

JOHN MARTIN (1789-1854)
AND THE MECHANICS OF MAKING ART IN A COMMERCIAL NATION

by

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Abstract

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Adviser: Professor Patricia Mainardi

This dissertation reinterprets the career of the English artist, John Martin (1789-1854). Challenging the popular characterization of him as an apocalyptic visionary opposed to modern commercial and industrial society, this study argues that Martin, in fact, was the only major artist of his time to speak out in favor of the modern science of political economy and its core concepts of competitive individualism, self-interest, and technological innovation. While many of Martin's artist contemporaries incessantly – and futilely – petitioned the government for financial assistance for “historical painting” on the grounds that state protection was necessary if the highest category of painting (according to the civic humanist theory of art) was ever going to flourish in commercial Britain, Martin argued that “historic painting” was “dead as an art,” and continually adapted his style, media, and subject matter to meet the demands of the art market. This dissertation contends that once we consider Martin's career from the perspective of someone who believed adamantly in modern political economy, his status in the history of British art as a Romantic visionary who believed that modern commercial society was immoral and corrupt will fall away.

My first chapter examines attempts by the Royal Academy between 1800 and 1815 to secure government funding for historical paintings by Academicians. It then goes on to discuss Martin's involvement in establishing the rival Society of British Artists in the interest of free competition among private exhibiting societies. The second chapter examines how Martin and others who had founded the SBA testified before a select committee of the House of Commons that the Academy was attempting to restrain free trade and extinguish competition by seeking a monopoly on public funds. The third chapter interprets Martin's Thames and metropolis improvement plans as celebrating, not condemning, the spread of capitalism, industrialization, and urbanization. The fourth chapter provides a detailed examination of John Ruskin's statements about Martin over a forty-five year period, demonstrating how Ruskin's contempt for capitalism – and those who supported it – informed his criticisms of Martin's work. The last chapter considers the effect that Martin's belief in laissez-faire capitalism had on his work in general and on his painting in particular.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	vi
List of Illustrations	x
Introduction	1
Chapter 1: “The Visionary Purposes of Vain Enthusiasts”: Martin and the Case for (and against) Government Support for the Arts in Early Nineteenth-Century Britain	22
Chapter 2: “Free Trade in Art, as in Commerce”: Martin and the 1835-36 Select Committee on Arts and Manufactures	77
Chapter 3: “This Magnificent National Undertaking”: Martin’s Thames and Metropolis Improvement Plans	133
Chapter 4: Ruskin vs. Martin: The Case against Capitalist Art	174
Chapter 5: “A Disposition to Render Art Subservient to Material Interests”: Martin as Painter (and Printmaker)	215
Conclusion	275
Bibliography	281
Illustrations	318

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure

1. John Martin, *The Fall of Babylon*, 1819, oil on canvas, 155 x 244 cm, private collection.
2. Benjamin West, *Genius Calling Forth the Fine Arts to Adorn Manufactures and Commerce*, 1789, oil on paper mounted on canvas, 49.2 x 62.5 cm, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco.
3. John Martin, *Sadak in Search of the Waters of Oblivion*, 1812, oil on canvas, 183.2 x 131.1 cm, Saint Louis Art Museum.
4. John Martin, *Joshua Commanding the Sun to Stand Still upon Gibeon*, 1816, oil on canvas, 150 x 231 cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.
5. John Martin, *Belshazzar's Feast*, 1820, oil on canvas, 162 x 253 cm, private collection.
6. John Martin, *The Seventh Plague of Egypt*, 1823, oil on canvas, 144.1 x 214 cm, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.
7. Thomas Kearnan, *Long Room, [National] Gallery of Practical Science, Adelaide Street, Strand*, c. 1840. Science Museum, London.
8. John Martin, *Deluge*, 1834, oil on canvas, 168.5 x 258.6 cm, Yale Center for British Art, New Haven.
9. Main Hall, The Polytechnic Institution, Regent Street, frontispiece to *The Year-Book of Facts in Science and Art*, 1841.
10. Interior of the Royal Panopticon of Science and Art, Leicester Square, 1854.
11. Newcastle Polytechnic Exhibition, Picture Gallery, 1848.
12. Frontispiece, illustrating a proposed water recreation area, to John Martin, *Mr. John Martin's Plan for Supplying with Pure Water, and Materially Beautifying the Western End of the Metropolis* (London: Plummer and Brewis, 1828). London Metropolitan Archives.
13. Plate A, "representing the proposed new Aqueduct," in John Martin, *Mr. John Martin's Plan for Supplying with Pure Water, and Materially Beautifying the Western End of the Metropolis* (London: Plummer and Brewis, 1828). London Metropolitan Archives.
14. Plate B, "design for a Fence Filterer, proposed to be placed at the mouth of the Aqueduct" in John Martin, *Mr. John Martin's Plan for Supplying with Pure Water, and*

- Materially Beautifying the Western End of the Metropolis* (London: Plummer and Brewis, 1828). London Metropolitan Archives.
15. Plate C, “a Sketch of a proposed method for raising water to supply those parts of the metropolis situated above the level of the reservoir,” in John Martin, *Mr. John Martin’s Plan for Supplying with Pure Water, and Materially Beautifying the Western End of the Metropolis* (London: Plummer and Brewis, 1828). London Metropolitan Archives.
 16. Plate D, “a proposition for separating the soil of the sewers from the water previous to its entering the river, securing the water of the Thames against the admission of the soil, and rendering that soil available and highly valuable as manure,” from John Martin, *Mr. John Martin’s Plan for Supplying with Pure Water, and Materially Beautifying the Western End of the Metropolis* (London: Plummer and Brewis, 1828). London Metropolitan Archives.
 17. “Explanatory Plate of the Following Plan for Improving the Air and Water of London, by John Martin, April 1832,” in John Martin, *A Plan for Improving the Air and Water of the Metropolis, by Preventing the Sewage Being Conveyed into the Thames, Thereby Preserving Not Only the Purity of the Air But the Purity of the Water, and Likewise the Manure for Agricultural Purposes* (London: Published for the Author by Plummer and Brewis, 1833). London Metropolitan Archives.
 18. John Constable, *Branch Hill Pond, Hampstead Heath*, oil on canvas, 62 x 78.1 cm, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond.
 19. Plate 2 (detail), “A tank, which should be in every field, and made so large as to hold a sufficiency of water for the use of the cattle in the dry season,” in John Martin, *Plan [for Permanent Filter] Inland Drainage* (London: Published for the author, 1832). London Metropolitan Archives.
 20. “Mr. John Martin's Plan for Supplying with Pure Water and Materially Beautifying the Western End of the Metropolis,” in John Martin, *A Plan for Abundantly Supplying the Metropolis with Pure Water from the River Coln[e], Forming at the Same Time a Railway, for [the] Rapid, Economical, and Safe Transit of Passengers and Goods between London and Denham, a Distance of Fifteen Miles in the Direction of the Projected Great Western Railroads; Confirming the Two Grand Objects, and Requiring for Both of Them neither the Occupation of More Land, nor Any Greater Expense in the Formation of Levels or Embankments than Would Be Separately Required for Either One* (London: by the author, 1834). Royal Institute of British Architects, London.
 21. “Plan Combining Aqueduct and Railway, by John Martin, April 3^d, 1834,” in John Martin, *A Plan for Abundantly Supplying the Metropolis with Pure Water from the River Coln[e], Forming at the Same Time a Railway, for [the] Rapid, Economical, and Safe Transit of Passengers and Goods between London and Denham, a Distance of Fifteen Miles in the Direction of the Projected Great Western Railroads; Confirming the Two Grand Objects, and Requiring for Both of Them neither the Occupation of More Land,*

nor Any Greater Expense in the Formation of Levels or Embankments than Would Be Separately Required for Either One (London: by the author, 1834). Royal Institute of British Architects, London.

22. James McNeill Whistler, *Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket*, 1875, oil on wood, 60.2 x 46.7 cm, Detroit Institute of Arts.
23. John Martin, *Canute the Great Rebuking His Courtiers*, 1842, watercolor and pencil on paper, 31.5 x 82 cm, Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle.
24. Joseph Mallord William Turner, *Slave Ship (Slavers Throwing Overboard the Dead and Dying, Typhoon Coming On)*, 1840, oil on canvas, 90.8 cm x 122.6 cm, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.
25. John Martin, *Christ Stilleth the Tempest*, 1852, oil on paper mounted on board, 46 x 62 cm, York Art Gallery.
26. Joseph Mallord William Turner, *The Goddess of Discord Choosing the Apple of Contention in the Garden of the Hesperides*, exhibited 1806, oil on canvas, 155.3 x 218.4 cm, Tate, London.
27. John Martin, *Destruction of Pompeii and Herculaneum*, 1822, oil on canvas, 162.6 x 251.5 cm, Tate, London. Damaged 1928.
28. John Martin, *Adam and Eve Entertaining the Angel Raphael*, 1823, oil on canvas, 131 x 198.5 cm, Kirkcaldy Museum and Art Gallery.
29. J. T. Willmore, after John Martin, *The Tournament*, 1830, 7.3 x 10.9 cm, steel engraving, plate 11 in the *Literary Souvenir*, 1830.
30. C. Rolls, after Gilbert Stuart Newton, *The Importunate Author*, 1836, steel engraving, 9.9 x 8 cm, plate 21 from *Cabinet of Modern Art, and Literary Souvenir*, 1836.
31. John Martin, Key to *Belshazzar's Feast*, 1821. National Art Library, Victoria and Albert Museum.
32. Key to John Singleton Copley, *The Death of Major Peirson, 6 January 1781*. Houghton Library, Harvard University.
33. John Martin, Key to *The Destruction of Pompeii and Herculaneum*, 1822. New York Public Library.
34. Titian, *Bacchus and Ariadne*, 1520-23, oil on canvas, 176.5 x 191 cm, National Gallery, London.

35. John Martin, *The Coronation of Queen Victoria*, 1839, oil on canvas, 238.1 x 185.4 cm, Tate, London.
36. John Martin, *Crucifixion*, 1834, mezzotint with etching, 46.7 x 72.4 cm, Michael J. Campbell Collection.
37. John Martin, *Key to M^r. J. Martin's Print of the Crucifixion*, 1834. Royal Institute of British Architects, London.
38. John Martin, *Plan of Jerusalem*, 1834. Royal Institute of British Architects, London.
39. John Martin, *Valley of the Tyne, My Native Country, from near Henshaw*, 1842, watercolor and gouache with gum arabic, over graphite, 26.6cm x 67.5cm, Cleveland Museum of Art.
40. John Martin, *London from Primrose Hill*, 1833, watercolor over graphite, 16.5 x 22.8 cm, Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge, Mass.
41. John Martin, *View on the River Wye, near Chepstow*, 1844, watercolor, gouache, and touches of oil paint (?) over graphite, with scraping out, heightened with varnish and/or gum Arabic, 29.9 x 71.8 cm, National Gallery of Canada.
42. John Martin, *The Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah*, 1852, oil on canvas, 212.3 x 136.3 cm, Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle.
43. John Martin, *The Bard*, 1817, oil on canvas, 157 x 215.5 cm, Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle.
44. John Martin, *The Destruction of Tyre*, 1840, oil on canvas, 83.8 x 109.5 cm, Toledo Museum of Art.
45. John Martin, *Pandemonium*, 1841, oil on canvas, 123 x 184 cm, Louvre.
46. John Martin, *The Great Day of His Wrath*, 1851-53, oil on canvas, 196.5 x 303.2 cm, Tate, London.
47. John Martin, *The Assuaging of the Waters* (detail, showing frame), 1840, oil on canvas, 143.5 x 219.1 cm, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco.
48. John Martin, *The Assuaging of the Waters*, 1840, oil on canvas, 143.5 x 219.1 cm, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco.
49. John Martin, *Pandemonium* (showing frame), 1841, oil on canvas, 123 x 184 cm, Louvre.
50. John Martin, Sketch for a frame for *The Celestial City and River of Bliss*, 1841, private collection.

51. John Martin, *The Celestial City and River of Bliss*, 1841, 123.2 x 194.3 cm, oil on canvas, private collection.
52. Page with detail “from Large Plate of Fall of Babylon” from *Martin’s Album* of eighty-four cuttings from proof impressions of his mezzotints, with three engravings by H. Le Keux, W. F. Starling and W. R. Smith. Mounted in a volume compiled the artist, full bound in tooled leather. Volume size: 43 x 33 cm. Victoria and Albert Museum.
53. John Martin, *The Fall of Babylon*, 1831, mezzotint with etching, 46.4 x 71.9 cm, British Museum.
54. Page with collage made “from the Deluge” from *Martin’s Album* of eighty-four cuttings from proof impressions of his mezzotints, with three engravings by H. Le Keux, W. F. Starling and W. R. Smith. Mounted in a volume compiled the artist, full bound in tooled leather. Volume size: 43 x 33 cm. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
55. Page with collage made “from the Deluge” from *Martin’s Album* of eighty-four cuttings from proof impressions of his mezzotints, with three engravings by H. Le Keux, W. F. Starling and W. R. Smith. Mounted in a volume compiled the artist, full bound in tooled leather. Volume size: 43 x 33 cm. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
56. John Martin, *The Deluge*, 1828, mezzotint with etching, 47.6 x 71.4 cm, British Museum, London.
57. John Martin, sketchbook, leaf 7 verso, graphite, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.
58. Cesare Cesariano, *Vitruvian Man*, from Vitruvius, *Di Lucio Vitruvio Pollione de architectura libri dece*. Translated by Cesare Cesariano (Como: Gottardo de Ponte, 1521).
59. Key to the engraving of *The Fall of Babylon*.
60. Benjamin Robert Haydon, *Curtius Leaping into the Gulf*, 1842, oil on canvas, 305 x 218 cm, Royal Albert Memorial Museum and Art Gallery, Exeter.
61. John Martin, *Marcus Curtius*, 1827, sepia wash with pencil, 17.5 x 11.5 cm, Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle.
62. Henry Le Keux, after John Martin, *Marcus Curtius*, 1828, 6.9 x 10.2 cm, steel engraving, frontispiece to the *Forget Me Not* for 1829.

INTRODUCTION

When John Martin (1789-1854) exhibited his most ambitious picture to date, *The Fall of Babylon* (1819, private collection, fig. 1), at London's British Institution, the art critic for the *New Monthly Magazine* hailed it as "one of the most astonishing productions of modern art. . . . This artist's pencil speaks a language as original as his conceptions are dauntless and diversified."¹ Another critic for the *Literary Gazette* declared the painting to be "a picture of the highest genius," even though this writer himself admitted that he had struggled to see the painting through the crowd surrounding it.²

Martin immediately sold the canvas for 400 guineas – then the highest price he had ever received for a painting and a princely sum for an artist of his time. Its sale caused Martin, years later, to remark that it helped pay off his debts and have a profit left over besides. Thus, by 1819, at the age of twenty-nine, Martin – married and with children – had risen from humble beginnings in Haydon Bridge, Northumberland, to become one of nineteenth-century Britain's most famous and highest paid painters; and yet, he had accomplished this with scant training as a painter and without membership in the oldest and most prestigious artist-run society in London, the Royal Academy of Arts.

Regarding his art training, at the age of fourteen Martin was apprenticed to a Newcastle coach decorator but ran away one year into the apprenticeship after a dispute with his master over an increase in pay. Beginning in 1804, Martin received some instruction in drawing and painting from an Italian artist resident in Newcastle by the name of Boniface Musso. However, in 1806, Martin set out for London, leaving behind a sister, two out of three brothers (all with

¹ "Fine Arts: British Gallery," *New Monthly Magazine* 11 (March 1, 1819), 171.

² "The Fine Arts: The British Institution," *Literary Gazette*, no. 108 (February 13, 1819), 105.

varying degrees of eccentricity and derangement), a jack-of-all-trades father, and a strict and god-fearing mother.³ Martin's "first resolve on leaving" his parents, he said, was "never more to receive that pecuniary assistance which I knew could not be spared."⁴ In London, Martin worked initially as a glass and china painter and sold landscape sketches made from his imagination to whoever would buy them: "Many a day, after fruitless efforts to dispose of my designs, have I returned to gaze upon them and feed myself with hopes; for, under all circumstances, I entertained the belief that I should some day be rich and independent. I never mistrusted myself or despaired of better fortune . . . my hope of success buoying me up, even when I was starving."⁵

Married in 1809 and living hand to mouth, he submitted his first work in 1811 to the Royal Academy, where it was shown at that year's annual exhibition. Upon quitting the glass-painting trade for good in 1812, he decided to seek fame and fortune as an oil painter, submitting his principal canvases to the Royal Academy. From 1813, Martin also began sending works to the British Institution.

After disputing with the Academy over damage to one of his canvases and the placement of his pictures in general, Martin stopped exhibiting his principal paintings first at the Academy's annual exhibition, sending his major works instead to the British Institution. The first painting to be shown at the BI without first being shown at the RA was the above-mentioned *The Fall of Babylon*.

³ His brother, Jonathan, was already away in the Royal Navy.

⁴ *Athenaeum* (June 14, 1834), 459.

⁵ Diaries of Ralph Thomas, quoted in Mary Pendered, *John Martin, Painter: His Life and Times* (London: Hurst & Blackett, 1923), 51. Pendered was the last person to have possession of Thomas's manuscript diaries. The diaries have been lost since the publication of her book in 1923, and so must be cited from Pendered, *John Martin*, which provides often incomplete references.

Two years before Martin exhibited this picture, his seriously unstable brother – the unfortunately similarly-named Jonathan - threatened to assassinate the bishop of Oxford and was thrown in a madhouse. In 1829, Jonathan burned down York Minster, claiming a vision had told him to do so. Confined for the rest of his life, he made drawings in his cell illustrating apocalyptic visions.

Many scholars have frequently assumed that John’s own apocalyptic illustrations and paintings like *The Fall of Babylon* are somehow akin to Jonathan’s formally awkward works depicting god’s vengeful wrath – proof that, as the saying goes, “genius is akin to madness.” For example, John is often still presented by art historians as “Mad Martin”: the religious fanatic who, like his brother Jonathan, deplored the religious and moral decay of the day and predicted in his work the fall of a modern Babylon - London.⁶ Similarly, John’s twenty-plus years of failed plans to rid the Thames of sewage and pollution have long been viewed as visionary attempts by a religious zealot (with no education as an engineer) to physically and morally “clean up” the New Babylon and transform it into the New Jerusalem. Therefore, Martin is usually treated in modern scholarship as an autodidact, who turned to art and civil engineering projects as a way – like Jonathan – to render his mystical visions in visible form.

