780-1836* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2001), 16-17.

<sup>110</sup> Francis Turner Palgrave, *The Academy*, May 23, 1874, 107.

<sup>111</sup> *New York Times*, "A Famous A Famous Painting: the Roll-Call after Battle," May 31 1874, 9.

<sup>112</sup> Meynell, *The Life And Works of Lady Butler*, 6.

who pressed the initial purchaser Charles Galloway to cede the painting to her.<sup>113</sup> Its image was materially pervasive during the Victorian era as it was massively reproduced by the Fine Art Society, which purchased its copyright.<sup>114</sup> Naturally, its immaterial image lasted in the memories of Victorians, as William Holman Hunt (1827-1910), in his memoir published in 1905, recalls the picture as a "deeply interesting picture" by an artist who "astonished the world."<sup>115</sup>

Almost every commentator on *The Roll Call* highlighted the magnitude of its success in 1874. Furthermore, the generative role of the painting in the history of British battle painting is commonly approved by both Victorian and Modern commentators, who saw the painting as the pioneering effort for the underdeveloped genre of military painting in Britain.<sup>116</sup> The picture's art-historical status is commonly understood in relation to the

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<sup>113</sup> For the general outline of the success of *The Roll Call*, see Butler, *An Autobiography*, (London: Constable, 1922), 101-114; Usherwood, *Lady Butler*, 28-36; Mark Hallett, Sarah Victoria Turner, and Jessica Feather, *The Great Spectacle: 250 years of the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition* (London: Royal Academy of Arts), 105.

<sup>114</sup> John M. Mackenzie, ed, *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), 67.

<sup>115</sup> William Holman Hunt, *Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood*, vol.2 (New York: McMillan, 1905), 310.

<sup>116</sup> Lalumia, *Realism and Politics in Victorian Art of the Crimean War*, 130,152; Hichberger, *Images of the Army*, 89; Usherwood, *Lady Butler*, 15, 59; Meynell, *The Life and works of Lady Butler*, 3; Butler, *An Autobiography*, 95.



following chronology of British battle painting. In the eighteenth century, as a pamphlet shows, battle painting was included under "History" painting.<sup>117</sup> According to Matthew Lalumia, eighteenth-century artists Benjamin West (1738-1820) and John Singleton Copley (1738-1815) painted contemporary military incidents according to "the percept of history painting," as they envisaged aristocratic soldiers as grand-mannered heroes in *The Death of General Wolfe* (1770) and *The Death of Major Peirson* (1782-1783).<sup>118</sup> In the early nineteenth century, painters such as George Jones (1786-1869) and Abraham Cooper (1787-1868) produced battle paintings in the manner of genre painting; the former specialised in the panoramic view of battle scenes while the latter worked in the Flemish style of skirmish scenes. A radical change took place in battle painting during the time of the Crimean War, which attracted various media, including painting, photography, popular print, and newspaper illustration. Ulrich Keller asserts that, in this period, such painters as Edward Armitage (1817-1896) and Thomas Jones Barker (1815-1882) produced battle paintings with compositional formulas that were influenced by popular prints.<sup>119</sup> Although the Crimean War, together with the Indian Mutiny (1857), caused an increase in battle paintings at the Royal Academy, battle painting as an independent artistic genre was not well appreciated in Britain. In 1861, William Michael Rossetti (1829-1919) regarded the

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<sup>117</sup> Thomas Morrison, *A Pindaric ode on painting* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1952), 1.

<sup>118</sup> Lalumia, *Realism and Politics in Victorian Art of the Crimean War*, 18.

<sup>119</sup> Keller, *The Ultimate Spectacle*, 223-225.

genre as the only field in which British artists were inferior to their French counterparts, declaring that they "have never fully grappled with [the] military subject."<sup>120</sup> The substantial development of the genre was made only after the Franco-Prussian War when the young French military painters such as Alphonse De Neuville (1835-1885) and Edouard Detaille (1848-1912) introduced a radically different type of battle painting which focused on the individual experience of war, rather than celebrating victorious moments in battles. This change in France inspired British artists such as Butler and Ernest Crofts (1847-1911) to paint the subject of war in a new manner.<sup>121</sup> *The Roll Call's* critical success in 1874 marks the threshold of a new era in British battle painting. Allegedly, in conjunction with the progress of political and military affairs, Britain finally saw the specialised genre of battle painting sustained by a considerable number of practitioners and a corresponding amount of public interest until World War I (1914-1918) when the genre lost its broad appeal. This is not to say that a single painting, *The Roll Call*, is the sole agent of the emergence of battle paintings in the late Victorian period. However, it is always regarded as the beginning of the art-historical period of late Victorian battle painting, it is necessary to examine what facilitated its decisive impact in the history of battle painting.

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<sup>120</sup> Rossetti, *Fine art, Chiefly Contemporary*, 13.

<sup>121</sup> Meynell, *The Life and works of Lady Butler*, 3; John Oldcastle, "Our Living Artists." *The Magazine of Art*, Jan 1879, 258; for Butler's remarks on French military painters, see Butler, *An Autobiography*, 95, 130, 138, 261; In case of Crofts, the German influence must have been stronger as he studied with the German military artist Emil Hünten (1827-1902) in Dusseldorf. See Harrington, *British Artists and War*, 181.

### 2.1.2 Existing Methodological Approaches to *The Roll Call*

The source of *The Roll Call's* great success has been discussed in terms of two frameworks. The biographical framework privileges the artist's intention and ideas as the main factors in the artwork's success, while the social history of art prioritises the collective ideologies of the society in which it was produced. Both perspectives offer clear-cut explanations for the success of *The Roll Call* and late Victorian battle paintings, but not without inherent limitations.

Being a conscientious artist, Butler meticulously recorded her opinions on artistic, political, and ethical matters in her autobiography and elsewhere. This unusual abundance of textual information is rare for a battle painter, which allows us to know the thoughts behind many of her activities and achievements. According to *An Autobiography*, Butler saw existing British battle paintings as objects to be reformed, as they failed to be serious works of art. She thought her mission was to make "battle-pieces" have "moral and artistic qualities not generally thought necessary" to the genre.<sup>122</sup> Her famous cautionary principles of not painting "contemporary subjects" and "a [direct] conflict," can be understood as part of her artistic project to reform the customs of British battle art.<sup>123</sup> Other than this

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<sup>122</sup> Butler, *An Autobiography*, 135.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid*, 184-187

professional concern, the artist's critical view of war and imperialism is widely known through her close association with the circle of anti-imperialistic liberal Catholics including her husband William Francis Butler, her sister Alice Meynell and her brother-in-law Wilfrid Meynell.<sup>124</sup> In keeping with her critical attitude towards war and conventional battle paintings, Butler develops a unique approach to depict the experience of individual soldiers. This merit is best remarked in the monograph written by Wilfrid Meynell in 1898:

Butler has done for the soldier in Art what Mr. Rudyard Kipling has done for him in Literature-she has taken the individual, separated him, seen him close, and let the world so see him.<sup>125</sup>

To modern readers, the passage might appear to be an attempt to elevate Butler's artistic position by comparing her to Kipling as the winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1907. However, it is more likely that Meynell's comparison was made to assert the autonomy of Butler's achievement in her field, for Butler's big hits such as *The Roll Call*, *Quatre Bras* (1875), *Balaclava* (1876), *The Remnants of an Army* (1879), and *Scotland for Ever!* (1881) predated Kipling's publication of *Soldiers Three* (1888), which contained stories of individual soldiers. What Meynell aims to point out in the passage is Butler's unique method to place the experience of individual soldiers at the centre of her paintings, unlike

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<sup>124</sup> Hichberger, *Images of the Army*, 80.

<sup>125</sup> Meynell, *The Life and Work of Lady Butler*, 31.

the older type of "panoramic battle-painting."<sup>126</sup> According to Meynell, the old-fashioned treatment of war that generalised individuals into a large army was reformed by De Neuville in France and Butler in Britain as their artistic method gave more "personality" to the "victim of war."<sup>127</sup> Such a treatment, he claimed, was "part of Humanitarianism of the century."<sup>128</sup>

The contention that Butler's humanitarian intention is the decisive factor in the whole career of the artist is further highlighted and confirmed when it is cross-examined with the widely quoted obituary which reports her statement:

Thank God, I never painted for the glory of war, but to portray its pathos and heroism.<sup>129</sup>

The Victorian framework that sees art as an embodiment of the artist's idea is hardly refuted by modern commentators. Paul Usherwood, in his catalogue of the large retrospective of Butler at the National Army Museum and other museums (1987-1988), readily refers to Meynell's comparison of Butler to Kipling on the grounds of their

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid, 31.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid. Meynell made a similar assertion in his earlier article written under his pseudonym, using the word "humanity." See, John Oldcastle, "Our Living Artists" *The Magazine of Art*, January 1879, 262.

<sup>129</sup> *The Times*, "Lady Butler," October 4, 1933, 17.

approaches to the experience of individual British soldiers.<sup>130</sup> To the curators of the *Artist and Empire* exhibition at the Tate (2015-2016), Butler's "emphasis on the pathos of war" and "anti-imperialism" was the most noticeable "characteristic" of her art in comparison with her male competitors.<sup>131</sup>

To the Victorians, the artist's individual intention was the explanation for the artistic success of *The Roll Call*. However, the modern scholars of Victorian battle paintings who revisited the subject in the 1980s were inclined to see collective ideas or ideologies as the primary factor in the painting's success. In *Realism and Politics in Victorian Art of the Crimean War* (1984), Lalumia highlights the prevalence of middle-class-oriented democracy in the period as the key element of the picture's success. He argues that the liberal democratic tendency of British society in the 1870s offered a fertile ground for the positive reception of Butler's early works. He points out that during the Crimean War the aristocratic commissioned officers' incompetence was exposed and, as a result, popular pictorial newspapers portrayed upper-class soldiers in an "entirely unheroic role," contrary to war art's traditional iconography, while common soldiers grew to be visualized as objects of "sympathy."<sup>132</sup> In addition, according to Lalumia, the democratic and anti-aristocratic sentiment regarding the army regained its strength under the first government of William Ewart Gladstone (1809-1898), whose war minister Edward Cardwell (1813-1886) abolished the purchasing

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<sup>130</sup> Usherwood, *Lady Butler*, 13.

<sup>131</sup> Smith, *Artist and Empire*, 110.

<sup>132</sup> Lalumia, *Realism and Politics in Victorian Art of the Crimean War*, 67-68.

of ranks in the army in 1871-1872.<sup>133</sup> In consideration of this social context, Lalumia contends that the "combination of a topical issue centring on the army and a renewed interest in the Crimean War" in the 1870s was the root of a more favourable "climate" for the new generation of British battle painters.<sup>134</sup> According to Lalumia, not only *The Roll Call*, but also Butler's other Crimean paintings, such as *Balaclava (1876)*, and *The Return from Inkerman (1877)*, are products of Victorian public's democratic mindset which was verging on "egalitarian idealism" by the late 1870s.<sup>135</sup>

Lalumia's framework appears to provide an objective explanation for the success of *The Roll Call* as it enquires into the meaning of battle paintings in the context of the social history of Britain. However, the critical subjectivism of the social history of art is displayed. Joan Hichberger, in *Images of the Army: the military in British art 1815-1914 (1988)*, refutes Lalumia's assertion, seeing instead the success of *The Roll Call* in relation to the militarism and imperialism of Victorian society. The problem is that the enquiry into social context is bound to be based on subjective interpretations, despite the illusion of objectivity by its association with sociology. Unlike Lalumia, who sees democracy as the chief sentiment of 1870s Britain, Hichberger regards authoritarian Imperialism as the dominant sentiment of the period. To Hichberger, the Cardwell Reforms were not benign schemes motivated by egalitarianism against the class-based culture of the army. Rather, they were

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid,130.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid, 152.

reconstructions of the army in accordance with the "ruling-class ideology" which instrumentalised seemingly democratic reforms for the "heroic conquest of the empire" that demanded "better-class" human resources.<sup>136</sup> According to Hichberger, the elevation of "the ranks" into "national heroes" in Butler's works was not a product of the demand of the democratic public, but it was "encouraged" by institutions such as the royal family and the army.<sup>137</sup> To Hichberger, nor was Butler's humanitarian project to paint the heroism and pathos of war progressive, as the new image of Tommy Atkins, whose characteristics were "honest, Christian, instinctively moral, however ignorant and rough," was suitable for the imperialistic soldiers whose mission was to fight the "savage" population of the globe.<sup>138</sup> Hichberger asserts that Butler's sympathetic representation of the war is more reactionary than progressive as it "attempts to depoliticize war"; for instance, *Balaclava*, the painting recently heralded by Dorothy Nott as a kind of proto-postmodern work in its recognition of "the psychological impact of war," is only a scheming picture to "play down" the "controversial aspects" of war.<sup>139</sup>

The common characteristic of biographical and social-art-historical methods is treating artworks as symbolic objects that embody or reflect the associable meanings. Hence, in this framework, *The Roll Call* represents various concepts, such as sympathy, pathos,

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<sup>136</sup> Hichberger, *Images of the Army*, 72-73.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid, 77.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid, 78.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid, 81; Nott, "Reframing War," 252.



humanitarianism, anti-imperialism, democracy, militarism, and imperialism. The problem of this method is to neglect enquiring how the art object thrived in its immediate relations to the viewers, which is the important problem in any great success in art history. Ideologies and sentiments may be contributing factors to the social role of *The Roll Call*, as they are, respectively, patterns of thought and patterns of feeling. However, the symbolic association of the painting cannot be the sole explanation for its success since a large part of its pictorial effect is unexamined and overlooked when meaning is regarded as the ultimate element of the painting's art. In this respect, Gell's concepts of the 'technology of enchantment' and of 'artworks as traps' can help reflection on *The Roll Call's* effectiveness, as they elucidate the mechanism of visual art in terms of its social efficacy, not in terms of its societal meaning.

## 2.2 Victorian Battle Art as a Technology of Enchantment

### 2.2.1 Art as a Technology of Enchantment

The manifested intentions of the artist and the presumed ethos of the time cannot explain the extraordinary success of *The Roll Call* and the spontaneous reactions towards it during the Victorian era. The iron railing installed in front of *The Roll Call* attests to the painting's magnetic effect; this was only the third time one had been used in the history of the annual exhibition of the Royal Academy of Arts (the other two occurred at the displays of

David Wilkie's *Chelsea Pensioners reading the Waterloo dispatch* in 1822 and William Powell Frith's *Derby Day* in 1858). To some degree, such public enthusiasm is related to what the painting depicts, as Palgrave contends that the "felicity in choice of subject" "explain[s] the popular enthusiasm."<sup>140</sup> However, the subject, the misery of the British soldiers in the first winter in Crimea, was hardly novel in 1874; it was a well-known subject through the critical dispatches of the war correspondent William Howard Russell (1820-1907) and the lithographic prints of the special war artist William Simpson (1823-1899) which were published during the war (plate 11).<sup>141</sup> Even if the wartime images were forgotten to the visitors at the Royal Academy of Arts in 1874, many Victorians were likely to be familiar with the image of the standing guardsmen on the Crimean War Memorial in St James's, London by John Bell (1811-1895), which had been part of the cityscape since 1861(plate 12). Bell's monument shares similarities with *The Roll Call* as it features three guardsmen in greatcoats standing in a gloomy mood. However, Bell's guardsmen did not stir the Victorian art world to the same degree as Butler's did.<sup>142</sup> Furthermore, apart from *The Roll Call*, there was another Crimean painting, *Balaklava: One of the Six Hundred* (1874)

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<sup>140</sup> Francis Turner Palgrave, "Royal Academy Exhibition," *The Academy* May 23, 1874, 584.

<sup>141</sup> For Simpson's lithographic prints, see Lalumia, *Realism and Politics in Victorian Art of the Crimean War*, 70-71.

<sup>142</sup> For the moment, the modern study of Bell is its minimal stage. Even then, the particular monument does not appear to be a big hit during the Victorian era. About Bell's Crimean monument, see, Richard Barnes, *John Bell: The Sculptor's Life and Works* (Kirstead: Frontier Publishing, 1999) 55; 61.

by Barker at the same exhibition in 1874 (plate 13). Barker's work adopts its subtitle from the famous poem of Alfred Lord Tennyson (1809-1892), *The Charge of the Light Brigade* (1854), and shows a fallen cavalryman during the disastrous charge of the Light Brigade in the Battle of Balaclava (1854). Although the painting focuses on a grave hero and a French *vivandière* (a female attendant on a regiment), the presentation of a cavalry officer is far more modest than that of the dying heroes in the grand-manner paintings. In addition, Barker's painting is scarcely jingoistic, as its theme is pathos, just as is Butler's. Yet *Balaklava* was totally eclipsed by *The Roll Call*, as if it was never hung at the same exhibition.<sup>143</sup>

The Victorians were not drawn to *The Roll Call* for its symbolic specification of the weary guardsmen in a Crimean winter, but for its strong realistic effect. They considered Butler's painting as the projection of a vision of a real event that took place during the Crimean War. In this respect, the painting went beyond the artist's intention, as Butler did not intend to paint any specific moment, but an emblematic image, of the war. Butler was only seven years old when the British forces arrived in the Crimea, and she made the painting in her private studio at Chelsea during the winter of 1873-1874. She hired ex-soldiers for the modelling, but there was only one Crimean veteran.<sup>144</sup> Regardless of these facts, her

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<sup>143</sup> A similar case is observed at the Royal Academy exhibition in 1875 when the French artist Henri Felix Emmanuel Philippoteaux (1815-84) exhibited *The Charge of the French cuirassiers at Waterloo* (1874). Despite the similar content (the cavalry charge at an infantry at a defensive position), Butler's *Quatre Bras* (1875) drew more enthusiasm from the reviewers. About the Philippoteaux's painting. See Usherwood, *Lady Butler*, 164.

<sup>144</sup> Butler, *An Autobiography*, 101.

painting was increasingly identified as a representation of a specific incident in history. When it was first revealed to the public, and they were given the information that the artist was female, many spectators believed that the painting was made by a nurse who had been an eyewitness of the war. They interpreted the monogram of a red cross on the painting, which was the symbol of the artist's youthful club at the South Kensington School of Art, as that of the International Red Cross.<sup>145</sup> This speculation was soon dismissed as the personal details of the artist were reported in the newspapers. However, the public desire to see the painting as a representation of a real event was not easily quelled. As early as 1892, the picture began to be regarded as a depiction of the battle of Inkerman (5 November 1854).<sup>146</sup> In 1909, a photographic postcard featuring a re-enactment of the painting in the Aldershot Military Tattoo was titled *Inkerman "The Roll Call"*.<sup>147</sup> The painting was given the attribution of a real person: at his centennial birthday, the Crimean veteran George Higginson (1826-1927) was identified as the mounted officer in the picture.<sup>148</sup> This identification of Butler's well-known painting was never recognised by her circle, and, at

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid, 47.

<sup>146</sup> "The "Roll Call" comes home to every English Heart in a way which no study of snow and the grenadiers could possibly do, if there were not the immortal story of Inkermann behind it." Hilary Skinner, "War Artists and War Pictures," *The Magazine of Art*, January, 1892, 62.

<sup>147</sup> Usherwood, *Lady Butler*, 35.

<sup>148</sup> *The Living Age*, "General Higginson, Centenarian," July 31, 1926, 330; *The Weekly Irish Times*, "Gen. Sir George Higginson: Dies in his 101st years," February 5, 1927, 9.

the same time, the artist and her associates were not active in fixing the already pervasive narrative attached to the painting.

*The Roll Call's* social role to contemporary viewers was to make them believe it was a pictorial vision of a real event. The mere content of the painting and the memory of the Crimean War may not be the primary factors in the painting's success as its intended narrative was replaced by a version imagined by the public that was under the influence of the exceptional effect of the painting. The mechanism of the high degree of technical excellence of *The Roll Call* which appealed to the Victorians, can be elucidated by Gell's view that regards art object as part of a larger system of technology. In "Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment of technology" (1992), Gell asserts that technical "excellence" is not a permanent characteristic of artworks, but the function of art objects as "components" of "a vast and often unrecognised technological system," which he calls "the technology of enchantment."<sup>149</sup> Enchantment or magic might sound irrational and superstitious, but it simply means a particular mode of art appreciation, manifested among highly socialised people. To Gell, an artist does not practice his technique in a haphazard way, but in "a network of intentionalities," which establishes the appropriate "level of collectivities and their dynamics."<sup>150</sup> This emphasis on social relations might appear to be in line with the semiotic framework which sees art as "propaganda" of ideas, but Gell clarifies that his framework is fundamentally materialistic: according to him, a system of

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<sup>149</sup> Gell, *The Art of Anthropology*, 163.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid*, 163.

technology [art] is not quite made to provide “technical means to persuade the individuals to desire a certain type of social order,” but to maintain “the social consequences which ensue from the production of the art objects,” accompanied by specific skillsets.<sup>151</sup> To Gell, the maintenance of the relations between the artist and the recipient is not just based on the properties of the objects, but also their particular attitudes towards “the technical process” itself. To sum up, the *technology of enchantment* is founded on the *enchantment of technology* (Italicised by Gell).<sup>152</sup>

To expound his concept of art as a technology of enchantment, Gell examines art objects from both non-Western and Western societies. He takes prow-boards from the Trobriand Islands - objects the inhabitants erect in front of their “Kula” canoes to demoralise the overseas Kula partners (plate 14)- as an example.<sup>153</sup> Gell dwells on the possibility that the particular pattern of the boards is the “predetermined psychological stimuli” (or weapons) in its association with “eye-spots patterns.”<sup>154</sup> However, he soon points out the limit of the

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Kula is a ceremonial exchange system practiced in the so-called Kula ring which includes the Milne Bay and Papua New Guinea which was known by the research of the anthropologist Bronisław Malinowski (1884-1942). See Bronisław Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (London; New York: Routledge, 2014).

<sup>154</sup> Gell, *The Art of Anthropology*, 165.

"visual effects" or *Gestalt* as the major source of the recipient's "disturbance."<sup>155</sup> What is more fundamental in the effect of the boards is its "association with [...] magical ideas"; without belief in "magical power," the "artistic prowess" of the carver will not be transformed into the "magical prowess" of the canoe's owner.<sup>156</sup> According to this framework, the belief in magic is the foundation of the transcendental power of art objects. Yet Gell tries not to downplay the significance of visual effects, as he acknowledges the "efficacy of art objects" as a "result of enchantment of technology."<sup>157</sup> What is magical to the Trobrianders is the difficulty of making the boards, that are sophisticated enough for ritualistic use, and typified by a dazzling design that consists of swirling curves, sharp direct carving, bright colouring, technical precision, and symmetry. In Gell's words, the canoe is enchanting as a "display of [...] artistry" which is only "explicable in magical terms," not as a "physical object."<sup>158</sup> The enchantment of technology, then, is not an abstract belief, but an action caused by the material properties of artworks that make human beings desire and admire the technology and its technicians. Gell argues that technical feats or "virtuosity"

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid, 166.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid, 166. Gell did not detail the practices of making and using the boards. For the more information about the prow boards, see The Bowers Blog, "Splash of Color: Massim Canoe Prow Boards" (Bowers Museum, December 2018).

<https://www.bowers.org/index.php/collection/collection-blog/splash-of-color-canoe-prow-boards-of-the-trobriand-islands>

<sup>157</sup> Gell, *The Art of Anthropology*, 166.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid, 166.

are essential in arranging the subject-object relation between people and things: referring to Georg Simmel's treatise on money, he maintains that it is the difficulty of acquisition of the object or the "resistance" from it that makes us desire it. In other words, "a kind of halo-effect" of works of art cannot be achieved without technical excellence.<sup>159</sup>

Gell considers that the belief in the veracity of the magical power of a certain ritual is formed by the knowledge of its unimaginable difficulty of creating the ritual objects. He finds the works of John Frederick Peto (1854-1907) a Western example of the enchantment of exceptional technique. The American artist was known for his photographic Trompe-l'oeil paintings of still life. His *Old Time Letter Rack* (1894) (plate 15) typifies the virtuosity of his art, the peculiar verisimilitude in its representation of flat objects (scraps, envelopes, and straps on the wooden board) on the flat surface of the canvas. Gell argues that the "difficulty" of the technology to transform painterly substances (pigments and so on) into a photographic vision, not the "aesthetic merit," is the primary source of admiration for the painting.<sup>160</sup> However, the viewer's admiration does not come from any delusion confusing the pictorial surface with either reality or a photograph. According to Gell, it is the "transubstantiation" of oil pigments to the realistic images of the depicted objects that makes the magic; the level of difficulty in the technical process of Peto's painting "transcends" the "normal sense" of the viewer who knows the fundamental difference between photography and painting. It is the knowledge of the "uncanny" chemistry of

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid, 167-168.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid, 170.



photography which makes the painter's work more special than a photograph because he achieves it without the faculty of the automatic transcription of nature.<sup>161</sup> The photographic transubstantiation of the light is indeed easier to explain than such pictorial transubstantiation. The incomprehensibility of a technique confers on the artist a "symbolic role as (an) occult technician."<sup>162</sup>

Gell does not suggest that the technical virtuosity of art is only concerned with an illusionistic technique. According to him, the "essential alchemy of art" is the transubstantiation of the artist's material into something else; hence, the mechanisms of Picasso's toy-assemblage *Baboon and Young* (1950) and Duchamp's *Fountain* (1917) all fulfil the core criterion of the technology of enchantment.<sup>163</sup>

### 2.2.2 The Technology of Realistic Battle Painting

Gell's framework is useful to see the success of *The Roll Call* in terms of the painting's compelling effect. The great degree of the painting's success would have been impossible unless it had exhibited an exceptional technical quality that could transcend the diversity of the ideological orientation of its viewers in vast numbers. The direct use of the painting

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid, 170-171.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid, 171-172.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid 173-174.

for propaganda purposes has been rare, since the painting is in the possession of the Royal family.<sup>164</sup> *The Roll Call* was most successful when it was used as a fine-art object at the Royal Academy of Arts, rather than in other settings. Therefore, the enchantment of the painting should be understood of the context of the customs surrounding fine arts in the West. The picture's use at the Royal Academy is comparable to the use of prow-board at the shores of the Kula ring. Upon the belief in the magical power of the board, the Trobrianders become more generous in battering. In the same manner, when the visitors to the Royal Academy acknowledged Butler as the qualified artist, they were enchanted by *The Roll Call*: their unique belief is fine-art.

*The Roll Call* is a highly technically accomplished picture, but it was hardly a technically exceptional picture at the exhibition. In fact, an artist regarded it as "an absurdly easy picture" on account of the greatcoat that covered the picturesque details of soldier's equipment and costume.<sup>165</sup> However, the painting struck Victorians as a very realistic picture. *The Illustrated London News* sees that the painting has a "vraisemblance that could only be expected from an eye-witness."<sup>166</sup> *The Art-Journal* observes that there is an

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<sup>164</sup> The Royal family lent the painting for nationalistic occasions such as the memorial event of the Crimean War at the Alexandra Palace in 1876 and The World's Colombian exposition in 1893. See, W.H. Pennington, *Sea, Camp, and Stage* (Bristol; London: J.W. Arrowsmith; Simpkin Marshall Hamilton, 1906), 145; *Chicago Daily Tribune*, "Art at the World's Fair," August 13, 1893, 14.

<sup>165</sup> Butler, *An Autobiography*, 102-103.

<sup>166</sup> *The Illustrated London News*, "The Royal Academy Exhibition," May 9, 1874, 446.

"absolute fact," in the painting, while *Morning Post* and *The Graphic* find in it "truthfulness" and a "life-like" effect.<sup>167</sup> It is therefore possible to assume that *The Roll Call's* unique realistic effect was the crucial factor in its magnetism to Victorian viewers, which was not facilitated by Butler's manual skills alone, but the particular method she used.

As far as its method is concerned, *The Roll Call* is a realistic picture, but it can also be a Realist picture when considering of its political context. In art history, Realism is a period style that bridges the gap between Romanticism and Symbolism; Gustave Courbet (1819-1877) is its acknowledged initiator.<sup>168</sup> What is peculiar about this loose category of style is its tendency to involve politics and ideologies, from the time of Courbet to the socialist realist art of the early twentieth century.<sup>169</sup> Realistic battle paintings are often seen as part of this Realist art on the grounds that they focus on the hardship of ordinary soldiers rather than the glory of aristocratic officers. For instance, Vasily Vereshchagin (1842-1904), the internationally celebrated Russian military painter, associates his art with the advent of socialism in *Realism*, the catalogue for his exhibitions in the US in 1888-1889.<sup>170</sup> Butler, too, was positioned under the banner of Realist art by her associates. Wilfrid Meynell uses

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<sup>167</sup> *Morning Post*, "The Royal Academy," May 5, 1874, 6; *The Graphic*, "Fine Arts," May 9, 1874, 455.

<sup>168</sup> Linda Nochlin, *Realism* (London: Penguin, 1990),13.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid*, 45-50.

<sup>170</sup> See *American Art Association, Exhibition of the works of Vassili Verestchagin*, (New York: American art association, 1888).

the word "Realism" to define the historical significance of Butler's art in his monograph in 1898.<sup>171</sup> Alice Meynell also does the same in "The Age of Anecdote" (1886) by summing up a new type of battle painting as the genre that most benefited from the "Realist" revolution in art.<sup>172</sup> She does not mention her sister's name in the article, but her descriptions clearly indicate Butler as the representative artist of Realist battle painting. According to Meynell, the main method of battle art is to "separate[s] the individual soldiers" from the larger army and to "study (them) in every possible human interest," which is synonymous with Butler's method to focus on individual soldiers.<sup>173</sup> As a Realist painting, *The Roll Call* is associated with the works of other British social-realist artists such as Samuel Luke Fildes (1844-1927) and Hubert von Herkomer (1849-1914), since it depicts the miserable state of the lower-class soldiers.<sup>174</sup>

However, the political realism of Realist painting does not fully explain the realistic effect of the battle painting, although its political connotations could contribute the generation of a realistic effect to a certain degree. Compared to Realist painting, which is concerned with content, realistic painting is more concerned with method. In fact, the idea of realistic painting has a longer history than Realist painting, whose specification was articulated after Courbet. Discussion on realistic painting is found in the discourses of Joshua Reynolds

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<sup>171</sup> Meynell, *The Life and Work of Lady Butler*, 31.

<sup>172</sup> Meynell, "The Age of Anecdote," 208.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid, 208-209.

<sup>174</sup> Julian Treuherz, *Victorian Painting* (London: Thames and Hudson,1997),179.

(1723-1792). In *Discourse III*, he divides the art of painting into two types according to their methods: the higher type of painting depicts the "perfect idea of beauty"; the lower type is produced by the "imitation of nature."<sup>175</sup> In his discourses, Reynolds, being a Platonist, consciously avoids using the word "real" for the lower type of painting. However, Reynolds's connotation becomes clear as he specifies that the method of the higher type of painting is not to represent "an individual, but a class," which is the exact opposite of the method of the lower type of painting which depicts the irregulars, not the general form.<sup>176</sup> According to Reynolds, the "Low School" is characterised by its "realistic imitation" of the meagre intellect which is "corresponding to history in literature," while the "Great School" is characterised by its power of "imagination" which is equivalent to "poetry": the former is typified by Dutch art, and the latter by Italian art.<sup>177</sup> Although Reynolds used the subject to uphold idealised grand-manner painting, his discourse encapsulates the method of realistic painting, which helped the later generation to contemplate the subject. Ruskin accepts Reynolds's categorization of a realistic method, but, at the same time, he elevates the ethical status of the method by relating it to his notion of the 'innocence of the eye,'

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<sup>175</sup> Joshua Reynolds, *Discourses on Art*, ed. Robert R. Wark (London: Yale University Press, 1997), 41-42.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid*, 47.

<sup>177</sup> John Ruskin, *Modern Painters III*, ed. E.T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (London: George Allen, 1904), 20-24.

whose practice is to "reject nothing" and "select nothing" in depicting nature.<sup>178</sup> Ruskin's affirmation of the method of painting the particular details of nature encouraged the Pre-Raphaelite painters to rebel against the method of grander-manner painting. Butler was acquainted with the Pre-Raphaelite painter John Everett Millais (1829-1896) whose studio she visited in 1862, and, in the same period, she was reading "Ruskin's inspiring writings" and applying his suggestions in her training.<sup>179</sup> It is highly likely that Butler was aware of the tension between the idealistic method and the realistic method when she was painting *The Roll Call* in 1874.

Butler and her circle, and even Ruskin, associated the method of realistic painting with ethical values such as truthfulness and humanitarianism. A painting as an object can be directly used as an instrument for charitable occasions; *The Roll Call* was selected to be displayed at Butler's solo shows at the Leicester Galleries during World War I in aid of the *Officers' Families Fund*.<sup>180</sup> However, within the method of realistic battle painting, there is an area free from ethical considerations. For instance, Butler did not regard the figures in her pictures as the literal representations of the people she saw in real life, but she

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<sup>178</sup> John Ruskin, *Modern Painters I*, ed. E.T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (London: George Allen, 1903), 624. About "the Innocence of the eye," see Alexander K. Wettlaufer, *In the Mind's Eye: The Visual Impulse in Diderot, Baudelaire and Ruskin* (Amsterdam; New York: Rodopi, 2003), 232-233.

<sup>179</sup> Butler, *An Autobiography*, 11; 14.

<sup>180</sup> *The Observer*, "Art and Artist: the Leicester Galleries," May 30, 1915, 14.

recognised them as independent entities in her aesthetic experimentations. According to her autobiography, she was excited to find that she and Jean-Louis Ernest Meissonier (1815-1891), who was the most prominent military artist of the time, had the same habit of giving a "name" to each pictorial figure he invented (the only known name of Butler's figures is "Gamin").<sup>181</sup> In fact, "figure" is a favourite word of Butler, who uses it whenever she finds anthropomorphic figures, pictorial or real, that "delight" her.<sup>182</sup> To her, human figures are elements of an artistic technique that induces "unity, vividness, straightforwardness, and breadth" before they are read as players of a story.<sup>183</sup> This kind of aestheticism might appear to be brutal to the people who view the artist as a sympathetic humanist. However, this professional mindset is deeply Victorian, as it corresponds to the William Michael Rossetti's stress on the "habit of regarding a picture as a picture," which is the "fundamental rudiment of art."<sup>184</sup> It is certain that Butler, like Rossetti, regards method as the foremost element of her trade.

The most inspiring artist for Butler's project of developing a method to make her figures realistic was Andrea del Sarto (1486-1530), who was not particularly acknowledged in

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<sup>181</sup> Butler, *An Autobiography*, 130.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid, 30; 64; 67; 97; 102; 106; 108; 153; 155; 176; 189; 190; 208; 235; 239; 257; 287; 293.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid, 12-13.

<sup>184</sup> Rossetti, *Fine art, Chiefly Contemporary*, 12.

Britain during this period, except through a poem of Robert Browning (1855).<sup>185</sup> In 1869, when she saw the fresco of *The Last Supper* by Del Sarto at San Salvi (c. 1527) (plate 16), she does not praise the deed of Jesus Christ, despite being a devout Catholic, but the artist's method, which is reflected in the "wonderful disposition of the hands and heads of the figures sitting at the long table," "the low of heads [the artist] has revelled in love of variety," and the "wonderful value of bright yellow" against "white."<sup>186</sup> Butler's appreciation of Del Sarto's method is followed by her diagnosis of its effect in which she finds the expression of "strong individuality" and the exceptional realism of the figures and their attitude.<sup>187</sup>

Contrary to her enchantment with Del Sarto's method, Butler was overtly discontented with the painting of the same subject in Fuligno (plate 17), which was regarded as a work of Raphael in this period (attributed to Pietro Perugino (c.1446-1523) in recent times). Despite her acceptance of its spiritual quality, Butler spotted "a very instructive contrast" between the methods of Raphael and Del Sarto.<sup>188</sup> In Raphael's method, there was a "want of connection" between the figures, caused by the "uniform light" whose effect was

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<sup>185</sup> Her high opinion of del Sarto created a tension with John Ruskin. Butler, *An Autobiography*, 153.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid, 62.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid, 63.



"unprepossessing."<sup>189</sup> What is learned from this account is that Butler's acknowledgement of the effectiveness of Del Sarto outweighs the conventional hierarchy between Del Sarto and Raphael in art history, which was a secondary consideration to the artist.

Although working on a different subject, Butler seems to have diligently applied Del Sarto's realistic method to her battle paintings. Butler's contemporaries found in *The Roll Call*, among many other things, Butler's methodical singularity and described it in terms very similar to the artist's own description of Del Sarto's method. Regardless of personal preferences in political and philosophical matters, the art-viewing public liked the method and effect of the painting that they experienced through "the expression and color of the wounded and dying," "the variety of (the soldiers') attitudes and facial expression," and "well-distinguished character."<sup>190</sup> In 1874, it was impossible to find any direct reference to specific political and military affairs in the contemporary reception of the painting; no one associated the achievement of the Cardwell Reforms and the problems of the Second Anglo-Ashanti war (1873-1874) with *The Roll Call*. It is equally impossible to find any reference to specific philosophy and ideologies such as humanism, democracy, and imperialism from the initial reception of the painting. There seems to have been only a

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<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> *New York Times*, "A Famous A Famous Painting: the Roll-Call after Battle," May 31, 1874, 9; *The Graphic*, "Fine Arts," May 9, 1874, 455; *The Times*, "Exhibition of the Royal Academy," May 2, 1874, 12.

mute performance of a technology for its own sake that was passionately applauded by the audience.

## 2.3 The Reality-Effect of Battle Painting as a 'Trap'

### 2.3.1 Battle Painting as a 'Trap'

The fact that *The Roll Call* was successful as a magnetic painting with an outstanding effect, compared to Barker's *Balaklava* of a similar subject matter and sentiment, induces one to question the hierarchy between the artist's technological intentions and ideological intentions. The Meynells seem to regard Butler's ethical intention to enlighten others as more fundamental than the aim of making picture effective. However, considering that any noble ideas, no matter how sophisticated, embedded in an artwork, are unlikely to be transferred to the recipients without the success of the art object's effect, it is possible to suppose that the hierarchical relationship which positions the ideological interest above the material interest is, in fact, reversed in the practitioner's mind. The fates of Butler's paintings were determined as they brazenly enticed and stimulated people for their survival. They can therefore be discussed in the light of Gell's notion of artworks as 'traps' which defines artworks as assertive materials programmed to work in anticipation of the viewer's behaviouristic traits. In his essay "Vogel's Net: Traps as Artworks and Artworks as Traps" (1996), Gell expounded his definition of artworks as traps by arguing against Arthur Danto's

refusal to acknowledge the Zande hunting net (plate 18), which was exhibited by the anthropologist Susan Vogel (1942-) in 1988 at the Centre for African Art in New York in the manner of a fine-art object.<sup>191</sup> Danto argues that the African people's net of is a mere artefact, whose resemblance to a Western fine-art object - such as string-bound structures of Jackie Winsor (1941-) (plate 19) - is only "superficial" because the net is not an embodiment of "complete, self-sufficient ideas" originated within the tradition of the Western-art-world.<sup>192</sup> Against Danto's Eurocentric notion of art, Gell points out that the bulk of art objects in the Western tradition were not actually made to be "appreciated by an art public" (as is the case for religious art made for liturgical use), and the fact that the Zande hunting net is unlikely to be an ordinary artefact, but a ritualistic object, as hunting tends to be regarded as a highly ritualistic activity in Africa.<sup>193</sup> For Gell, the hunting tools and traps in Africa are just as artistic as artworks in European art galleries, as they provide a useful model to explain what an art object is. According to Gell, an art object is like an automatically working trap without the presence of the artist; the artist designs her work, but it works as an "automaton" reacting to the anticipated behaviour of the viewer as a

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<sup>191</sup> The essay was first published in *Journal of Material Culture*, March 1 1996. In this chapter, I used the text reprinted in Gell, *The Art of Anthropology: Essays and Diagrams*, ed. Eric Hirsch (Oxford; New York: Berg, 2006).

<sup>192</sup> Gell, *The Art of Anthropology*, 189-195.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid*, 196-197.

prey.<sup>194</sup> Among the several examples Gell makes, a drawing of a giraffe trap provides a striking analogy with a work of art (plate 20). The giraffe cannot get out of the pit since it is dug according to the shape of the lower half of the animal. According to Gell, such a trap is not only a practical tool for the act of hunting, but also a representation of the "parameters of the animal's natural behavior" which provides a universal framework for artworks from both Western and non-Western art traditions.<sup>195</sup>

Butler's attitude towards her craft and its products surprisingly resembles a hunter's attitude to behaviouristic apparatus, as she never neglected to work on the innovation of her methods until very late in her career. Making their works more riveting than other paintings was part of the common professionalism of Victorian artists, who had to win viewers' attention in a competitive art scene. Yet Butler was more explicit in her desire to lure other human beings by knowing the logic of the enchantment over other painters. In her autobiography, a passage from the chapter recollecting the boisterous success of *The Roll Call* in May 1874 elucidates this stance:

It is a curious condition of the mind between gratitude for the appreciation of one's work by those who know and the uncomfortable sense of an exaggerated popularity with the crowd. The exaggeration is unavoidable, and no doubt, passes, but the fact that counts is the power of touching the people's heart, an "organ" which remains the same

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<sup>194</sup> Ibid, 200.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid, 200.

through all the changing fashions of art. I remember an argument I once had with Alma[-]Tadema on this matter of touching the heart. He laughed at me, and didn't believe in it at all.<sup>196</sup>

This account emphasises her integrity to discern between mere popular success and more meaningful artistic success. However, on the other hand, it reveals her materialist view of the human heart as a biological receptor which responds to particular stimuli. This stance is more clearly expressed in the passage recalling the success of *The Remnants of an Army* (1879) (plate 1). Reporting the tearful response that the Irish artist Alfred Elmore (1815-1881) had to the painting, she contends:

I have heard it said that no one was ever known to shed tears before a picture. On reading a book, on hearing music, yes, but now on seeing a painting. Well! That is not true, as I have proved more than once. I can't resist telling here of a pathetic man who came to me to say, 'I have a wet eye when I saw your picture!'<sup>197</sup>

These accounts show a very different image of the artist who has been portrayed as a sympathetic humanist. Although she defines the particular effect of *The Remnants* as "poetical," according to the conventional language of the time, her joy in finding a new

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<sup>196</sup> Butler. *An Autobiography*, 113.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid*, 184.

workable pictorial method is not concealable.<sup>198</sup> Though legitimate and innocent, the artist speaks in the manner of a pseudo-scientist who believes that the technique of manipulating human emotions is achievable through visual experiments of the human body. In this regard, 'the changing fashions' that might include time-specific issues become secondary elements of her art. It is undeniable that the artist had an anti-imperialistic intention in *The Remnants*, as she expresses this clearly in her autobiography. When the conflict of the Second Anglo-Afghan War (1878-1880) was at its height, Butler released the painting visualizing the hazardous incident during the First Anglo-Afghan War (1839-1842) in which British Imperial force were obliterated by the Afghan force leaving the army surgeon William Brydon and his horse as sole survivors.<sup>199</sup> However, it is hard to ascertain whether the painting guides one to think anti-imperialistically. Elmore might have been already an anti-Imperialist before he saw the painting. It is uncertain that any imperialists, who were genuinely touched by the painting, could be converted to become pacifists by the pictorial experience. Most of all, it is unlikely that Butler's excitement over *The Remnants* was caused by the discovery of a new moral insight; it is plausible that it was related to the new invention of a compositional scheme whose effectiveness was proven by viewers' spontaneous responses. The painting was the first to succeed in her method of juxtaposing a single pathetic figure (considering Brydon and the horse as one) with a

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<sup>198</sup> Ibid, 183; the simile between painting and poetry is common to the academic aesthetic, Joshua Reynolds's *Discourses on Art*. See, Reynolds, *Discourses on Art*, 120.