Yet such interpretations of John Martin as condemning modern commercial society on religious grounds require substantial modification, if not outright repudiation, when one understands the economic context in which he worked. During the eighteenth century, Britain became rapidly industrialized. By the end of it, Adam Smith’s doctrine of laissez-faire, as advocated in his *Wealth of Nations* (1776), was the prevailing philosophy. Nowhere was this more obvious than in the area of the arts, where the government advocated a strictly “let-alone”

⁶ See, for instance, Robert Flynn Johnson, *Judging by Appearance: Master Drawings from the Collection of Joseph and Deborah Goldyne*, exh. cat. (San Francisco: Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, 2006), 148.

policy. For instance, the Royal Academy of Arts, founded in London in 1768, was not and never has been a government agency; it relied on a shilling admission charge to its annual exhibition for its income. The variety of means of support available to French Academicians, who were the major recipients of government largesse (government salaries, a steady stream of government commissions, and a system of government purchases), were simply not available to their British counterparts. As a result, Academicians and independent artists alike in Britain found themselves in the same boat and were forced to operate like businessmen in the free-for-all of the art market. But while British Academicians sought new ways of government support to rescue history painting and themselves from the vicissitudes of the marketplace, Martin - as will be argued in this dissertation - fully grasped that history painting was dead as an art in a commercial nation; moreover, he sought to capitalize on its demise.

In *The Political Theory of Painting from Reynolds to Hazlitt: "The Body of the Public,"* John Barrell argued that the civic humanist theory of art enunciated by Anthony Ashley Cooper, 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury, which extolled history painting as the highest form of art because it promoted public virtue, was the dominant theory of the visual arts in England during the early decades of the eighteenth century. However, it was progressively attenuated over the course of the century "because this discourse could not contemplate the growth of commerce, and of capitalism, except as evidence of historical decline, and . . . because it found its models of social organization and civic virtue among small republican city-states, it could not be used to describe a complex, modern, commercial society."⁷ As David Solkin has also said in *Painting for Money: The Visual Arts and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century England*, by mid-century civic humanism had become vitiated by a burgeoning market economy and had mutated into what J.

⁷ John Barrell, *The Political Theory of Painting from Reynolds to Hazlitt: "The Body of the Public"* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986), 339.

G. A. Pocock has termed “commercial humanism,” or a watered-down version designed to accommodate it to the rising prominence of the bourgeoisie, by emphasizing a society bound together by mutual sympathy rather than by civic virtue.⁸

However, as both Barrell and Solkin have argued, the founding of the Royal Academy of Arts in 1768 was a revanchist attempt to restore the traditional civic humanist theory of painting. Yet the version articulated by the RA’s first president, Sir Joshua Reynolds, in his early *Discourses* proved impossible to implement in the increasingly dynamic, commercial society of late eighteenth-century England. Therefore, according to Barrell, Reynolds’s later *Discourses* evince a slackening of the President’s “efforts to define a civic art, and a ‘universal’ republic of taste constituted on the uniformity of human nature in ‘all ages and at all times.’”⁹

Under the leadership of Reynolds’s successor, Benjamin West, who assumed the presidency in 1792, the Royal Academy changed tack completely and launched a full-fledged campaign to obtain state funding for public history painting (or historical painting, as it was often called then) on the grounds that the highest genre of painting could serve as an effective instrument of economic development by diffusing taste, improving manufactures, and increasing commerce.¹⁰ As Holger Hoock has explained in *The King’s Artists: The Royal Academy of Arts*

⁸ J. G. A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History: Essays on Political Thought and History* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 194. For Solkin’s discussion of commercial humanism, see David H. Solkin, *Painting for Money: The Visual Arts and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993), 19-26, 214-246; and Solkin, “ReWrighting Shaftesbury: The *Air Pump* and the Limits of Commercial Humanism,” in *Painting and the Politics of Culture: New Essays on British Art, 1700-1850*, ed. John Barrell (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 73-99.

⁹ Barrell, *Political Theory*, 71.

¹⁰ Ann Bermingham, “The Origin of Painting and the Ends of Art: Wright of Derby’s *Corinthian Maid*,” in *Painting and the Politics of Culture: New Essays on British Art, 1700-1850*, ed. John Barrell (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 151-152, has said of Reynolds, “The early *Discourses*, in particular, can be read as an attempt to wean English artists away from notions of art’s commercial utility

and the Politics of British Culture, 1760-1840, “under President West, the RA temporarily put a stronger emphasis on the indirect commercial benefits of its activities and of the promotion of the fine arts in general; this might have been . . . in part in recognition of the appeal of the civic humanist discourse of the arts to only a relatively small élite.”¹¹

West’s anti-Reynoldsian (and therefore anti-Shaftesburian) argument for high art’s commercial utility is perhaps best emblemized in his painting, which I will discuss in Chapter 1, exhibited at the RA in 1790 entitled *A Sketch: Genius Calling Forth Arts and Sciences; Part of a Design in the Queen’s Lodge, Windsor, Intended to Show the Utility They Are of to This, as a Commercial Nation* (1789, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, fig. 2), known by 1805 as *Genius Calling Forth the Fine Arts to Adorn Manufactures and Commerce*.¹² Indeed, during West’s tenure as President of the Royal Academy (1792-1805, 1806-1820), the future PRA Martin Archer Shee and the Academy’s Secretary for Foreign Correspondence, Prince Hoare, gave expression to this ideological shift in texts calling for state funding for historical paintings by Academicians on the grounds that this would benefit manufactures and commerce.

While Barrell (mis)identified Hoare as using “the vocabulary of civic humanism almost undiluted,” he was right to note that Shee’s polemics on state patronage were full of contradictions and suffered from a fatal tension between the traditional discourse of civic

and to set a different course for artistic practice.” Compare West’s position with that of Jonathan Richardson, as discussed in Barrell, *Political Theory*, 39.

¹¹ Holger Hoock, *The King’s Artists: The Royal Academy of Arts and the Politics of British Culture, 1760-1840* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003), 72. See also Hoock, *King’s Artists*, 231-232, “However, the public rhetoric and arguments with which the RA courted political support and justified its activities from the 1790s mark a subtle but significant shift in its contributions to the discourse on an English school. For under President West the RA moved from solely deploying the civic-humanist to also using the commercial argument which it had hitherto left so carefully to the entrepreneurs of the art world, such as owners of private galleries and print sellers.”

¹² “A Correct List of the Works of Mr. West” in “Biographical Sketch of Benjamin West, Esq. President of the Royal Academy, &c. &c.,” *Universal Magazine* 3 (May 1805), 527.

humanism and the increasingly powerful discourse of political economy that would soon overtake it.¹³ Although Shee's writings were intended to defend the civic humanist tradition against the rising discourse of political economy, Barrell noted that "Shee seems to abandon the civic principles on which his own theory of painting elsewhere seems to depend."¹⁴ There are passages, for instance, in Shee's *Rhymes on Art* (1805) that Barrell argued are an "entire abandonment . . . of the civic principles of Shaftesbury" and "give us a foretaste . . . of how fragile those principles had become by the early decades of the nineteenth century."¹⁵ Indeed, unlike the variants of the civic humanist discourse discussed by Barrell that had implanted "within the matrix of civic humanism the embryo of a discourse [of political economy] which will eventually develop into a matricide," Shee's writings are matricidal in that they reveal "a cynical concern for his own market."¹⁶ For Shee, the arts "exist not so much – though Shee will claim they do – for the improvement of virtue, as for the benefit of the practitioners of those arts.

¹³ Barrell, *Political Theory*, 10. I disagree with Barrell's conclusion that Hoare steadfastly adhered to the civic humanist discourse on art. Barrell only discussed Hoare's *An Inquiry into the Requisite Cultivation and Present State of the Arts of Design in England* (London: Printed for Richard Phillips, No. 6, Bridge-Street, Blackfriars, by B. McMillan, Bow-Street, Covent Garden, 1806) and the periodical Hoare edited, *The Artist* (1809-1810). He did not cite Hoare's later *Epochs of the Arts: Including Hints on the Use and Progress of Painting and Sculpture in Great Britain* (London: John Murray, 1813), in which Hoare – arguing for the necessary linkage between art and commerce in Britain – pronounced, pp. 96-97, "Now, a man must be very little given to reflexion, who does not perceive, that from the relative situation (whether natural or political) of this Country, the great basis and spring of its resources, as long as we remain in the zenith of our glory, must be Commerce. Admitting, therefore, the axiom above proposed, whatever in this country can annex its success to the success of commerce, will rise with little effort, and as little chance of failure, to its highest point of elevation." See also pp. 349-350, "It appears consistent with the interests of our State, that, in order to give the full value to that taste and ornament, which are beneficial to commercial industry, the higher provinces of Design [i.e., historical painting], which are the sources of those benefits, should be diligently cultivated, and professional exertions in them, as far as may be, perfected."

¹⁴ Barrell, *Political Theory*, 52.

¹⁵ Barrell, *Political Theory*, 52.

¹⁶ Barrell, *Political Theory*, 10, 50.

All this however . . . is advanced under the cover of a moral tone so elevated, that his *Rhymes on Art* can at times manage to appear as a defence of art promoting public virtue in its most Spartan form.”¹⁷

As Kay Dian Kriz has noted in *The Idea of the English Landscape Painter: Genius as Alibi in the Early Nineteenth Century*, “Shee’s and Hoare’s polemics for public support of the arts represented the loser’s side of the controversy over artistic patronage which continued throughout the early decades of the century.”¹⁸ Of particular interest to me, however, is the remark that immediately follows, “It is a curious feature of the art historical literature on this period that while this failure to gain support for painting is repeatedly acknowledged, scant attention has been paid to the case presented by the winners of the debate – those vaunting the benefits of private patronage or a ‘free’ market competition for art.”¹⁹ Taking this statement as my starting point, I argue in this dissertation that John Martin has completely disappeared from the art historical radar screen as one of these “winners.”²⁰ In fact, Kriz herself did not discuss Martin in her book, but referred only in passing to “a one-and-a-half-page review extolling John Martin’s *The Fall of Babylon*” in Rudolph Ackermann’s *Repository of Arts*.²¹ Kriz did not

¹⁷ Barrell, *Political Theory*, 52. More specifically, I would add that the arts exist, according to Shee, for the benefit of Academicians. See Martin Archer Shee, *Rhymes on Art, or, the Remonstrance of a Painter: in Two Parts, with Notes, and a Preface, Including Strictures on the State of the Arts, Criticism, Patronage, and Public Taste*, 2nd ed. (London: John Murray, 1805), xi-xii.

¹⁸ Kay Dian Kriz, *The Idea of the English Landscape Painter: Genius as Alibi in the Early Nineteenth Century* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997), 34-35.

¹⁹ Kriz, *Idea*, 35.

²⁰ I was initially inspired to write this dissertation by David Solkin’s remark in *Painting for Money*, 1, that “since I find actual achievements of greater interest than unattainable ideals, I shall tend to concentrate on those artists and writers about art who embraced the realities of a burgeoning market economy, instead of bemoaning its arrival as a sign of social and spiritual degeneration.”

²¹ Kriz, *Idea*, 67; “Exhibition of the British Institution,” *Repository of Arts* 7 (March 1, 1819), 169-170.

explain her reasons for omitting one of nineteenth-century England's most important landscape painters from her discussion of the rise of the notion of the English landscape painter as "native genius." However, this omission (I would argue) was most likely because she set up a tidy opposition between the kind of public historical painting advocated by the civic humanist theory of art and the smaller-scale, domestic landscape painting that, according to her argument, came to serve in the marketplace "as a site for the inscription of a new form of individual identity."²² The reason for this pendulum swing from historical to landscape painting, Kriz argued, was because the civic humanist ideal of a unified public sphere had become all but untenable around the turn of the nineteenth century, as the doctrines of economic liberalism and self-interest gained sway in English society.²³ William Rodner has explained more clearly than I can in his review of Kriz's book, that:

because of its classical constraints, not to mention its muted coloring and preoccupation with line, history painting had limited appeal [in England]. . . . A more congenial national style, at once worthy and consistent with English ideals of freedom, individualism, and (increasingly) bourgeois capitalism, seemed to be what was wanted. . . . Ultimately, landscape provided the opportunity for the creation of a worthy English genre.²⁴

Yet there is no middle ground in Kriz's book between historical and landscape painting, which seems odd given the cross-fertilization of genres happening in the previous century and the fact that the attenuation and abandonment of the civic humanist discourse was a gradual

²² Kriz, *Idea*, 75. For the claim that Kriz's argument is predicated upon a series of polarities, see Stephanie Ross, review of *The Idea of the English Landscape Painter*, by Kay Dian Kriz, *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 58 (Autumn 2000): 409.

²³ Kriz, *Idea*, 139.

²⁴ William S. Rodner, review of *The Idea of the English Landscape Painter*, by Kay Dian Kriz, *Albion* 30 (Summer 1998): 335-336.

process.²⁵ Indeed, Kriz makes too neat a distinction between historical and landscape painting by largely ignoring Turner's historical landscapes and by categorizing Turner as a "landscape" painter only. For instance, she failed to point out that in 1817, as William Gerdts and Theodore Stebbins have mentioned, "Turner changed his own designation from 'landscape' painter to 'historical landscape' painter, perhaps in recognition of the appointment of . . . John Martin [in 1816] as 'Historical Landscape Painter' to Prince Leopold and Princess Charlotte."²⁶ As Gerdts and Stebbins additionally pointed out, on the international stage, "the year 1817 seems to have been crucial for the recognition of this thematic category. It was then that the King of France was reported to have founded 'Historical Landscape' as a class of painting to be encouraged."²⁷ Kriz's book stops at 1820, but, in 1818, the *New Monthly Magazine* - the same magazine in which she noted a writer had made in 1814 "a vigorous defense of this free market in cultural production" - paid tribute to Martin as having "ably supported our national claim to pre-eminence in landscape painting."²⁸ In addition, by 1820, Martin had been an exhibitor at the Royal Academy and the British Institution for nine and seven years, respectively. That same year, he also applied for associate membership (ARA) in the former society as a "historical

²⁵ Solkin, *Painting for Money*, 1, "During our period, for the first time in English history, paintings became an object of widespread capital investment; and alongside other cultural producers who contributed to an increasingly active trade in luxury goods, artists soon learned that many rules they had long accepted as absolute imperatives would have to give way to the higher laws of supply and demand. Economic pressures undermined hierarchies of genres, and often even the boundaries between different discourses, in a disorienting process of hybridisation that I have tried to respect. . ."

²⁶ William Gerdts and Theodore Stebbins, "*A Man of Genius*": *The Art of Washington Allston (1779-1843)*, exh. cat. (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1979), 105.

²⁷ Gerdts and Stebbins, "*A Man of Genius*," 104. What they were referring to was the establishment by the French Academy of a Prix de Rome for historical landscape (*paysage historique*) in 1817. Albert Boime, *Art in an Age of Counterrevolution, 1815-1848* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 485, has argued that "the Prix de Rome de Paysage Historique contributed positively to the formation of the independent landscape movement."

²⁸ Kriz, *Idea*, 36; "Exhibition of the British Institution," *New Monthly Magazine* (April 1, 1818), 257.

landscape painter” (although he, or someone else, at some point crossed out the word “historical”) and was denied.²⁹ Martin also gave his specialty in the *Annals of the Fine Arts* for 1819 and 1820 as two genres, “History and Landscape,” while Turner listed his as “Historical Landscape.”³⁰ A review of Martin’s *Macbeth* (1820, present location unknown) in the same journal declared, “Mr. Martin again triumphs in historical landscape.”³¹ All this is to say that, as the discourse of civic humanism gave way to the discourse of political economy, the boundaries between history and landscape painting in the hierarchy of genres became more fluid than Kriz made them out to be.

In my mind, Martin’s 1819 historical landscape, *The Fall of Babylon*, perfectly encapsulates Kriz’s argument that, in order to compete in the exhibition spaces of the RA and the BI, English landscape painters (domestic and historical, I would say) indulged in mannerism, which served as a way to catch the eye of the public and to distract attention away from other paintings on display.³² Similar to how Turner dismissed the work of Rubens in an 1811 lecture at the Royal Academy as debasing both the artist and his work because, as Kriz mentioned, he thought that Rubens “threw around his tints like a bunch of flowers,” the above reviewer for

²⁹ See the ARA nomination sheet for 1820 in the Royal Academy Archives.

³⁰ “Names and Residences of the Principal Living Artists Residing or Practising in the Metropolis, with the Line of Art They Profess, Corrected Up to the 1st of January, 1819,” *Annals of the Fine Arts* 3 (1819), 660, 665; “Names and Residences of the Principal Living Artists Residing or Practising in the Metropolis, with the Line of Art They Profess, Corrected Up to the 1st of January, 1820,” *Annals of the Fine Arts* 4 (1820), 650, 654.

³¹ “Exhibition of the Works of British Artists,” *Annals of the Fine Arts* 4 (1820), 151.

³² Kriz, *Idea*, 75, “That English landscape painting could serve as a site for the inscription of a new form of individual identity in large part derives from the fact that within the parameters of academicism landscape painting was *already* designated as the place where the ‘personal’ could be inscribed, not only via the choice of subject matter, but also through a self-decidedly individual ‘manner.’ That said, within academic discourse such productions of genius could not claim to have anything but a private function, since the objects depicted were deemed incapable of addressing a public (whether constituted as a ‘universal’ republic of taste or a national community of citizens).”

Ackermann's *Repository* stated that in Martin's *Fall of Babylon* "the colouring in the foreground sparkles like a bunch of flowers."³³ The effect this painting had on the (male) exhibition-goer was mesmeric, for as Robert Hunt said in the *Examiner*, "It would indeed be surprising if we did not see the spectators . . . leaving it, but, still thrilling with the strange and felicitous impression, coming back to it again after having looked at most of the other pictures with an absent mind, like a lover who is but half attentive to other women, in a delicious reverie on the superior charms of her who has the keeping of his heart."³⁴

As noted, Kriz did not discuss Martin, or any other painter, who vaunted "the benefits of private patronage or a 'free' market competition for art."³⁵ Rather, she opted to focus only on writers, like Richard Payne Knight, who advocated private patronage or free competition, and on painters of domestic landscapes (i.e., Turner, Thomas Girtin, Augustus Wall Callcott, Copley Fielding) who, she argued, competed in the marketplace but for whom "native genius came to serve as an alibi – as a claim to be somewhere other than where it was: not in the marketplace, vying for profit and fame, but in the purified and disembodied realm of the artistic imagination."³⁶ Deploying the category of native genius as alibi, she argued, had allowed each of them to function "at one and the same time as an autonomous subject, insulated from the vitiation of a market-oriented society, and also as a social subject, who represents the ideals of

³³ Kriz, *Idea*, 122; "Exhibition of the British Institution," *Repository of Arts* 7 (March 1, 1819), 170.

³⁴ [Robert Hunt], "Mr. Martin's *Fall of Babylon*," *Examiner* (February 7, 1819), 92. For Kriz's discussion of Hunt's art criticism in the *Examiner*, see Kriz, *Idea*, 35, 114-116, 122, 124, 137.

³⁵ Kriz, *Idea*, 35.

³⁶ Kriz, *Idea*, 8.

that society, [which] is contingent upon the way in which individual autonomy is socially regulated.”³⁷ She wrote of their domestic landscape imagery:

In the course of this quasi-alchemical process the ultimate magic trick is performed upon the body of the native genius himself: in a spectacular disappearing and reappearing act, he enters the spaces of exhibition and display within the urban marketplace and succeeds in annihilating the competition with his bravura effects; but upon closer inspection, it is discovered that he seems never to have been in the marketplace after all. For he has an alibi which places him within the locus of external nature in its customary (rather than its ideal) guise. The encounter which takes place there does not produce social disaffection, or a heightened awareness of nature as Other. On the contrary, the native genius’s embrace of the natural leads him back to an experience of his own social identity within a community marked by social empathy not economic self-interest; for it is that community of feeling alone which gives meaning to external nature. In this way the genius stages his reappearance as a social actor in the purified domain of the natural. His alibi secure, he remains uncontaminated by the market, yet victorious over it.³⁸

However, it is the thesis of this dissertation that, if Turner *et al.* were able to conceal their commercial activities behind a smokescreen of genius in order to reaffirm their place in a community guided by social empathy, then Martin adopted the opposite tactic: he jettisoned the civic humanist theory, endorsed the discourse of the marketplace, and spoke openly about altering his work to reflect changes in his markets. Moreover, if, as Barrell said, “the civic humanist theory of painting distinguishes the liberal man from the mechanic,” then by repudiating this theory in favor of the counter-discourse of political economy, Martin (unlike Turner *et al.*) pursued his art unabashedly as a mechanical trade, not as a liberal profession.³⁹

³⁷ Kriz, *Idea*, 141.

³⁸ Kriz, *Idea*, 141.

³⁹ This is further underscored by the fact that, spurned by the Academy for associate membership for the final time in 1821, Martin denounced the RA as a monopoly and helped found the SBA in 1823 and became a contributing member of the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce, both of which championed free trade principles. See *Transactions of the Society* 42 (1824), 231.

Martin has long been thought of as an apocalyptic visionary of the order of William Blake.⁴⁰ Yet while Blake railed against “the Fiends of Commerce,” Martin made it very clear throughout his life that making money was his *modus operandi* as an artist.⁴¹ Admittedly, having to paint for money had been a defining characteristic of the life of nearly every painter in England since the Reformation, due to the relative absence of Protestant church patronage and the historical lack of a comprehensive program of government support for the arts.⁴² What sets

⁴⁰ Thomas Balston, “John Martin, 1789-1854: Illustrator and Pamphleteer,” *The Library* 14 (March 1934): 383, described Martin as one of only two great religious artists (the other being Blake) that England had produced in the previous 300 years. Peppered with references comparing Martin to Blake, William Feaver, *The Art of John Martin* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 215-216, argued that Martin’s “self-appointed task was to attempt to surpass time and forestall catastrophe. . . . [Martin] served as both prophet and myth-maker, duty-bound, like Moses and Daniel, to furnish his fellow men with ‘decisive interpretation.’” Morton Paley, *The Apocalyptic Sublime* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 124, speculated (without saying exactly what these ideas are) that “some of Martin’s ideas about the Bible have much in common with Blake’s visionary radicalism. . . . Martin may also have had millenarian interests, as did Blake, and there was even an advertisement for a book supposedly illustrated by Martin entitled *The Gathering Standard of the World, Seen in the British Flag. The Threefold Banner of the Holy Bible, The Ensign of the Messiah’s Coming*.” He correctly noted, however, that a copy of this book with Martin’s rumored contribution(s?) has never been found.

⁴¹ William Blake to William Hayley, August 9, 1804, in *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, rev. ed., ed. David V. Erdman (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1982), 754. See also Blake, “Public Address,” in Erdman, *Complete Poetry and Prose*, 574, “Commerce is so far from being beneficial to Arts or to Empire that it is destructive of both as all their History shews for the above Reason of Individual Merit being its Great hatred.” On Blake’s adaptation of the civic humanist theory, see Barrell, *Political Theory*, 222-257. For a dissenting opinion, but one that still argues Blake saw commerce as the great obstacle to art, see Morris Eaves, *The Counter-Arts Conspiracy: Art and Industry in the Age of Blake* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1992), 148-151. For a discussion of Blake as “a professional artist . . . directly engaged in the everyday *business* of producing and selling art,” see Kurt Heinzelman, “William Blake and the Economics of the Imagination,” *Modern Language Quarterly* 39 (June 1978): 99-120.

⁴² See Solkin, *Painting for Money*, and Iain Pears, *The Discovery of Painting: The Growth of Interest in the Arts in England, 1680-1768* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988). “The Progress of British Art,” *Art-Union* 10 (January 1, 1848), 3, declared, “The truth is, the invariable policy of the Government was to encourage our Individuality, which we love intensely, and never to interfere in matters extra-parochial or purely intellectual, in relation to National Education or National Art. The Church, too, never swerved from her first resolution, and always held a whitewashed wall as far more orthodox than any ever decorated by Masaccio, Raphael, or Correggio. Thus, pictures in churches being proscribed lest they should seduce the mind to idolatry, Government having no desire to do what a Joint Stock Company or individuals could effect as well; . . . the Fine Arts in England, from the days of Elizabeth to those of Victoria, have been forced to beg their bread at the hands of private patronage.”

Martin apart, however, from most artists is that while painters as different as Shee and Blake both remonstrated against the lack of government support for the arts as forcing artists to be slaves to the market and while domestic landscape painters like Turner had an alibi to justify their commercial behavior, Martin called for a free market in art, supporting the twin slogans “free trade in art, as in commerce” and “free competition in art (as in commerce).”⁴³ Therefore, it is my argument that if Martin preached anything during his lifetime, it was the gospel of profit, not prophecy.

In his 1976 review of the last major monograph on Martin’s paintings, by William Feaver, Charles Stuckey argued that certain “aspects of Martin’s artistic life have never received proper attention, for one, the economics of his art.”⁴⁴ This still has not been done, even though three dissertations have since focused on Martin. For instance, Justine Hopkins in her 1990 dissertation examined how contemporaneous debates on the origins of life affected Martin’s landscape imagery.⁴⁵ Richard Burnett in his 1996 dissertation examined the affinities between Martin, his imitators, and those poets whom Burnett called “The Catastrophic School.”⁴⁶ In 1998, the geographer Anna C. Mallett investigated Martin’s interest in the environment and how

⁴³ See Blake’s call for government patronage in William Blake, “Public Address,” in *Complete Poetry and Prose*, 581.

⁴⁴ Charles Stuckey, review of *The Art of John Martin*, by William Feaver, *Art Bulletin* 58 (December 1976): 632. The dealer Michael Campbell, however, has organized three major exhibitions, with accompanying catalogues, on Martin’s prints. The most recent is Michael Campbell, *John Martin, 1789-1854: la oscuridad visible: estampas y dibujos de la colección Campbell*, exh. cat. (Valencia: Bancaja, 2006).

⁴⁵ Justine T. Hopkins, “Terrible and Traditional Muses: Science, Religion and Landscape Art from John Martin to William Dyce” (Ph.D. diss., University of London, Birkbeck College, 1990).

⁴⁶ Richard A. Burnett, “The Art of John Martin: Contexts and Sources of the Early Nineteenth-Century Taste for the Catastrophic in Painting and Literature” (Ph.D. diss., Cambridge University, 1996).

contemporaneous theories of the antediluvian world made their way into Martin's landscapes.⁴⁷

Yet, none placed Martin squarely within the economic debate over whether the British government should support artists and art societies or leave them to fend for themselves in the marketplace.

This dissertation attempts to do just that in order to establish Martin's place in the latter camp.

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. In Chapter 1, "The Visionary Purposes of Vain Enthusiasts': Martin and the Case for (and against) Government Support for the Arts in Early Nineteenth-Century Britain," I examine the Royal Academy's attempts between 1800 and 1815 under West's stewardship to secure government funding for Academic history painters on the grounds of art's economic utility for industry. Contrary to previous scholarship that has argued artists were not involved in the founding of the British Institution, I demonstrate that several Academicians, including West and Shee, helped found the BI so that the Institution's aristocratic members could assist the RA in achieving its objective of obtaining government funding for Academic history painters. I will compare the conflicting arguments between Academicians and non-member artists in England over the role that art exhibitions should play in the public sphere to contemporaneous arguments between Academicians and independent artists in France over whether the Salon should be, as Patricia Mainardi has described in *The End of the Salon*, an exhibition of Academic "pictures to see" (public didactic art) or democratic "pictures to sell" (art as merchandise).⁴⁸ I also will consider how these collaborative efforts between the RA and the BI for the benefit of Academic history painters ended in dissension and eventually

⁴⁷ Anna C. Mallett, "Chaos and Order: The Environmental Thought of John Martin (1789-1854)" (D.Phil. thesis, Oxford University, 1998).

⁴⁸ Patricia Mainardi, *The End of the Salon: Art and the State in the Early Third Republic* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 9-35.

led to the establishment by Martin and others of a third society, the Society of British Artists (SBA), whose “end it seeks [is] open and fair competition.”⁴⁹

In Chapter 2, “‘Free Trade in Art, as in Commerce’: Martin and the 1835-36 Select Committee on Arts and Manufactures,” I discuss how Martin and others associated with the founding of the SBA appealed to Parliament not to allow the Academy to move into the new National Gallery building being built with public funds in Trafalgar Square because they felt it would promote unfair competition between private exhibiting societies. Underscoring Barrell’s point about just how fragile the “civic principles of Shaftesbury” had become, and also highlighting Shee’s abandonment of them, I discuss how Shee (now President of the Royal Academy) defended the Academy’s place in national life by arguing that the RA trained designers for industry at no expense to the government. I also discuss how, around this time, Martin began exhibiting his paintings at industrial exhibitions associated with the free trade movement where painting was simply a trade like any other.

Chapter 3, “‘This Magnificent National Undertaking’: Martin’s Thames and Metropolis Improvement Plans,” is a reconsideration of Martin’s efforts from 1827 until the end of his life to embank the Thames and to collect the sewage being dumped into the river for use as night soil in rural areas. While his efforts have often been described as visionary attempts to physically, morally, and spiritually reform a debased, “Babylonish” London, I argue that they in fact celebrated the modernity of the capital and Britain as a commercial nation and promoted the exploitation of the countryside for maximum profit.⁵⁰ Although Martin believed in self-

⁴⁹ “Society of British Artists,” *Literary Chronicle*, no. 246 (January 31, 1824), 76.

⁵⁰ I have limited my discussion to his relatively well-known Thames and metropolis improvement plans because there is not enough space in this chapter to properly cover all of Martin’s other scientific and engineering interests, such as coal mine safety and ship construction.

administration of art by artists and their private organizations, his objective from the beginning was to obtain government support for his proposals. Therefore, I will explain in this chapter why he believed that the state should not interfere with a free market for art, but should concern itself with sanitation and the development of agricultural land for increased food production.

In Chapter 4, “Ruskin vs. Martin: The Case against Capitalist Art,” I provide a detailed examination of statements made by John Ruskin about Martin over a forty-five year period that demonstrates how Ruskin’s contempt for laissez-faire capitalism – and those who supported it – informed his criticisms of Martin’s work as an artist. In the conclusion of *The Political Theory of Painting*, Barrell described Ruskin as having made one of the last “attempts to argue that a primary function of painting is to make us aware of what we have in common.”⁵¹ Like the proponents of the civic humanist theory of painting, Ruskin “could not contemplate the growth of commerce and capitalism, except as evidence of historical decline.”⁵² However, unlike the defenders of the civic humanist ideal of public life, Ruskin’s focus as an art critic was not on the heroic male body as body politic, but on the unifying power of landscape painting. Yet, as Barrell has said in an argument that anticipates Kriz, Ruskin regretted “that the nineteenth-century preoccupation with landscape is the result of ‘mistakes in our social economy,’ and is the expression of a love of liberty which can no longer find satisfaction in the civic life.”⁵³ In this chapter, I argue that the landscapes of Martin, who painted with an eye to the marketplace, embodied for Ruskin not only “the mistakes in our social economy,” but even worse an

⁵¹ Barrell, *Political Theory*, 338.

⁵² Barrell, *Political Theory*, 339.

⁵³ Barrell, *Political Theory*, 338-339.

endorsement of the “evil” discourse of political economy and of a system of capitalist production based on quantity not quality.

Martin spoke candidly about the fact that he would determine the price of one of his works based on the amount of labor required for its production. It was also remarked at the time that he put a huge amount of work into a painting in order to artificially enhance its price in the market.⁵⁴ The primary objective of the final chapter, “‘A Disposition to Render Art Subservient to Material Interests’: Martin as Painter (and Printmaker),” is to follow Ruskin’s line of thinking further and to consider the influence of Martin’s belief in laissez-faire capitalism on his painting. Although Martin was on the winning side of the debate over public support for the arts, unlike his rival for fame, Turner, he has ended up on the wrong side of Modernist art history. Despite Robert Rosenblum’s singular attempt to link Martin’s paintings genealogically to the works of American Abstract Expressionists like Mark Rothko, Martin’s work has been perceived more as kitsch than *kunst*.⁵⁵ Since Turner’s paintings were hung in 1926 at the then Tate Gallery in such a way that a dialogue was created between his late work and French Impressionist painting, it has been Turner who has been viewed, rightly or wrongly, as a precursor of Modernism.⁵⁶ However,

⁵⁴ “Exhibition of the British Institution,” *Repository of Arts* 7 (March 1, 1819), 170, noted of the *Fall of Babylon* that “the Herculean labour he thus imposes upon himself can only be appreciated by those who have seen his pictures.”

⁵⁵ Robert Rosenblum, “The Abstract Sublime: How Some of the Most Heretical Concepts of Modern American Abstract Painting Related to the Visionary Nature-Painting of a Century Ago,” *Art News* 59 (February 1961): 38-41, 56-58. Reprinted in Henry Geldzahler, *New York Painting and Sculpture: 1940-1970*, exh. cat. (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1969), 350-359, and Clifford Ross, ed., *Abstract Expressionism: Creators and Critics: An Anthology* (New York: Abrams, 1990), 273-277. For a further elaboration of the argument, see Robert Rosenblum, *Modern Painting and the Northern Romantic Tradition: Friedrich to Rothko* (New York: Harper and Row; London: Thames and Hudson, 1975), esp. 204. I borrow the phrase “kitsch than kunst” from Peter H. Hassrick, “Introduction,” in *Redrawing Boundaries: Perspectives on Western American Art*, ed. Peter H. Hassrick (Denver Art Museum, 2007), 10.

⁵⁶ On the invention of Turner as a prophet of modernism, see Sam Smiles, *J. M. W. Turner: The Making of a Modern Artist* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007).

in closing the chapter, I argue that in his pursuit of fame and in competition with popular illusionistic entertainments like the panorama and diorama Martin rejected Renaissance perspectival conventions by fracturing the illusionistic picture space of the canvas. Specifically, I argue that Martin set out to destroy the illusion of deep space created in his pictures through linear perspective by his use of heavy impasto and by making solid and void interchangeable so that, as the viewer is drawn into the picture, he or she is just as quickly forced back out by layers of encrusted paint and by inversions of solid and void.

Regarding methodology, I employ a case-study approach as a way to work through the “great man” historical framework, which held British art studies hostage for most of the twentieth century and still affects how Martin is perceived today.⁵⁷ The case study approach has been used to great effect by Louise Lippincott in her *Selling Art in Georgian London: The Rise of Arthur Pond* as what Iain Pears has termed an “assault on the ‘Great Man Syndrome’” of writing history and also as a way of documenting and reconstructing, through Pond, the social and economic circumstances of the London art world as it underwent significant growth and change during the early Georgian period.⁵⁸ Martin presents, similarly, a valuable case study of a London art world in transition during the Regency and early Victorian periods, I would argue, because, just as Pond had long been overlooked in favor of Hogarth, Martin still is neglected in favor of Turner even in a book like Kriz’s of “the new art history.” Moreover, through Martin, it is possible to enrich our understanding of how the tension between the civic humanist discourse

⁵⁷ On “going through the biographical model rather than around it,” see Thomas E. Crow, *Emulation: David, Drouais, and Girodet in the Art of Revolutionary France*, rev. ed. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006), 300-310.

⁵⁸ Iain Pears, review of *Selling Art in Georgian London: The Rise of Arthur Pond*, by Louise Lippincott, *Oxford Art Journal* 8, no. 1 (1985): 66. See Louise Lippincott, *Selling Art in Georgian London: The Rise of Arthur Pond* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983), 1-10.

and the discourse of political economy exploded by the mid-1830s into a full-blown political confrontation in Parliament between Academicians and non-member artists over whether state sponsorship was necessary, or even desirable.⁵⁹ Doubtless there were other contemporaneous English painters, some of whom (like the all-but-forgotten George Foggo) I also will discuss, who strenuously advocated free competition in art alongside Martin and fulminated against the Academy's receiving any public funds. However, what makes Martin an ideal case study of those painters who spoke out for free competition in art during the Regency and early Victorian periods is that he is the best documented of the group simply because he was the most famous. Moreover, he has never been discussed as a vocal advocate of free-market competition in traditional life-and-work studies or, as my discussion of Kriz's book has shown, even in revisionist histories of nineteenth-century British art. Therefore, the picture of Martin that I hope will emerge from this dissertation is not the received one of a religious visionary who condemned Britain as a nation for its commerce and industry and somehow "rose above his age with a sense of almost gleeful conviction" or the one of him created by the three main Martin biographies as being "a mere child in the business of life" with regards to money.⁶⁰ Rather, I hope the picture that comes through is one of a marketing impresario, who was very much of his time in his belief that self-interest, not public virtue, was the predominant motivation of artistic production in early nineteenth-century Britain.

⁵⁹ Hoock, *King's Artists*, 226, has noted that "a debate proper about whether the state ought or ought not to support the arts only got under way around 1800, and reached its first climax in the 1830s," i.e., the 1835-36 Select Committee on Arts and Manufactures.

⁶⁰ Feaver, *Art of John Martin*, 214. When Martin's finances hit the rocks in the late 1830s, his friend, the barrister Serjeant Ralph Thomas, described Martin as "a mere child in the business of life.." Diaries of Ralph Thomas, quoted in Pendered, *John Martin*, 219; repeated in Thomas Balston, *John Martin, 1789-1854: His Life and Works* (London: Gerald Duckworth, 1947), 192; Feaver, *Art of John Martin*, 151.

CHAPTER 1

**“THE VISIONARY PURPOSES OF VAIN ENTHUSIASTS”:
MARTIN AND THE CASE FOR (AND AGAINST)
GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR THE ARTS
IN EARLY NINETEENTH-CENTURY BRITAIN**

It is a mistake unworthy of an enlightened government, to conceive that the arts, left to the influence of ordinary events, turned loose upon society, to fight and scramble, in the rude and revolting contest of coarser occupations, can ever arrive at that perfection which contributes so materially to the permanent glory of a state.¹

Martin Archer Shee, *Rhymes on Art*, 1805

I find from Mr. Shee’s poem . . . that there are people dull enough to excuse the public discouragement of English art, upon the principles of the liberty of trade.²

James Mackintosh to John Hoppner, RA, 1808

He ended by declaring that he would seek some more liberal business, where industry and ability would not be met by tyranny; that restrictions argued weakness and mediocrity, and that competition and improvement were the heart and hope of all trade, the advancement of all commerce and progress.³

Mary Pendered on a now lost speech, 1812, by John Martin
to his coworkers at William Collins’s glassworks

Later in life, John Martin explained to his friend Ralph Thomas that one of the reasons he gave up glass painting for oil painting in 1812 was because his fellow workmen at William Collins’s glassworks on the Strand, near Temple Bar, had found “my productions the greatest favourites and fetching the highest prices, sought to injure me. They found out that I had not

¹ Shee, *Rhymes*, xix-xxi.