<sup>199</sup> Butler. *An Autobiography*, 183.

vast landscape, which creates a sublime effect. Butler never repeated the same subject twice, but her compositional method and the particular configuration of the figures, were reused for different subjects throughout her career. It is not surprising that she repeated the compositional scheme of *The Remnants* later in *Evicted* (1890): a sympathetic painting of the Irish problem which shows an Irish peasant woman standing in the vast setting of the Irish landscape.

The behaviouristic aspect of the successes of Butler's artworks can be attested by the fact that her inventive compositional formulae are more widely accepted than her ethico-political position. As Hichberger points out, the "discernible types" such as "the last stand," "the charge," "after the battle," and "the march past" are effortlessly absorbed by other artists who certainly had different political opinions.<sup>200</sup> Moreover, the currency of her discoveries from human experiments was valid regardless of the national difference. For instance, the formula of onrushing cavalymen of *Scotland for Ever!* (1881) (plate 21) was not only imitated in Britain but also on the Continent. During the nineteenth century, the painting was popular in Imperial Russia; its reproductions were found in the streets of Moscow.<sup>201</sup> *Scotland for Ever!* was almost directly imitated by Viktor Mazurovsky (1859-1923) in *Fight near Telish, 1877* (1888) (plate 22). The Polish artist, who lived through the time of Imperial Russia, used the same formula in another painting *The Attack of Tekinsky Regiment* (1916-1917). Germans during World War I, too, plagiarised the painting by

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<sup>200</sup> Hichberger, *Images of the Army*, 77.

<sup>201</sup> Butler, *An Autobiography*, 248.

“transforming the Scots Grey into Prussian cavalry,” regardless of the contextual fact that it celebrated their enemy, as they were drawn to its effect, rather than its content.<sup>202</sup>

The pivotal role of inventive formulae is not only true in the case of Butler, but also for battle painters of the time in general. The works of Ernest Crofts, Richard Caton Woodville (1856-1927), John Charlton (1849-1917), Stanley Berkeley (1855-1909), and Vereker Monteith Hamilton (1856-1931) are discernible by their unique compositions. These artists tend to reuse their inventions for representations of different events that have no link to each other. Crofts uses the reportage style of perspective placing the viewer behind the troops moving over the hill for his Napoleonic Wars and English Civil War subjects. John Charlton, utilising his skill as an animal painter, devises the authentic “mould” of rushing horses onward at a slightly tilted angle, which gives a dramatic effect to his paintings of the Anglo-Egyptian War (1882), Boer War (1899-1902) and World War I.<sup>203</sup> Stanley Berkeley represents the advancing soldiers and horses thrusting to the left side of the viewer in his variable subjects. Hamilton uses the same side view of the advancing British troops for his paintings of the Anglo-Afghan War.<sup>204</sup> Caton Woodville, as the most energetic battle

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<sup>202</sup> Usherwood, *Lady Butler*, 83.

<sup>203</sup> Hichberger, *Images of the Army*: 117.

<sup>204</sup> About Hamilton’s Afghanistan paintings, see Harrington, *British Artists and War* 204-207.



painter and illustrator, might be the inventor of the most numerous formulae in Britain.<sup>205</sup> He also recycles his inventions for representing different wars. For instance, his Boer War illustration *Brave Irish* (plate 23), which shows the dramatically foreshortened figures at the moment of capturing the enemy stronghold, was reused for rendering a victorious battle of the Japanese army during the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905) (plate 24). The common aim of Victorian battle painters, regardless of their political stances, was to set up effective traps for the consumers of war images.

*The Roll Call* was Butler's most successful trap, although it is difficult to maintain that its compositional formula was the main element of its inventiveness. Perhaps the composition of the painting is unremarkable compared to her later paintings, as it was least emulated by other battle artists. The effectiveness of *The Roll Call* seemed to come from its anonymity and the minimal involvement of the narrative. It should be noted that *The Roll Call* is least involved with historical accounts compared to her later major successes. From *The 28<sup>th</sup> Regiment at Quatre Bras* onwards, her next Academy painting after *The Roll Call*, the subjects of her paintings grew to be more specific as they became related to specific incidents in history. It is true that Butler's historical visions are imaginary visions, not being translations of the accounts as in most cases. Yet it is possible to specify the written sources Butler used for her paintings, that are associated with the real events and people. The

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<sup>205</sup> For Caton Woodville's reputation as the most "admired" and "imitated" battle artist, see John Gooch, ed., *The Boer War: Direction, Experience and Image* (New York; London: Routledge, 2014), 218-220.

*Quatre Bras* was inspired by Captain William Siborne's *History of the War in France and Belgium in 1815* (1844);<sup>206</sup> *Balaclava* (1876) by the well-known story of the Charge of the Light Brigade during the Crimean War; *The Remnants of an Army* by Brydon's own account published by George Lawrence (1804-1884) in *Reminiscence of Forty-Three Years in India* (1874);<sup>207</sup> *The Defense of Rorke's Drift* (1880) by the first-hand accounts of the soldiers of the 24<sup>th</sup> Regiment who fought at the battle against the Zulu warriors;<sup>208</sup> and *Scotland for Ever !* by the manuscript account of James Armour who was one of the riders of the charge made at the Battle of Waterloo (1815).<sup>209</sup> Butler's practice of associating specific accounts with her paintings lasted until the very end of her career when she was still collecting first-hand accounts of World War I.

Compared to these works of the specific people and events, *The Roll Call* was related to a situation after an anonymous engagement in the Crimea. Admittedly, Butler must have been influenced by notable historical accounts of the war, such as Alexander William Kinglake's *The Invasion of the Crimea* (1863-1887) and William Howard Russell's *British Expedition to the Crimea* (1858). However, *The Roll Call* is still an open painting that makes the viewer bewildered. The painting may be an independent anecdote, but it is not a subordinate fragment of a bigger storyline, as is the case in *Quatre Bras*, *Balaclava*, and

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<sup>206</sup> Usherwood, *Lady Butler*;61.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid*, 77.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid*, 79.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid*, 81.

*Scotland for Ever!* which each represent specific moments in famous military operations. *The Roll Call* might be the painting whose materiality was taken into account more fully than Butler's other paintings as it has lesser conceptual associations, hence more interpretative potential. How far Butler intended to go with the painting's anonymity is not clear. Yet it is possible to imagine that Butler neglected to relate *The Roll Call* to a specific history in her stronger desire to captivate her viewers by using Andrea del Sarto's method of making the figures come alive, which was the core in the effect of the painting. In this sense, *The Roll Call* is the artist's most primitive painting; its bare structure corresponds with Gell's definition of artworks as traps.

### 2.3.2 The Reality-Effect of the Realistic Battle Painting.

Butler's works, in terms of their fundamental designs, were like automated traps captivating the attention of their viewers. Therefore, it is logical to ask what the bait of the traps was. Asking what the inherent effect of the painting was is problematic in the domain of art history since there is no way to measure the effectiveness of an art object by the analytic tools of the discipline. Furthermore, art history is perhaps the discipline that knows the futility of such an attempt best, as it professes to observe the vicissitudes of fortunes of artefacts throughout time. Nevertheless, the speculation of *The Roll Call's* material effect will gain worth as an expansion of the theoretical parameter in the studies of battle paintings.

*The Roll Call* was produced by Butler's unique method that separates a small band of individual soldiers from the grand vision of a battle and details the particular characteristics of the figures. This method seems to make a painting more realistic compared to more abstract, grand-manner history paintings. However, the effect of a particular painting cannot be reduced to the result of the application of a certain method. It is possible that the tactic of separating and focusing is applied to Butler's later paintings and to her competitor's. Yet only *The Roll Call* had a peculiarly magnetic effect. Even if the painting's uniqueness, as the first of its kind, caused this extraordinary success, it is still necessary to enquire how the painting succeeded in its own right. The most useful term to speculate about the painting's inherent faculty of enchantment is "vraisemblance" (f. likelihood) which is from the review in *The Illustrated London News*.<sup>210</sup> This contemporary use of the word vraisemblance led me to understand the effect of *The Roll Call* in the light of Roland Barthes's explanation of the mechanism of the realistic effect of artwork. In the essay "The reality effect" (1968), Barthes discusses the relation between vraisemblance and descriptive details in realist literature in the nineteenth century. To Barthes, the "descriptive details," that are abundant in Gustave Flaubert's novels, are the object of enquiry, as they seem to be "useless details," that have no clear "function" in "the narrative fabric".<sup>211</sup> Lacking any narrative significance, such details as "how long the sitting lasted, and the size, and the

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<sup>210</sup> *The Illustrated London News*, "The Royal Academy Exhibition," May 9, 1874, 446.

<sup>211</sup> Roland Barthes, "The Reality Effect," in *French literary theory today: a reader*, ed. Tzvetan Todorov, trans. R. Carte, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 11.

location of the door," seem to resemble aesthetic description (*ekphrasis*) in the Western rhetorical tradition.<sup>212</sup> However, according to Barthes, there is a difference between the 'fanciful' descriptions of the ancient and modern realist. He argues that the ancients, not restrained by the scientific belief that there is an essential difference between "the living" and the "intelligent," could infinitely create imaginative details as long as their audiences accepted their *vraisemblance*.<sup>213</sup> The modern realist, on the other hand, is in a difficult position to create the same vivid effect from the endless description of details (notations) because they believe that there is a "concrete reality" that will make notations "superfluous" at any time, through a cross-examination between signs and their referents.<sup>214</sup> Therefore, Barthes maintains, "a break down between the old *vraisemblance* and modern realism" was created.<sup>215</sup> Modern realism does not mean to signify any meanings, but to create the effect that makes us feel that notations are realistic. In this sense, the uninterpretable details in realist novels are not useless notations but are the "true signifier of realism."<sup>216</sup>

What is learned from Barthes's framework, which primarily concerns literature, is the endorsement of insignificant details that do not contribute to the plot of the main narrative

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<sup>212</sup> Ibid, 12.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid,14-15.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid,15.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid,16.

but are the essential elements to boost the likelihood of the artwork. Therefore, these details exist for their perceptual effect that disintegrates the viewer's logical mindset which discriminates the art and the physical world. In other words, modern realism is self-referential.

To localize Barthes's insight into the discipline of art history, especially in figure painting, I suggest using *fidget* as a proxy word for the literary details outside of the narrative structure. Fidget, of course, is known as the common symptom of people having Attention Deficit Hyper Activity Disorder (ADHD) at various degrees. However, before confining it as a neural disorder, one must acknowledge that fidgeting is a natural part of human life happens between structured intentional projects. The activities aspect of one's rational project are akin to the meaningful descriptions in the narrative fabric of a novel, while most of the unconscious aimless behaviours of a person are comparable to the insignificant details that hold their own expressional qualities.

In paintings featuring human figures, it can be expected that a person who knows how to mix between two different sets of activities - the intentional and the accidental- can create a realistic *vraisemblable* painting. It is suggested that Butler found the effect of fidgeting in figure painting when she observed Del Sarto's *The Last Supper*. It is true that Jesus Christ and the Apostles show a variety of movement. Yet it is hard to surmise that the mural is particularly dynamic compared to other paintings of the subject, as all the motions of Del Sarto's apostles seem to be relevant to the line of emotion belonging to the story. In terms of fidgeting, what Butler must have not failed to observe, but did not mention in her autobiography, is the two figures beside the central window above the Apostles (plate

25). The role of the pair is dispensable in the story of the Last Supper. The bearded figure seems to have just found the scene of the Eucharist and was curious; he asks the young figure serving them who they are. Their attitude is light and far more casual than the Apostles who are already agitated having listened to Jesus's announcement of his impending death and the betrayal of one of his disciples.

This description of fidget is found in *The Roll Call* in full scale. The bare narrative structure of the painting can be encapsulated in its title, *Calling the Roll After An Engagement, Crimea*. However, the number of people actually paying attention to the rational project of the roll call is only three: the mounted officer, the sergeant, and the beardless figure at attention. More tellingly, even the mounted figure appears to be listless with what he is doing by being simply carried by the horse. Other figures are distracted from the performance of the ceremony as they are engaged in chatter, resting, and looking around. Any knowledgeable person about the army would notice that this allowance of fidgeting at a muster means it is not an ordinary roll, but after real combat, as such the conduct is outside of the strict discipline of the modern army. This point can be visualized by the comparison between *The Roll Call* and a lithographic print featuring the review of the guardsmen by the Queen at Buckingham Palace. In *Queen Victoria and Prince Albert Inspecting the Wounded Grenadier Guards in Buckingham Palace* (1855) (plate 26), the soldiers are kept in order while waiting for their turn attentively. Whether the reportage scene is the literal transformation of the real event which happened at the specific time

and place is not important.<sup>217</sup> What is significant is that it is hard to find 'superfluous' details that are outside of the main narrative: inspection. Many details of Butler's guardsmen are nothing to do with the anecdote of the picture. Yet their fidgeting is part of the painting's authentic effect to captivate the viewer to accept the picture as an exceptionally life-like painting.

This is not to say this thesis claims to find out a universal explanation for the success of Butler, let alone the popularity of late Victorian battle paintings by the concept of fidget. Nevertheless, the noticeable insignificant behavioural details in *The Roll Call* indicates the self-referential nature of Butler's realism. It can be observed that many figures lose the focus from the main tasks in her early works other than *The Roll Call*, such as *Quatre Bras*, *Balaclava*, and *Inkerman*. In particular, the case of *Balaclava* shows that the artist's interest in pictorial details might eclipse her ethical project to "cherish" and "respect" the "individual personality" through the given "anecdote."<sup>218</sup> William Henry Pennington (1833-1923), who was one of the Hussars in the charge of the Light Brigade during the battle of Balaclava, also modelled for a conspicuous figure in *Balaclava* whose particular facial expression concerns the press (plate 27).<sup>219</sup> The commentators assumed that Pennington was

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<sup>217</sup> About the lithographic print made by George Houseman Thomas (1824-1868), see Keller, *The Ultimate Spectacle*, 181.

<sup>218</sup> Meynell, "The Age of Anecdote," 209.

<sup>219</sup> W.H. Pennington, *Sea, Camp, and Stage: incidents in the life of a survivor of the Balaclava Light Brigade* (Bristol: J. W. Arrowsmith, 1906), 144.



responsible for the uneven image of the British soldier in Butler's painting that they censured for being "theatrical," "ruinously obtrusive and unreal," and even "dazed and drunk."<sup>220</sup> These character assassinations greatly displeased Pennington who himself was a professional actor.<sup>221</sup> Usherwood appreciates this depiction of the "mental derangement" of a real victim of war as a "level of realism" beyond its time when such a "portrayal of war was still unacceptable."<sup>222</sup> Nott regards the painting as pioneering in showing "the effects of post-traumatic stress disorder, a phenomenon unrecognised until well into the twentieth century."<sup>223</sup> However, what is curious about the artist who exhibited an exceptional moral quality in "remembering the pain of others," is that she also seemed to accuse Pennington of theatrical modelling.<sup>224</sup> Following the initial success of *Balaclava*, Butler directs a *tableau vivant* of the picture at a private gathering that only features Pennington.<sup>225</sup> Her description of Pennington's re-enactment of his experience as a real

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<sup>220</sup> Usherwood, *Lady Butler*, 64-65.

<sup>221</sup> Pennington, *Sea, Camp, and Stage*, 150-151.

<sup>222</sup> Usherwood, *Lady Butler*, 65.

<sup>223</sup> Nott, "Reframing War," 252.

<sup>224</sup> Paraphrased from Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (London: Penguin, 2003), 103.

<sup>225</sup> About the nineteenth century practice of "living pictures," see Thomas S. Grey, "Tableaux vivants: Landscape, History Painting, and the Visual Imagination in Mendelssohn's Orchestral Music," *19<sup>th</sup>-century music*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (summer, 1997), 38-76.

victim of the disastrous operation is even harsher and more disrespectful than any other commentators:

The wretch pretended to obey, but, just before the curtain rose, rammed the busby down again, and utterly destroyed the meaning of that figure! We didn't want a representation of Mr. So-and-so in the becoming uniform of a hussar, but my battered trooper.<sup>226</sup>

Had Pennington read this account from *An Autobiography*, published in 1922, he would have been offended as according to his memoir, *Sea, Camp, and Stage* (1906), he seemed to respect Butler. Butler's disdain for the spontaneous expression of a veteran, who still might have had PTSD two decades after the war, induces one to rethink Butler's reputation as an all-time sympathetic viewer of the ordinary soldiers. In the end, whatever actually happened between Butler and Pennington during the model study, Butler chose to depict the central figure distinctively unfocused among his suffering and caring brothers in arms. The paradoxical attitude of the artist towards her sitter suggests that Butler took Pennington's fidgeting into account in the resultant painting out of an aesthetical interest rather than an ethical interest. Therefore, it is likely that the artist's discovery of the pictorial effect of Pennington's unruly behaviour preceded her humanitarian diagnosis of the disorder unknown in 1874. Butler might have had sympathy for the figures in her pictures.

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<sup>226</sup> Butler, *An Autobiography*, 155.

However, at the moment of art-making, those figures had to remain in the realm of cold technological concerns, as their role was to inflict a sanguine effect onto human beings.

#### 2.4 Conclusion: The Decline of *The Roll Call* as an Effective Object

To see a Victorian battle painting as an embodiment of method and effect, not as ideas and collective ideologies, is not a totally new perspective in history. Clement Greenberg in "Avant-Garde and Kitsch" (1939) disparages nineteenth-century battle painting as "unreflective" art that only depicts "effect" in its interest in robbing the time and money of the ignorant masses.<sup>227</sup> Even before Greenberg's article, which was written to uphold modernist values, "The Painting of War" (1916), an article in *The Lotus Magazine*, censures the shallowness of nineteenth-century battle paintings compared with the "deep" fine-art paintings of war, such as Leonardo Da Vinci's lost *The Battle of Anghiari* (1505) and Diego Velasquez's *The Surrender of Breda* (1634-35); to the anonymous author, realistic battle paintings fell to the level of mere illustrations as they aim to realise "anecdotes" rather than "art."<sup>228</sup> More tellingly, the article contends that Victorian battle paintings are "shipwrecked on the insignificance of detail" as they exploit "modern curiosity and modern

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<sup>227</sup> Greenberg, *Art and Culture*, 15.

<sup>228</sup> Anon. "The Painting of War," 29.

external realism" for the "enjoyment" of the viewer.<sup>229</sup> It is interesting to see that, in the article, Butler was excluded from this accusation of shallow realism, as her works exhibit "vitality" over "anecdote."<sup>230</sup> These analyses are not particularly advantageous for the effort to reinstate the art-historical status of Victorian battle art. However, they are valuable in understanding the social role of Victorian battle paintings in their immediate social relations, which is to enchant people with their external realism that is the essential quality of the genre.

One last insight learned from the case of *The Roll Call* is that the realistic effect of the painting, which was compelling in 1874, is not an inherent quality of the painting. Greenberg and the writer of *The Lotus Magazine* were able to abhor realistic battle paintings because they still sensed their enchanting power which needed to be exorcised by rational criticism. However, the gripping power of the realistic battle painting, as a system of technique, had been exhausted even before such conscious criticism. A forerunner of the decline of realistic battle painting as a valid social technique is found when *The Roll Call* was brought to the British public in the artist's solo show at Leicester Galleries in 1912. *The Athenaeum* witnessed the natural reduction of the former magical power, as they reported that the once "amazing" painting now appears to be "rather dull in execution" and only slightly better than the "weekly illustrations."<sup>231</sup> *The New York Times*,

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<sup>229</sup> Ibid, 29.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid, 29.

<sup>231</sup> *The Athenaeum*, "Fine Art Gossip," May 25, 1912, 4413.

contrary to the enraptured review it published in 1874, now coldly maintained that the picture would “receive but [the] scantiest notice” without the “need for special police protection” if it was hung again at the RA exhibition.<sup>232</sup> Such a quiet demise of the enchantment of a technology can be taken as the expiration of a technology of enchantment, which is called late Victorian battle painting.

### Chapter 3: Battle Painting’s Agency: The Case of Two Paintings of the Battle of the Alma

This chapter aims to identify the agents of Butler’s *The Colours* (1898). Depicting the glorious moment in which the Crimean veteran Robert Loyd-Lindsay (1832-1910) led his troops to the top of the enemy stronghold at the battle of the Alma (1854), *The Colours* is not a work that typically fits Butler’s humanitarian principles. Furthermore, the painting has an undeniable morphological similarity with *Sergeant Luke O’Connor Winning the Victoria Cross at the Battle of the Alma* (1859) by Louis William Desanges (1822-1887), which is part of the Victoria Cross Gallery that was founded from the late 1850s to the early 1860s. The apparent similarity between the two objects, which has not been discussed in detail, is not fully explicable in terms of biographical or social-historical motives. However, Gell’s concept of agency enables us to elucidate the probable agents behind the similarity,

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<sup>232</sup> *The New York Times*, “Art Notes from London,” May 26, 1912, 15.

which are related to elements uncommon in discussions of Victorian battle art. Contrary to the conception that Victorian battle paintings are primarily products of social and political causes, the visual specification of *The Colours* is heavily motivated by personal attachment and the desire of an individual. In addition, with the help of Gell's method of treating any contributing factor as a person, this chapter is able to incorporate a detailed account of a historical battle as a description of a substantial performance, not as an immaterial narrative, into the discussion of Victorian battle painting.

### 3.1 *The Colours* (1898) as a Problem Object.

#### 3.1.1 The Significance of *The Colours* in Butler's Career.

At the Royal Academy of Arts annual exhibition in 1899, Butler exhibited *The Colours* (1898), which depicts the moment that a band of Scots Fusilier Guards under the Queen's and regimental colours take the enemy stronghold at the Battle of the Alma in the Crimean War (1854) (plate 28). Unlike her popular works in the 1870s and early 1880s, the painting did not inflame any enthusiastic reactions among critics and the public. The painting was seen as a dull repetition of her old method, and in line with the retrospective trend of the 1890s, when British battle painters were increasingly revisiting great historic wars before

the Second Boer War, which broke out in October 1899, became a fresh subject.<sup>233</sup> *The Athenaeum* wrote that *The Colours* relies on the artist's "methods" too much, while it lacks "notions and experiences as regards military passion."<sup>234</sup> The architect Henry Heathcote Statham (1839-1924), in his review of the Academy's annual exhibition in the *Fortnightly Review*, contends that Butler's work was a "weak and theatrical contribution."<sup>235</sup> This was contrary to his acknowledgement of the merits of other battle painters such as Andrew Carrick Gow (1848-1912) and John Charlton (1849-1917) for their Jubilee Procession pictures, and his lamentation over the absence of the work of Ernest Crofts (1847-1911) whom he considered to be "by far our best artist" in the genre.<sup>236</sup> Butler must have read these comments on her painting when she was in South Africa, where she had gone in October 1898, following the appointment of her husband as the Commander-in-Chief of the colony.<sup>237</sup> These unfavourable remarks show the difficulties that the artist had to deal with in the later stage of her career; by the 1890s, Butler was no longer the most riveting artist in the genre of battle painting. Unlike the 1870s, when Butler was the sensational figure of the genre, after the middle of the 1880s her male competitors increasingly

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<sup>233</sup> Usherwood, *Lady Butler*, 101.

<sup>234</sup> *The Athenaeum*, "The Royal Academy," May 27, 1899, 664-665.

<sup>235</sup> Henry Heathcote Statham, "The Academy, The New Gallery, and The Guildhall," *Fortnightly Review*, July 1899, 391.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>237</sup> Usherwood, *Lady Butler*, 124.

established themselves through paintings of the contemporary colonial wars. In 1899, Butler did not stand out as a representative artist of her field which was now full of practitioners working on similar subjects.

Though harsh, it is hard to reject the *Athenaeum's* criticism of *The Colours* in all its aspects. The picture can be seen in relation to "the basic types" she had repeatedly used for her earlier works such as *Quatre Bras and Scotland for Ever!* as it represents a battle in a projective formula in which the soldiers advance toward the viewer without the presence of the enemy.<sup>238</sup> The painting is typical of Butler and seems to be based on a synthesis of existing methods rather than creativity and new inventions. If the visual specification of *The Colours* is the result of her artistic mannerisms, the artwork can be read as a sign of the decline of her career, unlike the period when she used to dazzle her audiences with the most inventive works in her genre.

This pattern - that a once appealing type of art object loses its originality and flare - is commonplace in art history and can be seen in the collective fate of Victorian artworks in the middle of the twentieth century. However, the implications of *The Colours* might be more damaging when considering the artist's ethical principle. The painting still appears to be made in accordance with the artist's principles of not exploiting the direct conflict between the two military forces, and not painting the contemporary subject.<sup>239</sup> However,

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<sup>238</sup> For the basic types of battle painting, see Hichberger, *Images of the Army*, 77.

<sup>239</sup> Butler, *An Autobiography*, 184-187.



the image of the British elite soldiers advancing with raised flags into a heavy artillery barrage seems to contrast with the artist's humanistic determination not to paint "the glory of war."<sup>240</sup> In *The Colours*, Butler is not ashamed to praise the British victory and the warlike ethos of the country. The Battle of the Alma (1854) was the British's army's first major engagement in the Crimea; whose objective was to capture the Great Redoubt on the hill above the River Alma against the Russians. The soldiers in the painting are the 'Colour band' of the Scots Fusilier Guards who had a crucial role in this battle, defending the colours and boosting the morale of other troops. There are not enough accounts of the contemporary reception of the painting, as it was placed at the headquarters of the Scots Guards shortly after the initial exhibition in 1899.<sup>241</sup> However, it is possible to assume that, unlike her other sympathetic paintings such as *Balaclava* and *The Roll Call*, the painting would not be welcomed by the Peace Society.<sup>242</sup> It is hard to ascertain how the painting would be appreciated by modern viewers, as it is Butler's least known work. Nevertheless, as a rare occasion, the painting happened to be filmed in a recent movie, *A United Kingdom* (2016). In the movie, the picture appears as a backdrop image to a British diplomat who tries to persuade the protagonists – an interracial couple - to separate due to the racism they could face on their return into Botswana. Here the painting is used as

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<sup>240</sup> *The Times*, "Lady Butler," 4 October, 1933, 17

<sup>241</sup> The painting was commissioned by the regiment. See Usherwood, *Lady Butler*, 103.

<sup>242</sup> According to Nott, *Balaclava* was seen as a painting the Peace Society would favour. See Nott, "Reframing War,"74.

an imperial symbol that emphasises the British empire's coercive rule over its colonies, as it is placed at the centre of the diplomat's office, next to a map of Africa. Considering this specific use, it is difficult to assume that the picture belongs to the same group of works that are prone to be associated with sympathy and pathos.

*The Colours's* form is generic, and its content dangerously oversteps the ethical boundary prescribed by the artist. Therefore, it is possible to ask whether the painting is a failed work in the artist's career. Not every work in an artist's oeuvre is a success that meets the artist's technical and moral standards. Butler's significance in art history is defined by her technical ingenuity and her strong ethical codes in handling her subject. While successful works such as *The Roll Call*, *Quatre Bras*, *Balaclava*, *The Remnants of an Army*, and *Scotland for Ever!* attest to Butler's art-historical significance by fulfilling the criteria of creativity and humanity, *The Colours* can be explained as an atypical and marginal piece in the artist's career.

A social-art-historical explanation for the ethical issues of *The Colours* can be found in the relationship between Butler's career trajectory and the period's social atmosphere. During the 1890s, Butler was competing against her male competitors who were mainly working on historical battle paintings that were "attuned to militaristic patriotism."<sup>243</sup> Against the warlike trend of the time, Butler released more reflective historical battle paintings. Her *Halt on a Forces March: Peninsular War* (1892) depicts gaunt horses drawing a heavy carriage during the Peninsular War (1807-1814). *The Dawn of Waterloo* (1895) shows the

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<sup>243</sup> Usherwood, *Lady Butler*, 103.

Scots Grey awaking on the morning of the great battle. Joan Hichberger contends that Butler's choice of a "melancholic" moment in *The Dawn of Waterloo* makes the work an "anti-war painting."<sup>244</sup> Butler's other works such as *Steady the Drums and fifes!* (1897) and *On the Morrow of Talavera* (1898) overtly focus on the tragic aspect of war. The problem is that these sophisticated and dramatic representations of war did not draw enthusiastic attention from the British audience in the last decade of the nineteenth century.<sup>245</sup> Nor was the Royal Academy kind to the artist, as they placed *The Dawn of Waterloo* in a bad location.<sup>246</sup> Considering the succession of negative reactions to Butler's emotive depictions of war, it is possible to imagine that the artist intentionally relaxed her rigid principles in *The Colours* to deal with her professional predicament.

The combative aspect of *The Colours* can be understood through Butler's legitimate desire to reverse her declining status in the British art world. However, *The Colours* cannot be explained alone by this intention to succeed, as it has an undeniable formal affinity with another painting. The resemblance between *The Colours* and the painting *Sergeant Luke O'Connor Winning the Victoria Cross at the Battle of the Alma* (1859) by the British artist Louis William Desanges (1822-1887) is striking (plate 29). The compositional scheme of the two pictures is almost the same. Both paintings show the formation of the foot soldiers in

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<sup>244</sup> Hichberger, "Military Themes in British Painting 1815-1914" (PhD diss., University College London, 1985), 130-131.

<sup>245</sup> Usherwood, *Lady Butler*, 103.

<sup>246</sup> Butler, *An Autobiography*, 259.

red coats (or scarlet tunics), on a plain, fighting enemies beyond the frame of the picture. The protagonists of each are guarding the colours as their main objective, as they are holding the colours next to the fallen figures. The effect of the thick smoke from black gunpowder, obscuring the mounted figures in the background, is also the same in both pictures. The skirmishing riflemen in the foreground left corner of both paintings are almost identical in their posture and position. It seems that Butler almost re-made Desanges's painting from the 1850s according to the technical standard of British battle painting in the 1890s.

The compelling resemblance between the two pictures would damage Butler's reputation as a conscious reformer of her genre. The artist is known to admire the works of the renowned French battle painters such as Meissonier, De Neuville, and Detaille, but she never plagiarised any of their works. The relation between the two pictures further complicates Butler's unnatural decision to copy another painter's work. Desanges's *Sergeant Luke O'Connor* is part of a bigger series called Victoria Cross Gallery that was made to commemorate the deeds of Victoria Cross awardees, while Butler's *The Colours* is a single project. Both pictures deal with the same battle, the Battle of the Alma, but they depict different incidents. Desanges's painting depicts the Irish Sergeant Luke O'Connor (1831-1915) of the 23rd Royal Welch Fusiliers holding the Queen's colour after the death of its previous bearer, while Butler's depicts Robert Loyd-Lindsay (1832-1901) (later Lord

Wantage) of the Scots Fusilier Guards advancing with the Queen's colour.<sup>247</sup> It is noted that the sitters of both paintings were awarded the Victoria Cross for similar actions on the same battlefield. This basic information about the two pictures cannot singlehandedly explain the apparent similarity between the two objects. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate whether the peculiar link between the two pictures was made by the associated elements, such as the same subject, and the same award.

### 3.1.2 A Methodological Reflection on the Issues of *The Colours*

The aim of this chapter is not to accuse Butler of plagiarism, but to inquire into the covert agents that generated the unmistakable similarity between the *The Colours* and *Sergeant Luke O'Connor*. In modern contemporary art, a formal resemblance between two art objects by two separate authors is often regarded as a sign of plagiarism that costs one of the artists their originality. However, formal resemblances between artworks are welcomed as positive properties in the art histories of earlier periods. In the studies of Antique and Renaissance art, for instance, Aby Warburg (1866-1929) endeavours to trace

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<sup>247</sup> Robert Lindsay became Robert Loyd-Lindsay after his marriage to Harriet Sarah (1837-1920) in 1858. See Stearn, Roger T. "Lindsay, Robert James Loyd-, Baron Wantage (1832-1901), army officer and agriculturist." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. 23 Sep. 2004; Accessed 14 Mar. 2021. <https://www-oxforddnb-com.libproxy.york.ac.uk/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-34544>.

the "afterlife of antiquity" by detecting "the undeniable similarity" between art objects from various regions and periods.<sup>248</sup> In studies of nineteenth-century art, the detective work of finding hidden sources for paintings which seem to be based on the artists' observation of nature and creativity is already a common practice. For example, Linda Nochlin identified that the popular imagery of "the Wandering Jew" was an inspiration for Gustave Courbet's *The Meeting ("Bonjour Monsieur Courbet")* (1854),<sup>249</sup> and Michael Fried suggests that we see numerous artworks of the past as "the sources" of Edouard Manet's seemingly progressive artworks.<sup>250</sup>

In finding the source of the similarity between Butler and Desanges's pictures, this chapter has benefited from Gell's notion of 'agency' and the 'Art Nexus,' explained in his *Art and Agency* (1998). In the Art Nexus (plate 3), Gell defines the entities that play a role in a relation created by an artwork in four terms: Index (art object), artist, recipient (viewer), and prototype (model). These four terms are put into the 'agent' and 'patient' position according to the specific relation they form.<sup>251</sup> The benefit of Gell's approach is that it

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<sup>248</sup> Aby Warburg, *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity: Contribution to the Cultural History of the European Renaissance*, trans. David Britt (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute), 1999, 126.

<sup>249</sup> Linda Nochlin, *Courbet* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2007), 29-30

<sup>250</sup> Michael Fried, *Manet's Modernism: or the Face of Painting in the 1860s* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1998), 79-80.

<sup>251</sup> Gell, *Art and Agency*, 17.

enables us to affirm not only sentient human beings, but also inanimate things such as art objects and non-human prototypes, as "persons" or "agents," on the condition that they play agentive roles in "art-like situations" in the vicinity of art objects.<sup>252</sup> In this framework, the artist, who is traditionally recognised as the active creator of his or her own artwork, can be perceived as being in a passive position to non-human entities when the specific relations and settings are considered. Furthermore, Gell divides the agent into the primary agent and secondary agent, according to the degree of their contribution to the generation of art-like situations, mapping out more detailed agent/patient relations into the form of diagrams<sup>253</sup>

From these basic tools, the notion of the prototype is particularly relevant when discussing the agency behind Butler and Desanges's comparable paintings since they illustrate the same historical battle. Gell considers the "visual recognition" of "resemblance" between the prototype and the index as the necessary condition of perceiving the agent/patient relation between the two entities.<sup>254</sup> It is certain that Butler is not the primary designer of the compositional feature of *The Colours*, as it noticeably resembles Desanges's earlier painting. Yet Butler's painting is not a complete copy of Desanges's, as there are many discrepancies in the visual specification between the two paintings. It might be that the flow of agency between the two pictures can be grasped by ascertaining the prototypes from which the

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<sup>252</sup> Ibid, 5; 7; 13; 19.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid, 51.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid, 26.

visual elements of the two pictures derived. Admittedly, the section in *Art and Agency* that orients the concept of the prototype is not expressly designed for the subject of Victorian battle paintings because Gell was more interested in the role of prototype in iconic images in religious art. He rejected Nelson Goodman's (1906-1998) linguistic semiotics that regard "symbolic convention" as the primary basis of "iconic representation" in art.<sup>255</sup> In a nutshell, to Gell, prototype is a matter of belief: an imaginary god can be the prototype of the index as long as the patient believe that the god "caused" the image of the index.<sup>256</sup> This point reflects Gell's advocacy of hyper subjectivism in art appreciation, but what is helpful for this chapter is that Gell believes that the appearance of an imaginary thing, such as god, in people's minds is still derived from "their memories of images" that need to have visual specifications whether they are "under-specified" or highly specified.<sup>257</sup> This implies that Gell acknowledges the existence of *mental images* that have varying degrees of specification in relation to material entities. Gell is more concerned with less specific visual forms as, in this section, he introduces the notion of 'aniconic' representation, that matters about the "spatio-temporal" elements of deities.<sup>258</sup> Yet, for my part, I venture to expand the range of the prototype as an agent beyond Gell's example of the appearance of a single entity such as Samuel Johnson (see 1.2.1) ; it is possible to assume that the 'visual

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<sup>255</sup> Ibid, 25.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid, 26.



form' of a specific historical event or a sequential performance can be an agentive prototype to art objects as it is contained as a mental image whose visual specifications are limited. This expansion is not disagreeable to Gell's framework since in the conclusion of *Art and Agency* he suggests applying the notion of agents not only to "biological organisms," but also to "events in the milieu."<sup>259</sup> Therefore a battle, or a war with limited visual specifications, can be an agentive prototype because no matter how a battle is remembered in the minds of individuals, certain details of the battle never change. For instance, at the Battle of Waterloo (1815), the Duke of Wellington fought against the army of Napoleon I in Belgium, not against the army of Tsar Alexander I in Moscow. The visual specification determined at the battlefield also shapes the appearances of any paintings representing the battle.

Perhaps in his all-out opposition to seeing art as meaning, Gell does not discuss 'memories of images' or mental pictures, whose mechanism depends on the involvement of language. It should be acknowledged that linguistic descriptions alone can dictate that the artist illustrates a specific image although the actual practice of image-making should be done in a composite form with the element of optical vision. This is true for a mental image of a battle, which is often heavily aided and determined by verbal descriptions since a direct observation of the event is extremely difficult. For this problem, it is beneficial to embrace W. J. T. Mitchell's theoretical insight that "all media are mixed media" as each medium has

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<sup>259</sup> Ibid, 222.

to depend on others.<sup>260</sup> Contrary to the opinion "circulated" by Clement Greenberg, Mitchell posits that there is no pure visual medium.<sup>261</sup> According to Mitchell, the optical sense needs to be coordinated with other senses such as touch and feelings in order to function in real life.<sup>262</sup> As there is no pure sense, there is no pure medium. While highlighting the coordination between the different senses, Mitchell favours the "verbal medium"; the practice of "ekphrasis" in poetic language remains the most "subtle, agile master-medium," for other media cannot fully realise its "crucial rule".<sup>263</sup> I am sceptical about Mitchell's overtly semiotic standpoint that regards language, unmatched by other media, as a principal institution of art. His hierarchical view, I argue, cannot be the rule when it comes to communities that do not have the tradition of sophisticated visual description or composed and subtle poetic language. Nevertheless, Mitchell's emphasis on the mixed use of senses and the efficacy of verbal description with regards to art in practice is certainly advantageous. It can elucidate the prototypes of Victorian battle paintings, as their recipients did enjoy using a high qualitative and quantitative level of the verbal medium in their culture.

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<sup>260</sup> W. J. T. Mitchell, "There are No Visual Media," *Image Science: Iconology, Visual Culture, and Media Aesthetics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 129.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid. 126.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid, 133.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid, 132.

## 3.2 The Significance of the Victoria Cross Gallery by William Louis Desanges (1822-1887) in Victorian Battle Art

### 3.2.1 The Success of the Victoria Cross Gallery

In order to discuss the agentive role of Desanges's *Sergeant. Luke O'Connor* with regards to Butler's *The Colours*, it is first necessary to review the artist and his project, the Victoria Cross Gallery, as they have not been discussed in detail except by Hichberger.<sup>264</sup> Desanges was born in London, in 1822, the great-grandson of a noble exile from France. When he was six, his family travelled to Florence where the artist had his first drawing class. After the family returned to England in 1831, the artist's formal education commenced in Birmingham, but he soon moved to Kent where he received drawing instruction. At sixteen, Desanges studied under the Lyon-based artist Jean Michel Grobon (1770-1853), who specialised in genre and portrait paintings, but his art education in France was brief, as he soon travelled to Italy. After his return to England in 1845, the artist began his career as a

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<sup>264</sup> See Hichberger, "Chapter Four: New heroes," in *Images of the Army*, -, "Democratising Glory? The Victoria Cross Paintings of Louis Desanges," *Oxford Art Journal* 7, no. 2 (1984)

professional artist.<sup>265</sup> In the initial stages of his career, the artist aimed to be a history painter and submitted several history paintings for public exhibitions, but they were not hugely successful.<sup>266</sup> It seems that he earned a living by painting female portraits, which brought him modest success. From 1859, Desanges's name began to be associated with the Victoria Cross Gallery. However, the success of the project did not motivate him to be a devoted battle painter. He continued to earn his living as a "fashionable portrait-painter" as he had done before although he occasionally worked on the subject of contemporary conflicts such as the regional conflict in British Gambia in 1866, the Ashanti Expedition (1873-1874) and the Anglo-Afghan War (1878-1880).<sup>267</sup> Perhaps because of his title as a chevalier, and his social skills, the artist became close to the Prince of Wales. However, the Royal family did not purchase his battle paintings. Instead, they commissioned several portraits of the Prince and Princess of Wales. One of the largest pieces of work he ever did for the Royal family was a group portrait, *The Royal Garden Party at Chiswick* (1876)

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<sup>265</sup> James Daffrone, "British Artists: their Style and Character," *Art journal*, February 1864, 41.

<sup>266</sup> *The Literary Gazette*, "Fine Arts: Westminster Hall," July 17, 1847; *Ibid.* "The British Institution," February 24, 1849, 134; *The Times*, "British Institution," February 05, 1855, 8; *The New Monthly Magazine*, "The Annual Picture Show in Trafalgar-Square," May 1853, 32.

<sup>267</sup> *The Examiner*, "The Picture of the Year," April 20, 1861, 248; about Desanges's battle paintings after the Victoria Cross Gallery, see Harrington, *British Artists and War*, 179; 204.

which was lost in a fire in 1879 (plate 30). The artist died in 1905, but little is known about his later life, as there are insufficient records about him after 1880.

The creation of the Victoria Cross Gallery was undoubtedly the most notable event in the history of Victorian battle painting in the late 1850s. Its history begins with the establishment of the Victoria Cross, which was a specific award for 'personal deeds of valour' in battle. Inspired by Foreign Military awards such as the French Legion of Honour and urged by public opinion and monarchical interest in the aftermath of the Crimean War, the award was made to honour meritorious soldiers regardless of their rank or class. In contrast to existing awards such as the British Order of the Bath, which was only conferred upon officers with long military careers, this new award took exemplary performances on the battlefield into account.<sup>268</sup> After the Queen distributed the first Cross in "the presence of an immense crowd" at Hyde Park in June 1857,<sup>269</sup> the award was a focal point of the press. In terms of art history, the award kindled the public imagination of the gallant Victoria Cross winners, which was a prime subject for representation in any artistic media. Desanges was the first artist to exploit this opportunity. According to the artist's own explanation, the Victoria Cross Gallery, which is the collection of pictures of

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<sup>268</sup> For the detailed history of the establishment of the award, see Melvin Charles Smith, "2. Institutionalization of Heroism in Britain," in *Awarded for Valour: A History of the Victoria Cross and the Evolution of British History*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 26-42.