² James Mackintosh to John Hoppner, February 19, 1808, in Robert James Mackintosh, ed., *Memoirs of the Life of the Right Honourable Sir James Mackintosh*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (London: Edward Moxon, 1836), 1:371. Mackintosh was a Judge of a Court of Vice-Admiralty in Bombay.

³ The full speech was included in the diaries of Ralph Thomas, but was only partially quoted, and the rest, summarized, in Pendered, *John Martin*, 56-57. Pendered was the last person to have possession of Thomas’s manuscript diaries. The diaries have been lost since the publication of her book in 1923, and so must be cited from Pendered, *John Martin*, which provides often incomplete references.

been regularly bound apprentice to the business, that I had not served the required term, and they determined to put an end to my employment.”⁴ Therefore, “in 1812, on leaving Collins’, Martin made the momentous decision to seek fame and fortune by oil-painting,” and in four weeks dashed off *Sadak in Search of the Waters of Oblivion* (1812, Saint Louis Art Museum, fig. 3), which he exhibited that same year at the Royal Academy’s exhibition at Somerset House, a few doors down the Strand from Collins’s shop.⁵ In other words, Martin was explaining to Thomas that to work as a glass painter in London required a lengthy apprenticeship before entering the trade, but to work as an oil painter and to exhibit at the Royal Academy required no such training.⁶

Frequently challenged during the seventeenth century, the authority of the Painter-Stainers’ Company, the guild that had regulated the painting trade within the City of London since Elizabethan times, did not collapse entirely until 1710, as metropolitan London expanded and painters moved outside its jurisdiction to areas like Covent Garden in Westminster.⁷ In the

⁴ Diaries of Ralph Thomas, quoted in Pendered, *John Martin*, 55.

⁵ Balston, *John Martin*, 32. See also *Illustrated London News* (March 17, 1849), 177, “Having now lost my employment at Collins’s, it became necessary to work hard, and, as I was ambitious of fame, I determined on painting a large picture, ‘Sadak,’ which was executed in a month.” At this point, Martin had been practicing oil painting in the evenings for at least two years and had exhibited one work, *Landscape Composition*, at the RA in 1811. Martin explained to the *Athenaeum* (June 14, 1834), 459, “It was now indeed necessary for me to work, and as I was ambitious of fame, I determined on painting a large picture. I therefore, in 1812, produced . . . ‘Sadak in search of the Waters of Oblivion,’ which was executed in a month. You may easily guess my anxiety when I overheard the men who were to place it in the frame disputing as to which was the top of the picture! Hope almost forsook me, for much depended on this work. It was, however, sold to the late Mr. Manning, the Bank director, for 50 guineas, and well do I remember the inexpressible delight my wife and I experienced at the time.”

⁶ Martin had told his coworkers before taking his leave, “My [glass] works have been sought for and paid for highly. . . . I have . . . proved that a long apprenticeship is unnecessary and this may result in a saving of your time.” Diaries of Ralph Thomas, quoted in Pendered, *John Martin*, 56.

⁷ On the fall of the Painter-Stainers’ Company, see Pears, *Discovery of Painting*, 118-119. For histories of the Painter-Stainers’ Company, see W. A. D. Englefield, *The History of the Painter-Stainers Company of*

vacuum of regulation that followed, as Matthew Hargraves has explained, “artists had to shift for themselves in the essentially open market that emerged in place of these customary forms of urban economic regulation.”⁸ The civic humanist theory of art that had advocated heroic historical painting as the highest genre may have been the dominant discourse of the arts, but in reality court and government patronage of historical painting was all but nonexistent, while church patronage was almost nil due to a Protestant suspicion of potentially idolatrous images.⁹ Iain Pears has said of this period that “one of the underlying pressures leading to the formation of an Academy was an attempt to overcome this situation and provide a stronger sense of identity and definition” for painters.¹⁰ However, by the time the Royal Academy was established in 1768 as a revanchist attempt to restore the civic humanist theory of art – in the wake of the advent of private art academies and public art exhibitions, as well as the rise of art dealers like Arthur Pond - painters in London had already exchanged, as David Solkin has said:

a traditional form of clientage for the pitfalls of a competitive free-for-all fuelled by anonymous and impersonal commercial demands. . . . The Royal Academy may have vigorously insisted (against a bitter chorus of dissenting voices) that its position was one of liberal and virtuous disinterest. But the very vehemence of its rhetoric could only serve to dramatise a fundamental lack of conviction: to make manifest an awareness that the public sphere of the later eighteenth century could neither be represented as a coherent ‘public,’ nor could it produce anything that might pass for a genuinely public art. The Academy, to put it bluntly, had simply arrived too late.¹¹

London (London: Chapman and Dodd, 1923); Alan Borg, *The History of the Worshipful Company of Painters Otherwise Painter-Stainers* (Huddersfield: Jeremy Mills, 2005).

⁸ Matthew Hargraves, *“Candidates for Fame”: The Society of Artists of Great Britain, 1760-1791* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005), 6.

⁹ Clare Haynes, *Pictures and Popery: Art and Religion in England, 1660-1760* (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2006), 4. Hargraves, *“Candidates for Fame,”* 6, also noted, “The lack of patronage from either the court, where a monarch [George II] proud of his philistinism occupied the throne, or the established Church kept modern art out of the public eye.”

¹⁰ Pears, *Discovery of Painting*, 119.

¹¹ Solkin, *Painting for Money*, 274. Pears, *Discovery*, 121, “The association of painting with an institutional structure was thus to heighten the merit of the art form by lending royal support to a vision of

Nick Prior has explained that, by the early decades of the nineteenth century, “while the patches and threads of civic humanism were still embroidered in artistic production and criticism, this discourse was increasingly marginalized.”¹² In part this was because artists generally still had to shift for themselves, because the British state:

was largely a peripheral organ, unwilling to soil its hands with public funds and therefore massively different from interventionist models of state-art relations on the continent. . . . Driven by a rhetoric of free trade, the British government nurtured a self-regulatory art world: it was not to provide a false stimulus but to let artists and institutions flourish unfettered.¹³

Nine years into the new century, the portrait painter, Academician, and future President of the Royal Academy (PRA), Martin Archer Shee complained about this laissez-faire state of affairs in his *Elements of Art* (1809), the companion to his *Rhymes on Art*:

As a nation, we are ignorant of the utility as we are insensible to the beauty of the Arts, and have neither the policy that promotes, nor the refinement that respects them. Unexcited, unprotected, and unpraised, without honour for dignity, or emolument for ease, they are left to struggle amid the contentions of common life; and obliged to practice the mercenary maxims of trade, without the security of its comforts, or the consolation of its independence [sic].¹⁴

what English painting could be, rather than having it tied down to the less favourable impression of what it actually was.” Hargraves, “*Candidates for Fame*,” 7, “Exalted notions that art was blind to such base motives as money-making bore little relation to the actual economic condition of artists trying to make a living.” Holger Hoock, “Reforming Culture: National Art Institutions in the Age of Reform,” in *Rethinking the Age of Reform: Britain 1780-1850*, eds. Arthur Burns and Joanna Innes (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 255, “Throughout much of the eighteenth century, it was generally assumed that artists and art ought to be supported by private patronage and markets, not by the state.” See also Hoock, *King’s Artists*, 232. On Pond, see Lippincott, *Selling Art*, 1983.

¹² Nick Prior, *Museums & Modernity: Art Galleries and the Making of Modern Culture* (Oxford: Berg, 2002), 76.

¹³ Prior, *Museums & Modernity*, 78. See also Hoock, *King’s Artists*, 226-228.

¹⁴ Martin Archer Shee, *Elements of Art, a Poem; in Six Cantos; with Notes and a Preface; Including Strictures on the State of the Arts, Criticism, Patronage, and Public Taste* (London: Printed for W. Miller by W. Bulmer and Co., 1809), 372-373.

Unlike France's state-sponsored academy of art, founded in 1648 as the Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture, the Royal Academy of Arts has always been a private institution, independent of government control.¹⁵ To this day, it receives no funds from the government to support its operations.¹⁶ However, this is not unique to the Royal Academy. The Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (also known as the Society of Arts), which was established in 1754 by the philanthropist William Shipley to encourage improvements and inventions in the arts and sciences as applied to industrial purposes, is also a private society, not subject to government oversight because it receives no state funding. Unlike the French Académie des sciences (1666), the Royal Society of London for the Improvement of Natural Knowledge (1660), the oldest scientific society in England, has also always been a self-supporting institution, free from government regulation.¹⁷

As was the case with Royal Academicians, who were devoted to establishing a native school of historical painting but argued they were unable to do so due to the government's unwillingness to financially support the arts, high-minded scientists, who also found themselves unable to conduct serious work in a competitive marketplace, argued that a perpetual lack of

¹⁵ Suppressed in 1793 by the National Convention, the French Academy was reestablished in 1795 as the Académie des beaux-arts, part of the Institut de France.

¹⁶ From 1781 to the present, the Royal Academy has been entirely self-supporting, its main source of income being its annual exhibition. George III, however, contributed £5116 1s. 1d. to the Royal Academy from the Privy Purse between 1769 and 1780 so that the fledgling art institution could balance its books. See Sidney Hutchison, *The History of the Royal Academy 1768-1986*, 2nd ed. (London: Robert Royce, 1986), 80. Nonetheless, Hoock, *King's Artists*, 35, has pointed out, "For the king, the sums were negligible, compared with the £1,500 or more that he allocated annually for the purchase of books for his library."

¹⁷ For instance, the long series of industrial exhibitions put on by the Society of Arts beginning in 1761 that were the forerunners of the 1851 Great Exhibition in London and the state-sponsored Universal Expositions in Paris were entirely self-funded. See Patricia Mainardi, *Art and Politics of the Second Empire: The Universal Expositions of 1855 and 1867* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987), 10.

state support was a professional death sentence. As the computer pioneer Charles Babbage lamented in 1830 in his *Reflections on the Decline of Science in England, and on Some of Its Causes*, “Unless there exist peculiar institutions for the support of such inquirers, or unless the Government directly interfere, the contriver of a thaumatrope may derive profit from his ingenuity, whilst he who unravels the laws of light and vision, on which multitudes of phenomena depend, shall descend unrewarded to the tomb.”¹⁸

To be sure, however, financial and structural independence had its perquisites for scientific and artistic institutions like the Royal Society and the Royal Academy. As Allan Chapman has noted with regards to the former:

Its lack of Royal or Government funding gave it an intellectual independence and freedom from official control which contrasted sharply with bodies such as the Florentine Accademia del Cimento and, later in the 1660s, Louis XIV’s French Académie des Sciences. No rich patron could close the Society down by suddenly withdrawing support, as occurred in Florence in 1667; nor, as happened in Paris, could a powerful minister of state lean on the well-paid Académiciens and encourage them to undertake lines of research in the which the government had a vested interest.¹⁹

With regards to the latter, Holger Hoock has similarly stated:

The Royal Academy also differed markedly from continental academies in the central role that exhibitions played in its organization profile: from the 1780s their commercial success ensured the Academy’s financial, and thus to an extent its political independence. In the administration of virtually all continental academies the local and/or national political authorities had a direct and often crucial say. At least among national

¹⁸ Charles Babbage, *Reflections on the Decline of Science in England, and on Some of Its Causes* (London: B. Fellowes, 1830), 19. The thaumatrope was a popular Victorian toy. A few pages earlier, Babbage had complained in a section entitled “Of National Encouragement” that “the little encouragement which at all previous periods has been afforded by the English Government to the authors of useful discoveries, or of new and valuable inventions, is justified on the following grounds: 1. The public, who consume the new commodity or profit by the new invention, are much better judges of its merit than the government can be. 2. The reward which arises from the sale of the commodity is usually much larger than that which government would be justified in bestowing; and it is exactly proportioned to the consumption, that is, to the want which the public feel for the new article.” See Babbage, *Reflections*, 14.

¹⁹ Allan Chapman, *England’s Leonardo: Robert Hooke and the Seventeenth-Century Scientific Revolution* (Bristol: Institute of Physics Publishing, 2005), 36.

academies, the RA was a rare example of an institution largely independent of direct political interference: it bore no formal relationship to the government of Parliament, and its royal recognition stopped short of a charter, though George III proved a fairly interventionist patron.²⁰

Also unlike its continental counterparts, the Royal Academy began as a secessionist body, formed by a group of artists who had decided to split off from the Society of Artists of Great Britain (established in 1761), which had been incorporated by a Royal Charter in 1765. The Society of Artists of Great Britain would remain the Academy's main rival in the free-for-all of the London art world until the former society's dissolution in 1791.²¹ Thus, the Academy was in essence during its early years one of three private societies (the third being the Free Society of Artists, 1761-1783) competing for the public's attention.²² Indeed, Horace Walpole wrote to Horace Mann on May 6, 1770, "We have at present three exhibitions. . . . The rage to see these exhibitions is so great, that sometimes one cannot pass through the streets where they are. But it is incredible what sums are raised by mere exhibitions of anything; a new fashion, and to enter at which you pay a shilling or half-a-crown."²³

After the demise of the Society of Artists of Great Britain in 1791, the Royal Academy became, in the words of Jon Whiteley, "the only survivor of all previous attempts to form

²⁰ Hoock, *King's Artists*, 28. See also Nikolaus Pevsner, *Academies of Art, Past and Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940; reprint, New York: Da Capo Press, 1973), (page citations are to the reprint edition), 185.

²¹ On the Society of Artists of Great Britain, see Hargraves, "Candidates for Fame."

²² On the Free Society of Artists' relationship to the other two societies, see Hargraves, "Candidates for Fame," esp. 1-3; Hoock, *King's Artists*, 19, 63.

²³ Horace Walpole, *Letters of Horace Walpole, Fourth Earl of Orford*, ed. Peter Cunningham, 9 vols. (Edinburgh: John Grant, 1906), 5:236.

associations for exhibiting modern art in Britain.”²⁴ By 1800, the Royal Academy actively strove to shore up its unique position as sole survivor by seeking state support for historical painting on behalf of its members arguing that historical painting could be useful to the nation commercially.²⁵ As I will discuss, this took shape as a full-fledged campaign to convince the government that state support for the arts was imperative if historical painting, the highest genre according to Academic doctrine, was ever going to flourish in Britain and have a trickle-down effect and improve the standard of design of British manufactures and, therefore, improve trade. As Shee put it in 1805 in his *Rhymes on Art*, the arts can no longer be “left to the influence of ordinary events, turned loose upon society, to fight and scramble, in the rude and revolting contest of coarser occupations,” if they were going to “ever arrive at that perfection which contributes so materially to the permanent glory of a state.”²⁶ Dead set against a free trade in art, however, Shee instead called for a policy of protectionism, for “the balance of trade is indeed (to speak commercially) completely against us; and although the hardy progeny of Commerce and Manufacture . . . are cautiously cradled up in bounties and protecting duties - the tender

²⁴ Jon Whiteley, “Exhibitions of Contemporary Painting in London and Paris, 1760-1860,” in *Saloni, gallerie, musei e loro influenza sullo sviluppo dell’arte dei secoli XIX e XX*, ed. Francis Haskell (Bologna: CLUEB, 1981), 69.

²⁵ Hoock, *King’s Artists*, 228. Solkin, *Painting for Money*, 211, “Unlike the exhibiting societies that had preceded it and that were to remain active (though to diminishing effect) for some two decades yet to come, the Academy was officially committed to promoting the cause of a truly public historical art.”

²⁶ Shee, *Rhymes*, xx. Speaking of another passage in Shee’s *Rhymes*, Kriz, *Idea*, 33-34, stated, “Although it is the arts in general that are invoked . . . it was lack of government sponsorship of history painting that was the key issue. . . . Shee’s poetic paean to the fine arts appeared in 1805, the same year that lotteries were held to dispose of the history paintings which formed John Boydell’s Shakespeare Gallery and Robert Bowyer’s Historic Gallery. Morris Eaves argues that this conjunction of events was not purely accidental – that in fact the failure of Boydell and other publishers to promote history painting through commercial galleries and the market for engravings provided the occasion for artists and writers such as Shee and Prince Hoare (whose *Inquiry into the Cultivation and Present State of the Arts of Design in England* appeared the following year) to campaign for government funding for the arts.” See Eaves, *Counter-Arts Conspiracy*, 84. On Hoare’s *Inquiry*, see below.

offspring of Taste are left helpless, naked, and exposed.”²⁷ However, such protectionist maneuvers on the part of the Royal Academy to safeguard its interests and forge a closer relationship with the state would come to be seen by detractors, like John Martin less as attempts to serve the interests of the growing number of painters in the metropolis and more as attempts by a private society to protect its forty members and inhibit free trade in art.

In this chapter, I will outline the major proposals sponsored by the Royal Academy to obtain government funding for historical painting shortly after the fall of the Society of Artists of Great Britain in 1791. This will include an examination of the involvement of several key Academicians in the establishment in 1805 of a second exhibiting society, the British Institution for Promoting the Fine Arts in the United Kingdom, as an “aid” or complement to the RA so that it could assist the Academy in its attempts to obtain government funding for historical paintings by Academicians.²⁸ I will examine how the initially close relationship between the two societies broke down by 1816 so that the RA no longer came to regard the BI as “its aid,” but as a rival exhibiting society. I then will consider how the following year, Martin turned to the Institution as the only viable alternative to the Academy for exhibiting – and more importantly, selling – his historical landscapes. Finally, I will discuss how, in 1823, Martin and a group of artists, who had

²⁷ Shee, *Rhymes*, xxx. See also Shee, *Rhymes*, lviii, 78-79 n.; Shee, *Elements*, xxi, 107, 157, 330.

²⁸ For use of the term “aid” in reference to the BI, see below. The lack of available commissions, other than for portraits, for those who had received training at the Academy had been a longstanding problem. See Martin Myrone, “‘Over-stocked with Artists of all Sorts’: The State of the Arts 1765-1775,” in his *Bodybuilding: Reforming Masculinities in British Art, 1750-1810* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005), 95-104. Myrone here discussed the Academy’s failed 1772-1773 project to decorate St. Paul’s with religious paintings and quoted Reynolds’ statement of the rationale behind the project to Lord Grantham, “It will certainly be in vain to make Historical Painters if there is no means found out for employing them.” Myrone also quoted William Chambers writing to Grantham after the Bishop of London refused to allow the project to go forward, “At present they [artists] have little or no encouragement, we are over-stocked with Artists of all Sorts, and it will soon be as necessary to have an Hospital for the Support of decayed Vertuosi as it was a few years to establish an Academy to raise them.”

grown dissatisfied with both the Academy and the Institution as the only two societies in the metropolis for showing paintings, helped to establish a third, the Society of British Artists.²⁹ This new society was hailed upon its establishment in some quarters as a “broad, and liberal Society, which may be truly named the genuine republic of arts” and was contrasted in the press with the RA and the BI as being “purely a commonwealth of artists, united for their mutual benefit, in the exhibition and sale of their works.”³⁰ As I will explain, Martin and several others who founded the SBA believed that any government support of the Academy would create unfair competition and spoke out publicly against government protection for the arts in favor of open competition between artists and exhibiting societies.³¹ While it cannot be doubted that Martin had a personal axe to grind with the Academy over the hanging of his paintings and his repeated failure to gain even associate membership in this institution, this chapter will attempt to demonstrate that Martin’s “hope to see a thorough reform, and all such monopolies thrown open” was also based in resentment at the Academy seeking a claim to a monopoly of public funds for its members and, thus, inhibiting free trade in art.³² It will aim to show that one of the main factors that fueled

²⁹ The society exists today as the Royal Society of British Artists (RBA).

³⁰ *European Magazine, and London Review* 84 (August 1823): 151; *Literary Chronicle*, no. 213 (June 14, 1823), 382. Andrew Hemingway, *Landscape Imagery and Urban Culture in Early Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 135, has noted that “the *Chronicle* was an ardent supporter” of the SBA.

³¹ “Society of British Artists,” *Literary Chronicle*, no. 246 (January 31, 1824), 76, “A new body, terming itself the ‘Society of British Artists,’ has been formed, and from which we have reason to expect a splendid exhibition will arise; and, since the professions of this society are those of peace and liberality, the end it seeks open and fair competition, we hail its promised appearance with sincere pleasure and decided approbation.” *Literary Chronicle*, no. 312 (May 7, 1825), 301, “If any proof were wanting of the good the Society of British Artists is calculated to render, it will be found in the vigorous competition to which it has driven the exhibitors at Somerset House.”

³² Martin put his name down for associate membership in 1816, 1820, and 1821. See Martin’s statements in “Report from the Select Committee on Arts and Their Connexion with Manufactures,” *Parliamentary Papers* 1836, ix (568), para. 848, “I was ambitious myself many years ago, when I was a very young man, of becoming an academician, but the desire ceased when I understood how the body was constituted.” He

Martin's hostility to the Academy was that (unlike the earlier Society of Artists of Great Britain) the RA lacked a Royal Charter and, moreover, was in no way, even according to Shee, a public institution, yet was still attempting, in Martin's estimation "a close and narrow monopoly, with the privileges of a Royal charter and power of a public institution, [that] could not but produce a mischievous effect on art itself."³³ This hostility, simmering in the 1810s and 1820s, would culminate in Martin's testifying before the 1835-36 Select Committee on Arts and Manufactures (the subject of Chapter 2), set up in part to investigate the Royal Academy's imminent move to the new National Gallery building in Trafalgar Square that was being built by an Academician (William Wilkins) with public funds.

The Academy's attempts to secure public funding for historical painting on behalf of its members began in earnest during West's presidency in March 1800 when the Academician John Opie published a "Proposal for a Public Memorial of the Naval Glory of Great Britain" in the

also claimed, para. 875, that "in speaking against the academy, I wish it to be understood to apply to the system, and not to the individuals, for I am proud to reckon amongst my friends the most distinguished members of the body, and have to acknowledge on various occasions the kind and generous support they have rendered me." Martin claimed at various points in his career that his quarrel with the Academy was "not with individual members, but with the association itself." See *Illustrated London News* (March 17, 1849), 177. See Shee's statements about Martin's testimony as being rooted in his quarrels with the Academy over the hanging of his paintings and failure to obtain membership in para. 2012-2013.

³³ *Illustrated London News* (March 17, 1849), 177. On the Royal Academy not being a public institution, see Shee, *A Letter to Lord John Russell, Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Home Department, on the Alleged Claim of the Public to be Admitted Gratis to the Exhibition of the Royal Academy* (London: W. Clowes and Sons, 1837), 5, "Although instituted for the promotion of great national objects, and powerfully sustaining those objects, it is not a national establishment. Though rendering important public services, it is not, in any respect, supported or assisted, nor has it ever been supported or assisted, from any public fund. It contains no object of art or article of property which can, in any sense, be termed national, or over the use or disposal of which the public, or their representatives in Parliament, can have any legitimate claim to exercise influence or control." See also Shee, *Letter to Lord John Russell*, 13, "The Royal Academy, my Lord, owe much to their Sovereign, but nothing to their country." Hoock, *King's Artists*, 305, believed that Shee was arguing here that the Academy "was a 'national institution' by virtue of its services and achievements, but did not constitute a 'national establishment' 'responsible to the public or their representatives in Parliament.'"

staunchly nationalist newspaper, the *True Briton*.³⁴ In this proposal, Opie called for the construction in the metropolis of a large circular building, “as nearly on the plan of the Pantheon at Rome as the different designation of it will allow,” to showcase a collection of specially commissioned historical paintings and sculptures honoring British naval victories and heroes “beginning from the remotest periods, and coming gradually down to the present day.”³⁵ It also would display a series of canvases “relative to our trade, commerce, colonization, discoveries, and other subjects connected with, and growing out of, the great power and prosperity of our Navy”; a series of half-length portraits of those men, who “though not of the first class, have deserved well of their country”; a colossal marble group, situated directly beneath the dome, depicting Neptune paying homage to Britannia; and, at the head of the room, a statue of George III. Regarding who would carry out this monumental undertaking, Opie made sure to point out that “happily the Royal Academy can supply, not one only, but many, in each department of art, of ability fully equal to the great end proposed.”³⁶

³⁴ Originally published in the *True Briton*, March 1800; reprinted in Hoare, *Inquiry*, 43-53, and in John Opie, *Lectures on Painting, Delivered at the Royal Academy of Arts: with a Letter on the Proposal for a Public Memorial of the Naval Glory of Great Britain*, ed. Prince Hoare (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees and Orme, 1809), 167-178. Also reprinted as “Letter Addressed to the Editor of ‘The True Briton,’ on the Proposal for Erecting a Public Memorial of the Naval Glory of Great Britain,” *Library of the Fine Arts* 4 (1832), 61-64. The best accounts of the Dome proposal are in Hoock, *King’s Artists*, 276-285; Hoock, “Old Masters and the English School: The Royal Academy of Arts and the Notion of a National Gallery at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century,” *Journal of the History of Collections* 16, no. 1 (2004): 5-7; Alison Yarrington, *The Commemoration of the Hero, 1800-1864: Monuments to the British Victors of the Napoleonic Wars* (New York: Garland, 1988), 338-345.

³⁵ Opie, *Lectures*, 174. On the relationship between Opie’s proposed building and the Panthéon in Paris, see Morris Eaves, *Counter-Arts Conspiracy*, 80-81, “Clearly, Opie was proposing the Gallery of British Honour as a third Pantheon to serve as a public sign that Britain, not France, had inherited the analogy.”

³⁶ Opie, *Lectures*, 174-175. See Hoock, *King’s Artists*, 281-282, for a list of Academicians who he thought might have contributed historical and allegorical paintings if the project had gone ahead.

The following month, Opie read out his proposal in its entirety to the General Assembly of the Royal Academy.³⁷ It was received enthusiastically and given the unanimous backing of his fellow Academicians. On June 21 of that year, the Academy Council resolved that it should be decided at a future meeting of the General Assembly how best to proceed with Opie's plan. Although the plan had not progressed by December 10, as the sculptor John Flaxman found out when he inquired about Opie's proposal in a General Assembly meeting that day, less than two weeks later, Flaxman and several other Academicians had organized a committee to investigate Opie's plan.³⁸ They then spent ten weekends refining and enlarging the proposal.³⁹

At a General Assembly of the Royal Academy on March 2, 1801, Flaxman read out the committee's final report.⁴⁰ It, too, called for "A Dome, or Gallery of National Honour," but not a fixed structure like the one Opie had proposed; instead, it recommended the construction of a building that could be expanded over time with additional wings, to accommodate not only historical paintings and sculptures commemorating naval heroes, but also "our Achievements by Sea and Land, Navigation, Commerce, Colonization, and all other distinguished Native Excellence, with Portraits and Statues of the most celebrated Worthies," past and present, while providing room for those to come.⁴¹ Thus, in theory at least, the committee's expanded plan

³⁷ Royal Academy, General Assembly Minutes, II, 113-121.

³⁸ RA, General Assembly Minutes, II, 133. See also Amelia Opie (John's wife) to Mrs. John Taylor, December 12, 1800, in Cecilia Lucy Brightwell, ed., *Memorials of the Life of Amelia Opie: Selected and Arranged from Her Letters, Diaries, and Other Manuscripts*, 2nd ed. (Norwich: Fletcher & Alexander, 1854), 78, "A committee of Academicians is to meet every Saturday till means are found to execute Mr. Opie's plan for a Naval Pantheon."

³⁹ Hoock, *King's Artists*, 278. The committee met between December 20, 1800 and March 2, 1801. See Royal Academy Archives, Minutes of the Committee on Mr. Opie's Proposition, RAA/GA/8/5.

⁴⁰ RA, General Assembly Minutes, II, 136-144.

⁴¹ RA, General Assembly Minutes, II, 142. Opie's original plan did include leaving empty space in his fixed structure for half-length portraits of future generations of those "not of the first class."

could provide endless commissions to Academicians, as more luminaries appeared on the horizon. In its proposal, the committee of Academicians conjured up visions of economic catastrophe at the hands of Britain's enemies should "Historical Art" remain without state protection.⁴² With the unanimous assent of the Academy, the eight-page proposal warned:

If therefore Historical Art continues without recourse and support, it must naturally perish, and this Country will be deprived of the reputation and honour attendant upon it, as well as the immense advantages and profits derived therefrom in every department of Manufacture and Commerce which depend for their perfection on the Arts of Design. . . .
 . . . it must be observed with regret that the inferior Arts and elegant Manufactures are not in an improving state at present, which must be traced to this cause, that Historical Painting and Sculpture are so totally neglected from which alone they can derive their perfection, the consequence of which is that Britain is purchasing with encreasing ardour, these Articles at great risk and expence from other Countries instead of supplying them with the produce of her own genius and industry, the encrease of this evil threatens the most fatal effects to the Arts of Design as well as all Manufactures and Commerce dependant on them, unless some Public measure be adopted for their preservation.⁴³

This proposal came to naught, however, when it failed to gain the support of the Tory Prime Minister, William Pitt the Younger, who was well-known in Parliament for his advocacy of Adam Smith's principles of free trade.⁴⁴ In his *Rhymes on Art*, Martin Archer Shee, who had served on the committee, did not name Pitt as the recipient of the proposal but said of its failure:

⁴² Alison Yarrington, "Popular and Imaginary Pantheons in Early Nineteenth-Century England," in *Pantheons: Transformations of a Monumental Idea*, eds. Richard Wrigley and Matthew Craske (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2004), 112, "Undoubtedly, both Opie's and Flaxman's motivation here was to promote high art and the Royal Academy at a national level by playing upon patriotic impulses at a time of war; and they were not unaware in this of the ways in which the enemy promoted art at a national level."

⁴³ Royal Academy, General Assembly Minutes, II, 138, 141-142. See also William Ewart's questioning of Shee regarding Academicians' involvement in the Gallery of National Honour proposal in "Report on Arts and Manufactures" (1836), para. 1946, "Did they do this under the sanction of the academy, or under its express orders? – Expressly under the sanction of the academy, who approved of every proposition that was made."

⁴⁴ Thomas James Mathias, *The Pursuits of Literature: A Satirical Poem in Four Dialogues*, 11th ed. (London: T. Becket, 1801), 130, described the political economist Adam Smith as "the great writer on wealth and finance, from whom Mr. Pitt learned his art."

As it is not to be expected, that the private purse of the Sovereign should defray the charges of a plan designed for the attainment of objects peculiarly public and national, we must attribute the unfortunate failure of the Academy's endeavours, in this instance, to the coldness and indifference of those to whose management the treasures of the state were intrusted: who perhaps conceived it no part of their duty to attend to such applications, and thought that the public money (even in so small a portion as was required to effect the plan proposed) might be better employed than in cultivating the flowers of taste, encouraging the productions of art, or stimulating by public honours the achievements of patriotism.⁴⁵

Unlike Shee, however, the Academy's Secretary of Foreign Correspondence, Prince Hoare, singled Pitt out by name as the "great Financier" who had failed to support the proposal, "During the power of Mr. Pitt, in 1801, when the Royal Academicians proposed their plan for a *Gallery of National Honour*, to the formation of which they stated a provision of 5,000*l.* per annum to be at once necessary and adequate, they were informed by that great Financier, that '*It was not then the time* for such an expenditure on the encouragement of the Arts.'"⁴⁶ Deploying an economic argument of art's utility for industry and commerce, Hoare, also said the plan "was recommended by farther considerations of utility, derived from the improvement, consequently to be expected, in all the elegant branches of manufacture, as well as the establishment, amongst us, of several subordinate species of art, hitherto regarded as sources of exclusive revenue to the Continent."⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Shee, *Rhymes*, 80-81 n. Hoock, *King's Artists*, 282, had noted that Shee "had been very active on the Dome committee" and that Shee's preface to *Rhymes on Art* "shows very close analogies with the wording of the Dome proposal."

⁴⁶ Hoare, *Epochs*, 16. Hoare was the son of the painter William Hoare, a founding member of the Royal Academy. He trained at the Royal Academy Schools, studied in Rome under Mengs, and exhibited at the RA until 1785, but gave up painting shortly thereafter and, later in life, set himself up as a playwright. Although Prince Hoare was not an Academician, Peter Funnell, "William Hazlitt, Prince Hoare, and the Institutionalisation of the British Art World," in *Towards a Modern Art World*, ed. Brian Allen (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 147, has said that as Secretary of Foreign Correspondence, Hoare's "central position is clear. He was of the Academy." For more on Hoare's background, see Nancy L. Pressly, *The Fuseli Circle in Rome: Early Romantic Art of the 1770s*, exh. cat. (New Haven: Yale Center for British Art, 1979), 96-98; Hoock, *King's Artists*, 119-123.

⁴⁷ Hoare, *Inquiry*, 42.

Yet despite this failure to obtain government protection, as Morris Eaves has explained, “The Gallery of British Honour was no isolated proposal but one episode in the [Academy’s] continuing effort to locate the polite arts advantageously in the economy.”⁴⁸ This campaign, beginning with the Dome project, can be attributed to the presidency of Benjamin West, who succeeded Sir Joshua Reynolds as President of the Royal Academy in 1792, one year after the fall of the Society of Artists of Great Britain.⁴⁹ As Hoock has explained in his discussion of the Dome proposal, “From the start of West’s presidency, the Academy’s public statements had been giving more prominence to the indirect commercial effects of their national project: it is the Dome proposal . . . that manifests this shift.”⁵⁰ I would rephrase Hoock’s assertion slightly, however, by saying that there was nothing in the statements coming out of the Academy during West’s presidency to suggest that the benefits that state support and protection of the fine arts

⁴⁸ Eaves, *Counter-Arts Conspiracy*, 79. See also Morris Eaves, “The Sister Arts in British Romanticism,” in *The Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism*, ed. Stuart Curran (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 261.

⁴⁹ West held this position until his death in 1820. James Wyatt was briefly made president-elect in December 1805, after West temporarily resigned the position; however, George III never formally approved Wyatt’s presidency. West was re-elected in 1806.

⁵⁰ Hoock, *King’s Artists*, 280. See also Hoock, *King’s Artists*, 72, “Under President West, the RA temporarily put a stronger emphasis on the indirect commercial benefits of its activities and of the promotion of the fine arts in general.” See Benjamin West’s first address as PRA on March 24, 1792, in John Galt, *The Life, Studies, and Works of Benjamin West, Esq., President of the Royal Academy of London*, 2 vols. (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1820), 2:79, “Here ingenious youth are instructed in the art of design; and the instruction acquired in this place, has spread itself through the various manufactures of this country, to which it has given a taste that is able to convert the most common and simple materials into rare and valuable articles of commerce.” Contrast West’s address with Sir Joshua Reynolds, “Discourse 1 (1769),” in *Discourses on Art*, ed. Robert Wark (San Marino, Calif.: Huntington Library, 1959), 13, “An institution like this has often been recommended upon considerations merely mercantile; but an Academy, founded upon such principles, can never effect even its own narrow purposes. If it has an origin no higher, no taste can ever be formed in manufactures; but if the higher Arts of Design flourish, these inferior ends will be answered of course.” Hoock, *King’s Artists*, 70, “In his inaugural discourse, Reynolds warned Academicians that, contrary to what had earlier been stated in proposals for academies, the artistic professions ought not to be organized on commercial principles.” Hoock, *King’s Artists*, 70, argued that “it was difficult to reconcile the disdain for the commercial in academic discourse with the self-image of England and Britain as a commercial nation.”

would have on the country's economy and its manufactures would be indirect. Rather, in an attempt to vie for the attention of its target audience of politicians like Pitt, whom Shee described in the couplet, "Art's mild complaint still sleeps in Power's ear/And lavish ministers are misers here," the Academy stressed the economic importance of the fine arts to a commercial nation like Britain.⁵¹

For instance, in 1802 during the Peace of Amiens, West was visiting the Louvre, accompanied by the Whig politician Charles James Fox and the banker Sir Francis Baring. While walking through the galleries, admiring the "vast collection of trophies" Napoleon had assembled, West

felt extremely sorrowful when he reflected, that hitherto the British government had done nothing decidedly with a view to promote the cultivation of those arts, which may justly be said to constitute the olive wreath on the brows of every great nation. . . . Mr. West endeavoured to explain in what manner he considered the cultivation of the fine arts of the utmost importance even in a commercial point of view to England.⁵²

According to West's biographer, John Galt, the effect of the president's economic argument on Fox was immediate; Fox, who would die a few years later, assured him "that if ever I have it in my power to influence our government to promote the arts, the conversation that we have had to-day shall not be forgotten."⁵³ Baring, who would go on to become one of the founding Directors of the British Institution, "also concurred in opinion, that it was really become an imperious duty, on the part of the British nation, to do something for a class of art that, undoubtedly tended to improve the beauty, and multiply the variety of manufactures, independently of all monumental

⁵¹ Shee, *Rhymes*, 80.

⁵² Galt, *Life of West*, 1:180.

⁵³ Galt, *Life of West*, 1:181.

considerations.”⁵⁴ But according to Hoare (writing in 1813), Fox, like Pitt and other statesmen, was never truly an enthusiastic supporter of government sponsorship of the arts, and neither appeared to “have felt any strong motive for extending protection to them, or fostering their growth in England. . . . The joint authority of Fox and Pitt against any proposition whatsoever, seems to end all contest, and overset all hope. Divided as those great men were on most public subjects, must not the point, in which they unite, be irrefragable?”⁵⁵

West, evidently, had been ruminating on the benefits that the protection and cultivation of the fine arts could have on the economy and manufactures years before his trip to the Louvre. In 1790, shortly before he assumed the presidency, he exhibited at the Royal Academy *A Sketch: Genius Calling Forth Arts and Sciences; Part of a Design in the Queen’s Lodge, Windsor, Intended to Show the Utility They Are of to This, as a Commercial Nation* (fig. 2), known by 1805 and today as *Genius Calling Forth the Fine Arts to Adorn Manufactures and Commerce*.⁵⁶ This sketch was a preparatory work for an elaborate decorative program consisting of nine designs for a ceiling in the Queen’s Lodge, a new building at Windsor designed by William Chambers that was used as the Royals’ primary residence from 1778 until 1804.⁵⁷ The centerpiece of this ensemble was *Genius Calling Forth the Fine Arts*, in which Genius, the most prominent figure in the composition, reaches out to the three reclining female allegorical figures

⁵⁴ Galt, *Life of West*, 1:181.