<sup>269</sup> *The Observer*, "Distribution of The Victoria Cross," June 28, 1857, 5.

winners of the Cross, was "designed and produced under a sincere appreciation of the national value of the order."<sup>270</sup> The Victoria Cross Gallery first appeared at the Egyptian Hall in April 1859 comprising "eight large historical paintings and twenty four smaller pictures."<sup>271</sup> The number of paintings rapidly grew about fifty in 1861.<sup>272</sup> The complete version of the series, which comprises fifty-five paintings, was finished by the time the Gallery moved to the Crystal Palace in Sydenham, 1862. The main subjects of the Gallery were the fighting soldiers at the two most popular wars of the period, the Crimean War and the Indian Mutiny, with a few of the series illustrating the less popular wars in Iran, Afghanistan, and China.

From its beginning, the Gallery enjoyed wide press coverage and thousands of visitors.<sup>273</sup> In 1864, the original pictures were sold, not to public institutions as suggested by the press, but to a "wealthy gentleman" near Leeds.<sup>274</sup> The Gallery was temporarily removed from the Crystal Palace within the year but repeatedly was returned to that location until the

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<sup>270</sup> Louise William Desanges, *The Victoria Cross Gallery: exhibition catalogue*, (London: Albert Palace, Battersea Park, 1885): 1. Quoted in Hichberger, "Democratising Glory?," 45.

<sup>271</sup> *The Times*, "A Victoria Cross Gallery," April 18, 1859, 9.

<sup>272</sup> *The Examiner*, "Fine Arts: The Pictures of the Year," April 20, 1862, 248.

<sup>273</sup> *The Art-Journal*, "Minor Topics of the Month," June 1859, 193.

<sup>274</sup> *The Art-Journal*, "Minor Topics of the Month," March 1864, 90.

1880s.<sup>275</sup> Desanges's pictures were popular as reproductions, appearing in photographs in 1860, and two of them were engraved for *The Illustrated London News* (plate 31). Eleven paintings were selected to be engraved for *Our Soldiers of the Victorian Cross* (1867) by Samuel Orchard Beeton (1831-1877), which was published to instil military heroism into middle-class school boys.<sup>276</sup> Such a success was certainly impressive, even though it is almost forgotten in Victorian art history. Understandably, the characteristic of Desanges's success appears to be different from Butler's, as there is a hierarchical division between the artworks displayed at the Egyptian Hall, and the Crystal Palace, and those displayed at the Royal Academy exhibition.<sup>277</sup> William Michael Rossetti only briefly acknowledged the Victoria Cross Gallery as "the nucleus" of "military or battle pictures" in Britain, and gave a more lengthy comment on the grand scale painting by the Irish painter Daniel Maclise (1806-1870), *The Meeting of Wellington and Blucher after the Battle of Waterloo* (1861),

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<sup>275</sup> *The Art-Journal*, "Crystal Palace Picture Gallery," July 1864, 204; catalogues in multiple editions were printed in different years up to 1885 for the exhibition of Victoria Cross Gallery at the Crystal Palace.

<sup>276</sup> Hichberger, "Democratising Glory?," 47.

<sup>277</sup> About the quality of the paintings at the Crystal Palace, see Antonio Noh, "Victoria Cross Gallery: Centrepiece of Pictorial Experience in the Afterlife of the Crystal Palace" (conference paper, University of York, 2018), 2-3.

at the Palace of Westminster (plate 32).<sup>278</sup> More recently, Ulrich Keller discussed the paintings of Desanges under the heading of "the London shows" and provided another chapter on Crimean War paintings; for Keller, the Victoria Cross Gallery was the succession of a panoramic painting of the Battle of the Alma exhibited at the Egyptian Hall in 1855, by an artist known as Mr. Cooman.<sup>279</sup> However, as the word 'Gallery' implies, the Victorians took Desanges's Victoria Cross paintings as framed canvas paintings, not ephemeral objects. Furthermore, although the Victoria Cross Gallery fits into more popular places than fine-art institutions, there must still have been a considerable overlap between those visiting to the Crystal Palace and the Royal Academy. This suggests that Desanges's battle images were as successful as Butler's paintings in terms of their quantitative distribution in Victorian Britain.

It is difficult to ascertain how Desanges's project came to be so successful in its time. The most viable answer is that the Victoria Cross Gallery was the first object of its kind in Britain, having the principle purpose of showing active combatants in the battlefield as the focal point in the medium of canvas painting. Before the Victoria Cross Gallery, in British military paintings the combatants generally remained as backdrop figures for more dignified personnel, such as commanders and high officers, whose tasks were not active

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<sup>278</sup> Rossetti, *Fine Art, chiefly contemporary*, 13. About Maclise's work, see Annette Wickham and Mark Murray-Flutter, *Daniel Maclise: The Waterloo Cartoon* (London: Royal Academy, 2015).

<sup>279</sup> Keller, *The Ultimate Spectacle*, 64-65.



fighting. One can see this in Benjamin West's *Death of General Wolfe* (1770) and John Singleton Copley's *The Death of Major Peirson* (1784). In Maclise's *The Meeting of Wellington and Blucher*, the generals are placed at an equal distance from the common soldiers to the viewer. However, the central narrative of the picture is still the meeting between Wellington and Blucher. Maclise tries to exploit the effect of the fighting scene by inserting skirmish scenes in the far background of the painting, but they were used as ornamental vignettes for the main story (plate 33). As for paintings of the Crimean War, the aristocratic mounted officers were still central figures. Francis Grant (1803-1878), who was the president of the Royal Academy (1866-1878) and Queen Victoria's portrait painter, portrays the Duke of Cambridge, posing among the advancing guardsmen at the Battle of the Alma (plate 34). Thomas Jones Barker (1815-1882) paints the Earl of Cardigan (1797-1868) heroically fighting deep inside the enemy lines with the supporting Light Brigade as anonymous soldiers (plate 35).<sup>280</sup> The lively pose of Cardigan looks convincing enough, but his pose is still loaded with rhetorical gravity of high art. Desanges's soldiers belong to far lower ranks than the protagonists of Grant's and Barker's paintings, and their actions were practical rather than dignified. In the Victoria Cross Gallery, the movements of Captain Charles John Stanley Gough (1832-1912), Lieutenant William Alexander Kerr (1832-1919), and Private John McDermond (1832-1868) resemble dry examples from contemporary training manuals rather than heroic postures (plates 36 and 37). In this regard, the Victoria

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<sup>280</sup> Another identifiable person in the painting is Lord George Paget (1818-1880), who is in the right middle ground of the painting. Keller, *The Ultimate Spectacle*, 224.

Cross Gallery was noticeably a new type of military painting. A review of *The Athenaeum* appreciates the ingenuity of Desanges's paintings by praising their "qualities of intense dramatic power," with less "extravagant exaggeration or attitudinising" and fewer "pretensions to High Art."<sup>281</sup> The unabashed illustration of fighting individuals *per se* was novel in canvas paintings in the middle of nineteenth century, and it was certainly the key element of the success of the project.

As a new type of object, the Victoria Cross Gallery's unique approach to exploit the violent actions in the battlefield succeeded to attract the Victorians. However, it is hard to pin down whether the formal ingenuity was the only cause of its success, as the commemorative feelings of the Victorians towards its subject also shaped their attitude to the Victoria Cross Gallery. The problem is that Desanges's battle paintings were not well-made in terms of technique. As soon as the Gallery appeared at the Egyptian Hall, the artist's technical incompetence was spotted by the press. *The Critic* harshly criticised the artist for being "utterly unprepared and out of training," to undertake such a large project, which was only a product of "vanity" of an artist whose trade was originally in "fashionable female portraiture."<sup>282</sup> The periodical was the Gallery's most inimical critic, and its indignation against Desanges was not appeased until the following year. It denounced the Gallery's poor quality and hasty execution, contended that it lacked proper naturalism to represent "reality of war" and that "patriotism" alone would compensate the "sore conflict

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<sup>281</sup> *The Athenaeum*, "The Victoria Cross Gallery," April 7, 1860, 480.

<sup>282</sup> *The Critic*, "Victoria Cross Pictures," April 23, 1859, 399.

with one's sense of what is due to art and to truth," and concluded that the paintings would appeal only to the "vulgar public."<sup>283</sup> However, such a critical voice was in the minority of the general opinions that turned a blind eye to the Gallery's apparent technical defects due to its usefulness in commemorating the gallantry of the British soldiers. Even *The Critic* surprisingly changed their stance in the winter of 1860, and became almost respectful towards the Gallery. It suddenly praised the Gallery's "exceedingly interesting compositions, both as works of art, and as more or less faithful records of the heroic actions of our army in the Crimea and India."<sup>284</sup> The magazine came to call the artist "indomitable," in a review of 1861, praising his project as "almost as heroic as some of the feats which have been rewarded with the Victoria Cross."<sup>285</sup> This opinion shift seems to reflect the editorial disputes within the magazine, whose editor was the journalist James Lowe (1798-1866). The change of the magazine's harsh tone signifies that the Gallery's commemorative function eclipsed its apparent technical deficiency, which means that Desanges's paintings grew to be considered as relics of British war experience. Desanges's success with the Victoria Cross Gallery is much more complex than the early success of Butler. While Butler's works do not indicate the names of specific individuals directly, each of Desanges's paintings claims inseparable relations with the sitters by baring their names (see 2.3.1). It is difficult to discuss the Victoria Cross Gallery without taking these given

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<sup>283</sup> "Victoria Cross Pictures," *The Critic*, April 7, 1860, 437.

<sup>284</sup> *The Critic*, "Art and Artists," November 17, 1860, 616.

<sup>285</sup> *The Critic*, "Art and Artists: Victoria Cross Gallery," March 30, 1861, 416.

narratives and identities into account, as they are bound to make the British spectators feel a strong attachment to the paintings.

### 3.2.2 The influence of the Victoria Cross Gallery on Late Victorian Battle Painting.

In contrast to her favorite French artists, there is no biographical evidence attesting that Butler recognised Desanges as a model artist to imitate or pay homage to. According to *An Autobiography*, Butler "feasted her eyes" on De Neuville's *Combat on the Roof of a House* and was deeply impressed by the same artist's *Street Combat*.<sup>286</sup> Butler saw Deatille, who was two years younger than her, with "a great admiration."<sup>287</sup> She was also "amused" when she found out that Meissonier shared her habit of giving names to her pictorial figures.<sup>288</sup> Contrary to her explicit recognition of the merits of French military painters, she was silent about the domestic artists in her field. The meaning of this silence does not seem to be positive, as she regarded the genre of battle painting as "almost non-exploited by English artists" when she decided to pursue it.<sup>289</sup> Desanges appears once in her autobiography, not as a respected senior battle painter, but as an artist close to the Prince

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<sup>286</sup> Ibid, 127;138.

<sup>287</sup> Ibid,128.

<sup>288</sup> Ibid,130.

<sup>289</sup> Ibid, 95.

of Wales. During the time of *The Roll Call's* meteoric success, the older artist invited Butler to his home and to the opening ceremony of his latest military painting of the British Expedition to Ashanti.<sup>290</sup> She remarks that Desanges asked her many questions about the details of *The Roll Call*. However, it is impossible to ascertain Butler's opinion on Desanges, let alone her assessment of the artist's work, from the single paragraph recording their meeting.<sup>291</sup> In line with this reticence, contemporary accounts never associated Butler with Desanges in terms of her artistic lineage.

The relation between Butler and Desanges has not been totally neglected in the history of British battle painting. Hichberger strongly points out that Desanges's works were "highly influential to battle painters of the following generation," including Butler, on the grounds that he was the pioneer of the "representation of individual heroism" of combatants in Britain, through his depictions of the winners of the Victoria Cross.<sup>292</sup> On one hand, Hichberger's merit to shed light on these neglected battle paintings should be duly noted. On the other, the simplification in her understanding of the historical role of Desanges's must be tackled. Hichberger regards Desanges as the British painter who, in the 1850s,

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<sup>290</sup> Desanges's *Fighting in the Ashantee Forest* (1874) was commissioned by Illustrated London News that engraved the picture for its special supplement. Harrington, *British Artists and War*, 179.

<sup>291</sup> Butler, *An Autobiography*, 113-114.

<sup>292</sup> Hichberger, "Democratising Glory?," 50.

"assimilated French military art into British subject" alongside Thomas Jones Barker.<sup>293</sup>

However, this proposition can be refuted for a number of reasons.

Firstly, it is uncertain how far Desanges was familiar with the method of contemporary French military art. Although he was given the title of chevalier from his family, his artistic activity and career in France seemed to be no more than passive education and casual travelling, which did not inspire him to be a French-style battle painter on his return to England. This contrasts with the case of Barker, who entered into the studio of the renowned French military painter Horace Vernet in 1835, and consequently won three gold medals for history paintings at the Salon, under the reign of Louis Philippe (1830-1848) before he returned to England in 1845.<sup>294</sup> It is hard to deny that Desanges is a battle painter. However, he was not fully committed to the genre in the same way as the battle painters of the next generation. It is more likely that the artist chose to paint Victoria Cross winners as a contingent subject for making a breakthrough in his career. Unlike Barker and Butler, Desanges was more a portraitist than a figure painter, which means that his skillset was not suitable for painting battle scenes that feature a large number of animated figures. It comes as little surprised, perhaps, that *The Critic* noted Desanges's unpreparedness for the particular subject of battle.

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<sup>293</sup> Hichberger, *Images of the Army*, 63.

<sup>294</sup> James Daffrone, "The Work of Thomas Jones Barker," *Art Journal*, March 1878, 69.

Secondly, Hichberger seems to think that the transformation of method and style in British battle painting took place over a long transitional period to reach its radical form in the 1870s; she emphasised the role of "Desanges in the process of assimilating French military art into the British vocabulary."<sup>295</sup> Yet it is hard to specify a French master who transmitted his grammar to Desanges. It is possible to attribute the technical aspect of some of Barker's works - such as precise draughtsmanship, polished surface, and sharp details - to the influence of his training in Horace Vernet's studio. Many of Desanges's paintings, however, resemble British oil works before the emergence of the Pre-Raphaelites, with their weak schematisation and painterly colourings under dim varnishing. It should be noted that battle painters in the last quarter of the nineteenth century were not passive apprentices of domestic art. Butler was closely following the new development in French military painting after the Franco-Prussian War. Crofts and Woodville both had a formal art education at the Düsseldorf Academy.<sup>296</sup> To the eye of the new generation battle painters, in terms of method and technique, Desanges's precedents may have appeared to be objects of reformation, rather than art works of respect.

Unlike Butler, Desanges's technique was not exceptional enough to lead a movement. However, despite any artistic deficiencies, his paintings seemed to influence battle painters

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<sup>295</sup> Hichberger, "Military Themes in British Painting 1815-1914" (PhD diss., University College London, 1985), 100.

<sup>296</sup> Harrington, *British Artists and War*, 181; Richard Caton Woodville, *A Random Recollections* (London: Eveleigh Nash, 1914), 14.

of the next generation with their emphasis on the action of a small band of soldiers. The strange affinities between Desanges's works and that of younger artists can be explained by the agentive role of the idea of the Victoria Cross. This does not mean that the ideological meaning of the award, patriotism, became the decisive factor in British battle paintings, as a social history art would suggest. What is crucial about the award is that it dictates and regulates the compositional and narrative aspects of the paintings associable with it. The Victoria Cross is awarded for the deeds of individuals, not for the collective effort of a regiment, which means that the nature of the award conditions any paintings depicting Victoria Cross winners to have similar visual properties. For instance, De Neuville's *Saving the Queen's Colour* (c.1882) has a formal affinity with Desanges's *Lieutenant Frederick Aikman at winning the VC at Lucknow* (c.1860s); each represent one or two mounted soldiers jumping on several savage attackers (plates 38 and 39). The time and space of the two paintings are completely different, as the former represents an incident at the Anglo-Zulu War in 1879, while the latter is about the Indian Mutiny in 1858. The French artist might have stumbled upon the Victoria Cross Gallery images while he was preparing for Queen Victoria's commission. However, it is less likely that De Neuville submitted himself to the systematic method of an obscure British artist.<sup>297</sup> It is more likely that the idea of rewarding the valorous action of small units of combatants led to such a composition which places the equestrian figures and the enemy foot soldiers in a certain way. As an agent, the idea of the Victoria Cross comes into play as a rule or dictation, not

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<sup>297</sup> About De Neuville's work, see Harrington, *British Artists and War*, 193-195.



as an abstract value, such as patriotism and militarism. It is the Victoria Cross as an institution that shapes any Victoria Cross paintings and makes them akin to each other.

The resemblance between Butler's *The Colours* and Desanges's *Sergeant Luke O'Connor* requires more explanation, as it appears to be more than a coincidence. A preliminary supposition is that Butler might have used the images of Desanges's fifty paintings as part of the visual corpus for her work. The reproductions of Desanges's works were pervasive in Victorian Britain, and the visitors to the Crystal Palace in Sydenham were bound to encounter the actual Victoria Cross Gallery.<sup>298</sup> Even if she did not acknowledge the artistic quality of Desanges's paintings, she may have still utilised the images as visual references. This assumption is true to a certain extent. However, it is still hard to understand her seemingly unwise decision to copy the painting that represents the same battle. It is therefore necessary to examine the agentive role of the same prototype, the Battle of the Alma, as it is the next link between Butler's and Desanges's paintings in answering the question of their formal similarity.

### 3.3 Battle as an Agent in Battle Painting.

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<sup>298</sup> About the location of the Victoria Cross Gallery inside the Crystal Palace in Sydenham, see Noh, "Victoria Cross Gallery," 6.

According to Butler's autobiography, her method of painting *The Colours* does not appear different from her usual method from the time of *The Roll Call*. First of all, she imagined a vision of "the colour party of the Scots Guards advancing up the hill of the Alma in their full parade dress," and then she found "fine models" in Dover, where she lived at that time.<sup>299</sup> Furthermore, she interviewed the protagonist of her imaginary vision, Robert Loyd-Lindsay, who showed a strong interest in Butler's plan to paint the action that had brought him the honour of the Victoria Cross. The aged veteran, who became Lord Wantage, offered Butler a meeting at the Guards Chapel where the actual colours from the battle were kept. According to Butler, Loyd-Lindsay demonstrated how he had held the Queen's colour during the battle, and he informed the artist how the original tint of the colour was more fresh back then.<sup>300</sup> This account sounds sufficient to understand *The Colours*, as it provides an explanation of the kind of image the artist intended and how she collected the relevant data for the actual painting. However, it should be noted that the account and the painting do not correspond. Butler wanted to paint the guardsmen advancing up the hill of the Alma, but there is neither a sense of moving upward nor the suggestion of a hill in the picture. The guardsmen are placed on a plain in the same way as the Royal Welch Fusiliers in Desanges's painting. As the intention of the artist fails to explain the specific visual property of the painting that might infringe her professional integrity, it is necessary to find the external agency for her decision.

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<sup>299</sup> Butler, *An Autobiography*, 271.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid.

One of the most fundamental agents of a battle painting is the mental image of the historical battle it represents as the prototype. History is not only a list of events in a linear timeline but also a collection of images whose specifications are more or less solid according to the historical facts. The meanings and contexts of the images can be altered by a series of revisions and findings. However, the skeletal structures of history - names, places, dates, and other quantitative matters - barely change, as they are based on real occurrences in history which have finite material specifications. Since the end of the Crimean War in March 1856, certain forms of mental images of its battles have been formulated based on actual battlefield performances. The Battle of the Alma is remembered as the image of the British troops capturing the enemy stronghold on the high ground called the Great Redoubt across the River Alma; the Battle of Balaclava as the disastrous 'Charge of the Light Brigade,' and the fortuitous 'Thin Red Line'; Inkerman as the fierce bayonet charge; and the Siege of Sebastopol as the arduous trench warfare to capture the Malakoff Tower and the Great Redan. These are mental images of battles of the Crimean War that retain their shape based on the real battles as prototypes. Facts can be forgotten and corrupted, as human memories are subjective, and new images can be inserted into the memory of the battles. However, the performance of a battle in a specific time and space is not reversible. Therefore, the battle has the agentive role to any artist who deals with it as a historical subject.<sup>301</sup>

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<sup>301</sup> Indeed the agency of historical events can be ignored on purpose as one can see the American film *The Charge of the Light Brigade* (1936) by Michael Curtiz in which the British Light Brigade charges against an army of an Indian chief who mercilessly killed

As an agent, the Battle of the Alma has its own rules because certain material properties of the event do not change despite varying accounts of the battle. It took place on 20 September 1854 and was the first battle between the Anglo-French forces and the Russian army. The Russians had an elevated position on a hill above the bank of the River Alma. The objective of the British was to capture the Russian battery called the 'Great Redoubt,' while the French objective was to capture 'Telegraph Hill.'<sup>302</sup> This topographical setting, as Butler articulated in her autobiography, stipulates the sense of movement up to the hill in its pictorial representations. Edmund Walker (1814-1882) painted the moment when the British troops arrived at higher ground from a lower terrain in his *The Battle of the Alma* (1854) (plate 40). Walker must have taken the idea of the battle on the hill literally, as the slope of the hill to the Great Redoubt was not as dramatic as the one in his imagination. As the reporter for *The Times*, William Howard Russell testifies that there were many "steps" and "terraces" between the advancing British troops and the Russian stronghold.<sup>303</sup> The hill was not a single cliff, but a series of obstructions consisting of a rivulet, vineyards, and

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women and children. In the film, the two different historical events, the Crimean War and the Indian Mutiny are mixed for the amusement of racially prejudiced audiences of the time.

<sup>302</sup> About the battle, see W. Baring Pemberton, *Battles of the Crimean War* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1962), 27-69; Clive Ponting, *The Crimean War: the truth behind the myth* (London: Chatto&Windus: 2004), 96-105.

<sup>303</sup> William Howard Russell, *The British Expedition to the Crimea* (London; New York: Routledge),111.

a plateau where the Russians were entrenched.<sup>304</sup> An illustration published a month later in *The Illustrated London News* shows the engagement of the individual troops on the hilly terrain in a more persuasive way than Walker's painting (plate 41). Nevertheless, the reference to the hill did not vanish in the later Alma paintings that focus on regiments other than the Royal Welch Fusiliers and Scots Fusiliers, as one can see from Richard Caton Woodville's *Battle of the Alma 1854* (1896; the Coldstream Guards) and Robert Gibb's *The Alma: Forward the 42nd* (1888; the Highlander regiment; see plates 42 and 43). It is unusual to find an Alma painting without a suggestion of the hill. However, as the absence of the hill is the common feature in *Sergeant Luke O'Connor* and *The Colours*, it is necessary to enquire why Desanges decided to place the Royal Welch Fusiliers on a plain, contrary to the common iconography of the Battle of the Alma.

It is possible to presume that Deranges would not care excessively about historical accuracy, as he was unprepared and lacked the necessary skillset for the subject. Furthermore, the fact that the artist was one of the first to exploit the effect of martial violence might make him more untrustworthy in the matter of historical research. However, in reality, Desanges took great care in maintaining historical accuracy as it was essential for his project. Many of the awkward details in the Victoria Cross Gallery are in fact due to the artist's obsession with historical detail. Apart from its unusual topography compared to other Alma paintings, *Sergeant Luke O'Connor* shows a peculiar figure that cannot be explained by the visual properties of the painting alone. The mounted figure on the left behind the band of the

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<sup>304</sup> Pemberton, *Battles of the Crimean War*, 44-45.

soldiers has his arms outstretched in a frantic manner (plate 44). His pose of stretching out his arms among the unimpressed soldiers appears to be comical, adding more crudeness to the painting. However, Desanges chose to paint what he knew rather than what he would have observed, as his painting narrates two separate anecdotes related to the Royal Welch Fusiliers, which was part of the Light Division that arrived at the hilltop first. Lieutenant Anstruther was the first British soldier who planted the colours "at the centre of parapet" before the Russian guns.<sup>305</sup> However, Anstruther was soon shot dead by the enemy, and it was O' Connor who protected the colours until the end of the battle, despite being severely wounded.<sup>306</sup> As the Victoria Cross was not awarded posthumously before the twentieth century, Desanges dedicated the painting to O' Connor but did not forget to paint the dead Anstruther (plate 45). The death of the frantic figure is in fact a separate incident from the story of O' Connor. It is widely reported that Colonel Chester, the commander of the Royal Welch Fusiliers, said "No, no!" against a false order from an anonymous officer, who mistook the Russians for the French, before he was shot dead.<sup>307</sup> The dumfounded officer to the left of the dying Chester appears to be the officer responsible for the false order. The reviewer of *The Critic* in 1861 was familiar enough with the story of Colonel Chester to repeat the same line of the Colonel's last words in the

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<sup>305</sup> Samuel Orchard Beeton, *Our soldiers and the Victoria Cross* (London: War, Lock and Tyler, 1867), 143.

<sup>306</sup> *Ibid*, 145.

<sup>307</sup> Pemberton, *Battles of the Crimean War*, 50.

article.<sup>308</sup> What is knowable is that Desanges's works are more historical than they look, and that the particular detail of the topography in *Sergeant Luke O'Connor* was not an arbitrary choice by the artist but was chosen to indicate the painting's faithful relation with the prototype. Furthermore, it is possible to assume that, in Desanges's painting, the plain as a topographic detail represents the plateau of the Great Redoubt, where the Royal Welch Fusiliers are stepping ahead of the other British troops.

### 3.4 The Written Image as a Prototype

Admittedly, associating the plain in Desanges's painting with the first arrival on the summit is a potentially weak assumption if not cross-examined with Butler's *The Colours*, which is another rare Alma painting placing the soldiers on a plain. It is true that every regiment went up the hill, eventually, since the battle was won by the British. Woodville and Gibb were no less enthusiastic in promoting the merits of their regiments, and their regiments are not seen as particularly lagging behind the others. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the strategic roles of O'Connor's and Loyd-Lindsay's regiments were closely linked during the battle. O'Connor's 23<sup>rd</sup> Royal Welch Fusiliers were part of the Light Division, and Loyd-Lindsay's Scots Fusilier Guards were part of the First Division. The plan of the battle shows that the role of the First Division, as elite soldiers under the direct command

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<sup>308</sup> *The Critic*, "Art and Artists: Victoria Cross Gallery," March 30, 1861, 416

of the Duke of Cambridge (1819-1904), was to reinforce the vanguard Light Division (plate 46). The problem was that the Light Division's offensive was unsuccessful as they were cut off from the reinforcement and had to fall back from the Great Redoubt. The reinforcement of the First Division was slow as the Duke lacked experience: he had not seen active service before the war.<sup>309</sup> Nevertheless, as soon as the First Division advanced, they led the battle leaving the disorganised Light Division behind. Eventually Loyd-Lindsay re-planted the British colours in the Great Redoubt. Two British soldiers won Victoria Crosses at the same battle due to almost identical actions, which was to plant the colours on the enemy stronghold. Even if it was never openly stated, this coincidence might have been a vexing problem for the awardees. While it is impossible to know what O'Connor's thought on the matter, it is possible to understand Loyd-Lindsay's perspective on the problem from his memoir which was published after his death in 1907, by his wife Harriet Sarah Loyd-Lindsay (1837-1920). According to the memoir, the Light Division got to the top of the hill first, but they had to retreat soon being "outnumbered three to one by Russian infantry drawn up on the plateau."<sup>310</sup> Within the First Division, Loyd-Lindsay's Scots Fusiliers were ahead of the Grenadier Guards and Cold stream Guards. What the guardsmen saw was the "Light infantry being pursued over the hill by the Russians," which disrupted the line of his

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<sup>309</sup> Ponting, *The Crimean War*, 102.

<sup>310</sup> Harriet Sarah Wantage, *Lord Wantage, V.C., K.C.B., a memoir* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1907), 26-27.



troops.<sup>311</sup> The reinforcement by the First Division played the deciding role in capturing the hill with Loyd-Lindsay contributing by keeping the Queen's colour safe during the operation. The memoir acknowledges the fact that there was a "Fusilier Regiment, whose colours for a brief space had been planted on the parapet of the Russian works."<sup>312</sup> Nevertheless, in the memoir, there is a subtle tone of disdain that implies that the charge of the Light Division was a failed "front attack."<sup>313</sup> For Loyd-Lindsay, his "impression" - that he was the first to arrive at the Russian earthwork - was important.<sup>314</sup> Considering Loyd-Lindsay's obsession with being the first standard bearer on the hill before anyone else, it is possible to imagine that he did not only give Butler casual advice, but also urged the artist to consider placing him on a plain, not on a slope. The particular decisions of Desanges and Butler to place the soldiers on the plain at a battle on a hill were not made haphazardly, but to represent specific situations in history. Despite these explanations for the plain in the pictures, it is still hard to ascertain why Butler had to copy the composition of Desanges's painting, replacing O'Connor's pictorial place with Loyd-Lindsay's. Nonetheless, another clue for the question can be found in Desanges's painting of Loyd-Lindsay.

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<sup>311</sup> Ibid, 27.

<sup>312</sup> Ibid.

<sup>313</sup> Ibid, 33.

<sup>314</sup> Ibid, 37.

Loyd-Lindsay's deed to fly the Queen's colour on the plateau of the Russian stronghold was well known to the Victorians, as Howard Russell remembers his "signal gallantry."<sup>315</sup> Furthermore, it is known that Desanges was introduced to the Prince of Wales by Loyd-Lindsay, who was an equerry to the Prince from November 1858 to February 1859. This personal connection enabled the artist to work on the painting for Loyd-Lindsay's Victoria Cross story at the White Lodge in Richmond, which was a residence of the Prince.<sup>316</sup> Not surprisingly, Desanges put extra effort into representing the deed of the young aristocrat. Desanges's *Robert James Lindsay* (1859) was one of the initial "8 large Historical Paintings" at the Egyptian Hall which was seen as "one of the best" works due to its "admirable likeness, the effective grouping, and the fair and accurate representation of the landscape"(plate 47).<sup>317</sup> In the painting, Loyd-Lindsay, who was only an ensign, was portrayed as the leading figure of not only his own unit but also of the following guards. The youthful figure, who holds a standard and looks back to his followers, leading them to a sure victory, can be readily associated with the image of Napoleon I made by Antoine-

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<sup>315</sup> Russell, *The British Expedition to the Crimea*, 117.

<sup>316</sup> Irene Hancock. "The Victorian Cross Gallery and the 'Deeds of Valour'," *The Blowing Stone* Spring/Summer, 1992, 4. Desanges made a portrait of the Prince in Masonic dress in 1885 (now in the Library and Museum of Freemasonry). Lindsay became a Grand Master of Berkshire Lodge in 1898. It is possible that the three people were tied by their membership of Freemasonry.

<sup>317</sup> *The Times*, "A Victoria Cross Gallery," April 18, 1859, 9.

Jean Gros (1771-1835) (plate 48).<sup>318</sup> When he was making the picture, Desanges seems to have been conscious of Loyd-Lindsay's privileged status as a commissioned-officer from an aristocratic background. The pictorial accolade that the artist conferred on Loyd-Lindsay contrasts with his painting of O'Connor: the non-commissioned officer standing on the plateau is of equal importance to the other figures with him, while being under the direction of the officer to his left. There is no pictorial privilege given to the Irish Sergeant, except the earnest representation of what he did, which was to hold the flag (plate 49). This contrast might be evidence of what Hichberger called an element of discrimination against "working class heroes," in Desanges's project, despite its democratic guise.<sup>319</sup> Nevertheless, Desanges's picture of Loyd-Lindsay has its own afterlife, as Loyd-Lindsay's basic pose came to be replicated in later Victoria Cross images in postcards and cigarette cards (plates 50 and 51). The question is why Butler did not follow the generic image of Loyd-Lindsay created by Desanges.

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<sup>318</sup> Desanges seems to have well spotted the rashness of a junior commissioned-officer by casting the image of young Napoleon because Lindsay' merit did not come from his obedience but recklessness, which caused a crisis in the command system of the British army during the war as it was for the famous case of Captain Louis Nolan (1818-1854) at the event of the Charge of the Light Brigade. Lindsay was more fortunate than Nolan, for he was awarded for having disobeyed the "mistaken order" to retreat. See Wantage, *Lord Wantage*, 28.

<sup>319</sup> Hichberger, "Democratising Glory?," 49-50.

The active military career of the future Conservative member of the House of Parliament was brief, but the image of the Crimean hero followed Loyd-Lindsay his entire life. Likewise, Loyd-Lindsay seemed to follow his self-image at the Alma. A fragment from Burford Panorama, which depicted the whole battle scene of the Alma, enabled Loyd-Lindsay's father to see him in London as a heroic standard bearer, while he could not see his son's return from the Crimea due to his sudden death.<sup>320</sup> Loyd-Lindsay revisited the Crimea in the autumn of 1888 to rehabilitate the image of battle that was fading in his memory. It is natural that he was interested in the material images of himself that were made by others. Finally, Loyd-Lindsay played a crucial role in saving the Victoria Cross Gallery, which was in danger of dispersion by the end of the 1890s. He purchased the Gallery and donated it to the council of Wantage in 1900.<sup>321</sup> Owing to Loyd-Lindsay's effort, the Victoria Cross Gallery survived in Wantage as an independent site until the Second World War.<sup>322</sup>

Despite Loyd-Lindsay's devotion to Desanges's Gallery, it is possible to imagine that he did not like his own image in the series. Desanges put extra care to beautify Loyd-Lindsay on a large canvas, but the strange effect created by the comparison between the figure

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<sup>320</sup> Wantage, *Lord Wantage*, 126. The Leicester Square Panorama was found in 1794 by the inventor of panorama, Robert Barker (1739-1806). It was run by John Burford and his son Robert (1791-1861) from 1823 to 1861. Stephan Oettermann, *The Panorama: History of a Mass Medium*, trans. Deborah Lucas Schneider (New York: Zone Books, 1997), 113.

<sup>321</sup> Hancock, "The Victorian Cross Gallery and the 'Deeds of Valour'," 3.

<sup>322</sup> About the disbandment of the Victoria Cross Gallery in Wantage, see *Ibid*, 5-8.

on the slope and the figure on the plateau of the hill might have vexed the first Baron of Wantage. Hence, later on in life, Loyd-Lindsay might have wanted to renew his pictorial image by intervening in Butler's plan to paint the very same incident of the battle. The intervention is not recorded in Butler's autobiography, but the evidence of Loyd-Lindsay's direct involvement with the creation of *The Colours* is found in an account in his memoir. According to his wife, when Loyd-Lindsay visited the Alma in 1888, "the stirring scenes of that day came vividly before him, including many details which had found no place in his letters at that time" and he "jotted down" even more vivid images for his wife.<sup>323</sup> What is revelatory is that the written image definitely corresponds to Butler's *The Colours* more than Desanges's Victoria Cross painting of Loyd-Lindsay. The written image claims that "[t]he colours were well protected by a strong escort"; there were [f]our non-commissioned officers and eight or ten privates"; Private William Reynolds (1827-1869), "did some execution with his bayonet"; "poor old Thistlethwayte had a bullet through his bearskin cap"; and Loyd-Lindsay neither drew his sword nor fired his revolver as he was immersed in the activity of planting his standard on the Russian Redoubt.<sup>324</sup> Desanges's painting does not show a dozen men protecting the colours, unlike Butler's, which shows a band of recognizable figures who are pointing the bayonet, dying, and the figure holding the standard without drawing his sword and pistol (plate 25). Considering this unmistakable formal similarity between Loyd-Lindsay's written image and *The Colours*, it is possible to

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<sup>323</sup> Wantage, *Lord Wantage*, 30.

<sup>324</sup> *Ibid.* 37.

surmise that Loyd-Lindsay provided the 'jotted down' note for Butler when he contacted the artist in 1898 in the interest of correcting his Victoria Cross image. This specific note was published as part of Loyd-Lindsay's memoir in 1907, but the fact that the note was kept unpublished in 1898 only confirms the role of the visual account as a prototype of *The Colours*.

Despite all the evidence of Loyd-Lindsay's active involvement in Butler's painting, the direct explanation for the morphological similarity between *Sergeant Luke O'Connor* and *The Colours* is still in the realm of the imagination. A viable explanation is that there was a moment when Butler and Loyd-Lindsay saw Desanges's Victoria Cross Gallery together either at the Crystal Palace or through photographic reproductions. In this speculative situation, Loyd-Lindsay may have persuaded Butler, who was hungry for authentic historical accounts to make her picture more powerful than the works of her advancing competitors, to paint him in the place of O'Connor, telling the artist that the real situation looked more like the little picture *Sergeant Luke O'Connor* than the grand painting of his own. In this case, Loyd-Lindsay would be the primary agent for the formal similarity between the two paintings.

### 3.5 Conclusion: The Uniqueness of a Marginal Artwork.

Orhan Pamuk, in his *My Name is Red* (1998), introduces a tale of people who are agitated by a picture. Fahir Shah, who conquered Samarkand, kills Selahatin Khan and seeks the

love of the beautiful Neriman, the wife of the late Khan. She assents the new ruler to be her new husband on the one condition: that he would not alter the face of the male figure in the picture of *Leyla and Mejun*, whose figures were modelled on her and the late husband. Fahir Shah accepts the proposal and spares this particular picture from the customary alteration made in the aftermath of conquest in the region. Fahir Shah has Neriman as his wife but could not stop thinking about the picture in which the late Kahn still resides as his new wife's husband. In the end, he enters the library and changes the face of Mejun into his own. However, his amateurish skill could not depict the likeness of his own face. The librarian finds the strange alteration and thinks the altered face is that of Abdullah Shah, Fahir Shah's archenemy in the neighbouring country. The rumour spreads, and it motivates the ambitious Abdullah Shah to overthrow Fahir Shah's throne. The young Abdullah, thereafter, lives with Neriman, as the picture depicts them.<sup>325</sup>

If Loyd-Lindsay was uneasy with the paintings of the Victoria Cross Gallery, as I have imagined, his attitude to the Victoria Cross paintings is closer to that of the anxious Oriental warlord in Pamuk's novel than that of a rational art audience in Victorian Britain. This insight, although it heavily depends on assumptions and imagination, can shed light on the studies of Victorian battle paintings whose frameworks have been attuned for objective explanations by using the collective contexts of social and military history. As the agents of *The Colours* are more atypical and individualistic, it is possible to see that the painting

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<sup>325</sup> Orhan Pamuk, *My Name is Red*, trans. Erdag M Goknar (London: Faber & Faber; Open Market, 2002), 70-71.

was not an insipid repetition of the artist's methods, but a unique object which was at the centre of involution of multiple agents, such as the preceding artistic project of another artist for the same subject matter, the impressive performance of the real battle, and the sitter with the strong emotional attachment to his self-image represented in the pictorial medium.

#### Chapter 4: The Agency of Working Conditions: Counter-Intuitive Parallels between *Scotland for Ever!* (1881) and the Nocturne paintings by James McNeill Whistler

This chapter highlights the agency of working conditions, which is the source of an affinity between *Scotland for Ever!* (1881) by Butler and the nocturnal landscapes of James McNeill Whistler (1834-1903). The two artists have never been discussed in parallel as their works have been studied under the conceptual categories of the realistic battle painting and the Aesthetic landscape painting. The chapter reveals that Butler's intention in making *Scotland for Ever!* was to protest against Whistler's artworks at the Grosvenor Gallery. She was possibly motivated by her discontent with the verdict of the scandalous legal case between Whistler and John Ruskin (1819-1900) in 1878. However, with regards to the actual procedure of painting its subject, *Scotland for Ever!* is closer to Whistler's Nocturne paintings, which were primarily created through memory and impression, than Ruskin's detailed landscapes, which were created by method of direct observation. The recognition



of this previously unacknowledged fact enables us to question the basis of rigid conceptual divisions between battle paintings and other avant-garde movements that have been taken as assumed.

## 4.1 Introduction

### 4.1.1 Questioning the Conceptual Isolation of Victorian Battle Paintings

In art history, a work of art is categorised into a collective style after an art historian's intuitive examinations of its form and content. However, style, which is a product of the art historian's "empirical" judgement in dealing with his or her specimens, came to be regarded as a concept which has essential value, independent from the arduous process of art-making.<sup>326</sup> It is art history's intuitive assumption that the stylistic difference between two paintings reflects two different aesthetics that solely involve different modes of perception and sensibility. The origin of this thought is credited to Alois Riegl (1858-1905) in the Vienna School. Riegl asserts that the radical stylistic change in depictions of nature in late Roman art is not a product of technical deficiency, as others considered it to be,

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<sup>326</sup> About the perspective that regards style as the product of "empiricism" in art history, see Robert S. Nelson, Richard Shiff, ed., *Critical Terms for Art History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003),105.

but a product of the particular "artistic will" or *Kunstwollen* of the period, inseparable from the late Roman people's particular way of perceiving time and space.<sup>327</sup> This idea of seeing artistic expression as the representation of perception is inherited by Walter Benjamin (1892-1940). Benjamin applies Riegl's idea to his discussion of the perceptual value of mechanically reproducible arts such as photography and film in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1935). From the late 1960s, the readership of this text in English-speaking world promoted the standpoint of seeing art as a matter of perception.<sup>328</sup>

The intuitive belief that different pictorial styles should reflect different types of perception seems unviable for the study of Victorian art; late nineteenth-century Britain, in particular, was a place where new artistic styles rapidly emerged and contested one another. It is a far-fetched idea that a Realist painter has a fundamentally different visual perception to an Impressionist painter in the same period. Nevertheless, the nomenclature of period styles is a strong factor in Victorian art history as it draws demarcations between

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<sup>327</sup> Christopher S. Wood, ed., *The Vienna School Reader: Politics and Art Historical Method in the 1930s* (New York: Zone Books, 2003), 85.

<sup>328</sup> Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), 222. Among English-speaking art historians, Jonathan Crary would be the most prominent scholar who is influenced by Benjamin's approach most. See his *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992) and *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001).

designated genres and movements, arguably assuming that pictorial styles represent different types of aesthetic sensibility. This conceptual demarcation drawn under the heading of style is particularly unhelpful in appreciating late Victorian battle paintings, as it confines the paintings to a sensibility serviceable to representing the subject of war and the associated sentiments and concepts, such as masculinity, imperial heroism, and humanitarianism.

This abstract structure around Victorian battle paintings is objectionable as it greatly restricts the discursive scope of the actual artworks. Hence, this chapter intends to question the notion that Victorian battle paintings are products of an exclusive type of sensibility, by discovering a type of sensitivity in Butler's *Scotland for Ever!* (1881) similar to that of the Nocturne paintings by James McNeill Whistler (1834-1903). This does not mean that the artistic sensibilities of Butler and Whistler are analogous in a literary sense, but only their actual operations of senses are parallel to each other as both artists practised a similar mode of observation in coping with particular working conditions.

The study of visual perception in a measurable sense no longer seems a suitable subject for art historians, as it is a subject which will be better fulfilled by modern neuroscientists. Yet art history is still able to elucidate the different modes of observation that artists used. This chapter, in particular, discusses the dissimilarity between artworks primarily created by reliance on long-term memory, and artworks produced from short-term memory, whose applications depended on varying working conditions. The absolute division between these two types of observation and application is difficult to prove in an objective sense, but their difference is a pressing concern for an artist who has to choose between the two.