⁵⁵ Hoare, *Epochs*, 17.

⁵⁶ See “A Correct List of the Works of Mr. West” in “Biographical Sketch of Benjamin West, Esq. President of the Royal Academy, &c. &c.,” *Universal Magazine* 3 (May 1805), 527. See also West’s title for the sketch in his 1801 account in Galt, *Life of West*, 2:214, “By His Majesty’s commands I made nine designs for the ceiling in the Queen’s Lodge, Windsor, for Mr. Haas to work the ceilings from. Viz. 1. Genius inspiring the fine arts to adorn the useful arts and sciences. 2. Agriculture. 3. Manufactures. 4. Commerce. 5. Botany. 6. Chemistry. 7. Celestial Science. 8. Terrestrial Science; and 9. To adorn Empire.”

⁵⁷ The lodge and the ceiling decorations were torn down in 1823.

in the bottom right closest to him in size and in proximity representing painting, sculpture, and architecture. Surrounding this panel were emblematic depictions of agriculture, manufactures, and commerce and other useful sciences that received benefits from the cultivation of the fine arts.⁵⁸ Helmut von Erffa and Allen Staley have remarked on “the commercial orientation of the allegorical message” of the series of paintings and the fact that they “are of considerable interest as allegorical celebrations of up-to-date scientific, technological, and commercial concerns. On a modest scale and with a frankly decorative purpose, the program echoes aspects of James Barry’s slightly earlier series of huge paintings devoted to the *Progress of Human Culture*” in the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce.⁵⁹ However, unlike Barry, West only made the sketches, which were paid for by the king, while Barry executed the six enormous paintings that make up the *Progress of Human Culture* at his own expense. Although West’s sketches were in oil, the ceiling decorations (1789; destroyed 1823) were in fact executed by a little known figure in the employment of the king named Haas in a style of colored sand painting called marmotinto, more associated with manufacture than fine art.

⁵⁸ John Britton and Edward Wedlake Brayley, *The Beauties of England and Wales*, 18 vols. (London: Printed by Thomas Maiden, Sherbourn-Lane, for Vernor & Hood, et al., 1801-1816), 1:260, “In the centre, in an oval, is Genius reviving the arts. At the corners are the emblematical representations of Agriculture, Manufacture, Commerce, and Riches, with appropriate symbols. In the intermediate compartments are delineations of astronomy, navigation, electricity, geography, fortification, gunnery, chemistry, and botany, executed in imitation of basso relievo. The surrounding ornaments are festoons of oak leaves, interwoven with roses, lilies, and thistles; the arms of the Sovereign, and other devices.”

⁵⁹ Helmut von Erffa and Allen Staley, *The Paintings of Benjamin West* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986), 90-93. After discussing Barry’s series, John Barrell, *Political Theory*, 199, remarked that Barry had produced “a theory of art by which history painting could be claimed to be adequate to represent all the moral activities of a modern commercial society.” Of Barry’s unprofitable devotion to historical painting, Shee, *Elements of Art*, 164 n., said, “He was an injudicious trader, whose commodities, though good in their kind, were brought to the wrong market; and though he found out his error, he disdained to change his cargo, or conform to the prejudices of those, whom he thought it his duty to direct, and his privilege to supply.” On Barry, see William L. Pressly, *The Life and Art of James Barry* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981); Tom Dunne, ed., *James Barry, 1741-1806: “The Great Historical Painter,”* exh. cat. (Cork: Crawford Art Gallery, 2005); Tom Dunne and William L. Pressly, eds., *James Barry, 1741-1806: History Painter* (Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate, 2010).

Marmotinto was a recent invention of the king's "table decker," Benjamin Zobel, who had trained in a Bavarian design school, and was derived from a fashionable method of decorating dinner tables in colored sand or marble dust to imitate oil painting.⁶⁰ Therefore, by taking on this commission, it can be said that West was putting his money where his mouth is by promoting the utility of the fine arts to manufacture both in the literal and allegorical sense. Yet in showing "the needs of a modern nation" in this series, as von Erffa has remarked, in form and content "nothing is more expressive of the transitional character of the eighteenth century than this ceiling."⁶¹ It also expresses the shift away from the civic humanist discourse that would take place under West's presidency two years after he exhibited the sketch, for as Hoock has pointed out:

The public rhetoric and arguments with which the RA courted political support and justified its activities from the 1790s mark a subtle but significant shift in its contributions to the discourse on an English school. For under President West the RA moved from solely deploying the civic-humanist to also using the commercial argument which it had hitherto left so carefully to the entrepreneurs of the art world, such as owners of private galleries and print sellers. The Academy's shift in rhetoric helped facilitate the state's acknowledgement of the artistic professions' needs.⁶²

George III's patronage of West was exceptional for the time, but it also proved to be evanescent.⁶³ In the 1790s, the financial support West had been receiving from the king became

⁶⁰ On Zobel, see Shearjashub Spooner, *A Biographical Dictionary of the Fine Arts: Being Memoirs of the Lives and Works of Eminent Painters, Engravers, Sculptors, and Architects, from the Earliest Ages to the Present Time, Alphabetically Arranged and Condensed from the Best Authorities*, 2 vols. (New York: J. W. Bouton, 1865), 2:1125

⁶¹ Helmut von Erffa, "Benjamin West at the Height of His Career," *American Art Journal* 1 (Spring 1969): 20-21.

⁶² Hoock, *King's Artists*, 231-232.

⁶³ On West's exceptionalism in terms of royal patronage, see "Benjamin West, and Progress of Fine Arts in England," *Edinburgh Monthly Review* 5 (January 1821): 39, "Even the influence of his late majesty seems to have been inconsiderable, as his patronage of Mr. West, liberal as it was, was more the result of personal regard for the artist, than of any enlarged notions with respect to art, and was conferred rather in his private capacity than as the head of state. Had the king, instead of confining his patronage to one individual, however meritorious as an artist, called in all the talent of the British school to his service, the decorations he projected [at Windsor] would have been much more interesting from their variety of

sporadic and, by 1801, evaporated completely, forcing him to abandon another series of paintings illustrating the progress of Revealed Religion for the Royal Chapel at Windsor. On May 26, 1804, Joseph Farington recorded in his *Diary* that, “West spoke of His situation & said that notwithstanding the encouragement He had had for 32 years past [from George III], were His life to be again past His choice wd. be *to depend upon the public rather than on an Individual*, having experienced how much apprehension & difficulty is inseparable from that situation.”⁶⁴ Due to the king’s chronically late payments during the 1790s and West’s loss of his annual stipend in 1801, West indicated to Farington several times between 1798 and 1804 that he was seriously considering returning to America.⁶⁵

It was during this time of financial uncertainty for West that he, Farington and several other Academicians, including the painter Robert Smirke and the future President of the Royal Academy, Thomas Lawrence, met with several gentlemen connoisseurs – including West’s companion at the Louvre, Sir Francis Baring – at West’s home between March and May of 1805 to discuss a plan hatched by the philanthropist Sir Thomas Bernard to establish an institution that would benefit Academicians by encouraging British historical painting.⁶⁶ Although not discussed as such by Eaves, I will argue in the next section that the involvement of West and other Academicians in establishing the British Institution for Promoting the Fine Arts in the United

character, and, in a national point of view, of much greater advantage in stimulating genius and diffusing taste.” See also Nancy L. Pressly, *Revealed Religion: Benjamin West’s Commissions for Windsor Chapel and Fonthill Abbey*, exh. cat. (San Antonio, Texas: San Antonio Museum of Art, 1983), esp. 15-25.

⁶⁴ Joseph Farington, *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, eds. Kenneth Garlick, Angus Macintyre, and Kathryn Cave, 16 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978-1998), 6:2331 (May 26, 1804).

⁶⁵ Farington, *Diary*, 3:1106 (December 3, 1798), 6:2339 (May 31, 1804).

⁶⁶ Peter Funnell, “The London Art World and Its Institutions,” in *London - World City 1800-1840*, ed. Celina Fox, exh. cat. (New Haven: Yale University Press, in association with the Museum of London, 1992), 157-158.

Kingdom was the next episode in the effort by the Academy to convince the government to financially support British artists, namely Academicians.⁶⁷ This will hopefully dispel the erroneous notion that “no artist had any share in its founding or its management.”⁶⁸ It also will demonstrate that Academicians’ involvement in founding the British Institution in 1805 was so that the latter’s wealthy and influential members could lobby the government on behalf of the Academy for funding for historical paintings after the Academy’s own Dome project had failed to win government backing.⁶⁹ I also will demonstrate that, until hostilities broke out into the open between the Academy and the Institution in 1815, when the BI established the first Old Master exhibitions, the two exhibiting societies regarded each other, albeit somewhat warily, as collaborators in the campaign to obtain state aid for British historical painting by Academicians, such as West. I then will conclude by discussing how the Institution became perceived by 1816 by those within and those without the Royal Academy to be a rival society, which provided the

⁶⁷ Eaves’s earlier article “Inquiry into the Real and Imaginary Obstructions to the Acquisition of the Arts in England: The Comedy of the English School of Painting” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 52 (Winter 1989): 134, did link the founding of the British Institution with Opie’s gallery proposal in terms of patriotism, describing the Institution as providing “institutional reinforcement for the program of the Royal Academy with a noticeably stronger emphasis on British nationalism.” However, he did not discuss Academicians’ involvement in establishing the British Institution and the collaborative effort between the two societies to obtain government sponsorship of historical painting.

⁶⁸ Ann Bermingham, “Elegant Females and Gentleman Connoisseurs: The Commerce in Culture and Self-Image in Eighteenth-Century England,” in *The Consumption of Culture, 1600-1800: Image, Object, Text*, eds. Ann Bermingham and John Brewer (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 503. For other examples of this view, see below. One particularly lengthy meeting at West’s home is described in Farington, *Diary*, 7:2556-2558 (May 14, 1805), where “the following resolution was passed today. Resolved, That Mr. West be requested as soon as He has obtained His Majesty’s approbation of the proposals for the British Institution for promoting the fine arts in the United Kingdom to submit the outline to the consideration of the Council of the Royal Academy. – Signed by desire of the Meeting, Thos. Barnard, May 14th 1805.”

⁶⁹ Hoare, *Inquiry*, 54-55 n., however, refused to give the Dome project up for dead and said of the new Institution’s relationship with the Academy, “The relative connexion which the *Gallery of British Honour* would hold with the Royal Academy and the British Institution, is obvious. These two would successively afford the truest test of the talents fitted to adorn such a national trophy.” On Hoare’s continuing support for the Dome proposal, see Hoock, *King’s Artists*, 282.

only real alternative for non-member oil painters, like John Martin, who had become disgruntled with the Academy to exhibit their canvases – that is, until the foundation of the Society of British Artists by Martin and others in 1823.⁷⁰

Following months of meetings between Academicians and gentlemen connoisseurs at West's house, a circular was approved on June 18, 1805, seeking subscriptions for a new British Institution for Promoting the Fine Arts in the United Kingdom.⁷¹ At the same time, the fledgling Institution's bylaws were approved with the first stating that the BI's purpose was not to encourage art that merely amused, but art that would increase the coffers of government by serving the needs of British industry:

The primary object of the BRITISH INSTITUTION, under HIS MAJESTY'S PATRONAGE, is to encourage and reward the talents of the Artists of the United Kingdom; so as to improve and extend our manufactures, by that degree of taste and elegance of design, which are to be exclusively derived from the cultivation of the Fine Arts; and thereby to increase the general prosperity and resources of the Empire. It is conceived, that such an institution is of peculiar importance to the United Kingdom at the present moment; when efforts are making in different parts of Europe to promote the Arts of Painting, Sculpture, and Design, by great national establishments, and thereby to wrest from us those advantages, which can only be retained by a pre-eminence in the Fine Arts.⁷²

⁷⁰ Some of the exhibiting societies for works in other media that existed around this time included the Society of Engravers (1802), the Society of Painters in Water Colours (1804), and the New Society of Painters in Miniature and Water-Colours (1807).

⁷¹ For the full text of the circular, see Thomas Smith, *Recollections of the British Institution, for Promoting the Fine Arts in the United Kingdom* (London: Simpkin & Marshall, 1860), 8-9. Farington also recorded in his *Diary*, 7:2557 (May 14, 1805), "Mr. Barnard being left with Smirke, Lawrence, & myself I told him that I thought that part of the introductory paper which described the political advantages derived from the arts ought to be preserved, as it went to shew to the public the necessity of doing something for the support of an object which went much farther than mere amusement." According to Jordana Pomeroy, "Creating a National Collection: The National Gallery's Origins in the British Institution," *Apollo* 148 (August 1998): 45, although "the Directors never said as much, money acted as the catalyst in their plan for improving a native school of art and the public's taste."

⁷² *An Account of the British Institution for Promoting the Fine Arts in the United Kingdom, Containing a Copy of the By-laws, a List of the Subscribers, etc.* (London: privately printed, 1805), 3. Ann Pullan has also said that, in the circular, the "patronage of the fine arts is represented as being central to the economic welfare and warfare of the nation" and that the founders "envisaged the promotion of art as an essential component for the fulfillment of Britain's imperial destiny as a commercial and manufacturing

The wording of this bylaw is clearly couched in nationalistic and protectionist terms reminiscent of the language used by the committee of Academicians charged with considering Opie's Dome plan in its eight-page proposal four years earlier. As in the Dome project, the ultimate desideratum of the British Institution was to obtain government funding for historical painters. Although the Institution was supported from the beginning – and would continue to be so supported until its breakup in 1867 – primarily by subscriptions from its wealthy patrons and members consisting of the nobility and gentry, such private fundraising was intended to be only an “important first step . . . till the grand purpose of its first principle be established and made permanent by adequate provision from the state, to ensure its full benefits to the country and posterity.”⁷³ Indeed, after the first exhibition of the British Institution was held in 1806, Farington recorded in his diary, “Mr. Barnard [sic] I conversed with. . . . This respected the British Institution. He expressed His hope that it wd. go on, in which I cordially joined, . . . He seemed to signify that He trusted something would yet be done to support it, evidently meaning by *Government*.”⁷⁴ The following November, Farington also wrote down some cryptic snippets of a conversation with West, for whom the “British Institution supported by Government engross attention.”⁷⁵

nation.” See Ann Pullan, “Public Goods or Private Interests? The British Institution in the Early Nineteenth Century,” in *Art in Bourgeois Society, 1790-1850*, eds. Andrew Hemingway and William Vaughan (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 34.

⁷³ Statement by the Directors, quoted in David Hughson, *London; Being an Accurate History and Description of the British Metropolis and its Neighborhood . . .*, 6 vols. (London: J. Stratford, 1805-1809), 4:339-340. Hoare, *Epochs*, 211 also wrote that the plan of the BI “smooths [sic] and prepares the way for the action of the Government, whenever it shall deign to assume the active patronage of the more elevated efforts of Art.”

⁷⁴ Farington, *Diary*, 7:2745-2746 (May 3, 1806).

⁷⁵ Farington, *Diary*, 8:2907 (November 15, 1806).

However, one of the original plans for government support of historical painting devised by Bernard during the planning stages of the British Institution, and endorsed by the Academicians West and Lawrence, would have turned the Academy's own annual exhibition from being what Solkin has called "a highly profitable spectacle and a marketplace for expensive luxury goods," not into what Patricia Mainardi has called an *exposition* of "pictures to see," but into an *exhibition* of "pictures to sell" to the government.⁷⁶ According to Farington, writing in July 1805:

Mr. Barnard said He had no doubt but next year Government would be easily induced to grant £3000 a year to purchase modern works for the purpose of forming a gallery. – It was a question whether *Commissions* should be given to Artists, or such pictures selected as may be painted & produced for publick view. – The latter was by West and Lawrence thought best. – Mr. Barnard said perhaps it ought to be a condition that works exhibited at the Royal Academy shd. be objects for selection and purchase, with Government money; and he had no doubt that in addition £1000 a year might be given by the *Institution* for such purpose which might be laid out in purchasing works which *might* or *not* have been exhibited at the Royal Academy.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ David H. Solkin, "This Great Mart of Genius': The Royal Academy Exhibitions at Somerset House, 1780-1836," in *Art on the Line: The Royal Academy Exhibitions at Somerset House, 1780-1836*, ed. David H. Solkin (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), 8. See Mainardi, *End of the Salon*, esp. Chapter 1, "Pictures to See and Pictures to Sell," 9-35, for an explanation of the difference between a French *exposition* of "pictures to see" and an English *exhibition* of "pictures to sell." For a mid-eighteenth-century description of "pictures to see" in France versus "pictures to sell" in England, see *The Present State of the Arts in England* (London: Printed for J. Nourse, 1755), 123-124, "The inhabitants of London amuse themselves with going to see the goods exposed to sale, just as the people amuse themselves at Paris in the great hall [the Salon], when the performances of the artists of the academy are exposed to public view." On Rouquet's remark, Hargraves, "*Candidates for Fame*," 7, has noted, "While the people of both cities enjoyed viewing art, French audiences thronged to see the latest modern art in the Louvre palace, whereas the British inspected Old Masters in commercial auction houses."

⁷⁷ Farington, *Diary*, 7:2592-2593 (July 21, 1805). Farington, *Diary*, 7:2596 (July 27, 1805), also recorded that one of the Directors, William Smith, "said He had spoke to Mr. Abbot the Speaker of the House of Commons on the subject of Parliament granting to the Royal Academy a Sum of money in aid of that Institution to purchase fine pictures &c. – Mr. Abbot said that upon a proper representation of their wants He had no doubt but Parliament would grant what might be necessary." See also Farington, *Diary*, 7:2749 (May 6, 1806), "Mr. Barnard, at the Academy, on Saturday, told Northcote that the Great Men Subscribers to the British Institution propose to move Government to grant a sum annually, perhaps £5000 a yr., to support the Institution and to form a School viz: a Collection of British Art. Northcote rejoiced to hear it, & sd. to Mr. Barnard 'Your Statue will be found in the midst of it' – to which Mr. B. replied 'then it should be designed by you'."