This point is best illustrated by an episode recounted by Porphyry (c.234-c.305) regarding the process of making a portrait of the Neo-Platonist philosopher Plotinus (c.204/5-270). According to Porphyry, a disciple of Plotinus managed to acquire a lifelike portrait of his master (who refused to sit for his portrait, being ashamed of his bodily existence) by inviting a professional artist to the school's conferences, so that the artist was able to draw the master's characteristic features of the master from memory after long observation.<sup>329</sup> Recognising the agency of working conditions in relation to the application of certain perceptual faculties, suggests that battle paintings are not products of a certain type of sensibility exclusive to the genre, but are the result of the varying types of sensitivity that are also found in creating paintings of other styles, that are bound to battle paintings through similar working conditions.

It should be noted that the issue this chapter deals with is not directly related to Gell's approach and concepts, but is an extension of Gell's interest in the production of art, and his preference for "counter-intuitive" knowledge over intuitive knowledge.<sup>330</sup> In *Art and Agency*, Gell was silent about perception and sensibility as he refuses to see "aesthetic" as an appropriate subject for his anthropology of art.<sup>331</sup> With regards to style, Gell overtly disagrees with the common view that regarded style as "synecdoche" of collective "patterns"

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<sup>329</sup> Plotinus, *Plotinus: The Enneads*, trans. Stephen Mackenna (New York: Larson Publications, 1992), 1.

<sup>330</sup> Gell, *The Art of Anthropology*, 24-26.

<sup>331</sup> Gell, *Art and Agency*, 2-3.

of thought and culture.<sup>332</sup> In making this point, Gell stresses the “inter-artefactual relations” within patterns and designs, where the discussion of human sense perception has no place.<sup>333</sup> Nevertheless, my interest in the agentive role of working environments in relation to particular modes of observation is influenced by Simon Dell’s contribution in *Distributed Objects: Meaning and Mattering after Alfred Gell* (2013). In “Gell’s Duchamp/Duchamp’s Gell,” Dell points out that Gell’s contention of seeing Duchamp’s oeuvre as a self-contained representation of Edmund Husserl’s model of temporality is contrary to Gell’s own aim to focus on “particular artworks in specific interactive settings,” which is caused by his reluctance to acknowledge “institutional forces.”<sup>334</sup> Dell, then, discusses the agentive role of contemporary “viewing conditions” in the self-referential aspect of Duchamp’s oeuvre, which is a product of the artist’s reaction to the emergence of private galleries in contemporary Paris, in which artists’ idiosyncratic styles were more valued than before.<sup>335</sup> Dell’s approach to stress the agentive role of interactive settings is a considerable extension of Gell’s framework, as Gell generally attributes agency to particular entities or persons, although in the last part of *Art and Agency* he does suggest expanding the range of persons to particular “events in the milieu.”<sup>336</sup> Similarly to Dell, this chapter endeavours to

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<sup>332</sup> Ibid, 162-163.

<sup>333</sup> Ibid, 217.

<sup>334</sup> Chua, *Distributed Objects*, 115; 120.

<sup>335</sup> Ibid, 122-123.

<sup>336</sup> Gell, *Art and Agency*, 222.

discuss the agency of working conditions as they induced Butler and Whistler, who are formerly regarded as two artists of solely different sensibilities, to exercise their sensitivities in a comparable way.

Before initiating a focused study of Butler's *Scotland for Ever!* and its relation to Whistler's nocturnal landscapes, it is necessary to give an account of the conception of the late Victorian battle paintings as an artistically isolated genre. This view is mainly caused by the high degree of specialisation in the Victorian art-world. In the late eighteenth century, battle scenes were painted by history painters who freely crossed the borders between different genres. For instance, John Singleton Copley (1738-1815) and Benjamin West (1738-1820) painted more portraits than battle pieces. Horace Vernet (1789-1863) in France produced consummate history paintings, such as *Pope Julius II ordering Bramante, Michelangelo and Raphael to construct the Vatican and St. Peter's* (1827) and *Raphael in the Vatican* (1832) beside his numerous paintings of modern wars. Daniel Maclise (1806-1870) was able to execute *The Death of Nelson* (1865) and *The Meeting of Wellington and Blucher* (1861), the grand murals of the Napoleonic Wars for the Royal Gallery, the Palace of Westminster, but he was mainly active as a Romantic history painter. Louis William Desanges (1822-1887) remained a portrait painter despite the notable success of his Victoria Cross Gallery. However, compared to these artists of earlier generations, battle painters after Butler and Ernest Crofts (1847-1911) did not deviate from battle or military subjects; only the subject of sport was a diversion in subject for battle painters because of

its notable "share with battle."<sup>337</sup> Butler painted numerous watercolours of soldiers playing equestrian sports. John Charlton (1849-1917) abruptly converted his specialty from sport paintings to battle paintings in the middle of his career, but often went back to hunting scenes. In lighter media than canvas painting, artists represented battles from considerably earlier times: Richard Caton Woodville (1856-1927), for example, made numerous illustrations of medieval warfare for magazines. However, none of the late Victorian battle painters tried to paint the more serious type of history painting which would be part of the trend Christopher Wood called the "Victorian Classical Revival."<sup>338</sup> Conversely, as Peter Harrington points out, the leading artists of the Royal Academy, such as John Everett Millais (1829-1896), Frederic Leighton (1830-1896), and Philip Hermogenes Calderon (1833-1898) "showed no interest" in painting battles of modern wars, unlike their eighteenth-century predecessors.<sup>339</sup>

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<sup>337</sup> Meynell, *The Life and Work of Lady Butler*, 14.

<sup>338</sup> Christopher Wood, *Olympian Dreamers: Victorian Classical Painters* (London: Constable, 1983), 15.

Butler made religious paintings during her formative years. However, she did not return to the subject once she was determined to pursue the battle subjects. Usherwood, *Lady Butler*, 25.

<sup>339</sup> Harrington, *British Artists and War*, 249. This assertion might be true in general, but exceptions can be found as Millais painted *News from Home* (1857) that depicts a Highlander reading a letter from home at the trench in the Crimea. Calderon did not

This high degree of specialisation of Victorian battle painters seems to give modern researchers of late Victorian battle paintings a conception that practitioners of the genre were either unfamiliar with or hostile to the progressive artistic movements in the last quarter of the nineteenth century such as Aestheticism, Impressionism, and Post-Impressionism. Harrington, in his *British Artists and War* (1993), deems battle painting as an "isolated movement in art" following the opinion of the art historian Walter Armstrong (1850-1918).<sup>340</sup> Harrington made this strong assertion through his particular interpretation of Armstrong's words, which could create mistaken views of the genre's artists. The original passage in Armstrong's article "Victorian Fine Art" (1887) is:

The last of the isolated movements in Art which I have to chronicle as belonging to the Victorian era, is that towards a school of battle painters, which seems to have subsided, however, as fast as it rose.<sup>341</sup>

From this passage, it is possible to understand that Armstrong does not mean battle painting was isolated from the other movements, but that he needed to isolate his subject in the artistic movements within the Victorian era for the purpose of writing the article: battle painting was only one of the artistic movements in the confined period. Harrington himself seems puzzled by his own misinterpretation of the passage as he finds Armstrong's

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paint contemporary wars, but he painted *After the Battle* (1862) that shows an imaginary anecdote of British soldiers at the War of Spanish Succession (1701-1714).

<sup>340</sup> Ibid, 246.

<sup>341</sup> Walter Armstrong, "Victorian Fine Art," *Art Journal*, June 1887, 176.



account of the economical foundations of battle paintings in England and France "doubtful."<sup>342</sup> Nevertheless, Harrington's interpretation reveals his rigid conception of Victorian battle paintings, as he perceived them to be only on the "periphery" of the Victorian art scene.<sup>343</sup>

While Harrington only discusses battle art in isolation from a larger art market, Joan Hichberger proposes that Victorian battle paintings are in a kind of aesthetic isolation, in opposition to the progressive artistic movements of the period. Hichberger maintains that late Victorian battle paintings were able to succeed at the Royal Academy because they represented the typical "narrative, didactic, and highly finished art" that the institution favoured, before the advent of "new art" which was influenced by "French Impressionism and aesthetic theories of art for art's sake."<sup>344</sup> She also points out that battle paintings were often seen as a healthy "antidote to the effete tendencies" of the emerging Aesthetic artworks.<sup>345</sup> Although Hichberger openly adheres to the social history of art methodologically, her perspective on the aesthetic status of Victorian battle painting is synonymous with Greenberg's historicist definition of battle art as a backward-looking genre against progressive avant-garde art (see 1.3.2).

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<sup>342</sup> Harrington, *British Artists and War*, 246.

<sup>343</sup> *Ibid*, 249.

<sup>344</sup> Hichberger, *Images of the Army*, 92.

<sup>345</sup> *Ibid*, 86-87.

Butler's personal opinion on contemporary avant-garde movements, such as Aestheticism and Impressionism, does not alleviate the negative image of battle painting as a reactionary form against progressive art movements. In her autobiography, Butler recounts that she "owes the subject of *Scotland for Ever!* to an impulse [she] receives" after seeing the Aesthetic artworks at the Grosvenor Gallery in 1879.<sup>346</sup> This comment is useful for Paul Usherwood who, in his article, "Elizabeth Thompson Butler: A case of Tokenism" (1991), sees that Butler's aversion to the artworks at the Grosvenor Gallery and the consequent making of *Scotland for Ever!* signify that the artist "had not lost faith in the Academy's values," which were against such "advanced art" of the period.<sup>347</sup> To Usherwood, Butler's negative feelings towards the private Grosvenor Gallery, which existed from 1877 to 1890 in New Bond Street as an alternative venue to the Royal Academy, were almost ironic: she was a supposed victim of the Academy's discrimination, as it unduly withdrew its support for her at the Academy member election in 1879.<sup>348</sup> Usherwood does not specify in his article what the Academy values were. Nevertheless, he believes that the 40 Royal Academicians in 1874 generally liked *The Roll Call* because it was a "manly" painting harmonised with the "idea of masculine prowess and camaraderie entirely consistent with

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<sup>346</sup> Butler, *An Autobiography*, 186.

<sup>347</sup> Usherwood, "Elizabeth Thompson Butler: A Case of Tokenism," 17.

<sup>348</sup> Ibid. For the general information of the Grosvenor Gallery, see Christopher Newall, *The Grosvenor Gallery Exhibitions: Change and Continuity in the Victorian Art World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 3-4.

the self-image of the Academy."<sup>349</sup> Usherwood does not demonstrate how *Scotland for Ever!* came to be a painting that adhered to the Academy's values, but he seems to believe that the martial content of the painting is self-evident for his claim.

Hichberger and Usherwood agree upon the framework that defines battle paintings as antithetical artefacts to avant-garde productions, and *Scotland for Ever!* is decisive evidence as Butler herself alludes to the painting as her all-out effort to respond the period's Aesthetic movement. However, regardless of the artist's intention, this chapter will revise the model that sees battle paintings as products of opposite concerns to those associated with avant-gardism through recognising that battle painters and avant-garde painters are not in conflict with each other in their concerns about the actual process of art making.

#### 4.1.2 The Significance of *Scotland for Ever!* in Butler's Career

*Scotland for Ever!* (plate 21) is a horizontally elongated painting depicting the historic charge of the Scots Greys during the Battle of Waterloo (1815). A contemporary reception of the painting offers a succinct description of how the painting would appeal to the Victorian viewers:

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<sup>349</sup> Usherwood, "Elizabeth Thompson Butler," 14.

[The painting represents] the charge of the Scots Greys at Waterloo. The famous dragoons are depicted at full gallop, headed by their officer, dashing in one resistless, resounding mass straight towards the spectator. The subject is a very stirring one, and is treated with great spirit; the actions of the men are well varied, and their expressions, as some of them shout "Scotland for Ever!" are vigorously realised; and the horses are boldly and not unsuccessfully foreshortened [...]<sup>350</sup>

The painting's initial impression has not changed substantially over time as the appreciation of a modern art critic hardly differs from the Victorian's:

They are charging straight at you, their horses like cannonballs hurtling forward, the men a gallery of courage, sabres aloft, red coats flaming as they advance in reckless unison.<sup>351</sup>

The painting is comprehensible to both modern and Victorian critics as they feel the same sense of speed, energy, and the violent struggle from it. This effect is largely created by the painting's projective formula. The Greys are "dashing towards" the viewer by reversing the subject-object relationship between the viewer and the artwork. The effect is facilitated by mastering two conventional or academic techniques - foreshortening and one-point perspective - but its mechanism is not conventional. The painting is an ideal example of

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<sup>350</sup> *The Illustrated London News*, "Fine Arts." April 16, 1881, 379.

<sup>351</sup> Jonathan Jones, "Jonathan Jones on art: Scottish heroism at Waterloo should not be forgotten," *The Guardian*, June 18, 2015, accessed April 19, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/jonathanjonesblog/2015/jun/18/scottish-heroism-at-waterloo-should-not-be-forgotten>.

the "Medusa effect," specified by W. J. T. Mitchell, which is intended to "transfix" and "paralyze" the viewer.<sup>352</sup> In this respect, *Scotland for Ever!* is a precursor to propaganda images used during World War I, such as conscription posters known for their pointing fingers, of Uncle Sam (1917) by James Montgomery Flagg (1877-1960) and Lord Kitchener (1914) by Alfred Leete (1882-1933).

*Scotland for Ever!* stands out as a visually effective artwork, that does not require the viewer to have much knowledge of its narrative. From its initial exhibition in 1881 at the Egyptian Hall, the painting was one of the most popular works of Butler, and it was one of the most reviewed paintings of the year. There is no doubt that the painting is the most widely reproduced and imitated painting of the artist (see 2.3.1). Its characteristic effect was not reduced in the early twentieth century, as the painting was the highlight of Butler's *Waterloo Centenary, 1815-1915* exhibition.<sup>353</sup> It also survived as an essential source for the cinematic representation of the historic charge in the film *Waterloo* (1970) by Sergei Bondarchuk (1920-1994) (plate 53).

According to Wilfrid Meynell, *Scotland for Ever!* is based on the Waterloo veteran James Armour's unpublished account of the charge.<sup>354</sup> However, the painting does not appear to rely heavily on a story because it lacks the attributes to narrate a historical event. There

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<sup>352</sup> W. J. T. Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 36.

<sup>353</sup> Nott, "Reframing War," 182.

<sup>354</sup> Meynell, *The Life and Work of Lady Butler*, 14.

are not many topographical markers in the picture, but it rather features the elements of a schematic space: the rows of cavalymen draw a straight horizontal line, and the artificially painted grasses on the ground and the cloud burgeoning from the background shape radial lines, guiding the dramatic recession of the space into which the cavalymen are advancing. Such schematisation could mislead the viewer to believe that the painting represents another charge in history such as the Charge of the Light Brigade during the Crimean War because the regiment's uniforms had not changed considerably since the Battle of Waterloo.<sup>355</sup> The absence of the enemy - one of the artist's principles - could also cause a similar confusion. Furthermore, Butler minimised the presence of the Highlanders who were holding "the stirrup of the trotting horses of the Greys," during the charge, according to the account of the military historian William Siborne (1797-1849).<sup>356</sup> Butler's Highlanders are almost unrecognisable due to their diminutive size, while they are awkwardly crammed into the corner of the picture (plate 54). Butler's decision was unusual

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<sup>355</sup> Ibid, 12.

<sup>356</sup> " As the Scots Greys passed through, and mingled with, the Highlanders; the enthusiasm of both Corps was extraordinary. They mutually cheered. "Scotland for ever!" was their war shout. The smoke in which the head of the French Column was enshrouded had not cleared away, when the Greys dashed into the mass. So eager was the desire, so strong the determination, of the Highlanders to aid their compatriots in completing the work so gloriously begun, that many were seen holding on by the stirrups of the horsemen, while all rushed forward, leaving none but the disabled in their rear." William Siborne, *History of the War in France and Belgium in 1815* (London: T and W, Boone, 1848), 414.

as the decorative effect of the kilted Highlanders was always valued by battle painters. The invisibility of the Highlanders was something that was reversed by her competitors who wanted to succeed in the same subject. This can be seen from *Gordons and Greys to the Front* (1898) by Stanley Berkeley (1855-1909), which represents the same charge as *Scotland for Ever!* (plate 55). Butler seemed to be aware of the incomprehensibility of the narrative subject of her painting. Hence, she wrote a lengthy explanatory note for the visitors to the Royal Institution in Manchester where the painting was exhibited in 1882, to supplement the lack of narrative elements in the picture.<sup>357</sup> Nonetheless, Butler's *Scotland for Ever!* does not appear to be a conventional narrative painting due to the unusual choices she made.

*Scotland for Ever!* can be seen as the artist's bold attempt to maximise its shock effect at the expense of narrative. It is a painting to stir viewers rather than to narrate a story. Drawing emotions from the viewer had been Butler's strength from the time of *The Roll Call* (1874) and *Balaclava* (1876). However, from 1879 onwards, she seemed to be more acutely aware of the power of paintings in making the viewer "shed tears," as she demonstrated with the hyper-emotional *The Remnants of an Army* (1879) (see 2.3.1).<sup>358</sup> By this time, the artist seemed to be at the crossroad between two types of art. *Scotland for Ever!* downplays narrative at the expense of its visceral effects, while *The Defence of Rorke's*

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<sup>357</sup> *The Manchester Guardian*, "MRS. BUTLER'S "SCOTLAND FOR EVER !" AT THE ROYAL INSTITUTION," January 13, 1882, 5.

<sup>358</sup> Butler, *An Autobiography*, 184-185.

*Drift* (1880) (plate 56) is still a faithful historical painting that provides fuller references telling a story. The Zulu War picture was commissioned by Queen Victoria who had a great interest in British colonial wars. The actual "heroes" of the battle were sent to visit the artist, and she was able to study the soldiers who fought at Zululand.<sup>359</sup> The painting shows details marking the timeline of the incident. It depicts a specific topographic marker, the barricaded mission station, Rorke's Drift; the soldiers' tunics are still red, but they are wearing new pith helmets instead of the old shakos that were no longer used by the British army from the late 1870s; the illustrious Zulu warriors, with their notorious spears, *assegai*, boast their presence, despite Butler's conscious effort to drive them "in[to] the shade."<sup>360</sup> Compared to *The Defence of Rorke's Drift, Scotland for Ever!* is not a typical historical painting as it appeals to the viewer's senses rather than the knowledge of historical facts. Butler repeats the same projective formula in *Floreat Etona!* (1882), *Within Sound of the Guns* (1903), and *The Avengers* (c.1917), but none exceeded the popularity of her first painting.

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<sup>359</sup> Ibid, 187.

<sup>360</sup> Michael Barthorp, *British Infantry Uniforms Since 1660* (Dorset: Blandford Press, 1982), 92. Butler, *An Autobiography*, 188.



## 4.2 *Scotland for Ever!* and the Whistler v. Ruskin Trial: Butler's Protest against Avant-Garde Movements

Butler's reaction to the Aesthetic movement is the best-known example of the tension between battle art and the avant-garde movement. According to the artist's autobiography, published in 1922, the primary motivation behind her creation of *Scotland for Ever!* was her fury at the artworks exhibited at the Grosvenor Gallery in 1879:

The Grosvenor was the home of the "Æsthetes" of the period, whose sometimes unwholesome productions preceded those of our modern "Impressionists." I felt myself getting more and more annoyed while perambulating those rooms, and to such a point of exasperation was I impelled that I fairly fled and, breathing the honest air of Bond Street, took a hansom to my studio. There I pinned a 7-foot sheet of brown paper on an old canvas and, with a piece of charcoal and piece of white chalk, flung the charge of "The Greys" upon it. Dr Pollard, who still looked in during my husband's absences as he used to do in my maiden days to see that all was well with me, found me in a surprising mood.<sup>361</sup>

On the surface, Butler's account evidences of her general aversion to the succession of avant-garde movements from the Aesthetic movement in the 1870s to British Impressionism in the 1920s. From this account, it is hard to fathom what exact conception

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<sup>361</sup> Butler, *An Autobiography*, 186.

Butler had of the two separate movements. The Aesthetic movement involves a dozen players whose styles and interests are different from one another. In her *Art for Art's Sake: Aestheticism in Victorian Painting* (2007), Elizabeth Prettejohn endeavoured to establish an art-historical scope for the movement by discussing the works of Millais, Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882), Simeon Solomon (1840-1905), Leighton, Whistler, Albert Moore (1841-1893) and Edward Burne-Jones (1833-1898) and their relevance to the concept of art for art's sake. However, at the same time, Prettejohn warns that there is a lack of cohesion in the movement in terms of "style," "subject," and "political and ideological concerns" in comparison to other movements.<sup>362</sup> The contemporary understandings of the movement could be quite different from Prettejohn's orderly one. In 1882, the critic Walter Hamilton saw the movement as a kind of second stage of Pre-Raphaelitism in terms of its "union of the arts of poetry and painting."<sup>363</sup> His narrow approach did not only neglect Leighton, Solomon, and Moore but also devalued Whistler as an "eccentric artist."<sup>364</sup> The majority of less informed spectators would regard anyone who exhibited his or her works at the Grosvenor Gallery founded by Sir Coutts Lindsay (1824-1913), as an aesthete.

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<sup>362</sup> Elizabeth Prettejohn, *Art for Art's Sake: Aestheticism and Victorian Painting* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2007), 2.

<sup>363</sup> Walter Hamilton, *The Aesthetic Movement in England* (London: Reeves & Turner, 1882), 24.

<sup>364</sup> *Ibid*, 61.

The same problem ensues with Butler's usage of the word 'modern Impressionists,' as it is impossible to know to whom she refers. She must have heard the names of Edouard Manet (1832-1883), Edgar Degas (1834-1917), and Claude Monet (1840-1926) during her lifetime since she was attentive to the Paris art scene out of her admiration for French military artists. She might have been referring to the domestic artists of the New English Art Club, which was founded in 1885, or to the English Impressionists, such as Wilson Steer (1860-1942), Walter Sickert (1860-1942), and George Clausen (1852-1944) whose influences had grown during the 1920s. It is also probable that Butler mixes up Post-Impressionist works when she mentions modern Impressionists, as she would have known about the public indignation caused by the exhibition *Manet and the Post-Impressionists* (1910), curated by Roger Fry (1866-1934). Butler's selection of the word "unwholesome" sounds similar to the expressions of anti-Post-impressionist outcries in the wake of the show, such as "anarchic," "egoistic," and "pornographic."<sup>365</sup>

Another obstacle to specify the target of Butler's criticism is the quantity and "stylistic diversity" of the exhibited works at the Grosvenor Gallery.<sup>366</sup> Approximately 240 artworks were exhibited at its annual exhibition. Despite the prominence of the Aesthetic artists mentioned above, the style and subject of exhibitors were much more complex. The artists

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<sup>365</sup> For the reception history of Post-Impressionism in Britain, see J.B. Bullen, ed., *Post-Impressionists in England: The Critical Reception* (London; New York, Routledge, 1988), 1-38.

<sup>366</sup> Newall, *The Grosvenor Gallery Exhibitions*, 27.

known as landscapists and genre painters also showed their works there. Its annual exhibition even includes military and battle painters. For instance, the battle painter James Prinsep Beadle (1863-1947) submitted *The Queen's Guard* (c.1889) to the gallery in 1889, while a solo show of the internationally renowned military painter Vasily Vereshchagin (1842-1904) was held in the gallery in 1887.<sup>367</sup>

The unintelligibility of the specific focus of Butler's hostility could be interpreted as the artist's ignorance and isolation from contemporary artistic movements. However, I argue that the motivation behind *Scotland for Ever!* is specific and related to the artist's reception of a particular event at that time: the Whistler v. Ruskin trial. It is evident that the widely published 1878 trial affected the language the artist chose to describe her act of painting because the particular word, 'fling', is found in both Butler's account and Ruskin's notorious description of Whistler's art-making practice. After he saw the Grosvenor Gallery's first annual exhibition of in 1877, Ruskin described Whistler as "a coxcomb asking two hundred guineas for flinging a pot of paint in the public's face."<sup>368</sup> At the trial, which ended in November 1878, the verdict was against Ruskin, although the amount of compensation was insultingly small to Whistler. The reports on the trial must have been

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<sup>367</sup> Henry Blackburn, ed., *The Grosvenor Gallery 1889, a complete illustrated catalogue of the summer exhibition at the Grosvenor gallery* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1889), 46; *The Athenaeum*, "M. Verestchagin's pictures," October 15, 1887, 510.

<sup>368</sup>John Ruskin, *Fors Clavigera*, vol. 29, *The Works of John Ruskin*, ed. E.T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (London: George Allen 1903-12),160.

still vivid in Butler's mind in 1879 when Whistler submitted other paintings that were very similar in style to those that had been at the gallery in 1877.<sup>369</sup> The sight of *Harmony in Green and Gold – The Pacific* (1866), *Nocturne in Blue-Green* (1871) and *Nocturne of Blue and Gold – Southampton Water* (1872) must have been enough to inflame her anger.<sup>370</sup> Considering these circumstances, it is possible to assume that Whistler was the main person Butler protested against with the aggressive painting, *Scotland for Ever!*, in sympathy with Ruskin. *Scotland for Ever!*, then, was Butler's act of revenge on behalf of Ruskin, by flinging her charging horses on the jester who degraded art. In this respect, the painting is less relevant to the artist's support for patriotism, conservatism, or manly ethos. The re-examination of Butler's account concerning avant-garde movements improves our understanding of the artist's relationship with the Aesthetic movement: her reaction was not caused by a blind aversion to a general collective, but by an individual reception of a specific case related to the movement.

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<sup>369</sup>It is possible that Butler went to the first exhibition as well because she had a solo show in the Fine Art Society in Bond Street in that year. *The Times*, "GROSVENOR GALLERY, New Bond-street", June 16, 1877, 2.

<sup>370</sup>For the full list of Whistler's works at the Grosvenor gallery in 1877 and 1879, see Christopher Newall, *The Grosvenor Gallery Exhibitions*, 135. Also see, Margaret F. MacDonald, Grischka Petri, *James McNeill Whistler: The paintings, a catalogue raisonné*, University of Glasgow, 2014, on-line website at <http://whistlerpaintings.gla.ac.uk>.

### 4.3 The Two Modes of Observation Articulated through the Whistler v. Ruskin Trial

#### 4.3.1 The Significance of Whistler v. Ruskin as the Articulation of Two Modes of Observation

The courtroom case between Whistler and Ruskin, which is brilliantly reconstructed in *A Pot of Paint: Aesthetics on Trial in Whistler v. Ruskin* (1992) by Linda Merrill, is significant as an articulation of two distinct modes of observation in relation to particular working conditions that each artist preferred, rather than, as it is often considered, a symbolic event that represents a conflict between Modernist individualism and Realist moralism. In the narrative of art history, Whistler's accusation of Ruskin for libel is often seen as a modernist artist's rebellion against the Victorian conception that art ought to be the sincere representation of nature. Ernest Gombrich may be the person responsible for propagating this view; in *The Story of Art* (1950), he describes Whistler's career in Britain as an apostolic "battle for modern art," which aimed to spread the new Impressionist movement taking place in Paris to the London art-world.<sup>371</sup> The trial, according to this framework, is a climatic event in Whistler's project to transform "art into a subjective, nonempirical realm."<sup>372</sup> This dualistic understanding of the event has been questioned in the study of British art history.

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<sup>371</sup> E. H. Gombrich, *The Story of Art* (London: Phaidon, 2011), 406-407.

<sup>372</sup> Penelope J.E. Davies et al., *Janson's History of Art: The Western Tradition* (New York: Pearson, 2016), 887.

Prettejohn points out that it is hard to see the case as a conflict between "conservatism" and the progressive idea of "art for art's sake," as the trial had an aspect of internal dispute within the Aesthetic movement.<sup>373</sup> Prettejohn's assertion can be easily understood by speculating the complex inter-personal relations formed by the trial. William Michael Rossetti and Albert Moore testified for Whistler while Edward Burne-Jones and William Powell Frith (1819-1909) did so for Ruskin. Moore and Burne-Jones were Grosvenor exhibitors while Frith was an established Royal Academician renowned for his narrative genre pictures. Rossetti was a member of the original Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood but sided with Whistler in court against Ruskin who used to be the most prominent champion of the Brotherhood.<sup>374</sup> Furthermore, despite his popularity as an art and social critic, Ruskin was hardly a powerful figure controlling a large institution, such as Royal Academy, and his comment did not terminate Whistler's future participations at the Grosvenor. Therefore, it is difficult to define the trial as a conflict between two opposing artistic movements.<sup>375</sup>

The trial, not being a factional conflict between the old and new movements, still appears to be an aesthetic conflict between two different principles. However, considering the

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<sup>373</sup> Prettejohn. *Art for Art's Sake*, 188.

<sup>374</sup> About attendance at the trial, see Linda Merrill, *A Pot of Paint: Aesthetics on Trial in Whistler v. Ruskin* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1992), 72-122.

<sup>375</sup> Whistler seemed to have a practical motivation to cause a sensation in the hope of boosting his reputation and seeking financial compensation out of the trial. See *Ibid*, 60-61.

actual practice of Ruskin and Whistler's art-making questions this assumption. Ruskin, Frith, Burne-Jones, and Butler were uncomfortable with the lack of finish in Whistler's paintings, which opposed the customary values of industry and skill in Victorian Britain. Ruskin is known for valuing the sincere depiction of nature - he advocated 'Truth to Nature' - while Whistler insisted that his paintings were only "aesthetic arrangements" which served art's autonomy.<sup>376</sup> Despite the apparent distinction between the two different aesthetics, recent art-historical researches highlight that the artistic methods of Ruskin, as an artist, not as a theorist, and Whistler cannot be explained by the division between naturalism and formalism. Conal Shields argues that Ruskin developed his aesthetic and artistic style through critical encounters with the styles and methods of contemporary landscapists such as Samuel Prout (1783-1852), James Duffield Harding (1798-1863) and J. M. W. Turner (1775-1851) as their compositional and formal traits can be seen in Ruskin's artworks.<sup>377</sup> Likewise, Anna Gruetzner Robins points out that Whistler's landscapes are not only formal studies of line, form, and colour, but also topographic records of particular locations, and which appear to be the artist's experimentation with the contemporary optical theory of

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<sup>376</sup> It should be noted that Ruskin's idea of 'Truth to Nature' does not mean a mechanical imitation of nature, but a production of truthful signs and symbols that appeal to not only the eye but also to the mind. See Ruskin, *Modern Painters I*, 92; about Whistler's definition of art as aesthetic arrangement, see Merrill, *A Pot of Paint*, 31.

<sup>377</sup> Christopher Newall, ed., *John Ruskin: Artist and Observer* (London: Paul Holberton, 2014), 48-58.



Hermann Ludwig von Helmholtz (1821-1894).<sup>378</sup> It is notable that Whistler's portraits, such as *The White Girl* (1862), *Arrangement in Grey and Black: Portrait of the Painter's Mother* (1871), and *Arrangement in Grey and Black, No. 2: Portrait of Thomas Carlyle* (1872-1873) (plate 57), are based on sincere observations of the sitters' characteristic traits. Whistler's portrait of Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881), in particular, was discussed in court as positive evidence to prove the artist's professional ability to draw an "excellent likeness" of his model, and it did not suffer harsh criticisms as did his Nocturne paintings, such as *Nocturne in Black and Gold* (1872-1877) (plate 58).<sup>379</sup>

This thesis agrees that Ruskin and Whistler have common ground in their efforts to paint varying subjects. However, the Whistler v. Ruskin trial reveals the notable fact that both artists had clear preferences for specific types of working conditions that were inseparable from the particular modes of observation they were inclined to practice. Ruskin preferred to sit in front of his subjects while he transferred their details, whereas Whistler separated the process of observation and the process of painting, relying instead on memory. The Ruskinian mode of observation, as I provisionally call it, utilises direct ocular contact with the subjects, made at short, rapid intervals to ensure the particular details are traced and transferred on paper promptly. In the Whistlerian observation, the actual painting can be done in remote time and space because the artist's contact with his subject is a holistic

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<sup>378</sup> Anna Gruetzner Robins, *A Fragile Modernism: Whistler and his Impressionist Followers* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2007), 11-19.

<sup>379</sup> Merrill, *A Pot of Paint*, 155-156.

experience which enables him to memorise impressions that will be forged into pictorial visions. Both modes of observation are highly connected to their corresponding working conditions.

#### 4.3.2 The Ruskinian Mode of Observation

Ruskin's aesthetic is encapsulated by the phrase 'Truth to Nature.' However, it is wrong to interpret his idea as an assertion of a mechanical imitation of nature. According to Timothy Costelloe, Ruskin did not advocate the making of art "tied to the real presence of some material object," but wanted to grasp the original intention or "perfect taste" of God, which does not require manipulation, through the detailed representation of nature.<sup>380</sup> In *Modern Painters I*, Ruskin remarks that he does not advocate the painting as an exact copy of nature because the "Ideas of Truth" are not "limited to the narrow field of art which takes cognizance only of material things," and truthful paintings operate "as a symbol as words do."<sup>381</sup> To Ruskin, the faithful observation of ocular visions is the only means to reach the beauty of nature, not an objective by itself.

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<sup>380</sup> Timothy M. Costelloe, *The British Aesthetic Tradition: From Shaftesbury to Wittgenstein* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 229-230.

<sup>381</sup> Ruskin, *Modern Painters I*, 104.

Ruskin's elaborate philosophy is relevant to this chapter in that it supports a particular working method to deal with physical objects and sceneries. Ruskin upholds Turner as the exemplary painter of truthful paintings which go beyond an imitative function and work as symbols. Ruskin must have known that Turner's landscape paintings were made by memory, design skills, and unique compositional schemes, which are bound to alter the real topography of the landscape, rather than by an unselective observation of nature. Hence, Ruskin endorses composition as an "arrangement of materials, not annihilation."<sup>382</sup> However, arguably, as an artist Ruskin did not have the same aptitude for composition and design from memory. In his autobiography *Praeterita* (1885), Ruskin confesses that he did not have the designing power to draw "out of head."<sup>383</sup> Conal Shields, in "Ruskin as Artist: Seeing and Feeling," agrees with this point by remarking that Ruskin needed "specific prompts to his eye and mind, and only actual objects could supply these."<sup>384</sup> Ruskin was not able to assimilate himself with Turner's method because he was inclined to chasing, tracing and translating the visual details in front of him. Ruskin deployed the picturesque compositional schemes for his paintings, but he still preferred to render the details of his objects on the spot.

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<sup>382</sup> Ibid, 334.

<sup>383</sup> John Ruskin, *Praeterita*, ed. Francis O'Gorman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 49.

<sup>384</sup> Newall, *John Ruskin*, 50-51.

The practical method of Ruskin is "to trace" the visual information given to him with minimal composition.<sup>385</sup> The details of nature are inexhaustible; to project them in painting to an utmost level demands one to spend extensive time in front of the actual object, which means that the artist needs a firm ground and steady objects in a well-lit condition. Most of Ruskin's pictures were made when he secured a stable working environment. Ruskin principally preferred to paint inanimate objects such as landscapes, architectural details, and geological and botanical objects rather than objects in rapid motion. Ruskin's picture of St. Mark's Basilica in Venice shows that the artist painted it under working conditions chosen based on his principle of painting on the spot and propensity for still subjects (plate 59). Ruskin created the picture in front of the south side of St. Mark's on a day in May 1846. Newall contends that Ruskin's fluent watercolour technique evokes a clear "sense of *plein-air* freshness" in the picture.<sup>386</sup> Nevertheless, what can be seen from the picture is not only a still image of the basilica but also the one or two hours of time the artist spent in the *piazza*. It is possible to imagine young Ruskin laboriously tracing the architectural details of the building on a rainy day. The picture seems to show the moment the rain stopped. The artist may have been working with pencil under the adjoining arcade of Doge's Palace while it was still raining. After he got the right guidelines for colouring, he would engage rapidly in shadowing and colouring according to either the most congenial, or the most recent, impression of light. Ruskin devoted most of the

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<sup>385</sup> "To trace" is the word Ruskin used. Ruskin, *Praeterita*, 199.

<sup>386</sup> Newall, *John Ruskin*, 128.

time in the square to painting the particular details of the architecture. Similar to long exposure photographs by Louis Daguerre (1787-1851), there are no people in front of the doorway of the most popular building in Venice. The painting is unfinished: the weather may have become harsher, or the artist may have had to leave for a meal. Ruskin seemed to rely on imagination or memory when he added the uncoloured column of Doge's Palace, since its ornamented pedestal does not exist in the real column (plate 60).<sup>387</sup> His ambition to transfer the maximum view of inexhaustible nature was arduous in real life. Ever since he realised the value of drawing "what really was there,"<sup>388</sup> Ruskin often found it difficult to spend so much time in front of the depicted object.<sup>389</sup> Consequently, many of his outdoor paintings are unfinished. These working conditions must have made Ruskin view

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<sup>387</sup> It is possible to know that Ruskin knew the peculiar shape of the columns of the Doge's palace according to another ink drawing of the same place he made in 1835. About the drawing, see *Ibid*, 116.

<sup>388</sup> "Considering of these matters, one day on the road to Norwood, I noticed a bit of ivy round a thorn stem, which seemed, even to my critical judgment, not ill 'composed'; and proceeded to make a light and shade pencil study of it in my grey paper pocket-book, carefully, as if it had been a bit of sculpture, liking it more and more as I drew. When it was done, I saw that I had virtually lost all my time since I was twelve years old, because no one had ever told me to draw what was really there!" Ruskin, *Praeterita*, 197.

<sup>389</sup> "The second, that my Florentine studies had not taught me how to draw clouds or stones any better; that the stream under my window was no more imitable than the Rhone itself, and that any single boulder in it would take all the month, or it might be six weeks, to paint the least to my mind." *Ibid*, 232-233.

the new technology of photography positively as it could store immediate visual information faster than his hands.

#### 4.3.3 The Whistlerian Mode of Observation.

Whistler's understanding of the relationship between art and nature is notably different from Ruskin's. He thought of a picture as an autonomous entity which is not subordinated to the truth of Nature. His comments on *Nocturne in Blue and Gold-Old Battersea Bridge* (c. 1872-5) during his trial clarifies this idea (plate 61). Whistler contends that the painting "represents Battersea Bridge by moonlight," but rather than "a portrait of the bridge," it is "a painting of a moonlight scene" through which he aimed to "bring about a certain harmony of colour."<sup>390</sup> For the artist, his paintings remain "an arrangement of line and form and colour."<sup>391</sup> In short, what Whistler wanted to create was not an ideal or a faithful representation of the Battersea Bridge and the Thames, but a good painting whose formal quality had an independent value.

Whistler's series of Nocturne paintings was the result of the Whistlerian observational method, which runs parallel to the Ruskinian method. It is impossible to record the view

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<sup>390</sup> Merrill, *A Pot of Paint*, 150-151.

<sup>391</sup> *Ibid*, 144.

of the night on the canvas *ex tempore* since the artist cannot see the object of painting and the painting in progress at the same time under the fading light. Furthermore, as Rossetti pointed out in his defence of Whistler, it is natural that the artist's Nocturne painting is "indefinite" because that is an innate quality of the subject.<sup>392</sup> Nevertheless, the majority of observed details at night are liable to be lost because of the long interval between seeing and painting. For Whistler, the long gap between seeing and painting could be bridged by his memory, based on impressions. The artist could paint night scenes confidently because he believed in his own visual memory, which he thought it was possible to improve through training. This method of utilising long-term memory through training was not exclusively Whistler's invention. In fact, this specific method had been practiced and advocated in France by Horace Lecoq de Boisbaudran (1802-1897) from the late 1840s. Whistler may have become familiar with the method when he met Alphonse Legros (1837-1911) and Henri Fantin-Latour (1836-1904), who learnt the technique from Lecoq as his pupils at the *École de Dessin*, in Paris in 1857.<sup>393</sup> It is hard to estimate how much time Whistler spent on the bank of the Thames at night by viewing the resultant paintings. Nevertheless, the artist lived in Chelsea, which is near to the river, so he was able to observe the night scenery along the Thames on a nightly basis.<sup>394</sup> The artist would

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<sup>392</sup> Ibid, 155.

<sup>393</sup> For Whistler's association with the French artists, see Daniel E. Sutherland, *Whistler: A Life for Art's Sake* (New Haven: Yale University Press), 49.

<sup>394</sup> Merrill, *A Pot of Paint*, 154.

pause on the river on purpose without the burden of the immediate sketching. Sometimes he would return to the same location until he could "form the idea in his mind," while "his manual labour," which must have been done in his studio during daylight hours, was rapid and instantaneous, and took only one or two days.<sup>395</sup>

The immediate tracing of the details was impossible when viewing the night because the right lighting for seeing the subject and the painting at the same time does not occur. The eye quickly adopts the different levels of illumination of the artist's studio and the landscape view outside. The distance between the fleeting night and the canvas cannot be shortened even by modern electric lights. For painters in the 1870s, to paint night views was to exercise memory and design skills rather than to use the faculty for the immediate delineation of ocular images. An artist who does not trust his own memory will not venture into the genre of nocturnal painting. At the Whistler v. Ruskin trial, Burne-Jones saw the prospect of the night view paintings negatively; he maintained that "to paint night" is "difficult," and he underrated Whistler's Nocturne paintings as some of the numerous failures to paint the subject.<sup>396</sup> As a landscape watercolourist, Ruskin managed to capture the beauty of the sky at a moment of the sunset by an accumulation of daily observations of the sky during that particular hour.<sup>397</sup> Nevertheless, Ruskin stopped painting nature when night fell, and did not attempt to paint it from memory. For instance, when he was

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<sup>395</sup> Ibid, 152.

<sup>396</sup> Merrill, *A Pot of Paint*, 173.

<sup>397</sup> Newall, *John Ruskin*, 306.



sketching Aiguilles at Mont Blanc in 1849, Ruskin could not faithfully draw the view he saw from the window of the mountain villa due to the shortage of daylight; hence he had to finish the sketch with the help of Daguerreotype.<sup>398</sup> Ruskin knew how to appreciate the beauty of the actual night view of the Thames as much as Whistler did, as he is known to have enjoyed a "moonlight boating expedition" to the river.<sup>399</sup> However, Ruskin did not endeavour to paint what he saw on the boat in contrast to Whistler who painted *Nocturne in Blue and Gold* out of a similar visual experience.

#### 4.3.4 Butler's Observation

This chapter has proposed two modes of observation under the names of the two opponents at a historic trial in art history. The Ruskinian mode heavily relies on immediate tracing by the direct observation of nature, while the Whistlerian mode relies on memory and design. Like other artists, Butler practiced the two modes of observation jointly during her career. In her early years as an artist, she exhibited her ability to capture the details of fast-moving figures, which attests to her strong memory and design skills. Her sketchbooks made from her trip to Italy from the end of 1860 to the spring of 1861 contain numerous scenes of battles and soldiers in everyday life (plate 62). It is unlikely that she made such

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<sup>398</sup> Ibid, 277.

<sup>399</sup> Tim Hilton, *John Ruskin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 291.

animated drawings before her subjects as they are abstract line drawings without particular details of colour and shade; the soldiers in the sketchbook are more likely to be heavily schematised based on her impressions of moving figures. This working condition changed only when she entered into the competitive London art scene.<sup>400</sup> Hence Butler's skills to render pictorial details based on the visual stimuli in front of her developed dramatically thereafter: when the artist was making *The Roll Call* (1874), *Quatre Bras* (1875) and *Balaclava* (1876), soldiers and veterans were hired to pose directly before her. It is possible to say that Butler's application of a static working condition is akin to the Ruskinian mode. Hence it is understandable that Ruskin praised *Quatre Bras* as the "first fine Pre-Raphaelite picture of battle" in his *Academy Notes*.<sup>401</sup> Butler managed to keep the same working condition when she was making *The Defence of Rorke's Drift* in 1879. The surviving sketches for the painting show that the artist could record the details of the soldiers of the 24th Regiment when they were stationed in Portsmouth (plate 63). She initially did not want to show the Zulu warriors in the picture, but she decided to paint a band of Zulus in the left corner of the canvas. Yet they were not made solely from imagination; Butler painted multiple Zulu warriors from an African performer brought to her from a show in

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<sup>400</sup> When Butler had the first chance to observe British soldiers near Southampton in 1872, her subjects were still moving as they were on manoeuvres. See, Butler, *An Autobiography*, 98.

<sup>401</sup> Ruskin, *Academy Notes: Notes*, 308.

London.<sup>402</sup> Butler's marriage to the Irish army officer William Francis Butler (1938-1910) provided her with more opportunities to sketch real soldiers as models. Nevertheless, Butler did not come to trace the fixed image of the posed models in front of her in a submissive sense. In fact, modelling sessions were an insufficient method for battle painters as battle scenes tend to represent a large number of animated figures interacting; hence the faculty of designing figures from imagination or memory is a characteristic quality of battle painters. Butler, too, did not lose her youthful drive to capture details from memory, as reflected in her early sketches, throughout her career. It seems that Butler was able to implement the two extreme modes of observation in practice.

Admittedly, within the scope of this thesis, it is difficult to measure the exact ratio to which each mode of observation contributes to her artworks. As a painter of realistic battle paintings, Butler must have thought herself a Ruskinian who sincerely observed particular elements of nature (see 2.2.2). At the same time, the Whistlerian mode of art making, which heavily relied on memory and the design faculty, was also part of Butler's practice. For instance, Butler's sketch of Private David Jenkins of the 24th regiment is brief, lacking detailed tonal modelling. It is questionable how much the sketch contributed to the resultant painting, as the exact image of the pose was not used for the painting at all. Hence, of the two soldiers at the bottom left of the final painting, it is hard to identify which is Private Jenkins although we know the name from Butler's sketch (plate 64). Butler may have made other sketches of Jenkins and others, but it is impossible to ascertain how

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<sup>402</sup> Butler, *An Autobiography*, 188.

much her sketching activity in Portsmouth was productive. She might have studied the poses and uniforms from another model in her studio, which was a more comfortable place for her to work, but this also requires the artist to design a considerable amount of the pictorial details, as she did with the Zulu warriors.

#### 4.4 Capturing Fugitive Things: Victorian Efforts in Drawing Things in Motion

Ruskin's commitment to painting in a way that was truthful to nature, regardless of its philosophical intent, promoted detailed paintings of nature that required adequate working conditions in practice. We might consider photography as a technology that mechanised the goal of the Ruskinian method, but it did not easily diminish Victorian artists' faith in their capacity to capture the factual details of nature. Horses in motion was a particular subject through which the battle painters of the time competed, and the photographic images of running horses produced by Eadweard Muybridge (1830-1904) had only an ambivalent impact on the competition to reproduce the subject by Ruskinian means. Victorian artists who accepted the efficacy of the Ruskinian method, including Butler, believed that their fast hands and strong memory could compete with the camera. However, without knowing the facts, Butler was closer to Whistler than Ruskin in painting the fast-moving horses in *Scotland for Ever!*. The artist's act of observing the onrushing cavalymen was parallel to the method of memory painting that Whistler adopted from

Lecoq, which stresses the importance of strong impressions generated from unexpected circumstances in modern life.

#### 4.4.1 Photography as a Mechanisation of the Ruskinian Method

The intricate relationship between Victorian art and photography is highlighted by an exhibition at Tate Britain, *Painting with Light: Art and Photography from Pre-Raphaelites to the Modern Age* (2016), which featured works by Ruskin and Whistler. Carol Jacobi, the curator of the exhibition, underlines Ruskin's endorsement of photographs as educational materials that teach students how to practice unbiased observation free from conventional artistic stylisations of nature.<sup>403</sup> Ruskin did not consider photography to be superior to human eyes and hands, as he saw the clarity and sharpness of photographic images as unsatisfactory.<sup>404</sup> Nevertheless, Ruskin's estimation of photography was far more positive than during the same period in France, where landscape photographs were regarded as

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<sup>403</sup> Carol Jacobi et al, *Painting with Light: Art and Photography from the Pre-Raphaelites to the modern age* (London: Tate, 2016), 29. Admittedly, the exhibition features Whistler's etchings based on photographs, as well as the photographs that imitate Whistler's Nocturne paintings. However, Whistler's interaction with photography does not affect my definition of the Whistlerian mode which aims to paint nature out of impressions and memory, as it was articulated at the Whistler v. Ruskin trial.

<sup>404</sup> Ibid, 23.

uncreative materials and inferior to paintings.<sup>405</sup> Ruskin did not show enmity towards the new technology, perhaps because he saw the mechanism of the camera as synonymous with that of the human eye and hand. He openly used daguerreotypes as *aides mémoire* for his projects, to paint subjects which had complex details that were vast in scale, such as Gothic cathedrals and Alpine landscapes.<sup>406</sup> Ruskin might not have been the only artist who thought that he could emulate the mechanical procedure of the camera. For instance, in his discussion of Manet's works in the 1860s, Michael Fried argues that the practice of "the mutual entanglement of eye and hand, seeing and rendering" has its roots in the artist's efforts to freeze instant moments of nature, as a result of the artist's encounter with photography.<sup>407</sup> Butler and battle painters, as will be discussed in later sections, even believed that they could outperform the camera if they had a good memory and a quick hand. The source of their belief was the assumption that they were practising a mode of observation analogous to that of the camera.

#### 4.4.2 The Problem of Capturing Things in Motion in the Nineteenth Century

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<sup>405</sup> Dominique de Font-Réaulx, *Painting and Photography 1839-1914*, trans. David Radzinowicz (Paris: Flammarion, 2012),122.

<sup>406</sup> Jacobi, *Painting with Light*, 25.

<sup>407</sup> Michael Fried, *Manet's Modernism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996) 320-326.

Compared to views of the night, the traceability of the image of a horse in rapid motion was a more complicated matter for artists. Observing horses moving in daylight was an everyday experience for the Victorians, as the animal's presence was much more frequent and familiar during the period. Furthermore, many Victorian artists, including Butler, knew how to ride, which means they knew how to coordinate with the movement of the animal in an athletic sense.<sup>408</sup> This optical and bodily familiarity with horses left Victorian artists hoping to seize its natural form with the naked eye. The speed of the animal was challenging for the artists, but Victorian battle artists did not seem to think that the task of painting convincing and informatively correct images of horses in motion was impossible; for Butler and other painters of military, battle, sport, and animal subjects, the depiction of the horse in motion by the Ruskinian method was an alluring task which could prove their skill and mastery as professionals.

Although battle painters claimed their expertise through this task, the correct representation of the image of a horse in motion, in an objective sense, was scarcely achieved in painting before the human eye was finally aided by photography in the late 1870s. There are many types of horse gaits such as the walk, trot, canter, and gallop, and the rider needs know how to correspond with the movement of the horse while dictating its movement. However, it is still questionable whether his horsemanship can be transferred to the ability to draw the position of the legs of the animal correctly. People have galloped

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<sup>408</sup> About Butler's proficient horsemanship from a young age, see Catherine Wynne, *Lady Butler: War Artist and Traveller 1846-1933* (Dublin, Four Courts Press, 2019), 39.

on horses since the early stages of civilisation, but their naked eyes were never able to catch the speed of galloping horses' legs. Hence, before the camera captured the objective image of galloping horses, horses' legs were not drawn from truthful observations, but stylised for the sake of the subject's dynamic effect. For instance, in *The 1821 Derby at Epsom* (1821) by Théodore Géricault (1791-1824) (plate 65), the horses have all their legs outstretched. The artist spent considerable time studying the horses and possibly "witnessed" the actual race, but the horses do not appear to be convincing to modern eyes as they appear to be flying rather than galloping.<sup>409</sup> It is as if Géricault, the renowned painter of horses and cuirassiers, had been unable to see during the race.

Géricault died young and did not see the introduction of the daguerreotype in 1839, but battle painters in the 1870s, too, had to wait several more years before the technological limit of photography, with regards to capturing horses' gaits, was finally lifted in 1878 by Muybridge. Muybridge was able to take sequential photographs of the horse in motion by using a special track wired with electronic circuitry at Palo Alto, which was funded by the Californian millionaire Leland Stanford (1824-1893).<sup>410</sup> Muybridge's photographic images of the horse in motion famously revealed that the pictorial representations of galloping horses up until then were incorrect. The horse in a full gallop does not stretch all its legs as in Géricault's painting, but at least one of its hind legs is always touching the

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<sup>409</sup> Lorenz E. A. Eitner, *Géricault: his life and work* (London: Orbis Publishing, 1983), 235.

<sup>410</sup> About Muybridge's experiment at Palo Alto, see Philip Brookman, *Eadweard Muybridge* (London: Tate, 2010), 77-88.



ground. The new finding was alarming for battle painters of the time who thought themselves experts in the subject. It was not a coincidence that Meissonier was the first artist Stanford visited in 1881 to promote Muybridge's studies in Europe.<sup>411</sup> Meissonier was considered to be an authority in pictorial images of the horse in motion. His expertise was guaranteed by the remarkable sale of his painting *Friedland, 1807* (1875) (plate 66); this spectacular painting of Napoleon's cavalymen breaking into full gallop was sold for 60,000 dollars in America, an immense sum of money in the period.<sup>412</sup> Nevertheless, the best human eye and hand of the era (according to monetary value) was corrected by the mechanical eye and hand of the camera. Seeing Muybridge's sequential photographs of the horse in motion, Meissonier had to admit that his horses in *Friedland, 1807* were drawn unscientifically as they were flying, similar to Géricault's.<sup>413</sup> Rebecca Solnit argues that Meissonier's acceptance of his falsity was a revolutionary event in which "the camera

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<sup>411</sup> About the introduction of Muybridge to Meissonier, see Constance Cain Hungerford, *Ernest Meissonier: Master in His Genre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 202-203.

<sup>412</sup> Ross King, *The Judgement of Paris: The Revolutionary Decades That Gave the World Impressionism* (London: Pimlico, 2007), 369.

<sup>413</sup> Hungerford, *Ernest Meissonier*, 204-205.

outripped the eye in representing the body in motion," making "the very meaning of academic painting [...] diminished."<sup>414</sup>

It is difficult to know how Ruskin thought about Muybridge's experiment, but Ruskin, as a drawing instructor, insisted that his method of direct observation could capture things in motion. As speculated above, Ruskin favoured still objects, as he did not trust his memory, but he could not avoid dealing with the problem of drawing animated objects, as he claimed the eye could be the right apparatus to perceive the truthful appearance of nature. In his *The Elements of Drawing* (1857), Ruskin explains how to draw "fugitive things" in nature such as "the animal in its motion, the tree in its growth, the cloud in its course," and "the mountain in its wearing away," and suggests knowing "the way things are going" as the remedy for capturing their movements.<sup>415</sup> It is notable that Ruskin evades the problem of the imperceptibility of fast moving animals by equating kinetics with a matter of growth, which he further examined in the case of the boughs of trees. When drawing clouds, his favourite subject, he admits the need for a "notable power of memory."<sup>416</sup> However, he did not put absolute faith in memory as he urges the reader to sketch the

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<sup>414</sup> Rebecca Solnit, *Motion Studies: Time, Space and Eadweard Muybridge* (London: Bloomsbury, 2004), 210.

<sup>415</sup> Ruskin, *The Elements of Drawing* (New York: Dover, 1971), 90-91.

<sup>416</sup> Ibid, 129. Ruskin also devised a schematic way to allude the motion of the clouds. See, Caroline Arscott, "Cloud Perspective," in *Ruskin Turner & the Storm Cloud*, ed. Suzanne Fagence Cooper, Richard Johns (London: Paul Holberton, 2019), 82.

"whole ranges of the clouds in the sky" "at the utmost possible speed" in order to assist the imperfect memory he had.<sup>417</sup> Even if Ruskin endorses the use of memory as the principal method in drawing clouds in motion, he did not want to abandon the hope of tracing the shapes of the clouds in stationary working conditions. Hence, he suggests to practise drawing "a single cloud" that would stay in its shape for five or six minutes, while granting the use of "lumps of cotton" as a substitute model for the real clouds.<sup>418</sup> To Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867), too, a fast hand was a viable solution to the problem of fast-moving objects. In "The Painter of Modern Life"(1863), Baudelaire appoints Constantin Guys (1802-1892), who was known for fast sketching method, as the model artist for fast moving modern society, on the grounds that "a rapidity of movement" demands "an equal speed of execution from the artist."<sup>419</sup> A more eccentric method for drawing fast-moving objects with the naked eye was tried by an artist whose subjects were far faster than Guys's rambling urbanites. At the end of the 1860s, Meissonier built a miniature track in his rural mansion, he sat on a wheeled sofa on the track, and was pushed by workmen to literally catch up with the moving horse running next to him.<sup>420</sup> It is uncertain how far he could

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<sup>417</sup> Ruskin, *The Elements of Drawing*, 129.

<sup>418</sup> Ibid, 129-130.

<sup>419</sup> Charles Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life," in *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, trans. Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon, 2012), 4

<sup>420</sup> Ross King, *The Judgement of Paris: Revolutionary Decades that Gave the World of Impressionism* (London: Pimlico, 2007), 250-251.

improve his visual knowledge of the horse in motion by moving at an equal speed with the animal. Meissonier's eccentric experiment is significant as an extreme form of the Ruskinian belief in the potential of optical observation, which was to be terminated by Muybridge's studies.

The advent of photography baffled Meissonier who had to adopt some of Muybridge's findings in his horse paintings to a certain extent. However, Butler did not lose her faith in the human capacity to draw nature correctly. She was even more orthodox than Ruskin himself, as she seemed to believe she could win over the camera through her given talent and practice. Butler expresses a kind of traditionalist uneasiness with photography in her autobiography, even though she was born after the invention of the technology, which continued to develop dramatically during her lifetime. She did not like being photographed and despised those who photographed her pictures for reproduction.<sup>421</sup> This disdain was not out of blind obstinacy, but rather a result of her faith and confidence in her good memory and quick hands. As a good Ruskinian, she considered Turner's works as evidence of the superior truthfulness of pictures created by the naked eye over machine-made photographs.<sup>422</sup> She discredited the new snap-shot images which were introduced by George Eastman's Kodak camera in 1888 because she knew that certain subjects did not pose for a painting in the desired way. When she visited in 1892, Butler gave up on having the Egyptians pose in her studio since they were not accustomed to the culture of

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<sup>421</sup> Butler, *Autobiography*, 114;132.

<sup>422</sup> *Ibid*, 300.

modelling for paintings. According to Butler, they become "stiff lay figures" when they were asked to pose, losing their graceful "movement," which meant that a truthful image of an Arab could only be made when he is in motion, not in pause.<sup>423</sup> She concluded that her "sketches done unbeknown to the *sketcher* and a good memory" (Butler's emphasis), were superior to modern snap-shot images.<sup>424</sup>

Muybridge's research on the movement of horses was seen as a cutting-edge scientific achievement during the late nineteenth century. However, the new finding did not directly discourage Butler's bravado. It is most likely that the artist finished making *Scotland for Ever!* without the knowledge of Muybridge's findings although a contemporary review in *The Magazine of Art* gives a false illusion of the connection between the two by associating the painting with the notion of "instantaneousness," as if it is a quasi-photographic vision.<sup>425</sup> While we are unable to know Butler's exact opinion on Muybridge's horses with certainty, it is possible to assume that the artist took the American photographer's work as a reassurance of the validity of her practice of Ruskinian observation. In 1874, *The Roll Call* was not only an emotive painting to its contemporaries but was also a noteworthy

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<sup>423</sup> Ibid, 231.

<sup>424</sup> Ibid, 231-232.

<sup>425</sup> Muybridge's *The Attitudes of Animal in Motion* was first published in the United States on May 15 1881, and his research was read at the Royal Society in London in February 1882; Butler's exhibition of *Scotland for Ever!* at the Egyptian Hall took place in January 1881. See Brookman, *Eadweard Muybridge*, 91; *The Art-Journal*, "Exhibitions," May 1881, 157-158; *The Magazine of Art*, "Pictures of the Year," January 1881, 304.

representation of the horse in motion, which caused a zoological debate through an exchange of correspondences in *The Times*. The exchange begins with Butler's short letter to the newspaper, which recounts that she had received a letter from "some well-meaning but mistaken individual" who pointed out "an error in the position of the horse's legs in my picture."<sup>426</sup> According to Butler, the anonymous critic argues that the near foreleg (moved forward) leads the off hind leg (moved backwards) in the same side when the horse trots. However, Butler protests that she depicted the horse in walk, not in trot, as this image was already demonstrated in Meissonier's painting, *Campaign of France, 1814* (1864). (plate 67).<sup>427</sup> After her letter, painters responded to Butler through correspondence in *The Times*. A painter of horses and cavaliers, Leonard Cattermole (act. c.1869-1886) points out that Meissonier was depicting a deviated and "unnatural" form of walk called an "amble" which was imported from the Arabs as Napoleon's horse Marengo was an Arabian horse bred in Egypt, and it was this walk that Butler was representing.<sup>428</sup> The rising animal painter Briton Rivière (1840-1920) supported Butler and Meissonier as well.<sup>429</sup> It is ironic that the particular debate was finally concluded as Butler's victory by Muybridge's study in the early 1880s. Unlike Solnit's historicist verdict, the triumph of photography did not entirely terminate the role battle painters as experts of animal locomotion. It is

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<sup>426</sup> Elizabeth Thompson, "The Roll Call," *The Times*, May 12, 1874, 12.

<sup>427</sup> Ibid, 12.

<sup>428</sup> Leonard Cattermole, "The Roll Call," *The Times*, May 14, 1874, 11.

<sup>429</sup> Briton Riviere. "The Roll Call," *The Times*, May 20, 187, 7.

surprising that some sequences of Muybridge's horse images corresponded to that of the particular horse of *Campaign of France, 1814*. Meissonier did not forget to exploit this coincidence in promoting his own reputation over that of Rosa Bonheur (1822-1899), who was another authority in horse painting in France, as Muybridge's sequences disagreed with the movements of the horses in Bonheur's great work *The Horse Fair* (1855).<sup>430</sup> Butler's reaction to Muybridge's work was the same as Meissonier's. In her recollection of the dispute over *The Roll Call* in 1874, she writes that her knowledge of horses' gaits was "vindicated by the snap-shot."<sup>431</sup> Wilfrid Meynell, in his monograph on the artist in 1898, retrospectively describes the vindication of Butler's ability to spot the correct movement of the horses with her naked eye by the "instantaneous photography" as a great achievement, which attested to "artist's gift of collodion on the retina."<sup>432</sup> It is highly likely that Butler and her circle saw *Scotland for Ever!* as a demonstration of her ability to draw near photographic images of things in motion with her naked eye once more.

#### 4.4.3 Visual Memory and Aesthetic Experience

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<sup>430</sup> Constance Cain Hungerford, *Ernest Meissonier: Master in his Genre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 203-204.

<sup>431</sup> Butler, *Autobiography*, 118.

<sup>432</sup> Meynell, *The Life and Work of Lady Butler*, 24.

Although the Ruskinian and Whistlerian modes were generally applied in composite ways in Butler's artworks, *Scotland for Ever!*, I argue, is a radical piece in Butler's oeuvre, for being the most Whistlerian artwork in its creation, not by the artist's agreement with the credo of Aestheticism, but by its relation to the unique subject, the horse in motion. *Scotland for Ever!* was Butler's most famous work that solely focused on the subject in oil. Butler had to make the painting using a different mode of observation compared with her earlier paintings because its subject, the charging cavalrymen, could not pause for her. This condition, in which Butler had to respond to the speed of the horses, is comparable to Whistler's condition in painting the night view of the Thames, and, in this type of working condition, impression is the key element to enable the artist to generate the memory and designs necessary for his or her painting.

If *Scotland for Ever!* had been made under the Ruskinian mode, Butler could be described as an exceptional artist who explored the realm Ruskin could not reach. The fastest objects that Ruskin could draw were clouds and streams, but Butler could capture the instantaneous moment of horses at full speed. Seeing her as a Ruskinian makes the artist a remarkable figure because it means that she achieved the task of improving human perception by developing the visual memory beyond the conventional level. However, Butler's confidence in her memory also brings her closer to Whistler, whose primary faculty was his memory. The difference between the two is that Whistler gave up the objective representation of topographical details in painting for the sake of impressions and plastic arrangements, while Butler insisted on the objective value of her painting in terms of its naturalistic precision. According to Wilfred Meynell, Butler did not only study the details



of the uniform of the Scots Greys for "general realism of representation," but also observed the staged action by the regiment:

I twice saw a charge of the Greys before painting 'Scotland for Ever!' and I stood in front to see them coming on. One cannot, of course, stop too long to see them close.<sup>433</sup>

Butler's resultant painting of the particular observations appears to be a Ruskinian painting as it shows ample detail of the men and horses in motion. Some men are shouting while the others are clenching their teeth, coping with the speed of their charge. The bugler has been fatally shot but is being supported by an alarmed speechless fellow soldier. The heads of the horses are almost rhythmically swirling in any possible direction. Yet the overall line of the attack is tuned by a composed horizontality, which is ironically the common feature of Whistler's *Nocturnes*.<sup>434</sup> Nevertheless, the abundant details alone strike the viewer in a mesmerising way. Her generosity in giving as many details as possible readily meets Ruskin's ideal as the painting "conveys the greatest number of the greatest ideas," to "the mind of spectators."<sup>435</sup>

Butler seems to believe that the main method she used for *Scotland for Ever!* was Ruskinian, as she emphasises the experience of observing the charge of the horsemen from the spot

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<sup>433</sup> Ibid, 12.

<sup>434</sup> Robins, *A Fragile Modernism*, 19-21.

<sup>435</sup> Ruskin, *Modern Painters I*, 92.

where the viewers would see the pictorial charge of the painting. However, it is doubtful that the artist could observe enough details for a truthful depiction of a cavalry charge from two charges of the Greys. It seems that even if Butler had a good memory, the artist needed to observe more charges for the purpose of the truthful depiction of nature. Thus, Butler's staging of two charges seems to be more in keeping with the Whistlerian method which utilises memory by impression. Whistler was imbued with the idea of training memory when he was staying in France during the 1850s. Numerous French artists, including Vernet and Meissonier, were fascinated with such an ability to draw from memory. This French method of memory painting is best explained by Lecoq in his treatises on the method, published in 1848. Lecoq's works became available in English under the title *The Training of the Memory in Art and the Education of the Artist* (1911). However, Lecoq's texts may have been readily accessible for Anglophone artists who did not have any difficulty reading French, such as Butler and Whistler, before the later translation.

In his treatise on memory training, Lecoq defines memory as "stored observation."<sup>436</sup> However, this is not necessarily only when remembering what is seen from nature. It is possible to read Lecoq as endorsing academicism when he stresses memorising the generalised forms, such as the "simplest possible shapes for length and proportion" and "the structure of the human body."<sup>437</sup> However, at the same time, Lecoq warns about the

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<sup>436</sup> Horace Lecoq de Boisbaudran, *The Training of the Memory in Art and the Education of the Artist*, trans. L. D. Luard (London: McMillan, 1911), 3.

<sup>437</sup> *Ibid*, 4; *Ibid*, 16.

problem of training with schematic forms at the expense of a Ruskinian innocent eye which he calls "the precious quality of naïveté," which is necessary for "ordinary drawing from the models," that can ensure "the maintenance of a high standard of accurate imitation" of nature.<sup>438</sup> Lecoq suggests the memorisation of basic patterns, which is the foremost task of "a worker in applied arts" drawing decorative patterns, is necessary for the pictorial artist painting his models.<sup>439</sup> This suggestion to practise memorising patterns as the preliminary step for the method of memory painting is particularly relevant with Butler, as she was educated at the Government School of Design in South Kensington which, at time of the artist's enrolment in the school in 1866, still focused on raising artists in applied arts.<sup>440</sup> In her autobiography, Butler complains about the programmes of the institution, such as copying "hateful scrolls and patterns," which made her fill the margins of her drawing papers with "angry scribbles of horses and soldiers in every variety of fury."<sup>441</sup> Despite her unpleasant memory, it can be suggested that the specific education Butler had

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<sup>438</sup> Ibid, 13.

<sup>439</sup> Ibid, 17.

<sup>440</sup> About the education of the school in this period, see Christopher Frayling, *The Royal College of Art: One Hundreds & Fifty Years of Art & Design* (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1987), 47-52. See also

<sup>441</sup> Butler, *Autobiography*, 10-11.

at South Kensington contributed to her ability to draw from memory as a professional painter.<sup>442</sup>

Lecoq's recommendation of improving memory by routine training with schematic forms does not necessarily support the revival of academism. His method was genuine as it finds a way to store the ocular image of nature at a particular moment with the help of impression. Lecoq explains that weak visual memory is a result of the unimpressed and unimaginative mind.<sup>443</sup> His remedy to break the boredom of the modern mind is to stage unexpected circumstances that interrupt the banality of everyday life. For instance, he suggests having life-model classes, not inside an ordinary studio, but at a memorable natural environment chosen for its beauty. His examples suggest that the genre of art in which the pupils are engaged in is history painting; he ordered that the naked or draped models should pose in natural attitudes "in this splendid living setting."<sup>444</sup> What Lecoq devised is a kind of strategy of surprise to heighten the minds of his pupils with an unrealistically picturesque vision in real life. The "illusions" in real life should not be

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<sup>442</sup> My opinion on this matter concurs with Jo Devereux's recognition of Butler's training at South Kensington as a contributing factor in her virtuosity to represent motion. Jo Devereux, *The Making of Women Artists in Victorian England: The Education and Careers of Six Professionals* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2016), 101.

<sup>443</sup> Lecoq, *The Training of the Memory in Art and the Education of the Artist*, 21-22.

<sup>444</sup> *Ibid*, 30.

performed repeatedly, he advised.<sup>445</sup> The students' objective at Lecoq's ingenious classes was not to illustrate these impressive sights, but to learn to store them in memory as personalised visions; hence Lecoq lets the students choose their own memorable scenes according to "their artistic bent."<sup>446</sup> It is significant that Lecoq's method utilises personal impressions as leverages to create and store unique visions in memory.

Lecoq's method of staging unexpected and possibly surreal scenes in the middle of modern Paris is similar to Butler's method of staging real cavalry charges in front of her. *Scotland for Ever!* might be an extension of Butler's usual practice of studying the posed models in costume that she had continued since *The Roll Call*. In fact, Butler already had the experience of studying the two troopers of the Horse Guards charging at her when she was making *Quatre Bras*.<sup>447</sup> Nevertheless, *Scotland for Ever!* was the most excessive and uncontrollable stage she ever set up. Standing in front of a band of manoeuvring cavalymen must have been a memorable event which would impress on her mind strongly. She might have been transfixed before the horses, and such an experience might have inspired her to produce the same effect through her painting. The actual vision that Butler obtained during the observation could not resemble the finished painting, as that would likely have resulted in a sketchy and indefinite impression. The best version of her vision of the Scots Greys must have been realised in the particular drawing when Butler flung her

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<sup>445</sup> Ibid, 31.

<sup>446</sup> Ibid.

<sup>447</sup> Butler, *An Autobiography*, 131.

stored impression on the "7-foot sheet of brown paper" in a fury against Whistler's Nocturne paintings.<sup>448</sup> As this drawing did not survive, only the small surviving compositional sketch of the painting found in her sketchbook provides a glimpse of the most Aesthetic artwork of Butler's oeuvre (plate 70).

Butler's sketch bears a great resemblance to Manet's *The Races at Longchamp*, (c. 1867) (plate 69). The thrilling sense of speed in Manet's painting appears to be very modern. However, such an impact was not made by the artist's knowledge of zoology. Manet's knowledge of horses galloping was just as limited as Géricault's, since Manet's other paintings of the same subject viewed from the side show the same flying-galloping horses.<sup>449</sup> Therefore, it is possible to assume that such an effective instantaneous painting was made by Manet's impressed mind, not by his objective knowledge of the movements of horses. Like Manet's painting, *Scotland for Ever!* is void of any scientific activity. The full-frontal and foreshortened angle of the horse is the least appropriate view to observe the locomotion of the animal. As Rudolf Arnheim points out, a foreshortened horse can appear to be "a penguin-shaped creature"; without prior knowledge of the animal, it does not provide any clue towards "the characteristic view of the whole."<sup>450</sup> How the four legs

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<sup>448</sup> Ibid,186.

<sup>449</sup> John P. O'Neill, ed., *Manet: 1832-1883* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1983), 338-339.

<sup>450</sup> Rudolf Arnheim, *Art and Visual Perception: A Psychology of the Creative Eye* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974),116-117

of the horse correspond to each other cannot be seen in *Scotland for Ever!*. Naturally, contemporary commentators could not reach an objective agreement upon the correctness of the representation of the horses. *The Art Journal* praises its "feat of draughtsmanship," while *The Athenaeum* regrets "its technical respects."<sup>451</sup> Choosing the foreshortening view might have been Butler's decision to evade the unnecessary feud over the pictorial correctness she had experienced with *The Roll Call*. Butler did not take Muybridge's findings seriously, as many of her horses in later pictures fully outstretch their four legs. What is certain is that *Scotland for Ever!* remained the artist's most effective painting, instilling a unique impression upon the viewer.

#### 4.5 Conclusion

*Scotland for Ever!* is a spontaneous painting chiefly based on memory and impression as were Whistler's paintings of fireworks on the banks of the Thames, although it has been regarded as a didactic narrative painting prioritising the factual observation of nature. One of Butler's motivations in making the painting was to protest against Whistler's Aesthetic landscapes. However, the particular condition of observing fleeting cavalymen was the primary factor in the operation of the artist's senses, which was comparable to Whistler's

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<sup>451</sup> *The Art Journal*, "Exhibitions," May 1881, 157; *The Athenaeum*, "Fine-Art Gossip," April 16, 1881, 534.

process of painting nocturnal landscapes. This counter-intuitive revelation of the affinity between Butler and Whistler leads one to rethink the relationship between battle paintings and aesthetic paintings. For instance, it invites comparison of the projective effect of *Scotland for Ever!* (and later battle paintings in the similar formula) with that of the series of captivating half-length female figures of Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882) which, according to Prettejohn, subverted "the relationship between the spectator and what is seen" through the "sensuous presentment of figure" (plate 70).<sup>452</sup> *Scotland for Ever!* is the most sensuous painting within Butler's oeuvre, while its effectiveness corresponds to Meissonier's definition of the aim of military art to be "the aid of history, speaking of the flash of swords" that is "to grave the flash upon men's mind."<sup>453</sup> The common interest that the Aesthetic movement and Victorian battle painting had in sensuous effects, together with the similar use of the faculties of the sense, blurs the conceptual demarcation between the two movements. This demarcation is brilliantly captured in *The Light That Failed* (1891) by Rudyard Kipling: the fictional character Dick Heldar, though he is a war artist rather than a battle painter, becomes blind after he inappropriately paints "Melancolia," supposedly an aesthetic painting, to earn the heart of his first love, a woman artist who

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<sup>452</sup> Prettejohn. *Art for Art's Sake*, 39.

<sup>453</sup> "The painter's part is to come to the aid of history. Theirs speaks of the flash of swords. The painter graves that flash upon men's minds." Valéry C.O. Gréard, *Meissonier: His Life and Art*, trans. Mary Lloyd (London; New York, 1897), 185.



follows new artistic styles in Paris.<sup>454</sup> Kipling imagines an irreconcilable conflict between two different genres as he regards the subject, such as battles and poetic allegories, as the primary factor in painting. However, as *Scotland for Ever!* attests, the subject cannot categorise the senses as exclusively serviceable for particular paintings, while the agency of particular working conditions is powerful enough to make a battle painter and an aesthetic painter practise their faculties in an analogous way.

## Chapter 5: Eye-witnessing and Victorian Battle Pictures

The aim of this chapter is to question the belief in the act of eye-witnessing as an essential element for artworks of higher ethical and artistic qualities, through examining the agency of Butler and other war artists' visual experiences with their supposed prototypes. The intuitive notion that privileges eye-witnessing as the most legitimate method for visualising battle scenes locates Butler, as a representative of homebased battle painters, in a

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<sup>454</sup> Rudyard Kipling, *The Light That Failed* (London; New York: Mcmillan, 1891), 174-175. *Melancolia* is obviously a winged figure, which reminds Dick of the famous engraving of Albrecht Dürer made in 1514. Both Dick and Maisie are not sure about its sex. The androgynous winged figure is one of the popular subjects for the Aesthetic artists such as Edward Burne-Jones, Simeon Solomon, Frederick Leighton. Kipling's mother, Alice Kipling (1837-1910) was a sister of Georgiana Burne-Jones (1840-1920), the wife of Burne-Jones. Kipling must have been familiar with the Aesthetic movement and the disputes around it.

disadvantageous position to war artists, who could access conflict zones. Yet Gell's speculation on the concept of prototype and his method to elucidate the complex mechanisms of agents in the production of artworks allow us to reconsider the conception of eye-witnessing as a practice that automatically entails the prototype's agency. Using Gell's approach, this chapter will demystify the authority of eye-witnessing in battle art through comparative examinations of the agents in *Evicted* (1890), Butler's only painting where she is an eyewitness, illustrations by war artists, primarily those of Melton Prior (1845-1910), and Butler's paintings made during World War I (1914-1918). This chapter suggests that the act of being on the spot with the subject does not categorically ensure the resultant artwork's moral and ingenious qualities; these are rather grasped by chance in the context of immediate social relations.

## 5.1 Eye-witnessing, an Art-historical Problem

### 5.1.1 Problem Raised: Eye-witnessing and Battle Painting in Art History

Thank God, I never painted for the glory of war, but to portray its pathos and heroism. If I had seen even a corner of a real battle-field, I could never have painted another war picture.<sup>455</sup>

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<sup>455</sup> *The Times*, "Lady Butler," October 4, 1933, 17.

Butler's comment, reported in her obituary in *The Times* in 1933, highlights the artist's reflection on her fulfilment of the life-long humanitarian principle of not beautifying war. However, at the same time, it candidly recognises the fact that the artist never had first-hand experience of the battlefield, despite being the most prominent battle painter in Britain. The comment asserts her innocence about the brutality of modern warfare, reflecting her negative conception of war after the experience of World War I (or the Great War). Yet it is an apologetic statement, to a certain degree, since the public recognition of her "knowledge of battle scenes" and "acquaintance with every interesting detail" of the subject of war cannot palliate her lack of experiencing war as an eye-witness.<sup>456</sup> In nineteenth-century battle paintings, the prestige of eye-witnessing has never been seriously questioned as it is believed to be a positive criterion for the artistic quality of an artwork. Continental artists, in particular, eagerly pursued the experience of eye-witnessing real military conflicts, whether as combatants or accompanying observers; such renowned military painters as Horace Vernet (1789-1863), Ernest Meissonier (1815-1891), Alphonse De Neuville (1835-1885), Edouard Detaille (1848-1912), and Vasily Vereshchagin (1842-1904) utilised it for their publicity.<sup>457</sup> In Victorian Britain, fewer battle painters could have

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<sup>456</sup> Ibid, 17.

<sup>457</sup> For Vernet's eye-witnessing of war, see Daniel Harkett and Katie Hornstein, ed. *Horace Vernet: and the threshold of nineteenth-century visual culture* (Hanover: Dartmouth College, 2017), 11-13; for Meissonier, Constance Cain Hungerford, *Ernest Meissonier: master in his genre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 111-115; for De Neuville, *The Art Armature*, "Alphonse de Neuville, July 1885, 23; for Detaille, D. Cady Eaton, *A Handbook of Modern French Painting* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1909), 294;

first-hand experience of battles, as the country did not suffer a serious invasion in its domestic territory, unlike its European counterparts. Butler was in the least advantageous position in obtaining this valued experience compared to her male competitors, as a woman artist who later acquired the status of a lady when her husband William Francis Butler (1838-1910) was made a knight in 1906.<sup>458</sup> It is true that Butler, as a new woman, endeavoured to overcome contemporary social barriers; she travelled extensively to countries involved in military conflict, such as Egypt, Sudan, and South Africa, using her husband's position in the British Empire. However, she was not able to observe a live battlefield in those locations. Instead, she painted *Evicted* (1890) based on eye-witnessing a real conflict in Ireland, which was in a state of a semi-conflict during the Victorian era. In a strict sense, the painting is not a military battle painting, but as a representation of an evicted Irish woman in the aftermath of the destruction of her house by the police, *Evicted* is an important piece to contemplate the agency of eye-witnessing in the oeuvre of the most famous battle painter in Victorian Britain, as will be discussed in this chapter.

Butler's anxiety over her lack of first-hand experience of war can be understood as part of the nineteenth-century obsession with the act of painting the subject on the spot, which became a criterion in realistic art. In Victorian Britain, John Ruskin, in *Modern Painters I* (1943), recommends artists to "go to Nature" and to paint nature as it was, following the

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for Vereshchagin, *The Times of India*, "A War Painter on War: Interview with Mr Vereshchagin," March 16, 1899, 6.

<sup>458</sup> William Francis Butler, *An Autobiography* (London: Constable, 1911), 457.

method of "rejecting nothing," and "selecting nothing" from their subjects.<sup>459</sup> To paint nature with an "innocent eye" implies the act of sharing the same space with one's object, and that it is within reach of natural sight.<sup>460</sup> Ruskin's emphasis on painting from a 'spot' is mostly concerned with a direct observation of a landscape and its components, which was enormously influential to Victorian artists, including the Pre-Raphaelites. Nevertheless, Ruskin contemplates the unique value of eye-witnessing in historical battle paintings when he contends that the "roughest sketch" of the Battle of Platea (479 BC) "done on the instant, and the spot" would be worth more than the "ideals of David in the Louvre."<sup>461</sup> More specific advocacy of eye-witnessing with regards to dynamic subjects is found in France; Charles Baudelaire, in "The Painter of Modern Life" (1863), upholds Constantin Guys (1802-1892) as *flâneur* (f. saunterer), as the model of an artist of fast-moving modern life. According to Baudelaire, the *flâneur* puts himself into the midst of modern society in order

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<sup>459</sup> John Ruskin, *Modern Painters I, Works of John Ruskin Vol 3*, ed. E.T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (London: George Allen, 1903), 624.

<sup>460</sup> The "innocence of the eye" is the exact expression used by Ruskin. See John Ruskin, *The Elements of Drawing, The Elements of Perspective and the Laws of Fésole, The Works of John Ruskin Vol 15*, ed. E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (London: George Allen, 1904), 27.

<sup>461</sup> John Ruskin, *Modern Painters II, Works of John Ruskin Vol 4*, ed. E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (London: George Allen, 1903), 382.

to absorb a "transitory" vision of modern life and "distil" it into art.<sup>462</sup> Baudelaire contends that the "ephemeral and fugitive and contingent" aspect of nature, which is an essential aspect of "modernity," can only be captured by the right type of artist who is ready to witness and "transcribe" it on the spot with the method of rapid sketching.<sup>463</sup> To Baudelaire, war was an important subject of modern life - soldiers stand out by their sumptuous uniforms either in everyday life or in battlefields -, and Guys was well-known for his career as a war correspondent of *The Illustrated London News* during the time of the Crimean War (1853-1856). Baudelaire thought highly of Guys's sketches of the Crimean War, as they "unfold the great epic poem" of the war better than any written accounts.<sup>464</sup> What is observed from Baudelaire's essay is a firm belief in eye-witnessing as the most appropriate method for painting modern wars.

The Crimean War took place in the age of popular media, as well as in an age of developed transport and communications in steam engines and telegraphs, which drew image makers to its battlefields. During the Napoleonic Wars, only a few artists were invited to battlefields by army officers.<sup>465</sup> However, for the first time in British history, the opportunity to travel

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<sup>462</sup> Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, trans. Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon, 2012), 7; 12.

<sup>463</sup> Ibid, 12; 21.

<sup>464</sup> Ibid, 18.

<sup>465</sup> About the British artists witnessed the wars, See Harrington, *British Artists and War*, 67-95.

to conflict zones was dramatically widened during the Crimean War, and the proliferation of eye-witness images of the war was sustained by a Victorian mass society that consumed images in various media. The wood-engravings based on the sketches of Guys and Joseph Archer Crowes (1825-1896) were published in *The Illustrated London News*.<sup>466</sup> William Simpson (1823-1899) published *The Seat of the War in the East* (1855-56) as part of the Colnaghi's Authentic Series. The two-volumes of lithographic prints, that were made based on Simpson's visual experience in the Crimea, are considered to be the most competent products of their kind.<sup>467</sup> The first war photographer Roger Fenton (1819-1869), with his photographic van in which he processed wet-collodion photography, went to the Crimea with the support of the Royal Family, and in the employment of Manchester art dealer Thomas Agnew & Sons.<sup>468</sup> The same firm sent the painter Jerry Barrett (1824-1906) to Scutari Hospital in Istanbul to paint the heroic image of Florence Nightingale (1820-1910) in *The Mission of Mercy* (1857).<sup>469</sup> Ernest Gambart (1814-1902), who was a renowned art dealer and a central figure in the Victorian art world, commissioned Edward Armitage

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<sup>466</sup> Keller, *The Ultimate Spectacle*, 78-106; Lalumia, *Realism and Politics in Victorian Art of the Crimean War*, 53.

<sup>467</sup> Ibid. 69-70.

<sup>468</sup> Ibid, 117.

<sup>469</sup> Keller, *The Ultimate Spectacle*, 184-185; 231-232.

(1817-1896) to go to the Crimea to make battle paintings such as *Bottom of the Ravine at Inkerman* (1856) and *The Battle of Inkerman* (1856).<sup>470</sup>

The conception that the artist is obliged to share the same space with his or her subject, and the broader opportunity to have empirical observations of war, created a norm whereby the image of battles should be made by first-hand observation. However, this normative thought is based on questionable assumptions. First-hand observation is believed to enhance the factual aspect of the artwork; hence it makes a more truthful painting. However, artists rarely transfer their instant visions of their subjects in a mechanical way. The transition of mental vision to a pictorial image is fulfilled in a trajectorial way which are likely to involve pictorial conventions and the artist's whims. Furthermore, to be war artists – who were distinguished from battle painters by making images of real actions from first-hand observations - does not mean that they always utilised empirical visions on the spot. The actual vision of their subject might not be so inspiring to war artists, who were also under the influence of other external factors concerning the reception of the final image. The popular belief in the ethical high ground of eye-witnessing as an artistic practice is not necessarily justified as a rule. It can be intrusive and offensive to observe the hardship and suffering of other human beings, while the act of sharing space with victims may not be essential in creating a symbolically and artistically sophisticated painting intended as an ethical statement. This chapter will discuss

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<sup>470</sup> For Armitage's Crimean pictures, see Jill R Armitage, *Edward Armitage RA: Battles in the Victorian Art World* (Rotherham: Matador, 2017), 63-82.



these problems to demystify the uncritical trust in the practice of eye-witnessing, thereby easing the Victorian anxiety over the absence of eye-witnessing, which may persist in the minds of artists in our time.