As Mainardi has argued, a similar decision the year before (1804) by Dominique-Vivant Denon, director of French museums under Napoleon, was “of unparalleled consequence for the future of history painting” in that country.⁷⁸ Denon had persuaded Napoleon in 1804 that the French state should purchase finished works directly from the Salon, rather than continue to give commissions to Academicians, as had been the tradition. As she has said, “In this one gesture, the Salon became a store, and artists became free-market small producers,” representing a movement away from traditional, eighteenth-century models of patronage towards nineteenth-century free-market capitalism.⁷⁹ In an instant, the Salon went from being an exposition of government-commissioned “pictures to see” (public didactic art) to being an exhibition of “pictures to sell” (art as merchandise).⁸⁰ Thus, despite their best intentions to raise British painting above commodity status, the inclination of West, Lawrence, and Bernard to have the government select pictures for purchase from among those “painted & produced for publick view” at the Academy (pictures to sell), rather than have “*Commissions . . .* be given to Artists” for historical paintings (pictures to see), only underscored the misguidedness and futility of their attempts to escape being mired in the dynamics of free-market capitalism.

Although Academicians were excluded from membership in the British Institution, this was not because the wealthy connoisseurs and collectors who served as the Institution’s Governors and Directors wished to assert their authority over professional artists, as has often

⁷⁸ Mainardi, *End of the Salon*, 14.

⁷⁹ Mainardi, *End of the Salon*, 14.

⁸⁰ Mainardi, *End of the Salon*, 14.

been claimed.⁸¹ Rather, according to Farington, it was a well known fact among the planners (Academicians and gentlemen connoisseurs included) that “it was the wish of His Majesty that *Artists* should not have any concern with the management of the British Institution.”⁸² In fact, the Royal Academicians involved in the planning stages of the BI pushed to keep artists out of the management of the British Institution, because, as Farington and Smirke told Bernard, “It would be best to proceed in their business witht. *Artists being concerned in it* by which means we should avoid the risque of an obstacle from the King being moved against it.”⁸³ Farington further believed “it would have been better to have had *the meetings* at the House of one of the Gentlemen who have signed the paper [delivered to the King by West asking for his approval of the BI] and that the Artists should not so have appeared in it as to make it [at] all necessary to communicate the scheme to the King till it should be finally settled.”⁸⁴ Farington’s fear that

⁸¹ Bermingham, “Elegant Females,” 503, “By excluding artists, the founders of the British Institution signaled their ability as connoisseurs and gentlemen to rise above the petty politics of professional faction in order to form impartial aesthetic judgments and guide the taste of the nation at this critical time.” Hooch, *King’s Artists*, 63, argued that “in 1805, connoisseurs established the British Institution to reassert their position in the struggle over the right to control the art world, and especially the frameworks for the public viewing of modern productions.” See also Pears, *Discovery of Painting*, 206; Funnell, “London Art World,” 158-160. Funnell briefly mentioned Academicians’ involvement in the planning stages, but did not discuss the fact that Academicians were the ones who pushed for the exclusion of artists from membership.

⁸² Farington, *Diary*, 7:2564 (May 30, 1805). See also Farington, *Diary*, 7:2548 (May 2, 1805), when Farington stated, “I suggested that it [royal patronage] was likely to be adopted and as beneficial to the arts, *but not to state it to Him as something that waited for His Royal approbation*, for if that were the case, & His Majesty should have had it already misrepresented to him, He might at one suppress it by disaproving [sic] it.” Farington, *Diary*, 7:2554 (May 10, 1805), “Should the king entertain an unfavorable impression of it many will discountenance it.” Shee, *Rhymes*, xlv, said that “his Majesty’s approbation of their plan, which they have been so fortunate to obtain, is an additional security, that the superstructure will be both useful and ornamental to their country.” See also Funnell, “London Art World,” 158.

⁸³ Farington, *Diary*, 7:2560 (May 18, 1805).

⁸⁴ Farington, *Diary*, 7:2559 (May 17, 1805).

Academics' involvement in the scheme would displease George III proved to be well-founded because:

when it was first proposed to the King to sanction the establishment of the British Institution with his patronage, he made some objection, conceiving that it was likely to interfere with the Royal Academy, which he justly considered with the partiality of a parent. But on Mr. West explaining to him that the two institutions were very different in their objects, the Academy being formed for the instruction of pupils, and the other for the encouragement of artists arrived at maturity in their profession, His Majesty readily consented to receive the deputation of the association appointed to wait on him in form to solicit his patronage.⁸⁵

Therefore, it could not have been a surprise to Academicians to find that they were excluded from membership in the British Institution, given what I have just stated and the fact that West, Farington, and Lawrence – three of the Academy's key power brokers at the time – all helped draft “the *wording* of the *exception* against Artists.”⁸⁶

Nonetheless, the exclusion of artists from membership in the BI was not absolute, since West, as President of the Royal Academy, was made an honorary member.⁸⁷ The Academy and the Institution were initially so intertwined that in 1807 West and Farington argued over which one of them had been responsible for bringing the society into existence. West, for instance, “assumed to Himself being the credit of having occasioned the establishment of the British Institution,” telling Farington that “while He was in France [during the Peace of Amiens, see above] He saw such advances in Art made there that unless something should be done in this

⁸⁵ Galt, *Life of West*, 2:185.

⁸⁶ Farington, *Diary*, 7:2566 (June 2, 1805). For further discussion among Academicians about this subject, see Farington, *Diary*, 7:2564-2566 (May 30-June 3, 1805).

⁸⁷ Farington, *Diary*, 7:2572 (June 9, 1805); Susan Rather, “Benjamin West, John Galt, and the Biography of 1816,” *Art Bulletin* 86 (2004): 330.

country we shd. be behind them and this had caused Him to propose this institution.”⁸⁸ Farington took exception to this, and “told Constable *I* might with as good a right claim the merit of being the author of it, for I was present with Mr. West when Mr. Bernard the real author of it, read His Proposal for forming it.”⁸⁹

Thus, from the outset, the British Institution was not regarded by the Royal Academy as a rival society, but as a complementary organization. Moreover, the Institution’s fourth bylaw assured that its annual exhibition of modern British art would be timed so as not to compete with the Academy’s exhibition.⁹⁰ In addition, this rule made it clear that a preference would be given at the Institution’s own exhibition of works by “living British artists” to works previously shown at the Academy.⁹¹

⁸⁸ Farington, *Diary*, 8:3153 (December 1, 1807). According to Galt, *Life of West*, 2:181-182, when West returned from his trip to Paris, he “endeavoured to set on foot the formation of a society, which should have the encouragement of the fine arts for its object, and thought that government might be induced to give it pecuniary assistance. Sir Thomas Barnard took up the idea with great zeal.”

⁸⁹ Farington, *Diary*, 8:3153-3154 (December 1, 1807).

⁹⁰ Bylaw 4 in *Account of the British Institution*, 3, “The British Institution will be shut up during their annual [the Academicians’] exhibition.” As Francis Haskell, *The Ephemeral Museum: Old Master Paintings and the Rise of the Art Exhibition* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), 50, has noted, the whole *raison d’être* of the British Institution was “that of supporting modern British art.” The phrase “modern British art” was commonly used throughout the nineteenth century to signify British art from Hogarth on. For instance, Tim Barringer has noted in his *Reading the Pre-Raphaelites* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 89, that “in 1858, the Pre-Raphaelites and a number of their associates founded the Hogarth Club, an independent exhibiting society, intended, in Hunt’s words, ‘to do homage to the stalwart founder of modern British art’.” It also was used as a means for contemporary British artists to distinguish their work from that of the Old Masters. See Philo-Artes, “On the More Effectual Promotion of the Fine Arts,” *Library of the Fine Arts* 3 (June 1832), 498, which implored the nobility to give up “the rage for collecting the works of *the old black masters*” so that “the thousands expended by noblemen on the trash of the Continent would flow into the right channels, of supporting the superior geniuses of modern British art.”

⁹¹ Joseph Farington, “Memoirs of the Life of Sir Joshua Reynolds,” in *The Literary Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds, Kt.*, corrected 5th ed., ed. Edmund Malone, 3 vols. (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1819), 1:cclxiii. See Bylaw 4 in *Account of the British Institution*, 3.

Writing in 1806 in his *An Inquiry into the Requisite Cultivation and Present State of the Arts of Design in England*, Prince Hoare declared that “the British Institution, in its recent establishment, liberally and judiciously blends the interests of the Royal Academy with its own.”⁹² While the Academy was to continue providing its students with training in drawing from the antique and the life, “the Institution would act principally as an extension of the Academy by providing a practical outlet for the education given to students in the Academy schools.”⁹³ West, who would briefly resign the presidency of the Royal Academy in December 1805, due to a fight for power with the architect James Wyatt, even told Farington on July 21, 1805, that he felt “excessive disgust at the state of the Academy, & said He looked to the *new Institution* for everything, and that the Royal Academy would be left a mere drawing school.”⁹⁴ Although some Academicians, like Henry Fuseli, at the outset “thought the Plan promised little,” Farington “told him in my opinion, it promised everything, if the peevishness & jealousies of Artists does not

⁹² Hoare, *Inquiry*, 124. He also wrote in a chapter entitled “Of the Patronage Derived from the British Institution” in his Hoare, *Epochs*, 205, published eight years after the BI’s founding that “the two Establishments, of the Royal Academy, and the British Institution, have brought Painting to a high degree of skill, and pictures to a high price. It remains, that the Art should meet the protecting favour of a Statesman.”

⁹³ Peter Fullerton, “Patronage and Pedagogy: The British Institution in the Early Nineteenth Century,” *Art History* 5 (March 1982): 61-62. Fullerton went on to say, “at the very least it might assist artists to sell their works and at best it might answer the long-felt need to encourage and reward the moderns financially and make possible access to otherwise secreted old masters.” Despite these remarks, Fullerton agreed with the orthodox argument that the RA and BI were locked in competition from the beginning, e.g. “The Institution was no foolhardy competitor.”

⁹⁴ Farington, *Diary*, 7:2592 (July 21, 1805). Two days before, Farington, *Diary*, 7:2591, recorded that he had passed, “the most unpleasant evening I ever did in the Royal Academy in the midst of party spirit & *personal attacks* & sneering remarks.” After writing of the conflicts over appointments for the Professor of Painting and the position of Keeper, Farington wrote in Farington, *Diary*, 7:2595 (July 26, 1805), “To such a state is the Academy reduced, more divided than ever.” Farington, *Diary*, 7:2757 (May 11, 1806) recorded a frank conversation with West that reveals just how poisonous the atmosphere at the Academy had become for West, “For Himself, He added, that He had by withdrawing himself secured his own comfort. He could now wake in the morning without the unpleasant consideration of having those people to meet in the evening, - to him it had been a happy release.”

prevent the good effects.”⁹⁵ That “everything” included, by 1806, access for RA students to copy Old Master paintings (something the Academy woefully lacked) from the collections of the Institution’s patrons.⁹⁶ It also included prizes to aspiring historical painters in the form of large cash premiums and bounties.⁹⁷ The use of cash prizes for historical paintings was not meant to be an end unto itself, however, but the first step toward convincing the state to step in and

⁹⁵ Farington, *Diary*, 7:2559 (May 17, 1805). See also Farington, *Diary*, 7:2578 (June 28, 1805) for portrait painters’ misgivings about the British Institution.

⁹⁶ Pomeroy, “Creating a National Collection,” 42, and Pomeroy, “Collecting the Past to Create a Future: The Old Masters, Artists, and Patrons in Early Nineteenth-Century England” (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1996), 184. Smith, *Recollections*, 53, quoting the Directors, “By these means, they have in a great degree encouraged those young men of genius, who are desirous of devoting their talents to the higher and more useful branches of art, and have supplied the means of instruction and improvement to Students on their quitting the Schools of the Royal Academy.” Shee, *Elements*, 25 n., “That part of the plan of the British Institution which offers to the student an opportunity, so much at his ease, to profit by the works of the old masters, is particularly entitled to commendation. It supplies a want which has long been felt.” Hoare, *Epochs*, 186, “The principal inadequacy, therefore, of the Royal Academy to that sphere of instruction, which the Institution is otherwise well calculated to fill, consists in the want of a Gallery furnished with original Pictures, for the study of the pupils; in the want of (at least a few) original Statues; of a better furnished Library, both in Books and Engravings; of Models in Architecture; and of a larger and more commodious space for proper study from the collection of Plaster-Casts.” Hoare, *Epochs*, 210, “The original Resolutions of the Establishment announce a path of decided utility to the interests of the Country. They proposed the institution of such a school of Painting, as might forward and improve the communications of that Art with the manufactures of the Country; and in this was deservedly implied the task of ‘extending and increasing the beneficial effects of the Royal Academy.’” Johann David Passavant, *Tour of a German Artist in England: with Notices of Private Galleries, and Remarks on the State of Art*, 2 vols. (London: Saunders and Otley, 1836), 1:59, “Another great advantage to art in general is also derived, by its thus affording the means of copying the old masters; a circumstance formerly very difficult of attainment.” William Sandby, *The History of the Royal Academy of Arts from its Foundation in 1768 to the Present Time, with Biographical Notices of All the Members*, 2 vols. (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts & Green, 1862), 1: 273, “The school of the British Institution was supplemental to that of the Academy, and was formed by obtaining the loan of good pictures by old masters, to be copied by the [RA’s] students. It was obviously not in the power of the Royal Academy to form such a collection of paintings as would have been necessary for this purpose.” West is even depicted at the British Institution among much younger students copying Rembrandt’s *The Mill* in a drawing (1879.0614.757) by A. E. Chalon now in the British Museum. Although the BM dates the drawing to 1805, the Old Master school did not open until 1806. Moreover, Farington, *Diary*, 8:2909 (November 18, 1806), recorded that West was at the BI, copying Rembrandt’s painting, on the day he made this diary entry.

⁹⁷ Premiums for excellence were distributed beginning in 1808. For a list of winners and prize amounts by year, see Smith, *Recollections*, 134-135. See also Fullerton, “Patronage and Pedagogy,” 65.

sponsor the kind of large-scale, public historical painting long advocated by the Academy by setting an example of liberal patronage for the state to follow.

Shee, who would later also take credit for founding the BI, initially expressed some concern at the time of the Institution's establishment:

should the government hold itself exonerated in consequence, from all interference in their favour. The efforts of individuals may do much to keep alive the spirit of the Arts among us . . . but the protection of the state only, can invigorate their existence, or animate them to those ennobling exertions which constitute the triumph of an age, and which only can be deemed correspondent with the other splendid achievements of this great empire.⁹⁸

However, by 1809, Shee overcame those reservations and wrote in his *Elements* that, through their example and efforts, the Institution's members "will add new layers to the machine which they have so honourably set in motion, and at length, stir those powers of the state, which have

⁹⁸ Shee, *Rhymes*, xlvi-xlviii. Several decades later, Shee, when President of the Royal Academy, claimed that his *Rhymes on Art* was the reason the Institution had come into existence. See his testimony in "Report on Arts and Manufactures" (1836), para. 1948, "Many gentlemen will bear me out in the assertion that an institution which has been acknowledged to produce considerable benefits to the arts originated from that publication; I have the authority of some members of the institution to say, that in consequence of the effect which that little publication produced, they were led to exert themselves, and the British Institution was formed in consequence." Shee's son, not surprisingly, also gave his father the lion's share of the credit for its establishment in Martin Archer Shee, *Life of Sir Martin Archer Shee: President of the Royal Academy, FRS, DCL*, 2 vols. (London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1860), 1:280-281. So would the earlier author of "British Institution, Pall Mall," *Somerset House Gazette* 1 (February 21, 1824), 305, "At length a professor [Shee], in his hours of relaxation from the labours of the palette, diverted the spare energies of his mind in the exercise of his pen, and the elegant and patriotic appeal of the *rhymes* [sic] on art touched the sympathies of those noble minds to whom they were addressed, and we beheld the British Institution." Sandby, *History of the Royal Academy*, 1:273, diplomatically claimed that the Institution was founded due to the combined efforts of West and Shee, "The British Institution – an offspring of the plan of West two years before – owed its foundation partly to the President's fruitless efforts, partly to Shee's 'Rhymes on Art,' and to his correspondence with Sir Thomas Bernard." Richard Redgrave and Samuel Redgrave, *A Century of Painters of the English School; with Critical Notices of Their Works, and an Account of the Progress of Art in England*, 2 vols. (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1866), 2:138, noted that Academicians "suggested the formation of some institution which should reward and encourage our artists. This last suggestion, which was earnestly advocated by Benjamin West and Martin Shee (who both afterwards successively filled the president's chair at the Academy), alone took some shape at the time, though not exactly in the manner they had contemplated; it led to the foundation of the British Institution, which sought, by the union of some of the most distinguished individuals, to patronize native art."

been so long immoveable by every other application.”⁹⁹ Hoare in 1813 similarly claimed that “if ever the Government should assume to itself the patronage of the higher provinces of Painting, its views would be found so fully seconded by the British Institution, as to produce nearly a complete arrangement of the powers of the State in regard to Painting.”¹⁰⁰ Thus, Hoare and Shee were strong supporters of the British Institution in its early years and were pleading, as Peter Funnell has put it, for “painting to be removed from the caprice and unpredictability of the market and to be placed under regulatory control of the government.”¹⁰¹ Funnell, however, was wrong when he described such calls for government protection by Shee and Hoare as condemnations of the way in which the British Institution operated.¹⁰² According to Hoare, “The benevolence and bounty which have graced its birth, will continue to diffuse their cheering

⁹⁹ Shee, *Elements*, xx. This statement, and the previous three pages of the *Elements*, addressed – and put to rest – his earlier apprehensions that the government might consider itself excused from providing support for the fine arts due to the exertions of the British Institution’s wealthy subscribers. Shee added, “After the exertions they have made, it is impossible to doubt of their zeal; and when their rank and consequence in society are considered, their influence must appear as irresistible, as the cause which calls for it is worthy of their protection, and important to the character of their country.”

¹⁰⁰ Hoare, *Epochs*, 220.

¹⁰¹ Funnell, “William Hazlitt,” 148. Funnell was specifically discussing Hoare’s *Epochs of the Arts*. See also Funnell, “London Art World,” 161. Hoare, *Epochs*, 212, “It is impossible to view the efforts of the British Institution, without reverting to a wish for the powerful protection of the State to the higher departments of the Arts.” A similar statement is in Shee, *Elements*, xviii. See also Hoare, *Epochs*, 281, in the chapter entitled “Patronage of the State,” where he argued, “The lessons of the Academy may accomplish the student; the British Institution may provide for the wants of the proficient, may present a Gallery of Pictures, all proofs of English ability, and a thousand successive Galleries may be added, without producing any concentrated result, or erecting the trophy of lasting fame, which is the present object of solicitude to British artists; without securing the purposes of national advantage, which are, at all times and in all things, the object of solicitude.”