### 5.1.2 Methodological Reflections on the Efficacy of Gell's Framework Concerning Eye-witnessing.

Gell does not offer an extensive analysis of the problem of eye-witnessing because his works mainly treat ethnographic artworks which do not have the problem of realistic depiction of nature. Nevertheless, in *Art and Agency*, Gell explains the mechanism of realistic depictions of nature in art, through expounding the concept of prototype and discussing specific cases of realistic artworks. In Gell's *Art Nexus*, the prototype is the subject that can be "represented in the index" (artwork) by virtue of "visual resemblance."<sup>471</sup> By his theory, realistic art is a product of a social relationship in which the prototype is the primary agent that compels the artist to imitate its appearance (plate 3). Gell diagrammatises the case as *Prototype-A* → *Index-P*, and finds its best example in the *Portrait of the Duke of Wellington* (1812-1814) by Francisco Goya (1746-1828): the agency of the impressive physiognomy of the Duke appears to dictate Goya's brush strokes.<sup>472</sup> Gell expresses the same sort of relation in a more complex way when he divides the agent

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<sup>471</sup> Gell, *Art and Agency*, 27.

<sup>472</sup> *Ibid*, 35.

into the "primary agent" and "secondary agent," using brackets, according to the varying degrees of their contributions to the "formation, appearance, or manifestation of the intentional actions."<sup>473</sup> He devised the following formula:

[[[Prototype-A] →Artist-A] → Index-A] → Recipient-P

The best example he found for this formula is the portrait of *Samuel Johnson* (1772) by Joshua Reynolds (plate 4). The characteristic appearance of the foremost man of letters in England at the time, as the reputable author of *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755), is primarily "responsible for the compelling aspect of Dr Johnson's appearance" in the painting, while Reynolds's skill and style becomes a secondary agent.<sup>474</sup> Rather than prioritising the artist's merit, Gell views the social relation of realistic art as "reversed"; for example, *Mona Lisa* (c.1504-c.1506) by Leonardo Da Vinci (1452-1519) can be expressed as

[[[Artist-A] →Prototype-A] → Index-A] → Recipient-P.<sup>475</sup>

Gell's method to discern the agency of the prototype is relevant to the inquiry into the efficacy of eye-witnessing as it is useful to assess the level of involvement of the visual

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<sup>473</sup> Ibid, 36.

<sup>474</sup> Ibid, 52-53.

<sup>475</sup> Ibid.

specification of the prototype in the artwork, which in turn reveals the level of contribution of the act of eye-witnessing to the artworks.

Caution should be taken when using Gell's method of diagrammatising the agency of the prototype, as it is far from a scientific measurement of the prototype's innate qualities. Gell's formulae represent the psychological relations between the artist, the prototype (the subject), the index (the art object), and the recipient (the viewer), not a fixed structure working for the art object in an objective sense. Hence, the manifestation of the agency of the primary agent is indispensable to the existence of the "primary patient" who can abduct the particular agency of the primary agent.<sup>476</sup> The problem is that the infinite number of primary patients around a single artwork means an infinite number of social relations whose elucidation may be meaningless. Gell himself was not certain about pinning down the sitter as the ultimate primary agent for Goya's *Wellington*, as he contradicts himself by suggesting that the culture of valuing artistic genius of the period is the true primary agent.<sup>477</sup> This crucial relativism in Gell's framework is not strongly articulated in *Art and Agency*, perhaps on purpose, which makes one misapprehend Gell's theory as a solution for the objective analysis of artworks, rather than another form of postmodern affirmation of art's subjective reception. Nevertheless, Gell's determination to pronounce certain types of mechanism of art from myriad possibilities is still useful for the user of his

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<sup>476</sup> Ibid, 51.

<sup>477</sup> Ibid, 35.

method who wants to deny the supposed agency of concepts and conditions over individual art-like situations, including the matter of eye-witnessing.

## 5.2 War Artists and Battle Painters

### 5.2.1 The Distinction between Battle Painters and War Artists

To modern English speakers, the words 'battle painters' and 'war artists' sound synonymous. In fact, the former is rarely used, while the latter became the umbrella term to denote any artists who deal with the subject of war. However, in late Victorian Britain, these two terms had specific connotations for two different professions, distinguishable by the matter of eye-witnessing. Battle painters were emphatically the people who worked with canvas paintings. Their aim was to succeed in the artworld by exhibiting their works in fine-art spaces such as the Royal Academy of Arts, the fine-art sections of international expositions, and private galleries. Although Butler was not accepted as a formal member of the Royal Academy, she still was a model artist who demonstrated that battle paintings could be taken seriously at academy exhibitions.<sup>478</sup> Ernest Crofts (1847-1911) and Andrew Carrick

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<sup>478</sup> About the attitude of the institution towards Butler, see Paul Usherwood. "Elizabeth Butler: a Case of Tokenism," *Women's Art Journal*, Vol 11, No2, (Autumn 1990- Winter 1991),14-18.

Gow (1848-1920) were involved with the Royal Academy, not only as formal members, but also as Keepers of the institution. The annual exhibition at the Academy remained the most important venue for competition between battle artists who often found themselves crowded over similar subjects (see 3.1.1). Other painters who chose to compete at the Academy's annual exhibition were Robert Gibb (1845-1932), Robert Alexander Hillingford (1824-1904), Vereker Monteith Hamilton (1856-1931), and Stanley Berkeley (1855-1909). The main job of war artists, who were sometimes called 'special (war) artists', was not to produce artworks in a complete form, but to provide sketches based on their first-hand accounts of military campaigns for the illustrated press. William Simpson was still active in the late nineteenth century as he was an important correspondent for *The Illustrated London News* during the Second Anglo-Afghan War (1878-1880).<sup>479</sup> Nevertheless, Melton Prior (1845-1910) and Frederic Villiers (1851-1922), who worked for *The Illustrated London News* and *The Graphic* respectively, emerged as two notable war artists in Butler's generation. Prior and Villiers were sent to conflict areas around the world to transmit their visual experience to the British public. Their media were rough sketches whose finishes were not considered to be essential, as home-based illustrators working for their London firms were ready to rework them by adding more details and pictorial effects. War artists' credentials were based on their eye-witnessing experience, which was not necessarily fully

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<sup>479</sup> Simpson was active until he fell ill in 1890. For the introduction of war artists in late Victorian Britain, see Roger Thomas Stearn, "The War Artists" in "War Images and Image makers in the Victorian Era: Aspects of the British Visual and Written Portrayal of War and Defence" c. 1866-1906" (PhD diss., for University of London, 1987), 7-25.

noticeable from their works in visual media. An un-pictorialised portion of their eye-witnessing experience is reflected in the written accounts they sent to London for newspaper columns explaining the printed images. Furthermore, war artists published substantial biographies from comprising personal memoirs of the campaigns they were attached to. For instance, Prior's memoir was published posthumously under the title *Campaign of a War Correspondent* in 1912, and Villiers published *Villiers: His Five Decades of Adventure* in 1920. In terms of format, the memoirs of these war artists were imitations of the writings of contemporary war correspondents such as William Howard Russell (1820-1907) and Archibald Forbes (1838-1900). Nevertheless, the written accounts of war artists are valuable materials in finding out the agency of eye-witnessing as they inform us how war artists behaved in the different phases of battles for the purpose of making images.

As battle painters and war artists were both practising pictorial art, their professional territories were sharply close to each other. There was a great overlapping area between the two parties due to their common skillset, and because their subject of battle was in great demand due with the expanding industry of pictorial journalism. William Simpson occasionally painted in oil as one can see from his *Battle of Inkerman* (c.1855). Charles Edwin Fripp (1854-1906) worked extensively as a special artist for *The Graphic*, although he is best remembered in modern Britain as the painter of *The Battle of Isandlwana, 22 January 1879* (1885). The case of Godfrey Douglas Giles (1857-1941) suggests that the boundary between the two professions can be merely circumstantial. Giles began working as a special artist for *The Graphic* while he was serving as an army officer. After being discharged as a Major in 1884, he undertook art education in Paris under Carolus Duran

(1837-1917) and exhibited a large-scale oil painting, *The Battle of Tamaï*, at the Royal Academy in 1887.<sup>480</sup> To work as a special artist for an illustrated magazine was not impossible for battle painters either. William Barnes Wollen (1857-1936) was undoubtedly a battle painter, given his technical competence that reflected his education at the Slade School of Art, and his constant career as a professional painter, but he was also sent to the Second Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902) as a correspondent for the newly made magazine the *Sphere*.<sup>481</sup> Nonetheless, it was difficult for battle painters to be war artists without systematic support. Painters cannot singlehandedly go to battlefields in search of artistic inspiration. Conditioned by their medium, canvas painting, it was difficult for "studio-based artists" to be war correspondents.<sup>482</sup> Battle painters such as Richard Caton Woodville (1856-1927) and John Charlton (1849-1917) mainly worked as home-based illustrators whose job was to produce the final versions of the rough sketches sent by war artists.<sup>483</sup>

### 5.2.2 The Rhetoric of War Artists' Eye-witnessing.

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<sup>480</sup> Hichberger, *Images of the Army*, 98; 111-112.

<sup>481</sup> Harrington, *British Artists and War*, 276.

<sup>482</sup> Stearn, "War Images and Image makers in the Victorian Era," 34.

<sup>483</sup> Hichberger, *Images of the Army*, 92-93.

The absence of eye-witnessing in battle painters' practice was not considered a serious problem during the 1870s and 1880s, which was the heyday of British battle painting. However, the urgent need for eye-witnessing in the making of good battle paintings began to be advocated by war correspondents from the 1890s. John Edwin Hilary Skinner (1839-1894), in his article "War Artists and War Pictures" in the *Magazine of Art*, 1892, asserts the superiority of the works of war artists over those of battle painters. For Skinner, battle paintings of "the realistic school" are inadequate because they tend to exaggerate the reality of war by only depicting "critical moments" of battle, such as "tremendous charges, and sabres crossed and muskets broken," that are hard to observe in real battlefields.<sup>484</sup> According to him, instead of these "terribly realistic details," what war artists such as Prior and Villiers, are prone to witness are more humdrum features of battle such as "the stray skirmisher lacing up his boots by the roadside," the "ammunition wagon" at the village, and the "frost-numbed sentinel," as direct observation of the real conflict is too dangerous for the correspondents.<sup>485</sup> Between sensational but imaginary images of battle and the "suggestive" but truthful images based on direct observation, Skinner urges his readers to choose the latter on ethical grounds that "wounded" soldiers should not be painted "from imagination," as that would be "a grave offence against art."<sup>486</sup> Skinner's aversion to battle paintings representing close combat, based on his ethical awareness regarding the

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<sup>484</sup> Hilary Skinner, "War Artist and War Pictures," *Magazine of Art*, January 1892, 62.

<sup>485</sup> *Ibid*, 62-63.

<sup>486</sup> *Ibid*, 63.



particular subject of war, sounds rather similar to Butler's humanitarian determination not to paint conflict, but the pathetic experience of ordinary soldiers.<sup>487</sup> However, Skinner does not exclude Butler from his criticism, as he suggests that she is the most prominent example among the artists who "never quitted the banks of the Thames."<sup>488</sup> For instance, to Skinner, Butler's *Balaclava* (1876) was a fine example of the realistic school as its "ghastly details" are "too realistic" compared to the first-hand accounts of the Charge of the Light Brigade.<sup>489</sup> Skinner's article reflects the growing conception in British society that eye-witnessing was an essential credential of artists dealing with the subject of modern wars.

During the Second Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902), the pressure on battle painters to have first-hand experience of war grew stronger. In "A Group of Battle Painters and War Artists" in the *Windsor Magazine*, August 1900, Robert Machray (1857-1946) stressed the significance of the experience of war for the artistic quality of artworks on the subject. For Machray, eye-witnessing "holds its own inspirations," as the observing artist is bound to share hardship with the fighting soldiers, and to see "the reality of the war."<sup>490</sup> While

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<sup>487</sup> Meynell, *The Life and Work of Lady Butler*, 31.

<sup>488</sup> Skinner, "War Artist and War Pictures," 62.

<sup>489</sup> Ibid.

<sup>490</sup> Robert Machray. "A Group of Battle Painters and War Artists." *The Windsor Magazine*, August 1900, 264.

attempting to make the "distinction" between war artists and battle painters, Machray was generous to include any battle painters who went close to conflict areas as correspondents under the heading of war artists, even if they did not see real battles.<sup>491</sup> Butler was in the least advantageous position in Machray's proposition, as she was summed up as a lesser kind of artist, who could only be "familiar with details of military life" without having the experience of "sharing emotions" with the real soldiers in the campaign.<sup>492</sup> Machray's argument is more emotional than rational, as he believes that first-hand experience of a particular battle confers onto the artist the honour of war artist, and they can then paint more battle scenes from their enhanced imagination. For instance, Machray regards Woodville as a battle artist with the credentials of war artist, by recognising the artist's limited experience in Egypt and Serbia.<sup>493</sup> It seems that Machray wanted to stress the importance of artists partaking in the "Imperial Spirit of the time," rather than to discuss the efficacy of eye-witnessing in art-making.<sup>494</sup> Nevertheless, Machray's article suggests the difficulties Butler faced in working as a battle painter who had no prospect of having first-hand experience of her subject, in an age when the eye-witnessing of battle was likened to the military duties of combatants.

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<sup>491</sup> Ibid, 264.

<sup>492</sup> Ibid, 263.

<sup>493</sup> Ibid, 265; 268.

<sup>494</sup> Ibid, 263.

This is not to say that all Victorians had a blind faith in the value of eye-witnessing and were unaware of its intricacies. The most acute criticism over the practice of war artists was made by the war correspondent Charles Frederick Williams (1838-1904). In "Battle Pictures," published in the *Magazine of Art*, 1896, Williams admits that the canvas paintings of Butler and other battle painters are "built-up" products of their imagination. However, he also points out that the mass-produced battle pictures based on the sketches of special artists are also "not always justified by facts."<sup>495</sup> Similar to Skinner, Williams points out that not every war special artist had an opportunity to be directly attached to the fighting troops, as battles often broke out unexpectedly, and the actual optical experience of the combatants could be exaggerated by corresponding artists who made images based on soldiers' verbal accounts rather than their own observations.<sup>496</sup> The particular example Williams gave is the famous 'Moonlight Charge of the Life Guards' during the Anglo-Egyptian War (1882). The cavalry charge led by Drury Lowe (1830-1908) was the most popular image on the campaign due to its dramatic night-time circumstance. The British cavalry charged against the army of Ahmed Urabi (1841-1911) in a desert plain at night and captured many Egyptian guns. The problem is that the images made by the war artists stationed in Egypt romanticised the battle, although none of them were present on the spot. According to Williams, the charge was made not at midnight, but at about 8:15 pm. The soldiers fought in the dim evening in late August, not under the guiding moonlight

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<sup>495</sup> Charles Williams. "Battle Pictures," *The Magazine of Art*, January 1896, 346.

<sup>496</sup> *Ibid*, 346.

fully displayed at midnight. But the verbal accounts of the charge arrived at the place where the war artists were stationed at around midnight under the moonlight.<sup>497</sup> The particular situation in which the artists were inspired by the specific moonlight they were under when they heard the enchanting news would be a legitimate agent to Gell, but not according to the intuitive conception of eye-witnessing as a substantial criterion for a truthful artwork. One of the artists who painted the moonlight charge was Woodville, who was in Egypt at the time. The artist painted a realistic image of the charge under the heading *Kassassin, the Moonlight Charge of the Life Guards* (1883), which was hugely popular through reproductions published by the Fine Art Society (Plate 71). Woodville seemed aware of Williams's criticism, as, in his biography, he hinted at the inability to verify the facts of the charge, and at the involvement of his imagination in picturing the event.<sup>498</sup>

Despite all the limits and intricacies of the act of eye-witnessing battles, war artists maintained a privilege as professionals who held an expert knowledge of the reality of war and an authority over ethically visualising war. The practical value of the rough sketches of the special artists was acknowledged in relation to the inefficiency of photography,

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<sup>497</sup> Ibid, 346.

<sup>498</sup> "The truth of that charge will, I suppose, never be known, as the adventures of the brigade on that night were really remarkable." Richard Caton Woodville, *Random Recollections* (London: Eveleigh Nash, 1914), 57.

which was almost unable to capture vivid images "within the zone of fire."<sup>499</sup> Until the twentieth century, human memory and hands were more suitable tools than the camera for reporting battlefields. As Anne Lacoste points out, the "bulkiness" of photographic machines and their "lengthy exposures" did not help Victorian war photographers gain proximity to live battlefields.<sup>500</sup> Hence, what war photographers could capture was the ruinous "aftermath" of the battle, as one can see in the works of Roger Fenton and Felice Beato (1832-1909) (Plate 72).<sup>501</sup> As eye-witnessing was the only way to represent what really happened during battles in Butler's time, the artist herself desired to acquire her own "roughest sketch of the battle of Platea" to make an authentic battle painting, within the limits of the social constraints around her.<sup>502</sup>

### 5.3 The Intricate Practice of Eye-witnessing

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<sup>499</sup> Charles Williams. "Battle Pictures," *The Magazine of Art*, January 1896, 347; Edward M. Spiers, ed., *Sudan: The Reconquest Reappraised* (London: Frank Cass, 2005), 83.

<sup>500</sup> Anne Lacoste. *Felice Beato: a Photographer on the Eastern Road* (Los Angeles: Paul Getty Museum, 2010), 119-120.

<sup>501</sup> *Ibid*, 132.

<sup>502</sup> Ruskin, *Modern Painters II*, 382.

### 5.3.1 Butler's Eye-witnessing Experience for *Evicted* (1890)

Being a battle painter without the opportunity of gaining experience as an eye-witness, one might assume that Butler was a prime example of Skinner's artist who "never quitted the banks of the Thames."<sup>503</sup> However, Butler did not live a sedentary life. She enjoyed a great deal of mobility throughout her upbringing, and during her marriage to the renowned army officer of the empire. During her maiden days, her family travelled to Italy, Switzerland, France and Germany multiple times. Even before she became famous for *The Roll Call*, Butler worked as a correspondent for *The Graphic*, providing pen and ink drawings of the first Catholic pilgrimage in England since the Reformation.<sup>504</sup> After she married William Francis Butler, she visited Egypt, Sudan, South Africa, Syria and Palestine: places which were inseparable from British Imperial policies. When she travelled to Palestine in 1891 with her husband, she made visual records of the region in watercolour, which became the source of her illustrated travelogue *Letters from the Holy Land* (1903).<sup>505</sup> It is possible to assume that she had every potential to be a *flâneur* of British battlefields, but her social class and gender prevented her from being sent to the dangerous corners of the nineteenth-century globe without the protection of her family. Even if she could

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<sup>503</sup> Skinner, "War Artist and War Pictures,"62.

<sup>504</sup> Butler, *An Autobiography*, 99.

<sup>505</sup> Usherwood, *Lady Butler*, 118.

know "the details of military life" from her privileged connection to the army, there was no possibility for her to partake in real military actions as war artists did.<sup>506</sup>

Considering Butler's inability to be a war artist, we might assume that her well-known principles of not painting "direct conflict" and "contemporary incidents" were not only related to her humanistic ideals, but also to deal with her life-long anxiety about the absence of eye-witnessing in her artworks.<sup>507</sup> As it appears among modern military historians, whose job appears to be less implicated in the direct experience of battles, such anxiety around eye-witnessing seems to be a matter of remorse in conscience.<sup>508</sup> Butler had the valuable chance to paint the real suffering of others caught up in conflict in *Evicted* (1890) (plate 73), which depicts a dejected Irish woman in the aftermath of eviction in Ireland. Considering the fact that the painting is an isolated case in the artist's oeuvre, as a product of experience of eye-witnessing, it is necessary to ask two questions. Firstly, did the act of eye-witnessing contribute positive qualities, such as authenticity and morality,

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<sup>506</sup> Machray. "A Group of Battle Painters and War Artists," 263.

<sup>507</sup> Butler, *An Autobiography*, 184-187.

<sup>508</sup> The British military historian John Keegan (1834-2012) tends to begin his books with the apology for not having "been in a battle," and other military historians are following suit. John Keegan, *The Face of Battle: A Study of Agincourt, Waterloo and the Somme* (London: Bodley Head, 2014), 1.; John Keegan, *A History of Warfare*. London (London: Pimlico, 2004), xiii.

to the resultant artwork? Secondly, was the existence of the prototype (the Irish woman) as the primary agent essential for the painting? If so, the efficacy of eye-witnessing, which was believed by many Victorians, including Butler, can be established, and her anxiety will be vindicated.

Compared with Butler's other military paintings, *Evicted* might be regarded as a side-line work as it represents a domestic non-military conflict. However, in the last decade of the nineteenth century, the chronic eviction of native tenants by absentee landlords in Ireland verged on a series of semi-military conflicts, sparked by Land Act in 1870 and the Irish National Land League. The more violent form of agitation concerning land was commonly called 'Land-War' by contemporaries. The word was a common headline in newspapers: the Irish journalist James Godkin (1806-1879) wrote *The Land-War in Ireland: A History for The Times* (1870), and the Catholic anti-imperialist Wilfrid Scawen Blunt (1840-1922) also published his personal memoir on the event with the title *The Land War in Ireland* (1912). As the Land War led to the Irish War of Independence (1919-1921) in the trajectory of the Irish problem, the eviction could be seen as not only a socio-political matter but also a matter of military conflict.



At some point between the spring and October of 1888, Butler found that she could seize a rare opportunity to paint a real conflict scene on the spot.<sup>509</sup> She impulsively ran to the scene. Her autobiography records the details of her experience:

Being at Glendalough at the end of that decade, and hearing one day that an eviction was to take place (...) I got an outside car and drove off to the scene, armed with my paints. I met the police returning from their distasteful "job," armed to the teeth and very flushed. On getting there I found the ruins of the cabin smouldering, the ground quite hot under my feet, and I set up my easel there. The evicted woman came to search amongst the ashes of her home to try and find some of her belongings intact. She was very philosophical, and did not rise to the level of my indignation as an ardent English sympathiser.<sup>510</sup>

Butler seems to make this account in order to increase her professional integrity as a battle painter. However, if the recollection is true, her attitude was surprisingly more reckless than any other war artists of her age. War artists, perhaps having learnt lessons out of experience, usually make themselves less visible in the real scene. Their working method was quick drawing on portable sketchbooks, and they were often content with making observations of situations and to work out the drawings from memory in quiet and safe places at the

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<sup>509</sup> According to the biography of William Francis Butler, the family moved to Ireland in the spring of 1888 and left there in August. See William Francis Butler, *An Autobiography* (London: Constable, 1911), 351-352.

<sup>510</sup> Butler, *An Autobiography*, 199.

camp. Butler, perhaps being unaccustomed to facing the real situation, brought her easel, paints, and a canvas or a wooden board to the scene, as if the evicted woman was her contracted model similar to the soldier models in *The Roll Call* (1874) and *Quatre Bras* (1875). The meeting between the artist and the evicted woman was not a solemn visitation. Given the bulkiness of her items and the custom of her class, Butler must have been accompanied by one or two servants and at least one male guardian on a vehicle. Likewise, the Irish woman may not have been alone. Butler could not be the only person who heard the news of that particular eviction. It is highly possible that, in the same scene, there was an "eviction crowd" of the local population, who had been already agitated by what had just happened.<sup>511</sup> It may not have been the aftermath of conflict, but the middle of it. If Butler confronted the eviction crowd without the protection of the police force as she described, it must have been a hazardous situation. Eviction scenes in Ireland were popular destinations for special artists of the London newspapers. Naturally, their presence was not welcomed by the villagers, who often regarded them as intelligence agents.<sup>512</sup> Despite her good intention to evoke the British public's ethical awareness of the Irish problem through the painting, the process of making good art would cause discomfort of the prototype who was supposedly benefitting from the work.

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<sup>511</sup> Lewis Perry Curtis, *The Depiction of Eviction in Ireland 1845-1910* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2011), 96-101.

<sup>512</sup> *Ibid*, 158.

The image of the Irish woman standing alone in the wild nature of Ireland might look familiar when it is compared to the melancholic wanderers in the paintings of Caspar David Friedrich (1774-1840) or the resolute Scarlett O' Hara in the movie *Gone with the Wind* (1939). However, Butler's sublime representation of the eviction is rare among pictures of this particular subject. Imagery of the eviction in Ireland was most commonly represented as a sheer conflict in an almost Hogarthian style of brutality and black comedy. Such a representation was relished by the English public; for example, *The Illustrated London News* published illustrations representing violent incidents in Ireland as adventure stories under the heading *With General Buller in Kerry* (plate 74). Moreover, for most of the contemporaries, it was clear that the eviction of the Irish peasants was a conflict between organised law enforcement, on behalf of the landlords, and impoverished local tenants. Butler's husband, William Francis Butler, in his recollection of the experience as a young Irish man in the eviction crowd, clearly describes the atrocity of the police operation and his own rage against them.<sup>513</sup> Not surprisingly, to Lewis Perry Curtis, the author of *The Depiction of Eviction in Ireland 1845-1910* (2011), Butler's representation of the chronic conflict is regarded as the most "romantic" image of the Irish eviction iconography.<sup>514</sup>

The softened image of the eviction is in line with the typical aspect of Victorian social realist art which depended on "drama and pathos and a desire to elicit sympathy" from

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<sup>513</sup> William Francis Butler, *An Autobiography*, 11-12.

<sup>514</sup> Curtis, *The Depiction of Eviction in Ireland 1845-1910*, 291.

the viewer.<sup>515</sup> However, what is specific about the painting is its pictorial composition that owes more to the artist's method than to the particular observation on the spot. *Eviction* recalls her previous success, *The Remnants of an Army* (1879) (plate 1). In the earlier painting, Dr. Brydon, in his exhaustion, shakes his head upward in a Baroque manner. Contrary to all the misery its figure bore, the painting's landscape part is poignantly silent and beautiful. The image of Brydon and his horse on the brink of collapse is striking; yet the small figures of men coming out from the fortress to rescue them suggest that the survivors are soon to be redeemed by the British forces. *The Remnants* proved to be highly effective painting in its evocative power to "move" human emotions.<sup>516</sup> It is possible to imagine that Butler reused her verified formula a decade later for the similar purpose of softening people's hearts with regards to the Irish problem (see 2.3.1).

If *Evicted* was created according to the artist's old formula, we might question the adequacy of painting the two different stories using a synonymous composition. In both *Evicted* and *The Remnants*, there is the same contrast between the suffering individual and the beauty of nature. What is different is the movement of the small figures in these two paintings. In the earlier picture, the small figures in the distance are approaching the protagonist, whereas in the later painting they are moving away from her. This might evidence Butler's dependence on her method as she recollected that the police passed by her just before she actually reached the scene. It would have been natural for her to paint

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<sup>515</sup> Julian Treuherz, *Victorian Painting* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1997), 181-182.

<sup>516</sup> Butler, *An Autobiography*, 184.

the police corps in a position coming towards the viewer if she had been primarily inspired by her empirical observation. This is not to say that an artist should paint the scene in a manner resembling the process of a snapshot photograph. What is important is that there are many paintings, particularly of the same period, that had a unique composition due to the artist's particular visual experience. For instance, James Tissot's boat paintings such as *On the Thames* (c.1876) (plate 75) and *Portsmouth Dockyard* (1877) give the viewer the sense of movement and distance that the artist absorbed from his specific visual experience. As she demonstrated in other paintings (see 2.3.1 and 4.4.4), Butler was not an exception from this tendency to invent new compositions from empirical observations of real events. However, in *Eviction*, eye-witnessing, as a specific factor, did not induce the artist to create any compositional invention.

The fact that Butler placed the Irish woman into her usual formula suggests that the agency of the prototype was not abducted as in the realistic paintings of Goya and Reynolds. In *Evicted*, the landscape reflects her outdoor studies, but, in the compositional scheme, which was supposed to be based on the spatial relationship between the artist and the sitter, Butler's method seems to be a stubbornly dominant agency in the painting. Admittedly, such a methodical tendency is commonly found in the works of battle artists such as Meissonier, Crofts, Woodville, and Charlton. However, there may be a personal aspect to Butler's recycling of her old method, in the painting involving an act of eye-witnessing. The Irish problem could be too close for her to maintain her usual aesthetic distance from the prototypes. As an English Catholic, she was a wife of an Irish Catholic army officer and lived to observe the entire sequence of the Irish Problem: the Land War, the Irish Home

Rule Movement (1870-1914), and the Irish War of Independence (1919-1921). At the same time, Butler still seemed to have an inherent problem in confronting the social conflict, as she was brought up as a member of the upper and ruling class of the British Empire. This particular anxiety is detected in her use of the word "picturesque" in her autobiography; she mostly applied it to describe aesthetically pleasing subjects which did not concern the negative aspect of the society. For Butler, European peasants, and Arabs in Egypt, alongside soldiers and horses, were picturesque enough to be painted, whereas the people in London slums and the Jewish Ghetto in Rome were "hideous" and "very horrible" to her.<sup>517</sup> Her way of classifying things according to their aesthetic qualities affected her artworks. In Butler's oeuvre, it is possible to find pictures representing what she described as picturesque, but it is impossible to find pictures representing the subjects she thought as hideous and horrible. One can assume that the brutal circumstance the Irish woman was under was not aesthetically encouraging for the artist to be inspired by it, regardless of her initial plan to do so.

The prototype's lack of agency in *Evicted* suggests that Butler's empirical observation of the Irish woman is not sufficiently contributed to the actual making of the painting. Unlike the motionless scenery of Glendalough, the peasant woman stood in front of Butler only once. If Butler managed to work out the image of the woman to a satisfactory level on that day in terms of technique, there must have been additional difficulty in painting the real person in misery. The Irish woman was a different prototype to the usual ex-soldier

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<sup>517</sup> Butler, *An Autobiography*, 82; 102.

models that, although they sometimes performed spontaneously (2.3.2), were under the artist's control. It is doubtful that Butler dared to direct the victim who had just been released from her nightmarish experience. Was there a moment when the Irish woman looked back into the eyes of the painter, whose presence at the scene of eviction was so conspicuous? If so, the eyes and facial expression of the evicted Irish woman towards an English lady may not have been so philosophically reserved, but would have been more puzzled, baffled, angered, and even hostile, in a manner similar to the reactions of the survivors of the Grenfell Tower fire in 2017 towards the spectators.<sup>518</sup> Butler seemed to decide not to be stirred by such an uneasy moment. Instead, she chose to put the living Irish woman in the same position as Dr. Brydon, despite the vast difference between the one who is to be redeemed and the one who has been ruined.

Butler's insistence on maintaining aesthetic distance from her subject creates an art-historical effect in the painting. *Evicted* appears to calm the high level of adrenaline of a fighting image under the guise of the subject's philosophical endurance. The Irish woman could do little against the departing yeomanry, having completed their job, other than

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<sup>518</sup> Chris Baynes, "Grenfell Tower estate resident slams 'spectators' visiting London fire site for 'a day out,'" *Evening Standard*, Jun 16 201, accessed on 11 April 2019, <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/grenfell-tower-estate-resident-slams-spectators-visiting-fire-site-for-a-day-out-a3566601.html> ; Maya Oppenheim, "Grenfell Tower residents urge visitors to stop taking selfies: 'You want to slap the phones out of their hands,'" *Independent*, June 20 2017, accessed on 11 April 2019, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/grenfell-tower-residents-selfies-angry-grief-tourism-party-a7799591.html>.

contemplate her hopelessness. Representing her with such resignation makes her a saintly Catholic in the wilderness rather than a rough peasant woman. It is no surprise that the painting has a resonance with the Catholic iconography of a hermit saint. In particular, Butler's Irish woman shows a perceptible resemblance to St. Francis in *Sir Francis in Ecstasy* (c.1480) by Giovanni Bellini (1430-1516), which depicts the saint at a moment of religious ecstasy, showing the stigmata inscribed in his palms (plate 76). The vast natural surrounding is not a political space, but the field of the saint's mystic experience with God. In Butler's painting, the nameless peasant woman is in a similar position to that of the saint. Glendalough is not a typical georgic place but is a picturesque spot. The hut appears to be a religious ruin, although there is no direct allusion creating this impression. The social contexts of the two pictures are different, and their morphological resemblance was probably by chance. However, the similar effect revealed by the comparison between the two paintings suggests that Butler did not intend to represent the situation of tension and conflict that she witnessed, but to transform it into a picturesque anecdote.

*Evicted* was not a successful piece in terms of Butler's humanitarian project, as it failed to persuade people who were heartless towards the Irish Problem. The picture was not received as sympathetically as it was intended among her main audience, who was the ruling class in Ireland and visitors to Royal Academy exhibition in London.<sup>519</sup> To Butler's dismay, the Prime Minister Lord Salisbury (1830-1903) made a joke that he wanted to take

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<sup>519</sup> Usherwood, *Lady Butler*, 94-95.



part in evicting the woman rather than saving her after seeing the picture.<sup>520</sup> To English conservatives, the painting might have been another black comedy whose appropriate reception was sardonic laughter rather than heartfelt empathy.

Through *Evicted*, which was the only one of Butler's works to utilise the mode of eye-witnessing, Butler could invent neither an authentic formula nor a unique agency from the prototype. However, it is hard to discount the painting as the failure of an artist who was content being an "unworldly" onlooker over the suffering of others.<sup>521</sup> Perhaps her life was too deeply implicated with the sequence of the Irish Problem to exploit the event solely to create her art. *Evicted* became a biographically significant work for the artist who experienced the reciprocal violence of the Irish problem. In 1922, three decades after she painted the evicted Irish woman, Butler and her family were forced to be removed from their residence in Ireland, Bansha Castle. According to her daughter, Eileen Gormanston, Butler, like her Irish woman, was said to stand with her "accustomed dignity" in the face of raving Irish Republicans shooting at her residence.<sup>522</sup> It is possible to imagine that the artist had the evicted woman of her picture in her mind when she found out that she was put into the reversed position. If this is the case, Butler's dignified conduct in the face of own misfortune can be seen as a re-enactment of the picturesque courage and resolution of the Irish woman in her picture. *Evicted*, in this respect, is an authentic artwork as a

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<sup>520</sup> Butler, *An Autobiography*, 199.

<sup>521</sup> Eileen Gormanston, *A Little Kept* (London; New York: Sheed and Ward, 1953), 53.

<sup>522</sup> *Ibid*, 115-116.

prophetic object that would mediate Butler's memories, and dictate her behaviour, while its primary agent was neither the artist nor the prototype, but chance.

### 5.3.2 The War Artist's Practice of Eye-witnessing

To discuss the agency of eye-witnessing in visualising war, it is necessary to examine the works of war artists. In Victorian battle art, the artist's individual methods tended to be the primary agency of a painting. Therefore, in Victorian war art, prototypes are supposed to have exerted dominant influences on the artists who travelled to remote conflict areas to witness them. The possible benefits of the direct observation of a live battle are twofold. Firstly, eye-witnessing should result in accurate representations of the factual details of a battle. Secondly, the work of a war artist should have an exceptional artistic quality compared to the work of an artist who never saw real battles; war artists' works were, according to Machray, based on "inspirations" from their "knowledge of the reality of the war."<sup>523</sup> Melton Prior's works offer suitable specimens for examining the exceptionality of war artists' works compared to those of homebased artists' works. The London-born artist was Butler's exact contemporary, and he began his career in 1873, as a war artist for *The Illustrated London News*. When Butler made a boisterous success in 1874 with *The Roll Call*, Prior made a less dramatic but unmistakable entrance into his field with pictorial

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<sup>523</sup> Machray. "A Group of Battle Painters and War Artists," 264.

reports of the Anglo-Ashanti War (1873-1874).<sup>524</sup> While his occupation as a special war artist lasted until the time of Russo-Japanese War (1904), he is comparable to Butler not only in his fame, but also in his substantial written accounts. *Campaigns of a War Correspondent* (1912), which was published after Prior's death, is a good counterpart to Butler's *An Autobiography*, in its length and detail. Although it contains exaggerated stories of his adventure and crime in remote parts of the globe, it prompts speculation on how Prior utilised eye-witnessing in his works. Admittedly, the published versions of Prior's sketches are not the same as the original rough sketches. This chapter deals with the published versions, assuming the impossibility of verifying which of the many surviving sketches embody Prior's actual empirical, on-the-spot, observations.

The cross-examination of Prior's memoir and his works tells us that the practice of eye-witnessing in war art was more intricate than it seems. The actual situations he observed were not always the primary agents of his artworks. Other factors such as his compositional habit, imagination and the press's editorial decisions had a part in the creation of reportage images. His works representing the Battle of Ulundi (1879) in *The Illustrated London News* on 6 September 1879 show the complexity in identifying a single line of agency in his work. This particular battle, which took place two months prior to the publication of Prior's illustrations, was a decisive victory that ended the Anglo-Zulu War (1879). On that day, the

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<sup>524</sup> Butler might have heard his name when she was invited to see Desanges's painting of Ashanti War which was based on Prior's sketch. Butler, *An Autobiography*, 113. Harrington, *British Artists and War*, 179.

paper issued an extra supplement in the form of a large sheet showing the final charge of the Zulu army against the British forces seen from behind (plate 77), which was completed by Woodville based on a sketch by Prior. In the picture, there is no hand-to-hand fighting between the two armies as the British are only suggested as dots in the far distance. Yet the picture is fierce in its vivid description of the Zulu warriors, who were not only holding the famous ethnic shields and spears, but also loading and firing modern Martini-Henry rifles they had captured from the British. The problem of this spectacular image, which is meticulously polished by Woodville, is its reversed viewpoint from the enemy perspective that seems hardly achievable in the real situation. The *Illustrated London News* seems to be concerned with this problem as it states that the view was observed from the occupied encampment behind the Zulu-line, which had been broken by British soldiers, unseen in the image.<sup>525</sup> One can suppose that the paper's explanation is true, although it is hard to specify from Prior's later published memoir the exact moment of viewing the Zulus from at that particular angle. Nevertheless, the arrangement of the picture, which depicts the Zulu army from the rear, suggests that the artist's observed vision on the spot is not the images' sole agent. The illustration was not the first visual account of the battle to be based on Prior's sketch. It should be noted that another illustration of the same battle, depicting the view of the British assault against the Zulus had been published a week earlier, on the pages of the paper (plate 78). It was still possible for a war artist to travel between the enemy side and the British side, according to the various situations of the

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<sup>525</sup> *The Illustrated London News*, "The Zulu War," September 6, 1879, 6.

battlefield. The two illustrations form a parallel in the visual sequence of the paper in the year 1879. The Zulu War broke out in January and ended in July of that year, but there was a time lapse between South Africa and London. The paper often gave notice of the arrival of the correspondents' accounts and the coming of complete illustrations by them a week later. Even if the war ended with the capture of the Zulu king Cetshwayo kaMpande (1826-1884) in August, the images of the war were published with fresh recollections until the end of the year. Therefore, the image of sweeping British troops advancing towards the Zulus as dots might not have been a coincidental choice, considering its compositional parity with the image from the opposite viewpoint. The intention of *The Illustrated London News* to arrange their illustrations regarding the problem of visual variety was not secret, as the paper openly informed that certain illustrations were "sequels" to the ones published in an earlier issue.<sup>526</sup> Moreover, readers often collected newspapers illustrations, which means that they could rearrange the two images of the Battle of Ulundi as a battle diptych. Prior was certainly aware of the necessity of keeping a variety of battle scenes to entertain the reader. Therefore, the sequential nature of the images in the illustrated paper and the editorial interest over it can be considered verifiable agents of Prior's two pictures of the Battle of Ulundi.

The same issue of *The Illustrated London News* contains another image of the same campaign that attests to the eye-witnessed view as a primary agent of the resultant

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<sup>526</sup> *The Illustrated London News*, "Our special artist in the Transvaal," February 8, 1896, 163.

product. This particular image was based on a sketch by Nathaniel Newnham-Davis (1854-1917), who rose as a notable journalist and writer after his military career. In the illustration, Garnet Wolseley (1833-1913) presents a Victoria Cross to John Chard (1847-1897), the hero of the Defence of Rorke's Drift (plate 79). The scene appears to be based on eye-witnessing, because of the spatial relations between the figures: Chard, Wolseley, another mounted officer, Colonel Colley holding an extract from the *London Gazette* reporting Chard's meritorious action, and the unseen observing artist, are specific and convincing. Moreover, by cross-examining the case with another picture of the same scene published on the very same day by the rival magazine *The Graphic*, it is possible to ascertain that the visual specification of the actual ceremony was the primary agent of both images (plate 80). *The Graphic's* composition involves more figures and scenic elements, but the basic position and role of the figures are synonymous with that of *The Illustrated London News*. *The Graphic* clarifies that their illustration is based on an original sketch by its correspondent, Dr. Doyle Glanville.<sup>527</sup> If the information is true, it is possible to assume that eye-witnessing mattered in the making of these two pictures, and that the event itself was their prototype, which played an overpowering role as an agent.

Even if the works of war artists are seen under the heading of reportage art, they are not free from art-historical conventions, as was the case in Butler's *Eviction*. The front page of the aforementioned issue of *The Illustrated London News* contains an impressive illustration of a hand-to-hand fight between a Zulu warrior and Captain William Beresford

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<sup>527</sup> *The Graphic*, "The Zulu War," September 6, 1879, 6.

(1847-1900), which was based on a sketch by Prior (plate 81). The image is an explicit fighting scene, as its pictorial details are all about the duel between the mounted British soldier and the African warrior on foot. The Zulu's *assegai* is renowned for its fierceness as a sharp metal weapon, but Beresford's swordsmanship has higher precision and strength, and neutralises the Zulu's attack. Despite the picturesque valour of the savage attacker, the trained modern British soldier easily overpowers him. According to *The Illustrated London News*, the Zulu was killed "in the manner shown in the sketch, being run through with the sword piercing his shield and his naked body."<sup>528</sup> However, it is possible to doubt whether Prior did observe the scene. From Prior's memoir, it is uncertain whether Prior actually was attached to Lord Beresford in this dangerous reconnaissance mission a day before the Battle of Ulundi. Neither his memoir nor the article explaining the illustration confirms Prior's eye-witnessing of the incident.<sup>529</sup> It is more likely that Prior made his sketch from verbal accounts circulating inside the camp.

In keeping with the uncertainty over the artist's direct observation, the picture of Beresford and the Zulu warrior resonates as an iconographical type in art history, namely, the image of the monster slayer that had been repeatedly painted by renowned artists in the West such as Paolo Uccello (c.1397-1475), Raphael (1483-1520), Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640), Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863), and Gustave Moreau (1826-1898). Prior's work has a

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<sup>528</sup> *The Illustrated London News*, "The Zulu War," September 6, 1879, 6.

<sup>529</sup> For Prior's recollection of the incident., see Melton Prior, S. L. Bensusan, ed, *Campaigns of A War Correspondent* (London: Edward Arnold: 1912), 112-113.

suggestive resemblance to Delacroix's imaginary *Lion Hunt* (1855) (plate 82). Johann Nepomuk Schönberg (1844-1913), the homebased artist who finished the published version of the illustration, may have created this resemblance by referring to the images of canvas painting in art history.

### 5.3.3 Butler's Great War Pictures.

Many of battle painters who commenced their career in the late 1870s survived to see the outbreak of World War I in 1914. The global conflict did not only signal the end of a peaceful age in Western Europe that had lasted more than 40 years after the Franco-Prussian War, but it also introduced a new type of war that featured machine guns, high-explosive shells, mines, poison gas, tanks, aircraft, submarines, and an unprecedented number of casualties. As the cultural, economic, and psychological impacts of the war were so profound in Britain, it became the most urgent subject to be dealt with in painting. Battle painters, from the Crimean War to the Second Boer War, had benefited from the times of conflict, as they were the only party to meet the public demand to see the subject in painting. However, this pattern changed during World War I: the war became a universal subject to British painters, regardless of their genre, while the old guard of battle painters were marginalised from public attention. The institutional patronage of war art in Britain, such as the programmes of Canadian and British War Memorials, unprecedented in scale, excluded extant Victorian battle painters, giving preference to the younger and better-



recognised artists in the mainstream art world.<sup>530</sup> Even in private venues, the subject of the war and its battles was eagerly pursued by individual artists whose sets of expertise had not previously been associated with the subject of war. Nevertheless, the surviving Victorian battle painters welcomed the event, as they could not find the right subjects during the peaceful Edwardian era. Woodville, Charlton, Wollen, James Prinsep Beadle (1863-1947) and Allan Stewart (1865-1951) energetically painted and illustrated the new type of war in their usual venues: the Royal Academy and illustrated magazines.<sup>531</sup> Butler, now in her late 60s, was strongly motivated by the war. She held two solo shows dedicated to the war at the Leicester Galleries in London, as well as submitting oil paintings of the subject to the Royal Academy.

The fact that the most influential battle artist in Victorian Britain survived to see this new type of war, and energetically worked to negotiate the changes in war, her familiar subject, is certainly a subject of art-historical interest. World War I was another war, after the Irish Land War, in which Butler had a strong emotional involvement. Butler did not see the real battles of the new war that took place in mainland Europe. However, the emotional and psychological space between the artist and the details of the war was closer than ever.

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<sup>530</sup> For the Canadian War Memorials, See Richard Cork, *A Bitter Truth: Avant-Garde Art and the Great War* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1994), 204-213; For the British War Memorials, see Sue Malvern, *Modern Art, Britain and the Great War* (London; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 69-75.

<sup>531</sup> For the Victorian battle painters' works during the Great War, see Harrington, *British Artists and War*, 303-309.

Alongside the rest of the civilian population, Butler closely followed the war's progress. James Fox, in *British Art and the First World War 1914-1924* (2015), points out that many artists suffered from imaginative hardships, and Butler was certainly one of them.<sup>532</sup> It was not a conflict that they could consume as a Hogarthian black comedy, but an event in which the English were victim to the mechanical warfare, which eventually changed people's conception of war. Considering these psychological implications, Butler's wartime pictures should not be discarded as lesser works made in the decline of her career.

Butler's wartime works begin with the "cheerful" watercolour picture of her son, Patrick, bidding farewell on horseback.<sup>533</sup> The horse's movement seems light-hearted. The posture of the rider is upright, without the shadow of war's trauma (plate 83). There is a sense of the artist's pride and affection for the prototype, the young man who, at the moment, could not imagine his future agony.<sup>534</sup> Butler exhibited her Great War pictures at the Leicester Galleries, which had been an alternative space for the artist due to intermittent tensions between her and the Royal Academy. It is interesting to see that Butler's first wartime exhibition held at the gallery in June 1915 was dedicated to the Waterloo

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<sup>532</sup> James Fox, *British Art and the First World War 1914-1924* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 34.

<sup>533</sup> Cork, *A Bitter Truth*, 72.

<sup>534</sup> Patrick boasts his departure to the Front to some officers who envied him. See Patrick Richard Butler, *A Galloper at Ypres* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1920), 12.

centenary. The show consists of *Scotland for Ever!* and other new works in watercolour.<sup>535</sup> Going back to the subject of the Napoleonic Wars amidst the indirect experience of modern warfare might appear to attest to her conservatism. However, the exhibition was being prepared while Butler was solely occupied by the imminent war. Butler was well-aware of the problem of revisiting past battles between the Red Coats and Napoleon's Imperial Guards, at the critical moment of a modern war.<sup>536</sup> Despite the antiquated subject, the show was motivated by strong contemporary concerns; it was part of her activity at the charitable organisation, the Officers Families Fund. The titles of the works suggest that the exhibition not only celebrated the gallantry of the British, but also that of the Napoleonic French, as if the exhibition honoured the new comradeship between the two major allies of World War I. In Butler's career, the Waterloo Centenary exhibition signifies a pause or a transitional phase before the artist directly confronted the "grim" image of modern war, rather than an anachronistic indulgence in the "sparkle" of the war of the past.<sup>537</sup>

Butler's Great War exhibitions proper took place in 1917 and 1919. The title of the first show was *A Glimpse of the Great War*, suggesting an air of modesty or anxiety in dealing with the event, now widely pictured by painters who had the experience of eye-witnessing

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<sup>535</sup> Butler, *An Autobiography*, 320.

<sup>536</sup> "Who will look at my 'Waterloos' now? I have but one more of that series to do. Then I shall stop and turn all my attention and energy to this stupendous war." Ibid, 327.

<sup>537</sup> Ibid, 325.

as either war artists or combatants. Butler was never an eyewitness of live battles of the war. She only updated her knowledge of military equipment and uniforms by studying the troopers of her son's division stationed in Southampton.<sup>538</sup> It should be stressed that her research method in the 1910s had not changed at all since *Quatre Bras* (1875) and *The Defence of Rorke's Drift* (1879). After seeing the exhibition, Paul George Konody (1872-1933), the champion of modernist painting in Britain, dismissed her paintings of the Great War as mere illustrations, products of craftsmanship, without "the value attached to personal experience."<sup>539</sup> However, despite Konody's accusation, Butler's Great War pictures are more than generic illustrations of the previous century. In their making, complex factors of the new war acted profoundly as agents. Heated nationalism induced Butler to paint pictures for *A Glimpse of the Great War* with unlikely themes. Butler had produced battle paintings narrating the stories of Victoria Cross winners before, as in *The Colours* (1898) (see Chapter 3); now, for the first time in her career, Butler produced a series solely dedicated to portraying Victoria Cross winners without concerning anecdotes (plate 84). In painting more complicated anecdotal pictures, Butler seemed to be more methodical and less reserved; she almost abused her old projective formulae, as if she were trying to claim her authorship of them belatedly. Figures of Highlander pipers in *A 'Lament' in the Desert* (1887) (plate 85), the watercolour painting she claims to have made out of an eye-witnessing experience in Wadi Halfa, Sudan, now reappear impatiently attacking forward

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<sup>538</sup> Ibid, 321.

<sup>539</sup> P. G. Konody, "The Leicester Galleries," *The Observer*, May 20, 1917, 5.

in "*The Black Watch*" on Auber Ridge, May 9<sup>th</sup>, 1915, abandoning their reflective ambiance (plate 86).<sup>540</sup> The cavalry of *Scotland for Ever!* appear in *The Avengers*, avenging the nurse Edith Cavell (1865-1915), who was martyred when she was killed by the Germans in Belgium in 1915 (plate 87).<sup>541</sup> *The Avengers* is comparable to other wartime onrushing horse paintings such as Lucy Kemp-Welch's *Forward the Guns!* (1917) and John Charlton's *French Artillery Crossing the Flooded Aisne and Saving the Guns* (1915).<sup>542</sup> By representing a furious charge of the horsemen, Butler did not hide her intention to partake in the fervour of propaganda on the specific incident. It is hard to deny that the artist hastily applied old formulae to her new subject. However, such a decision was not primarily made by her dependency on method, but by the extreme urgency that she felt in dealing with the war as an extraordinary prototype.

Although Butler's recycling of old formulae in her representation of the Great War can be legitimised as a reaction to the war's overwhelming force, an inquiry into progressive elements in her wartime artworks is also necessary. Butler's wartime works did not only show an element of repetition but also the abandonment of principle: for the summer exhibition at the Royal Academy in 1917, she presented a near side-view of a clash between the British army and its enemy in *The Dorset Yeoman at Agagia, 26<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1916* (1917)

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<sup>540</sup> About *A Lament*, see Usherwood, *Lady Butler*, 90-91.

<sup>541</sup> Butler, *An Autobiography*, 329.

<sup>542</sup> About Lucy Kemp-Welch's *Forward the Guns!* (1917), see Cork, *A Bitter Truth*: 127-128.

(plate 88). Together with another painting of a cavalry charge, *The Charge of the Warwickshire and Worcestershire Yeomanry at Huj, 8<sup>th</sup> November 1917* (1918), *Dorset Yeoman at Agagia* shows Butler's adoption of the conventional composition that had been a strong point of her male competitors such as Woodville and Wollen. Butler might have thought that a cavalry charge in the age of the machine gun was a heroic deed. Butler's work was not of the same mood as the time she had highlighted the aftermath of the Charge of Light Brigade in *Balaclava* (1876), in which she defied the conventional method of representing direct conflict (2.3.2).

However, it is wrong to pin down Butler's Great War pictures as regressive works, stunned by the overwhelming agency of the war. A new iconography, authentic to the war, stepped into her pictures. *"Eyes Right!"* (1916) shows the image of the British troops showing respect for the wayside Calvary (plate 89). It is possible to associate this picture, exhibited at the Leicester Galleries in 1917, with the artist's Catholic religion, as Usherwood does.<sup>543</sup> However, the work should be seen in the wider context of the re-emergence of the crucifix as a forgotten prototype in British art. As Nicholas J. Sanders discusses in his article "Crucifix, Calvary, and Cross: Materiality and Spirituality in Great War Landscapes" (2003), the Protestant British soldiers were perplexed on encountering outdoor crucifixes at an early stage of the war, but they soon became attached to them, as they came to have "dense

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<sup>543</sup> Usherwood, *Lady Butler*, 146.

meanings transformed by the conflict."<sup>544</sup> Butler was a Catholic, and, in the initial stage of her career, she considered becoming a painter of religious subjects, following her mother's suggestion.<sup>545</sup> However, she had never included the image of the crucifix in her paintings, in any context. Before the war, Victorian battle painters were virtually blind to outdoor crucifixes and shrines, and these were even rarely seen in French military paintings. The image of Calvary rose in war imagery due to the unprecedented atrocity of the industrialised war. Calvary was widely depicted during the war regardless of style and school. James Clark's *The Great Sacrifice* (1914) (plate 90), which effectively equates the sacrifice of Jesus Christ with that of common soldiers by exploiting the image of Calvary, was one of the most popular pictures in Britain around 1915 due to its emotive appeal.<sup>546</sup> As the artist intentionally blurred the form of the crucified Jesus, it is uncertain whether Clark's Christ is a hallucinatory vision of Christ or the representation of an actual Calvary. Nonetheless, it is hard to deny the agency in Clark's picture of the realistic Calvary in France and Belgium, that was observed by British soldiers. The sudden appearance of the crucifix in Butler's oeuvre, too, attests that the artist was sharing the specific visual experience of the war with her contemporaries.

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<sup>544</sup> Nicholas J. Saunders, "Crucifix, Calvary, and Cross: Materiality and Spirituality in Great War Landscapes," *World Archaeology*, Vol 35 (1), 2003.

<sup>545</sup> Butler, *An Autobiography* 46.

<sup>546</sup> James Fox, *British Art and the First World War 1914-1924*, 123.

Butler's most authentic Great War painting was exhibited at the artist's second exhibition at the Leicester Galleries in 1919. After *A Glimpse of the Great War*, Butler seemed more confident in dealing with the war, as she named her second show *Some Records of World War*, which implies that the new paintings were based on soldier's first-hand accounts of the war by the soldiers. Even if there were no impulsive propagandistic works like *The Avengers*, Butler re-exhibited her cavalry charge pictures, *Dorset Yeoman at Agagia*, and *Charge of the Warwickshire and Worcestershire Yeomanry*. There were watercolours representing the aftermath of battles, such as *In the Retreat of 1914: the Royal Horse Guards* (c. 1919), which developed into the larger oil painting *In the Retreat from Mons: the Royal Horse Guards* (1927) (plate 91). Among these typical pictures, which remind one of Butler's earlier pictures, the artist revealed *The Guides* (c. 1919) (plate 92) with which she accomplished artistic authenticity by her unique way of representing World War I as the threshold of mechanised warfare in the twentieth century.<sup>547</sup> In it, Butler negotiates her characteristic aversion to modern technologies such as railways, factories, and torpedoes.<sup>548</sup> She had featured machine guns in the aforementioned pictures of charging Yeomans, but they were overcome by heroic cavalry charges. Her attitude to modern warfare dramatically changed in *The Guides*. At a glance, the picture appears to be another

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<sup>547</sup> The painting is a least known work of the artist, and its medium, whereabouts, and the dimension are unknown so far. Its image is known from the reproduction at the catalogue. See Elizabeth Thompson Butler, *"Some Records of the World War," An Exhibition of Pictures* (London: Leicester Galleries, 1919).

<sup>548</sup> Butler, *An Autobiography*, 19; 22; 57; 143; 221.



work of onward horsemen and plunging horses from the horizon. However, the painting is unique in its portrayal of a conciliatory relationship between old and new war machines. Mark Tanks, the new weapon invented by the British in order to cross no man's land, are guided by the cavalymen in order not to get stuck in shall craters. Tanks were a formidable weapon that took over the tactical place of the cavalry in war. Yet the crews' vision in the tank was greatly limited, and so they still needed heroic sacrifices by the horsemen. The role of guiding cavalry was not only essential, as it was in the previous century, but it was more dramatic and heroic, considering the high risk of facing mines and machine guns with bare flesh.<sup>549</sup> The specific tactic was transitional, and authentic to the war when the tanks were less tactically and technologically capable. However, this counter-intuitive image of the collaboration between tank and cavalry is never visualised in any pictures and movies on the war, perhaps, because they assume the relationship between tanks and horses as that of two opposing symbols.<sup>550</sup> Tanks fascinated younger artists who were sent to the battlefield, such as William Orpen (1878-1931), Muirhead Bone (1876-1953), and, C. R. W. Nevinson (1889-1946) (plate 93). However, their works tend to highlight the shocking aspects of the new weapon, neglecting the vulnerability of the machine, which was part of

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<sup>549</sup> The death toll of the leading horsemen who was mounted officers was high according to the account quoted by Butler. Elizabeth Thompson Butler, *Some Records of the World War*, 6.

<sup>550</sup> This perspective is best visualised in Steven Spielberg's film *War Horse* (2011) in which the warhorse Joey runs into the no man's land, being frightened by the British Mark IV tank.

the reality of modern warfare. Regardless of being unable to eye-witness the real event, Butler was the only artist who recognised the subtle intersection between the rising mechanical warfare and a waning traditional warfare, and transform it into a unique vision.

#### 5.4 Conclusion

Butler's Great-War pictures were not methodical repetitions of a mature artist whose creative energy was in decline, but products based on the war's strong and specific agency. If more studies are to be made according to immediate relations, we may expect to find more unique values from representations of the war by other Victorian battle painters. Eye-witnessing may not be the essential element in producing artistic battle paintings, as the cases of Victorian battle and war artists attest. The decline of the careers of the late Victorian battle painters might have been due to the dramatic shift of the hegemony in British art-world. French Impressionism was gradually adopted by British artists who were "dissatisfied" with the domestic art scene that was dominated by "great Academicians" – such as Leighton, Millais, and Alma-Tadema - from the last quarter of the nineteenth century.<sup>551</sup> However, a more drastic form of modernist art was introduced to Britain by

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<sup>551</sup> Kenneth McConkey, *Impressionism in Britain* (London: Yale University Press, 1995), 12-13.; see also, Kate Flint, *Impressionists in England: the Critical Reception* (London: Routledge, 1984), 26,

Roger Fry's Post-Impressionist exhibitions in 1910 and 1912 at the Grafton Galleries.<sup>552</sup> On the eve of the Great War, the British art world was hotly divided by various factions seeking cultural hegemony, and both traditionalist and modernist artists hoped that the war would bring about artistic opportunities and enable them to override their creative competitors.<sup>553</sup> In this context, the Great War seemed to be the most prized subject for artists in any faction and genre. The portrait artists such as John Singer Sargent (1856-1925) and Richard Jack (1866-1952) painted monumental war paintings, *Gassed* (1919) and *The Second Battle of Ypres* (1917). George Clausen (1852-1944), the Impressionistic painter of British peasant life painted *In the Gun Factory at Woolwich Arsenal* (1918) as part of his effort to represent the "Home Front."<sup>554</sup> The Slade graduate artists such as Augustus Edwin John (1878-1961), William Rothenstein (1872-1945), and William Orpen (1878-1931), were attached to the army as war artists. The younger modernist artists such as C. R. W. Nevinson (1889-1946),

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<sup>552</sup> About the reception of Fry's Post-Impressionist exhibitions, see J.B. Bullen, *Post-Impressionists in England: the Critical Reception* (London; New York: Routledge, 1988), 1-38.

<sup>553</sup> George Robb, *British Culture and the First World War* (Houndmills: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002), 130-132; It is not to say that every modernist artist supported the war, as some of them pursued pacifism. For the works of pacifist modernist artists in Britain, see Grace Brockington, *Above the Battlefield: Modernism and the Peace Movement in Britain, 1900-1918* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).

<sup>554</sup> Kenneth McConkey, *George Clausen: and the pictures of English rural life* (Edinburgh: Atelier Books, 2012), 173-175.

Paul Nash (1889-1946) and Eric Kennington (1888-1960) were sent to the Western front as official war artists.

Among the contested factions painting the subject of war, battle painters are considered traditional and conservative against the modernist artists. However, what is noteworthy is that the inadequacy of battle painters for the new war was judged by the matter of their eye-witnessing experience, not by their artistic credo. What Konody meant by "personal experience" in his sour review of Butler's wartime exhibition at the Leicester Galleries was none other than the matter of eye-witnessing that was the advantage of his protégé Nevinson, who exhibited gruesome paintings of the "machine war" at the same gallery in October 1916.<sup>555</sup> Prioritising their eye-witnessing of the war was a modernist tactic to discount paintings of the war made by older generation artists as ethically irresponsible artworks. Nash famously wrote that his mission was to expose "a bitter truth" to the people who did not acknowledge the brutality of the new type of war.<sup>556</sup> However, if eye-witnessing is not an essential element for the artistic quality of paintings of war, as has been discussed in this chapter, it is possible to recuperate the discarded status of late

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<sup>555</sup> P. G. Konody, "The Leicester Galleries," *The Observer*, May 20, 1917, 5.; *Current Opinion*, "THE WAR OF THE MACHINES AS DEPICTED BY AN ENGLISH ARTIST" October 1917, 267. For Nevinson's exhibition in 1916, see Cork, *A Bitter Truth*, 131-133.

<sup>556</sup> Paul Nash, *Outline: An Autobiography*, ed. David Haycock, (London: Humphries, 2016), 187.

Victorian battle paintings by unearthing more cases like *The Guides*, in which the particular transitory moment of history succeeded to manifest as a crucial agent in a truthful way.

## 6 Conclusion

This thesis has endeavoured to examine the operative aspect of Elizabeth Thompson Butler's battle paintings inspired by the anthropological framework of Alfred Gell, which provided a novel way to discuss Victorian battle paintings in terms of agency, not in terms of meaning as in the conventional format of the social history art. By looking at Victorian battle paintings as operative objects in their immediate social relations, unexpected and discarded elements in the social history of battle paintings came to light. Chapter 2 elucidated the central role and mechanism of effect in Butler's success with *The Roll Call* in 1874, that reaffirms Victorian battle paintings as effect-centred artefacts, rather than ideologically defective artefacts. Chapter 3 traced the individual agents specific to Butler's late work, *The Colours*, which resulted in making the painting more an object of personal attachment than a symbolic object for collective politics. Chapter 4 questioned the stylistic demarcation between Butler's battle paintings and Whistler's avant-garde paintings, assumed in art history, through discussing the agentive role of particular working conditions in depicting motion, which was the crucial problem to both artists. The last chapter endeavoured to question the ethical high ground given to eye-witnessing in painting the subject of war, by examining the agentive role of the prototypes in the works

of war special artists and Butler. It found that the act of having eyewitness experience on the spot with the prototype does not always count as the primary factor in the final result of the work, nor is it particularly ethical to the assumed sitters in distress. The revelation of those unexpected and counter-intuitive factors in Victorian battle paintings with the help of Gell's framework, contributes to changing the image of Victorian battle paintings from generic objects to more authentic objects by which creative experience is possible in our time.

This thesis offers unique academic value as a study of Victorian battle paintings represented by the works of Butler, understood as products of specific social relations in opposition to the generalising approach of the social history of art. In doing so, it focuses on the action of art, rather than the meaning of art, inspired by Gell's anthropology of art. Gell primarily aims to defy semiotic readings of art, mainly with regards to artworks of ethnic societies, familiar to his discipline. His framework is not immaculate, and its weakness is often exposed when it is applied to diverse subjects. In this regard, this thesis poses as an expansion of Gell's anthropology of art, tuned for its purpose to offer a counterpoint to the social history of Victorian art. Arranging a specific opponent to confront might not be a wise tactic for art-historical research if it cannot suggest a viable alternative to the established methodology that is distributed into many variants. However, this thesis is not purely antithetical to the social history of art. Rather, its usefulness is to stress what is neglected in the social history of art: the uniqueness of social relations made by the artworks. The social history of art, in its intention to create the most insightful contextual meanings of artworks, overlooks the specific social relations consequential to

the artworks that cannot be reduced to those meanings. Admittedly, as postmodernists, many social-art historians would not believe that the meanings of artworks they articulate are absolutely true to both them and the people who lived in their subject periods. This thesis, too, as an art-historical account of Victorian battle paintings, does not claim that the effects of the artworks, that are found to be effective to their Victorian contemporaries, are their innate qualities, but that they only belong to the particular social relations of the time. The effect of an art object, in a fundamental sense, is transitory, as it ceases after its immediate social relation with its recipients terminates. It is hoped that the recognition of this point will encourage modern viewers to have renewed relations with the Victorian battle paintings that have survived over time in ways that are true to each individual.

My intention to prioritise the immediate and effectual operations of battle paintings could be taken as ethically irresponsible, especially regarding the conception of upholding one's identity as the foremost equation in every art experience, which is a distinctive trait of the radical art history. Then it is incumbent on me to make a remark on what I provisionally call identity art history, in order to defend myself from the possible accusation of neglect of ethical responsibility as an art historian. In *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, Erwin Panofsky asserts that, compared to antique perspectives with multiple vantage points, Renaissance perspective with a single vantage point is "an extension of the domain of the self," as it is a systemisation of the external world in accordance with a "subjective point of view."<sup>557</sup> In the radical art history, the pursuit of "Identity," in its relation to "identity-politics" is

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<sup>557</sup> Erwin Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form* (Zone Books: New York, 1997), 67-68.

comparable to the symbolic effect of the single subjective point of view in the Renaissance perspective as in Panofsky's explanation. To a radical art historian who wishes to manifest his or her identity through writing about art, the existing story of art must be re-modulated according to the evaluative system consistent with the political interest and standpoint of the individual.<sup>558</sup> Indeed, identity art history is viable as a postmodern practice to deny a single objective reality existing outside of one's subjective experience. However, it should be noted that the manifestation of one's identity is not just the subjective perception of the world in an autonomous sense, but a social action which assumes its primary recipients, which means the punctation of identity, as a single vantage point to which the image of the world is modulated, is made to serve a targeted group of people on the privileged spot, as in the case of Renaissance perspective. The problem is that the critical image of art history made to serve identity politics might not make sense to the recipients who feel themselves standing further from the intended spot. In this respect, Gell's framework to elucidate the flow of agency, rather than to edify a rigid principle of art, offers fewer distortions to the sceptic viewer who is reluctant to fixate his or her identity in terms of existing slots of factional identities such as Marxist, Feminist, and ethnic or sexual majority or minority.

My scepticism over a fixed identity would be readily refuted by the assertion that one's political, sexual, class and ethnic identity is already present as a social phenomenon without

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<sup>558</sup> About the significance of identity and identity-politics in the radical art history, see Harris, *The New Art History*, 262-264.



the need of any intentional manifestation. For instance, Gell's intention not to regard meaning essential to art would automatically identify him as a conservative, as it opposes the radical factions who prioritise symbolic and political meanings in discussing art. My silence over the political implications of Victorian battle painting, which would be particularly unsatisfactory to many people from former British colonies, would also locate me opposite to the postcolonial critics. However, such impositions of one's implicit identity pinned down by the others is objectionable, for it does not only ignore one's consciousness regarding his or her identity but also privileges one's inborn condition: a female art historian is expected to agree with feminist art history; a gay art historian is expected to deal with queer theory; and an ethnic minority should endorse postcolonialism. In case of a South Korean art historian who chose to research Victorian battle paintings, he is expected to be a vocal critic of the imperialistic aspect of his subject since the Japanese occupation of Korea (1910-1945), whose psychological impacts are still graven into many Koreans, was partially an outcome of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance (1902-1923) which was initially formed against Imperial Russia. Nevertheless, the hereditary designation of identity, which appears to be a mere extension of nationalism, will be best repudiated by the romantic notion of identity expounded by the nineteenth-century thinkers such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Friedrich Nietzsche that advocates the renewable form of identity. Emerson, in essay "History," urges young Americans to transcend their parochial identity as nationals of a culturally premature country compared to European nations by active

reading of the histories of renowned civilisations in human history.<sup>559</sup> The constant overcoming of one's inborn condition by nurturing his "second natures" is an important task pronounced in Nietzsche's existentialist philosophy.<sup>560</sup> Butler seemed to share such a nineteenth-century concept of fluid identity based on achievements when she constantly used "he" as the subject when she made general statements about artists or painters, which might reflect her relish on her hard-won status as a professional artist whose skills and fame exceeded other male artists of a masculine subject, rather than lamenting on her minority status in the male-centred Victorian art world.<sup>561</sup> In Gell's anthropology of art, the question of identity could be answered by its definition of 'person,' which is based on an agentive quality in each contingent social situation, resulting in action rather than its static and categorical definitions. The romantic concept of identity based on one's contingent but active qualities is in line with the traditional Eastern Asian practice of giving one multiple 'art names' (Chinese: 號, Korean: *ho*) according to his achievement in specific fields of art, and certainly personal relations, and its application would be more workable than the solid and fixed identities that are regarded as exhibitionistic "fantasies" by Zygmunt Bauman for their inadequacy in the "liquid" environment of postmodern

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<sup>559</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Essential Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. Brooks Atkinson (New York: The Modern Library, 2000), 115.

<sup>560</sup> Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, 76.

<sup>561</sup> See Butler, *An Autobiography*, 16; 47; 52.

society.<sup>562</sup> Seeing identity as a series of one's contingent roles in specific situations, the dynamics of Butler's behaviours with regards to the different persons illustrated in this thesis, that are not always seen as politically correct, would be the indication of her free Victorian spirit, not ethical haphazardness.

The adoption of Gell's action-centred art theory has been demonstrated in this thesis for studying Victorian battle paintings only, but its prospect in wider Victorian art studies is expected to be positive, though in a complementary sense, not in a revolutionary sense. Since Marcia Pointon stressed the significance of reception history, the detailed examination of the social relations immediate to artworks has been not uncommon in Victorian art studies, to which the particular period offers ample materials, such as letters, memoirs, magazine and newspaper articles, and sketches, that are necessary for such a scheme. However, it seems that the social relations among persons in terms of art-like situations are less explored in the domain of the Victorian art study compared to the societal relations among sentient human beings such as in respect to friendship, politics, commercial dealings, and professional collaborations. In this sense, the approach

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<sup>562</sup> Admittedly, Bauman's criticism over fixed identities results from his extreme pessimism about the possibility of having an authentic individuality in a hyper consumer society, while he sees the origin of solid identities in modern times come from "the romantic concept of the self," which presumes the inner essence beneath the external world. While I agree with Bauman on the futility of the self-designation of identities, I am more optimistic with the prospect of the fluid identity based on action, which results from a solely different understanding of the romantic concept of the self from Bauman's. See Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), 83-88.

demonstrated in Elizabeth Pettejohn's recent works, *The Modernity of Ancient Sculpture* (2012) and *Modern Painters, Old Masters* (2017) verges on Gell's focus on immediate and personal relations among agents and patients. In discussing the reception history of ancient sculpture in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Pettejohn pays attention to the "chance" element in the encounter with specific artefacts, which is more consequential than the general "chain of reception," whose entirety has been unduly assumed in art history, in viewing modern artworks alluding to the influence of ancient Greek sculptures.<sup>563</sup> To shed light on the complexity of the allusion to the influence of the Old Master's artworks shown in Victorian artworks, that are part "combative," part "receptive," Pettejohn explores the relations in the vicinity of ancient paintings in modern Britain, although she does not believe that the objective reconstruction of actual relations is unfeasible.<sup>564</sup> There is no direct reference to Gell in Pettejohn's works, but there are great similarities: chance encounter could be translated into immediate relations, and the modern works' active and passive responses to the ancient works can be rephrased with Gell's concept of agents and patients. Indeed, these resemblances are more likely to have been made by chance owing to the Victorian art study and Gell's anthropology of art's common interest in reception

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<sup>563</sup> Elizabeth Pettejohn, *The Modernity of Ancient Sculpture: Greek Sculpture and Modern Art from Winckelmann to Picasso* (London, I.B Tauris, 2012), 36.

<sup>564</sup> Elizabeth Pettejohn, *Modern Painters, Old Masters: The Art of Imitation from The Pre-Raphaelites to the First World War* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2017), 12-15.

history, but they are still positive signs that now is the time for Gell's approach to be instrumentalised for the Victorian art study.

With regard to the study of military art history, associated with the study of military history, rather than of art history, my approach to battle paintings could offer useful implements in utilising the extensive knowledge of military history on which the field of study found. Although military art historians usually work as part of collective projects, concerning the social history of the army, and whose main concern is to speculate on the significance of specific wars and military incidents in a wider context, the abundant literal and artefactual materials they profess would provide a fertile ground for the focused study of individual artworks, if they were to consider Gell's concept of agency in their researches. In particular, the method of assessing the agency of eye-witness accounts demonstrated in this thesis will be performed more proficiently by military art historians. For instance, the necessary doubt over the myth of eye-witnessing is already present with the conflicting hope of elucidating the sources of the reportage pictures in Harrington's contributions to *Sudan: The Reconquest Reappraised* (1998) and *The Boer War: Direction, Experience and Image* (2000). Harrington is highly sceptical of the veracity of pictorial accounts of battles, as he views the close-up battle scenes made by the war artists "purely conjectural."<sup>565</sup> Yet he endeavours to specify the routes through which the first observations of the battle scenes

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<sup>565</sup> John Gooch, ed, *The Boer War: Direction, Experience and Image* (London: Routledge, 2014), 229.

are carried through to the final publications of images.<sup>566</sup> This conflict between doubt and thin hope in the explanation of the process of making war images can be negotiated when Gell's flexible notion of agent and patient is taken into account, together with my attention to the agentive role of working conditions. Furthermore, Gell's emphasis on the immediate social relations concerning specific artworks would help to elevate the status of individual paintings and sketches in army museums associated with military historians, for it regards the art objects as prerequisite materials for the association of social factors, not as subsidiaries to military history at large.

As my research of Victorian battle painting has been undertaken as part of Victorian art study, not military art study, and my residence has been moved from Great Britain to South Korea where the direct observation of the artefacts of the genre is impossible, my future projects will not be limited to this particular subject. Yet Gell's anthropology of art appears to be still useful in studying Victorian art in Seoul when his vigilance towards the meaning of art enables one to be critical towards the relations between texts and artworks. To the structuralists, the meaning of texts is often assumed to be permeated, like the air, in the society the artworks belong to; hence the deciphering of the imprints of general intellectual and emotional climates in artworks is possible. However, when texts are regarded as persons indexing specific actions, according to Gell's definition of personhood, the texts associable with Victorian artworks that are more accessible in South Korea than the actual

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<sup>566</sup> Edward M. Spiers, ed, *Sudan: The Reconquest Reappraised* (London: Frank Cass, 1998), 98-99.

artworks, could be handled as more vibrant materials than before, when their agentive roles to the artworks are elucidated.

As far as the reception of Victorian art history in South Korea is concerned, the use of Gell's method for the subject is expected to be valuable for art-historical researches by prioritising the essential relations about the artworks against the ever-growing contextual and interpretive meanings. In South Korea, the introduction of general social context is the basic approach to Western artworks, due to the public's relative unfamiliarity with the general history of Western Europe. Yet the general outline of Victorian art history in the country is even more unsubstantial because of the dominance of the Francocentric version of nineteenth-century art history which is the product of the popularity of Modernist art in the last century: presently, there are only two introductory books on the Pre-Raphaelites, Tim Barringer's *Reading the Pre-Raphaelites* (2012) and Timothy Hilton's *The Pre-Raphaelites* (1985), that are translated into Korean. Naturally the in-depth study of the subject is not possible from the translated materials alone: none of the biographies of the Victorian artists written before World War II have been translated into Korean, and the works concerning Victorian art criticism, such as those of John Ruskin and Walter Pater, are partially translated without any institutional supports. Contrary to the premature stage of Victorian art history in the country in terms of formal publication, Victorian artworks have advanced to make social relations with modern Koreans. For contemporary artists, such as Bae Joonsung (b.1967) and Lee Jeongwoong (b.1982), who freely adapt and exploit the art of Alama-Tadema, the contextual knowledge of the society to which the Victorian

artist belonged has not much importance for their trade.<sup>567</sup> The names of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Millais and Waterhouse are no longer shrouded in mystery to many Koreans, who are increasingly acquainted with Victorian artworks through diverse ways, such as visiting internet websites and blogs, or international travelling. This steady growth of the South Korean public's reception of Victorian art certainly calls for more art-historical surveys of Victorian art history in Korean. Gell's anthropology of art will be useful for this art-historical task, as it provides a convenient tool to select and map out the skeletal relations consequential to art objects, that are foundational materials for the art historian before he makes any kind of interpretations. The way in which the thesis highlighted the operative aspect of Victorian art in its immediate relations, in particular, is expected to be a useful example for Korean art historians of Victorian art who wish to challenge the interpretive writings on their subject by the Korean authors with intellectual backgrounds from philosophy and social history who are prone to associate varied contextual meanings with Victorian artworks without taking into account the social factors more genuine to the actual objects.

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<sup>567</sup> Elizabeth Prettejohn and Peter Trippi, ed., *Lawrence Alma-Tadema: At Home in Antiquity* (London: Prestel, 2017), 171.



## 7 Illustrations and Figures



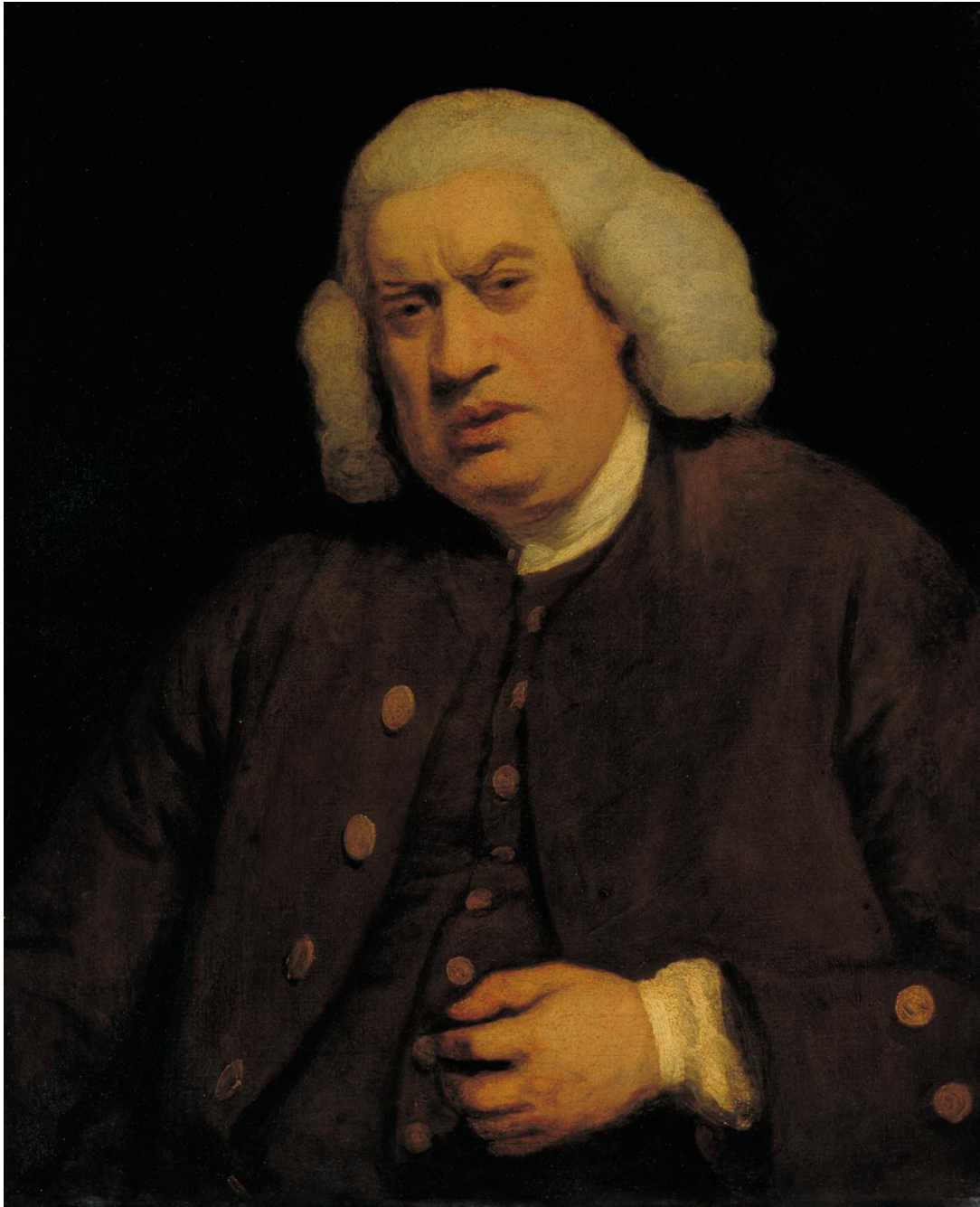
1. Elizabeth Thompson Butler. *The Remnants of an Army: Jellalabad, January 13th, 1842*, 1879. Tate Britain, London. Oil on canvas, 132.1 x 233.7 cm.



2. A reconstruction of the battle painting section of the *Artist and Empire* exhibition by replacing *The Remnants of an Army* to *Quatre Bras*.

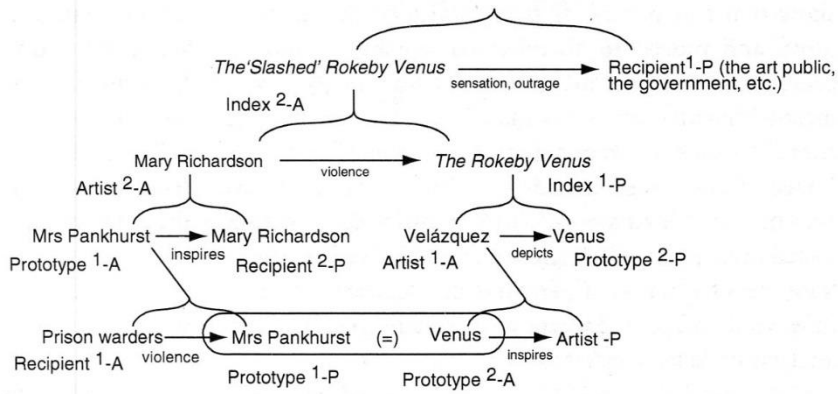
		AGENT			
		Artist	Index	Prototype	Recipient
P A T I E N T	Artist	Artist as source of creative act Artist as witness to act of creation	Material inherently dictates to artist the form it assumes	Prototype controls artist's action. appearance of prototype imitated by artist. Realistic art.	Recipient cause of artist's action (as patron)
	Index	Material stuff shaped by artist's agency and intention	Index as cause of itself: 'self-made' Index as a 'made thing'	Prototype dictates the form taken by index	Recipient the cause of the origination and form taken by the index
	Prototype	Appearance of prototype dictated by artist. Imaginative art	Image or actions of prototype controlled by means of index, a locus of power over prototype	Prototype as cause of index Prototype affected by index	Recipient has power over the prototype. Volt sorcery.
	Recipient	Recipient's response dictated by artist's skill, wit, magical powers, etc. Recipient captivated.	Index source of power over recipient. Recipient as 'spectator' submits to index.	Prototype has power over the recipient. Image of prototype used to control actions or recipient. Idolatry.	Recipient as patron Recipient as spectator

3. Gell, *Art and Agency*, table 1, "The art nexus."



4. Joshua Reynolds. *Doctor Samuel Johnson*, c.1772. Tate, London. Oil on canvas, 62.2 x 75.6cm.





5. Gell, *Art and Agency*, fig.4.4/4.



6. Elizabeth Butler. *The Roll Call*, 1874. Royal Collection. Oil on canvas, 93.3 x 183.5 cm.



7. Elizabeth Thompson Butler. A detail of plate 1.



8. Elizabeth Thompson Butler. A detail of plate 1.





9. Elizabeth Thompson Butler. A detail of plate 1.



10. Elizabeth Thompson Butler. A detail of plate 1.

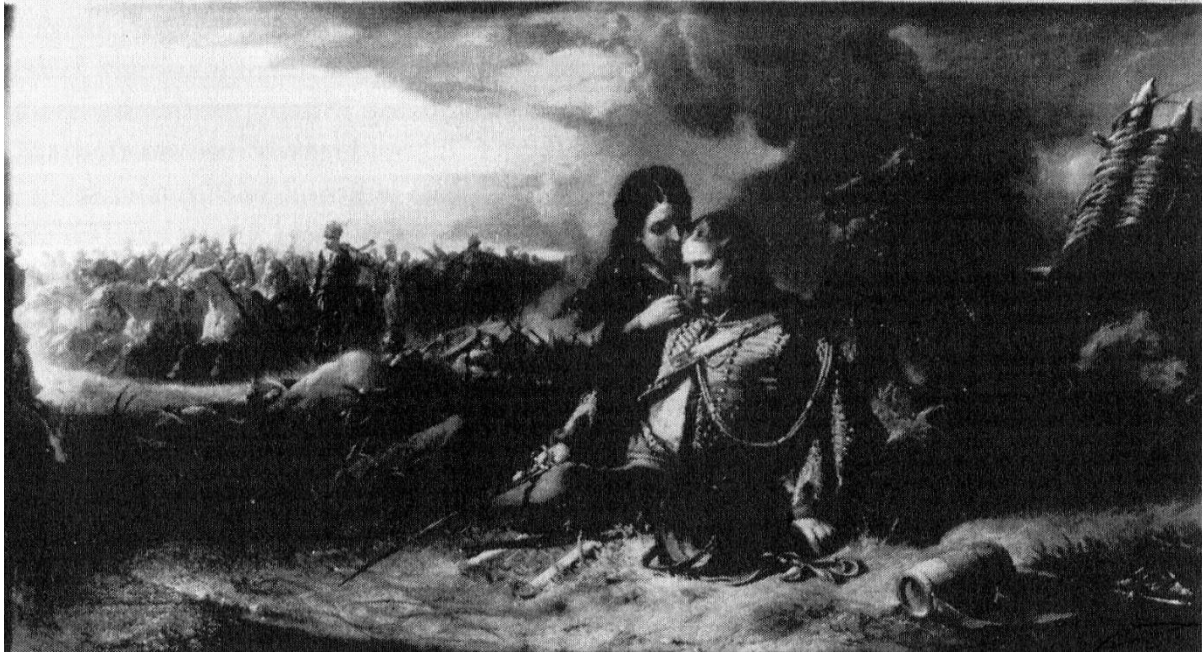


11. William Simpson. *The embarkation of sick persons at the harbor in Balaklava*, published April 24, 1855. Sterling Library, Yale University. Lithograph.





12. John Bell. *The Guards Crimean War Memorial*, 1861. St. James's, London.



13. Thomas Jones Barker. *Balaklava: One of the Six Hundred*, 1874. Private collection. Oil on canvas, 68.5 x 122cm.



14. Massim culture; Trobriand Islands. Splashboard (*Lagim*), 20th Century. Santa Ana, Bowers Museum. Wood, paint, and metal.





15. John Frederick Peto. *Old Time Letter Rack*, 1894. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Oil on canvas, 76.52 x 63.5 cm.

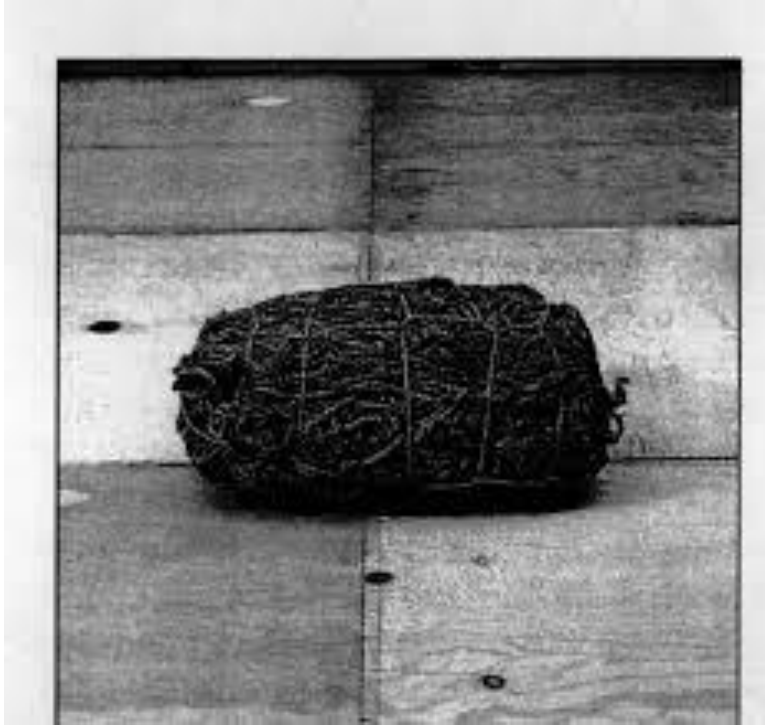


16. Andrea del Sarto. *The Last Supper*, c.1527. Convent of San Salvi, Florence. Fresco, 525 x 871 cm.



17. Pietro Perugino. *The Last Supper*, 1496. Convent of Fuligno, Florence. Fresco, 440 x 800 cm.

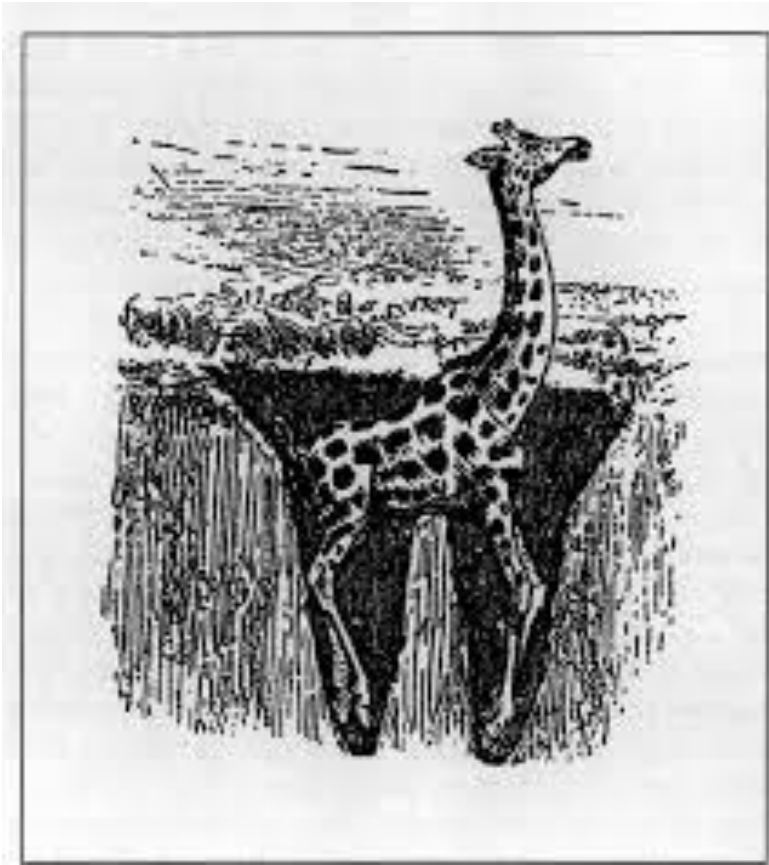




18. Zande hunting net, bound up for transport (central Africa) from "Vogel's Net" (1996).



19. Jackie Winsor. *Double Circle*, 1970-71. Paula Cooper Gallery, New York. Hemp, 53.34 cm x 137.16 cm.



20. Giraffe trap from "Vogel's Net."





21. Elizabeth Thompson Butler. *Scotland for Ever!*, 1881. Leeds City Art Gallery, Leeds. Oil on canvas, 101.5 x 193 cm.



22. Viktor Mazurovsky. *Fight near Telish 1877*, 1888. State Russian Museum, St Petersburg. Oil on canvas, size unknown.





23. Woodville, Richard Caton, "My brave Irish" (1901). *Prints, Drawings and Watercolors from the Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection*. Brown Digital Repository. Brown University Library. <https://repository.library.brown.edu/studio/item/bdr:245534/>



24. Richard Caton Woodville. 'Scientific Fanatics': General Oku's Troops Storming the Russian Entrenchments at Kin-Chau." *The Illustrated London News*, July 2, 1904.



25. Andrea del Sarto. A detail of 16.





26. George H. Thomas, *Her Majesty and HRH the Prince inspecting the Wounded Soldiers of the Grenadier Guards at Buckingham Palace, February 20<sup>th</sup>, 1855*, 1855. Published by Dominic Colnaghi, April 9, 1855. Lithograph, with watercolour, 33.4 x 47.8cm.



27. Elizabeth Thompson Butler. *Balaklava*, 1876. Manchester City Art Gallery, Manchester. Oil on canvas, 103.4x 187cm.



28. Elizabeth Thompson Butler. *The Colours, advance of Scots Guards at the Alma*, 1898. HQ Scots Guards, London, Oil on canvas, 98 x 155.6 cm.

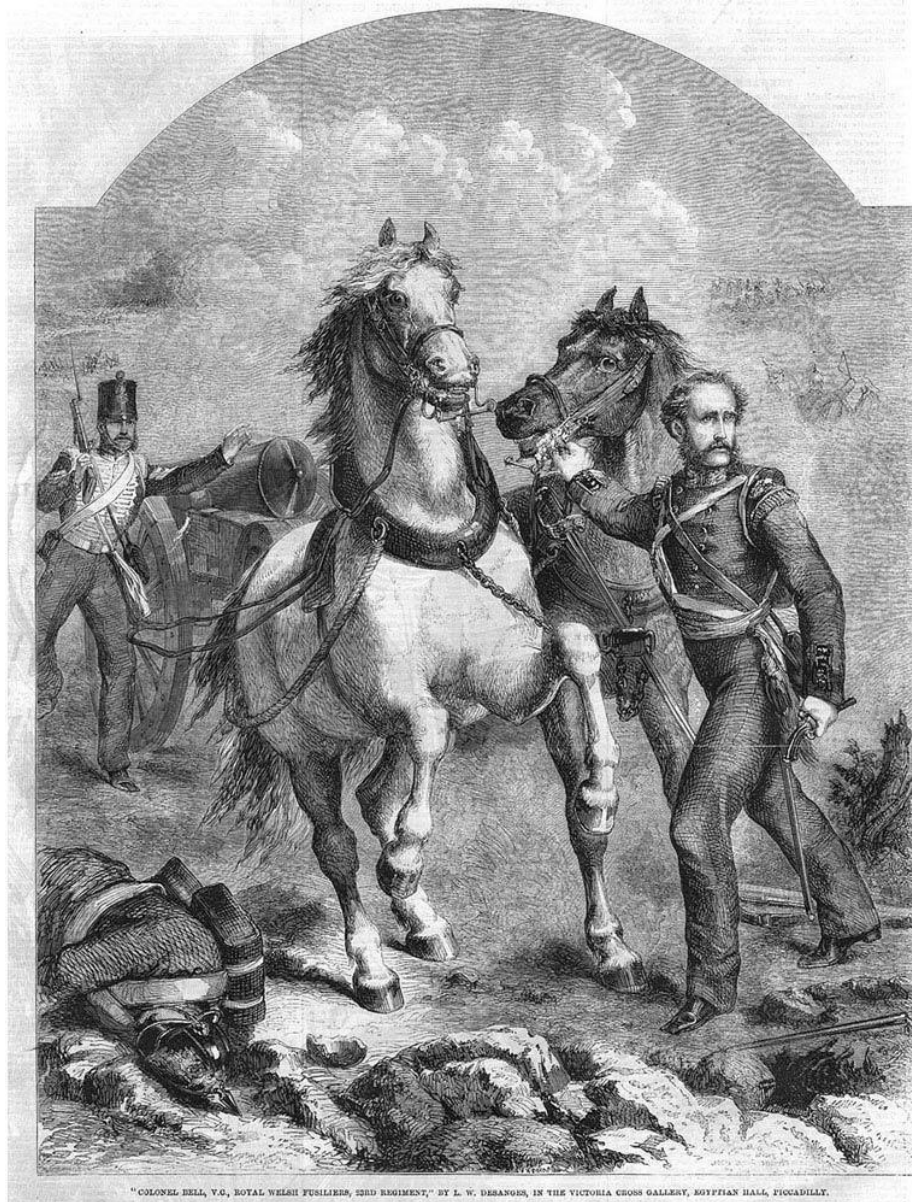




29. Louis William Desanges. *Sergeant Luke O'Connor Winning the Victoria Cross at the Battle of Alma*, 1859. Royal Welch Fusiliers Museum, Caernarfon Castle. Oil on canvas, 65 x 78cm.



30. After Louis William Desanges. *The Royal Garden Party at Chiswick*, c.1876-79. Autotype with hand-colouring, 38 x 87cm.



31. Louis William Desanges. "The Victoria Cross Gallery." *The Illustrated London News*. June 2, 1860.





32. Daniel Maclise. *The Meeting of Wellington and Blucher after the Battle of Waterloo*, 1861. Palace of Westminster, London. Water-glass painting, 368.3 x 1392cm.



33. Daniel Maclise. A detail of plate 32.



34. Francis Grant. *H.R.H. the Duke of Cambridge at the Battle of Alma leading the Guards up the hill in support of the Light Division.*, 1868. Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst. Oil on canvas, 213.2 x 185.4 cm.



35. Thomas Jones Barker. *The Charge of the Light Brigade*, 1855. Staff College, Camberley.  
Oil on canvas, 180 x 225 cm.



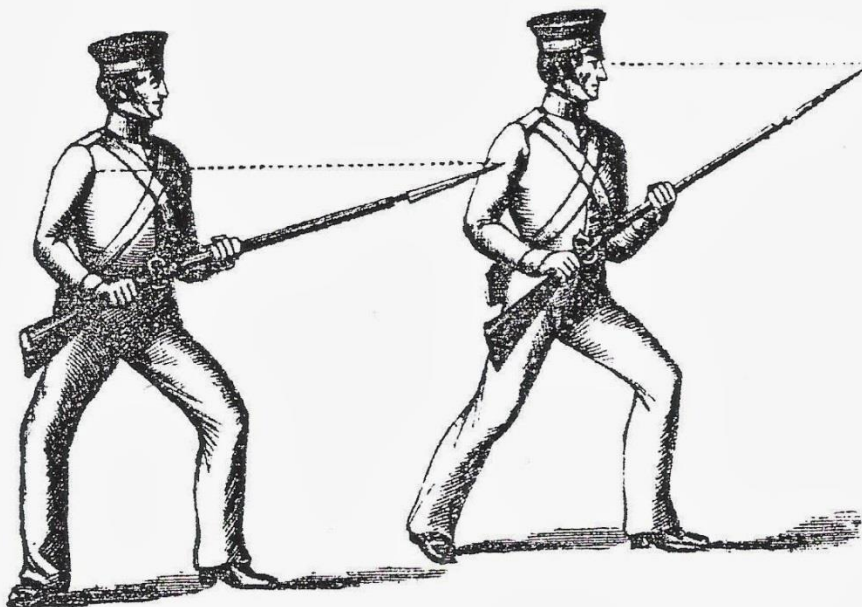


36. Louis William Desanges. (From left to right) *Captain C. J. S. Gough (1832–1912), 5th Bengal European Cavalry Winning the Victoria Cross at Khurkowdah, Indian Mutiny, 15 August 1857, circa 1860. Oil on canvas, 63.4 x 76.2 cm. Lieutenant William Alexander Kerr (1832–1919), 24th (Bombay) Regiment Native Infantry, Attached to the South Mahratta Irregular Horse, Winning the Victoria Cross, Indian Mutiny, July 1857, circa 1860. Oil on canvas, 91.5 x 71.1 cm. Private John McDermond (1832–1868), VC, 47th (The Lancashire) Regiment of Foot, Winning the Victoria Cross by Saving Colonel Haly, His Commanding Officer, at Inkerman, on 5 November 1854, circa 1860. Oil on canvas, 119.3 x 104.1 cm.*

PLATE I.

No. 1.

No. 2.



GUARD.—AGAINST INFANTRY.

GUARD.—AGAINST CAVALRY.

*No. 1 is the position of the Carte and Tierce Parries ; only in Carte the point of the Bayonet must be directed 6 inches towards the left ; in Tierce, 6 inches towards the right.*

37. From Richard F. Burton. *A Complete System of Bayonet Exercise*. London: William Crowes, 1853.



38. Alphonse De Neuville. *Saving the Queen's Colours*, c.1882. Cardiff Castle Museum, Cardiff. Oil on board, 68.5cm x48.7cm.



39. Louise William Desanges. *Lieutenant Frederick Robertson Aikman (1828–1888), 4th Regiment (Bengal) Native Infantry, Commanding 3rd Regiment (Sikh) Irregular Cavalry, Winning the Victoria Cross at Lucknow, Indian Mutiny, 1 March 1858, c. 1860*. National Army Museum, London. Oil on canvas, 106.6cm x 91.4cm.





40. Edmund Walker. *The Battle of Alma*, 1854. National Army Museum, London. Oil on canvas, 34.4 x49.5 cm.





41. *The Illustrated London News*. "The Battle of Alma," October 21, 1854.



42. Richard Caton Woodville. *Battle of Alma 1854*, 1896. National Army Museum, London. Colour photogravure. The original painting is in the Coldstream Museum, Coldstream. Oil on canvas, 88.9 x149.8 cm.





43. Robert Gibb. *Alma: Forward the 42<sup>nd</sup>*, 1888. Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum. Oil on canvas, 127cm x 218.4 cm.

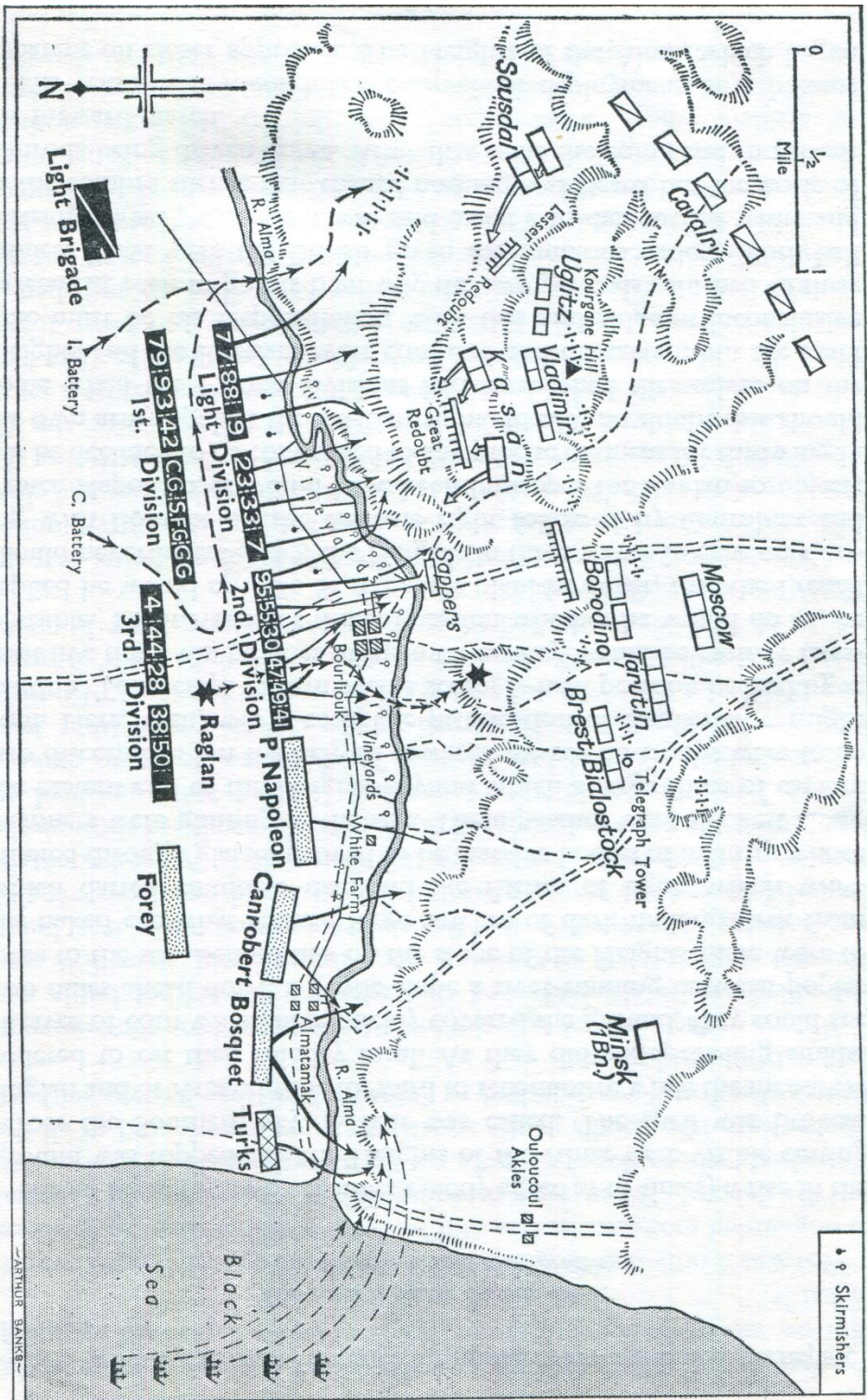


44. Louis William Desanges. A detail of plate 29.



45. Louis William Desanges. A detail of plate 29.





46. The plan of the Battle of the Alma from *Battles of the Crimean War* (1962) by W. Baring Pemberton.



47. Louis William Desanges. *Robert James Lindsay*, 1859. Wantage Town Council, Wantage, Oil on Canvas, 247 x 212 cm.





48. Antoine-Jean Gros. *Bonaparte at the Pont d'Arcole*, 1796. Palace of Versailles, Versailles.

Oil on canvas, 130 cm × 94 cm



49. Louis William Desanges. A detail of plate 29.





50. Harry Payne. *Lieutenant Robert J. Lindsay. 1st Bn. Scot Fusilier Guards. Alma. 20th September 1854*, from *The Heroes of the Victoria Cross. Twelve Reliefs Portraying the Various Deeds and Daring Valour Performed by Britain's Soldiers from the Crimean War to the Present Day* (London: Birn Brothers, 1887). Embossed coloured card, 15.24cm x 12.7 cm.



51. Anonymous artist. Player's Cigarettes. *R.L. Lindsay at the Alma, 1854*, circa 1910. Coloured card, 3.5cm x 6.6cm.



52. Elizabeth Thompson Butler. A detail of plate 28.





53. A still frame from Sergei Bondarchuk's *Waterloo* (1970).



54. Elizabeth Thompson Butler. A detail of plate 21.



55. Stanley Berkeley. *Gordons and Greys to the Front*, 1898. Private Collection, USA. Oil on canvas, 155 x 245 cm.



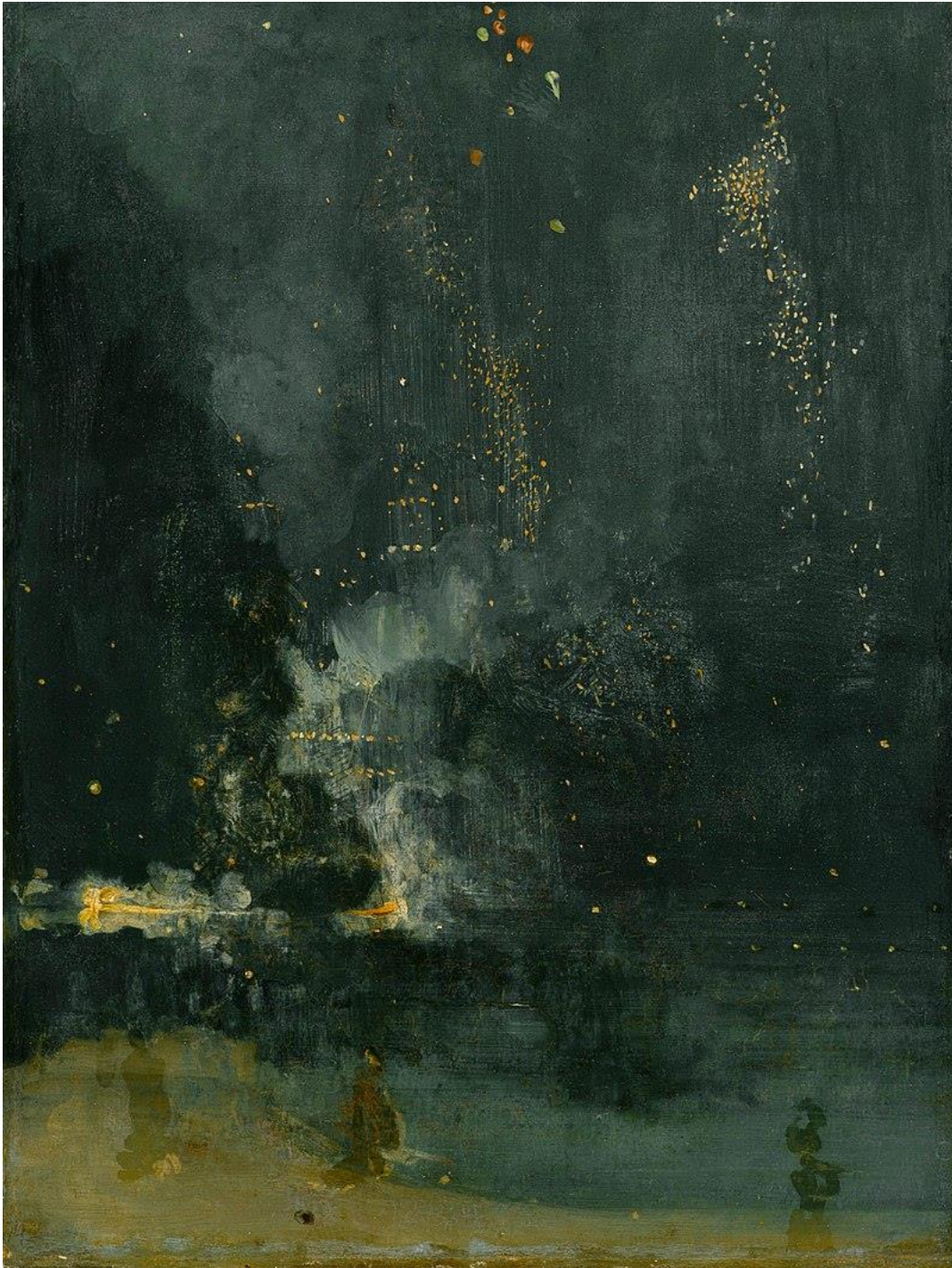


56. Elizabeth Thompson Butler. *The Defence of Rorke's Drift, January 22nd, 1879, 1880*. Royall Collection, UK. Oil on canvas, 120.2x 214 cm.



57. James McNeill Whistler. *Arrangement in Grey and Black, No. 2: Portrait of Thomas Carlyle*, 1872-1873. Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, Glasgow. Oil on canvas, 171 x 143.5 cm.



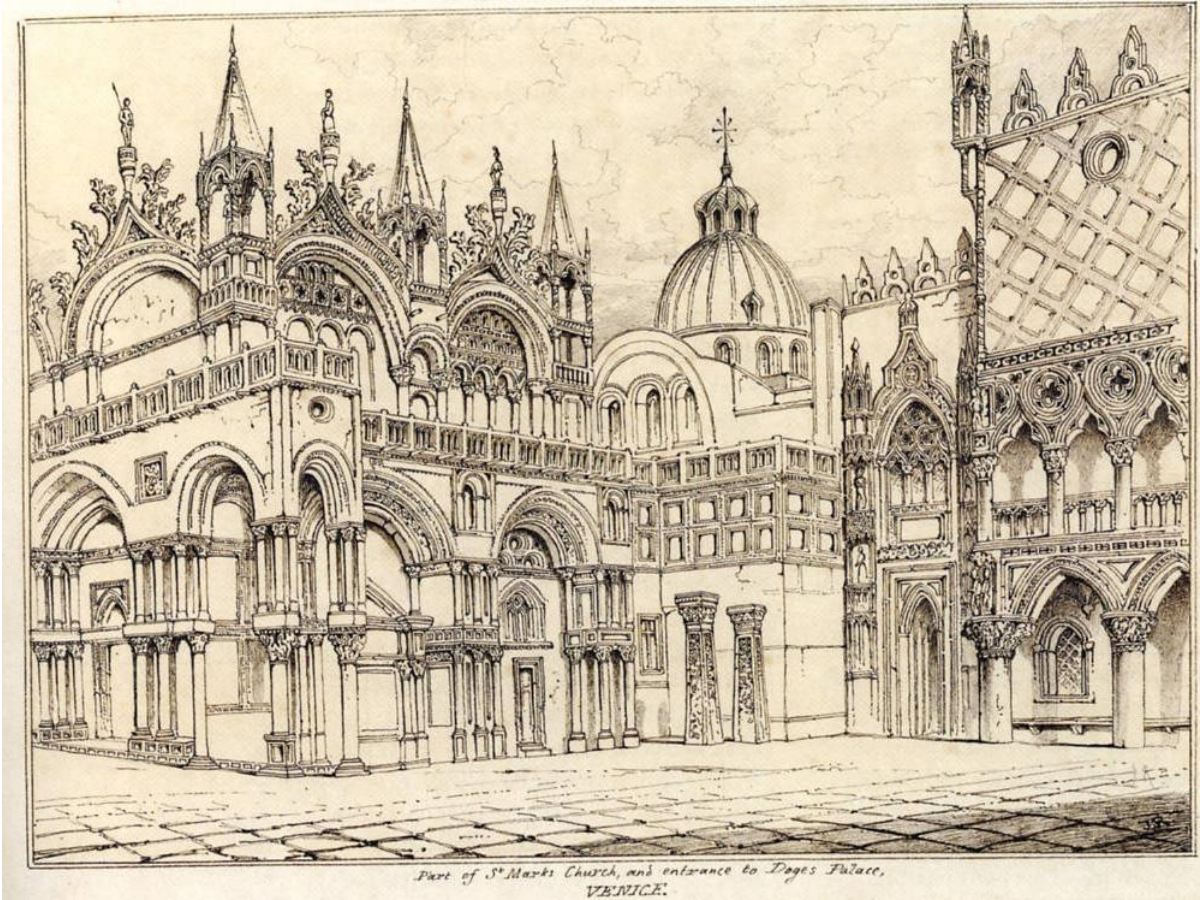


58. James McNeill Whistler. *Nocturne in Black and Gold*, 1872-77. Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit. Oil on canvas, 60.3 x 46.6 cm.





59. John Ruskin. *Part of St. Mark's Basilica, Venice: Sketch after Rain*, 1846. The Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. Watercolour and bodycolour and ink over graphite on grey wove paper, 42.1 x 28.6 cm.

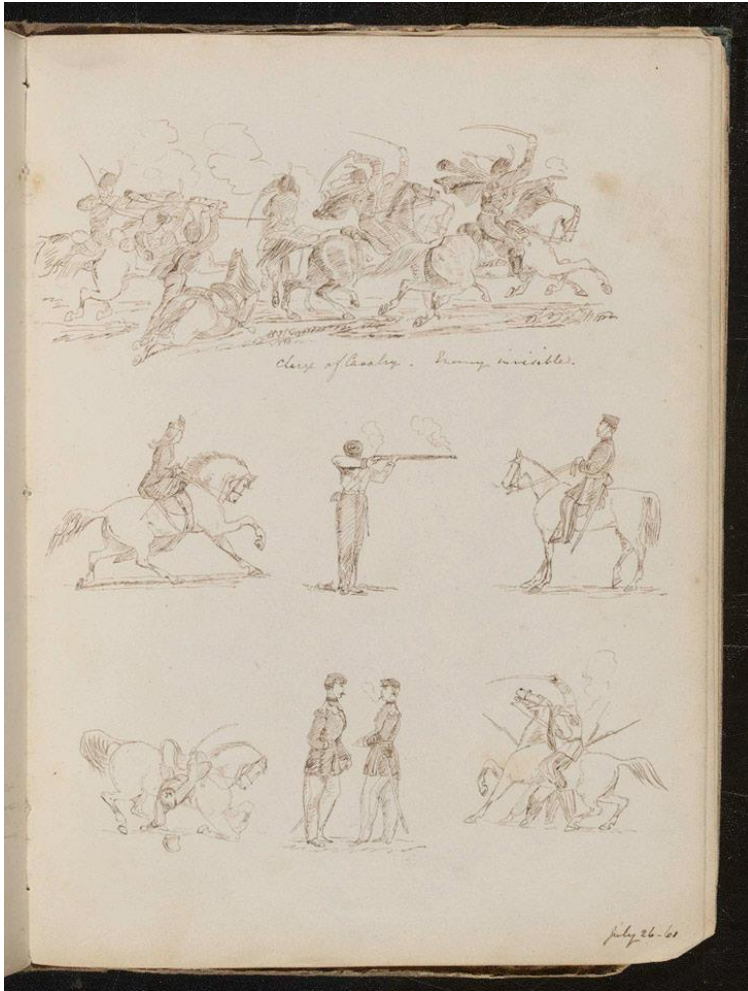


60. John Ruskin. *The Piazzetta and St Marks, Venice*, 1835. Ruskin Foundation, Lancaster. Graphite and black ink on white paper, 24cm x33cm.





61. James McNeill Whistler. *Nocturne in Blue and Gold- Old Battersea Bridge*, circa 1872-75. Oil on canvas, 68.3 x 51.2 cm.



62. Elizabeth Thompson Butler. *Seven studies of cavalry battles, soldiers and a woman riding*, c. 1860-61. National Army Museum, London. Pen and ink on paper.



63. Elizabeth Thompson Butler. *Private David Jenkins Kneeling to fire*, c.1879. National Army Museum, London, Pencil sketch on paper.





64. Elizabeth Thompson Butler. A detail of plate 56.



65. Théodore Géricault. *The 1821 Derby at Epsom*, 1821. The Louvre, Paris. Oil on canvas, 92 x 123 cm.



66. Ernest Meissonier. *Friedland, 1807, 1875*. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Oil on canvas, 135.9 x 242.6 cm.



67. Details from *The Roll Call and Campaign of France, 1814*.





68. Elizabeth Thompson Butler. Study for the composition of *Scotland for Ever!*, c.1879. Pen and ink on paper, 18.1 x 11.5 cm.



69. Édouard Manet. *The Races at Longchamp*, 1866. Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago. Oil on canvas, 84.5 x 43.9 cm.





70. Dante Gabriel Rossetti. *Bocca Baciata*, 1859. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Oil on canvas, 32.1 x 27 cm.



71. Richard Caton Woodville. *The Moonlight Charge at Kassassin*, 1884. Published by Fine Art Society in 1884.



72. Felice Beato. *Korean casualties, after the attack on Fort Sondolmok (Fort McKee), 1871.*  
Los Angeles. J. Paul Getty Museum Albumen silver print, 23.6 × 29.6 cm.





73. Elizabeth Thompson Butler. *Eviction*, 1890. University College Dublin, Dublin. Oil on canvas, 236 x 177.8cm.



74. *The Illustrated London News*, "With General Buller in Kerry: Resistance to Eviction." November 20, 1886.



75. James Tissot. *On the Thames, 1876*. The Hepworth Wakefield, Wakefield. Oil on canvas, 74.8 x 118 cm.





76. Giovanni Bellini. *Sir Francis in Ecstasy*, circa 1480. Frick Collection, New York. Oil on panel, 124.6 x 142 cm.



77. Richard Caton Woodville and Melton Prior. *The Zulu War-Battle of Ulundi*, 1879. Special supplement for *The Illustrated London News*, September 6, 1879.





78. Based on a sketch of Melton Prior. The Zulu War: *The Battle of Ulundi: Inside Square.* *The Illustrated London News*, August 23, 1879.

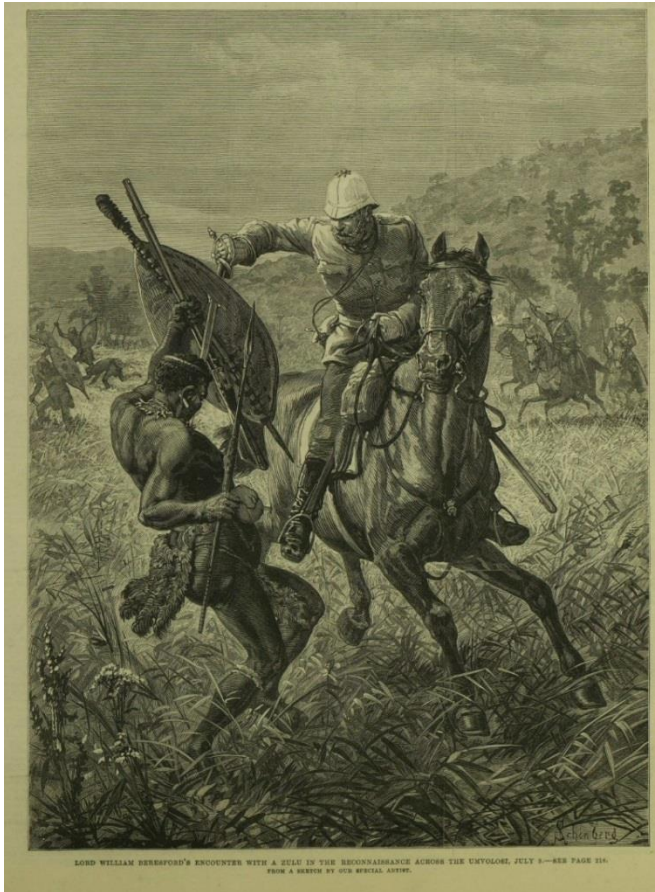




79. Based on a sketch of Nathaniel Newnham-Davis. *The Zulu War: The Investiture of Major Chard, RE, with the Victoria Cross. The Illustrated London News, September 6, 1879.*



80. Based on a sketch of Dr. Doyle Glanville. *The Zulu War: Sir Garnet Wolseley Presenting the Victoria Cross to Major Chard, R.E. at the Inkwenke Camp. The Graphic, September 6, 1879.*



81. Johann Nepomuk Schönberg and Melton Prior. *Lord William Beresford's Encounter with a Zulu in the Reconnaissance across the Umvolosi, July 3.* *The Illustrated London News*, September 6, 1879.



82. Eugene Delacroix. *The Lion Hunt*, 1855. National Museum, Stockholm. Oil on canvas, 57 x 74cm.



83. Elizabeth Thompson Butler. *Patrick, Au Revoir!*, 1914. Private collection. Watercolour over pencil, 15cm x 10.2cm.





84. Elizabeth Thompson Butler. *A 'V. C.' of the Seaforths*, 1916. Russell-Cotes Art Gallery & Museum, Bournemouth. Watercolour on paper, 58 x 43.5cm.



85. Elizabeth Thompson Butler. A *"Lament" in the Desert*, 1925. Private collection. Oil on canvas, 76 x 62.5 cm



86. Elizabeth Thompson Butler. "*The Black Watch*" on Aubers Ridge, May 9<sup>th</sup>, 1915, circa 1915-1917. Whereabouts unknown. Possibly watercolour, size unknown.





87. Elizabeth Thompson Butler. *The Avengers*, circa 1915-1917. Whereabouts unknown. Possibly watercolour, size unknown.

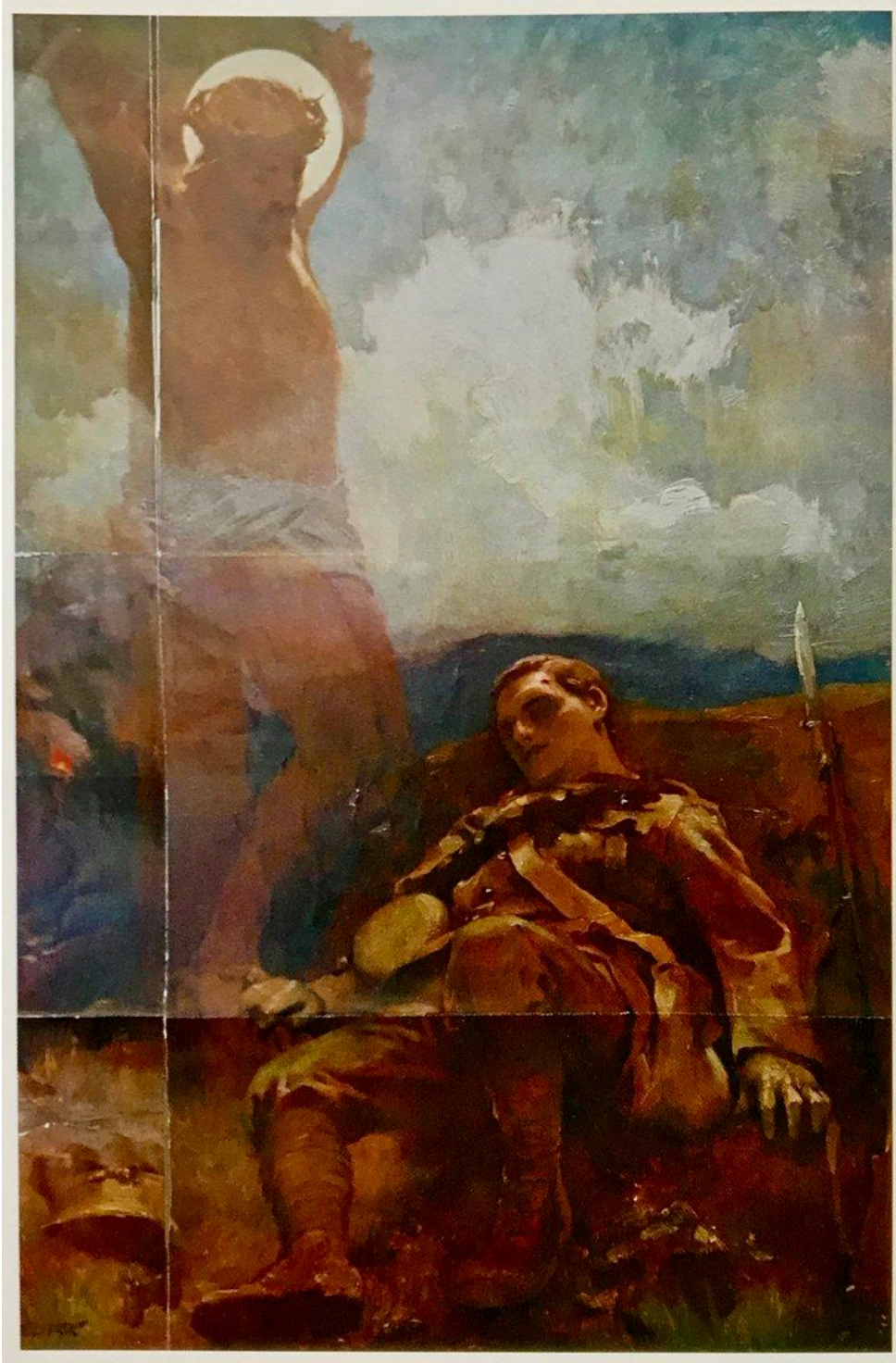




88. Elizabeth Thompson Butler. *The Dorset Yeoman at Agagia, 26<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1916*, 1917. The Keep Military Museum, Dorchester. Oil on canvas, 97.8 x 185cm.



89. Elizabeth Thompson Butler. *"Eyes Right!"* 1916. Private Collection. Watercolour over pencil, 41x 58cm.



90. James Clark. *The Great Sacrifice*, 1914. Lithograph, 60.5 x 40 cm. Supplement for *The Graphic* 23 November 1914.





91. Elizabeth Thompson Butler. *"In the Retreat from Mons: the Royal Horse Guards,"*1927. Royal Hospital, London. Oil on canvas, 61 x 96.5 cm.



92. Elizabeth Thompson Butler. *The Guides*, circa 1917-1919. Whereabouts unknown. Possibly watercolour, size unknown.



93. William Orpen. *A Tank*, 1917. Imperial War Museum, London. Charcoal, chalk and watercolour on paper, 59 x 45cm.

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<i>Bow Bells</i>	<i>Living Age</i>	<i>Windsor Magazine</i>
<i>Chicago Daily Tribune</i>	<i>Lotus Magazine</i>	<i>Illustrated Naval and Military Magazine</i>
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