¹⁰² Funnell, “William Hazlitt,” 148, “And like other protagonists of what may be called the patronage lobby of the period – Haydon and Shee for example – Hoare identifies the chief flaw in such bodies as consisting in their merely perpetuating established forms of patronage. They are governed by individual collectors and connoisseurs – in other words those who had so signally failed British painting in the past – and through their chief means of encouragement, the exhibitions of works for sale, were simply providing alternative market outlets.” For a similar line of reasoning, see also Funnell, “London Art World,” 161; Kriz, *Idea*, 42-43. For an opposing opinion, that the Institution destroyed established forms of patronage, see Pullan, “Public Goods,” 35-36. On B. R. Haydon, see my next chapter.

influence over the labours of the artist, and will find in his gratitude their best reward.”¹⁰³ Hoare also dedicated his *Inquiry* to the BI’s President and Governors, while dedicating his *Epochs* to the Prince Regent, who had been the BI’s Vice-Patron since 1805 and its Director from 1811. For Shee, while the Academy could provide training and exhibition facilities for artists, the British Institution was the first society established in the metropolis for “the express purpose” of protecting and encouraging them.¹⁰⁴ In addition to praising the BI in his *Rhymes and Elements*, Shee also published in 1809 *A Letter to the President and Directors of the British Institution; Containing the Outlines of a Plan for the National Encouragement of Historical Painting in the United Kingdom*.¹⁰⁵ Far from castigating the Institution’s leaders for having been ineffective in promoting British historical painting, he lamented that:

Unfortunately, however, the liberal sentiments upon this subject, which actuate the Members of the British Institution, are but little prevalent with the government, and still less with the people of this kingdom; and to this circumstance it must be ascribed, that in your patriotic designs, you have found no assistance from the one, and no co-operation from the other. To this circumstance it must be attributed, that, while objects of doubtful advantage or transient gratification are pursued by both, at an expense beyond all example or calculation, the objects which you so laudably pursue, and the good effects of which are as permanent as they are important, seem likely to be defeated, for want of funds too trifling to be considered as a tax, either on the liberality of the public or the income of the State.¹⁰⁶

Shee went on to praise the Institution for “the experiment which you have made has produced an effect of the highest consequence to the object we have in view.”¹⁰⁷ This shared objective was

¹⁰³ Hoare, *Inquiry*, 232.

¹⁰⁴ Shee, *Rhymes*, 58 n.

¹⁰⁵ Martin Archer Shee, *A Letter to the President and Directors of the British Institution; Containing the Outlines of a Plan for the National Encouragement of Historical Painting in the United Kingdom* (London: Printed for William Miller, by J. Moyes, 1809).

¹⁰⁶ Shee, *Letter to the President and Directors*, 6.

¹⁰⁷ Shee, *Letter to the President and Directors*, 13.

“liberal protection from the government,” and “in this opinion, I have the good fortune to be supported by the sentiments of so many enlightened Members of your Body . . . The extension of this protection to the neglected Arts of our country, it will become your dignity and disinterestedness, gentlemen, to require; and its attainment is, I trust, reserved for your timely interposition to effect.”¹⁰⁸ Going even further in his praise of the Institution’s continued efforts to obtain government protection, Shee avowed, “On those exertions, I do not hesitate to confess, I conceive the last hopes of Art in this country to depend. When the apathy which disgraces other quarters, from which, an effort might justly be expected, is considered, there appears to be no prospect for the Arts, but that, which the zeal and perseverance of your Society afford.”¹⁰⁹

In the second half of his ninety-page letter, Shee laid out an elaborate plan for a triennial competition between British historical painters for cash prizes and proposed “that the sum of five thousand pounds be annually appropriated by government, to the encouragement of the Arts” to be placed directly “under the management of the President and Directors of the British Institution.”¹¹⁰ Connecting it to the Academy’s ongoing efforts to promote historical painting, Shee also indicated in the letter that his plan was lineally descended from Opie’s Dome proposal.¹¹¹ Like the RA committee on Opie’s project, Shee, who had been on the committee,

¹⁰⁸ Shee, *Letter to the President and Directors*, 17-18.

¹⁰⁹ Shee, *Letter to the President and Directors*, 15.

¹¹⁰ Shee, *Letter to the President and Directors*, 43. For details of the plan, see Shee, *Letter to the President and Directors*, 43-81. He described it, p. 81, as “a Plan, founded not upon a liberal consideration of what might be done, or perhaps, ought to be done, by the richest and most powerful people upon earth, for the protection of those Arts which adorn and dignify human society; but calculated to render, in some degree, available to this great end, such contracted means as it may not be quite hopeless to solicit in times like these, from the parsimonious policy of the State.” Hoare, *Epochs*, 216 n., described it as “a well-digested plan of rendering money subservient to higher motives.”

¹¹¹ Shee, *Letter to the President and Directors*, 84 n. See also “Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1836), para. 1948, when he told the 1835-36 Select Committee on Arts and Manufactures (the focus of my next

also called for £5000 from the government to carry into effect the aims of this new proposal, although on an annual basis, rather than as a one-time grant. He stated that the details of his new plan, “nearly as it is now brought forward,” first came to him at the time the Institution was founded, but that he had laid it aside for fear it would seem “ungracious” of him to submit it to the members of an establishment still in its infancy.¹¹² He further explained that, when the Council of the Royal Academy had gathered in August 1809 to debate the merits of yet another new plan by Flaxman to promote historical painting that had been laid before the General Assembly the previous June, he then presented as an alternative the present plan, “though upon a much smaller scale, the effect which, even in that state of contraction, it was thought, by some Members [of the Academy], capable of producing, revived in me once more, the desire of offering it to your consideration.”¹¹³

chapter), “Subsequently to the plan of Mr. Opie, a plan was brought forward by Mr. Flaxman and myself for the purpose of procuring encouragement in the higher departments of the arts, strongly stating that although the academy had used every exertion for the cultivation and education of artists, they had not the means of patronizing them when educated; and that, therefore, something was required to be done by the state.” Hoare, *Epochs*, xxiii, said when conducting research on the topic of government art patronage, “I have availed myself of every assistance that I could derive from the plans of Mr. Flaxman and Mr. Opie, and from the proposal made some years since to the Ministry by the Royal Academy, as well as from Mr. Shee’s late Letter to the Directors of the British Institution, and from their *Representation* printed in 1810.” Hoare, *Epochs*, 282, also said, “Will any one believe, that, if the support desired formerly by Mr. Opie’s, and lately by Mr. Shee’s, proposal, were now brought forward for consideration in the House of Commons, that it would meet with opposition from any party?” Edward Edwards, whom I will also discuss in Chapter 2, wrote in his *The Administrative Economy of the Fine Arts in England* (London: Saunders and Otley, 1840), 191, that Shee’s “plan was submitted in 1809 to the directors of the British Institution, and led to their *Representation*, addressed in 1810, to the British Government, but with the same ill success which had attended the previous efforts of Opie, Flaxman, and West, and which has since attended the exertions of Mr. Haydon and others.” On Haydon’s efforts, see below and Chapter 2.

¹¹² Shee, *Letter to the President and Directors*, 82. See also his *Rhymes*, xlvi-xlvii.

¹¹³ Shee, *Letter to the President and Directors*, 83. According to the Royal Academy’s General Assembly Minutes, IV, 132, Flaxman had read out on June 27, 1809, “his Proposition for promoting the Taste & Encouragement of Historical Painting. Which was highly approved, and refered [sic] to a future Council”; but, there is no further mention of the proposal in the Council Minutes or the General Assembly Minutes. However, official discussions did take place - one can chart the progression from Flaxman’s original proposal in the RA General Assembly on June 27, 1809, to the Council’s consideration of Shee’s alternative plan the following August, as well as Academicians’ opinions of the respective merits or

Around the time of this August 1809 Academy Council meeting, as Shee recalled in 1837, he had been

in a conversation with the late Sir Thomas Bernard and the late Sir George Beaumont, two of the Directors of the British Institution, in which I took the liberty of throwing out some suggestions for rendering more effective the operations of that Society. Having been assured by those Gentlemen that there was nothing which the Directors desired more than that some specific plan for the encouragement of the Arts should be offered for their consideration, I addressed to that body the Plan.¹¹⁴

Thus appeared *A Letter to the President and Directors of the British Institution*, which was published on October 2, 1809. Two months and two days after its publication, West summoned Shee to his home for a meeting with two other Academicians – Flaxman and William Beechey – who had served with Shee and West on the RA’s 1800-1801 “Committee on Mr. Opie’s Proposition.”¹¹⁵ West’s letter unequivocally shows that, in the PRA’s mind, the Royal Academy and “its aid” the British Institution had been committed to working together to obtain government protection for the arts in order to free Academic historical painters from the free-for-all of the marketplace:

The plan which you have so clearly pointed to those gentleman to pursue, for maintaining the Dignity of painting in this country – should they not move on that plan and the government of this country not acced [sic] to the proposal those gentlemen may make to them on your plan; the great object for which the British Institution was established, will be lost and the elevation of the Fine Arts for which we have been exerting ourselves ever since the Establishment of the Royal Academy, and its aid the British Institution, will fail, and the arts fall to that level they were on before His Present Majesty honored them

shortcomings of the two proposals, in Farington’s *Diary*, 10:3502-3503 (July 2 – July 3, 1809), 3522 (August 4, 1809), 3527 (August 19, 1809), 3529 (August 23, 1809). Flaxman’s 1809 proposal was not the same as the Gallery of National Honour proposal, which he had read out to the General Assembly in 1801; rather, as Farington, *Diary*, 10:3502, recorded “[Thomas Phillips] also informed me that Flaxman had made a motion for giving £400 this year to 2 members of the Royal Academy hereafter to be fixed upon, viz: £200 each for painting each an Historical picture, as an encouragement to promote that branch of Art. I told Him it then appeared to me that it wd. not produce the effect intended, & wd. only add to the expenditure of the Academy. He agreed with me.”

¹¹⁴ Shee, *Outlines of a Plan*, iii-iv.

¹¹⁵ Hoock, *King’s Artists*, 281-282.

with a station and a name – to the disgrace of the national apathy, in not giving them protection.¹¹⁶

The members of the British Institution did move on Shee's plan, however, and by January 1810, two draft proposals "almost identical to Shee's" were drawn up.¹¹⁷ Lord Dartmouth, President of the Institution, then submitted the final proposal to Spencer Perceval, the Tory Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer, arguing on behalf of the Institution's Directors that state support for "high art" was vital to the interests of British manufacturing.¹¹⁸ Hoare also published a long extract from the Directors' appeal to Perceval for £5000 in his periodical, the *Artist*, and applauded "the continuance of the zealous and liberal proceedings of the *Directors*, in the

¹¹⁶ Benjamin West to Martin Archer Shee, December 4, 1809, Victoria & Albert Museum, National Art Library, MSL/1979/6128. Farington, *Diary*, 5:2579 (June 24, 1805), indicated that relations between West and Shee had been extremely poor in 1805, when the British Institution was established. However, Farington, *Diary*, 9:3483 (June 9, 1809), reported, "West told me that Shee's Poem, 'Elements of Art' is very highly spoken of. – He has heard nothing to the contrary. Impressed with the manly & able manner in which Shee has maintained the cause of Art & of its Professors, He thought it proper & did call upon Him to express His acknowledgment of it. He sd. Shee has paid much attention to Him since He, Shee, came into the Council, & has occasionally walked home with Him, to His door, and communicated His (Shee's) sentiments to Him. Thus seeming indirectly to apologise for His former proceedings."

¹¹⁷ Fullerton, "Patronage and Pedagogy," 72 n.69. Beaumont, according to Farington, *Diary*, 10:3628 (April 7, 1810), had some reservations about the plan's efficacy, "Sir George sd. Sir Thos. Bernard had spoken to Him abt. Obtaining money from Government for the encouragement of Historical Painting, & asked me if I had read Shee's pamphlet on the subject. He sd. Sir Thomas was very sangwine in His hopes which added He, I am not, at the same time expressing that He should not stand in the way of it. He then talked of Artists making Patrons by the excellence of their productions, rather than of making artists by giving money, which wd. operate to cause a vast increase of Artists raised in hopes of obtaining it. He also repeated what He had often before mentioned. How little money Poets have earned by their labours & that Milton produced His works, & Correggio His pictures in a state of comparative poverty, and with little hope of profit."

¹¹⁸ See extracts from the Directors' representation published in Hoare's periodical, *The Artist* 2 (1810): 419-420, "That the skill of the inferior artists employed by the manufacturer, must, in a great degree, depend on the relative excellence of the most distinguished artists; whose exertions in the higher departments of art, it is therefore of importance to encourage."

representation which they have at present submitted to our government, for the more effectual promotion of Painting.”¹¹⁹

Like his predecessor Pitt, however, Perceval refused the appeal the following June, on the grounds, as Shee put it, that “he did not consider the object in view of sufficient importance to justify the expense required for its attainment.”¹²⁰ Perceval’s refusal may not have been entirely unexpected; West had met with him years before to discuss government protection for the fine arts and had found him unpersuadable, as John Galt recounted:

[Perceval] listened to the representations which Mr. West made to him with a repressive coldness, it might almost be said with indifference, had it not been marked with a decided feeling; for he seemed to consider the whole objects of the British Institution, and the reasons adduced in support of the claims which the interests of the arts had on government, as the visionary purposes of vain enthusiasts.¹²¹

Hoare described Perceval’s rejection of Shee’s proposal in 1810 as disturbing “the golden dream of hope, which had long soothed the patriotic cares of the British Institution,” adding that, in the

¹¹⁹ *The Artist* 2 (1810): 418. See Farington, *Diary*, 10:3625 (April 4, 1810) for Farington’s negative opinion of the plan and for other Academicians’ support of it. Farington also expressed a pessimistic view of the plan’s chance of success earlier, see Farington, *Diary*, 10:3615 (March 13, 1810).

¹²⁰ Shee, *Outlines of a Plan*, iv. Farington, *Diary*, 10:3676 (June 26, 1810), “West told me that Sir Thomas Bernard had lately informed Him that Lord Dartmouth had applied to Mr. Percival, Chancellor of the Exchequer, for £5000 for the purpose of encouraging Historical painting; but Mr. Percival had declined it.” See also Funnell, “London Art World,” 162. Demonstrating the importance of Shee’s activism for government support of historical painting to the later campaigns of B. R. Haydon, something I will discuss at length in the next chapter, one finds in Benjamin Robert Haydon, *Benjamin Robert Haydon: Correspondence and Table-Talk with a Memoir by His Son*, ed. Frederic Wordsworth Haydon, 2 vols. (London: Chatto and Windus, 1876), 2:216-217, that, on November 7, 1811, Haydon submitted a memorandum “addressed to the Prime Minister, Mr. Perceval, on the subject of public encouragement to Historical Painting and the foundation of Schools of Design . . . begging Mr. Perceval to set aside 4000*l.* a year for the decoration of our public offices by historical paintings.”

¹²¹ Galt, *Life of West*, 1:183. It is not entirely clear exactly when this meeting took place. Galt suggested it occurred during the planning stages of the British Institution and focused on the new society’s objectives. James Thomas Flexner, *America’s Old Masters* (New York: The Viking Press, 1939), 84, however stated that it occurred before, during a discussion about West’s proposal for “a national English museum of painting,” which Perceval rejected, and “from its ashes rose the British Institution.” Regardless, the important point is that West’s arguments for state protection were pejoratively labeled as “visionary” by Perceval years before he soundly rejected Shee’s BI proposal.

Directors' representation to the Prime Minister, "never before, in any period or in any country of the world, had such an assemblage of rank, and various importance, been united in behalf of the Arts."¹²² Before likening Perceval's refusal of protection to that of Pitt nine years earlier, when the Academy's proposal for a Dome or Gallery of National Honour had been laid before that Prime Minister, as well as to Fox's inactivity on behalf of the arts, Hoare described the resistance of Perceval to protecting historical painting as endemic to those in power because, as the opening section of my chapter indicated, the government had long been content to let the art world regulate itself:

For let us not endeavour to disguise this truth. The Minister of England, who refused assistance to the encouragement of Painting, does not utter, in his refusal, the sentiments of an *individual*, but those, which are common to his station in society, and to his education; by neither of which the mind has necessarily been opened to the due esteem of that study, for which the British Institution pleaded in vain. . . .

It might, indeed, have offered some consolation to the noble advocates, if, in declining to lend a helping hand to the advance of Painting, Mr. Perceval could have laid claim either to singularity or precedence. Unfortunately, similar applications, though not from equal solicitants, had been twice before found ineffectual, under the administrations of the two most distinguished Statesmen [Fox and Pitt], whom Europe has seen in modern times.¹²³

A few months after Perceval refused the £5000 grant, the Directors in 1811 took the unprecedented step of printing a four-page preface to the annual *Catalogue of the Works of*

¹²² Hoare, *Epochs*, 13-14.

¹²³ Hoare, *Epochs*, 14-16. See also Hoare, *Epochs*, 281-282, "The argument, which has been used to justify a delay of protection to the Arts from the State, viz. that the requisite expense of encouragement to them would be ungraciously viewed by the Nation, is a phantom." See also Shee, *Letter to the President and Directors*, 82 n., "How can the public consider the Arts as national objects, when they behold them neglected and despised by those, who are especially appointed to be the guardians and promoters of all national interests?" Referring to what he called "the better orders of society," Shee, *Letter to the President and Directors*, 8-9, regretted that either they viewed art as a useless luxury or "admit the importance of the Arts, of which they have read a little, and perhaps, heard a great deal: but, impressed with certain commercial notions, they would regulate the powers of genius by the principles of trade, and cultivate the Arts like a common manufacture. . . . They consider [the Arts], only as operating on manufactures and commerce of a country – as contributing improvement to convenience, and polish to luxury – as enabling us to excel our neighbours in the productions of our looms and the taste of our furniture."

British Artists Placed in the Gallery of the British Institution, Pall-Mall, for Exhibition and Sale, in which they announced that, although they had not yet secured government protection of historical painting, it had always been their intention to do so.¹²⁴

In offering to their countrymen the advantages which may be derived from this Establishment, the Directors are ready to admit, that it is by no means suitable to the wealth, the power, and the dominions of the United Kingdom. But though the British Institution has not attained the magnitude and importance, which, in such a country as this, might have been expected; and though it has not as yet succeeded in attracting the attention, and obtaining the protection, of *Government*, their efforts have not relaxed, nor have they been wholly abortive.¹²⁵

The Directors went on to say that, in the meantime, they themselves would fund an increase of the Institution's cash prizes for historical painting.¹²⁶ That year, the Institution also made its first purchase of a historical painting by a living British artist (and, of course, an Academician):

Benjamin West's *Christ Healing the Sick* (1811, destroyed).¹²⁷ The picture was bought for three

¹²⁴ The Society of British Artists would establish a rival exhibition known as the *Annual Exhibition for the Sale of Works of Art by Living British Artists*, in 1824 on Suffolk Street, just a short walk away from the British Institution. On the SBA as a rival society, see below.

¹²⁵ *Catalogue of the Works of British Artists Placed in the Gallery of the British Institution, Pall Mall, for Exhibition and Sale* (London: W. Bulmer and Co., 1811), 11-12. This was also reprinted in Smith, *Recollections*, 58. William Paulet Carey, *The National Obstacle to the National Public Style Considered: Observations on the Probable Decline or Extinction of British Historical Painting, from the Effects of the Church Exclusion of Painting* (London: Howlett and Brimmer, 1825), 104-105, also quoted this section of the catalogue and observed that "[this] proves their conviction, that they [the Directors] cannot, of themselves, with their own limited resources, effect their noble object; and that they have, all along, looked to the GOVERNMENT of the country for its accomplishment." This contradicts Pullan's claim, "Public Goods," 34, that the BI's interest in state support did not survive "beyond the initial stage of soliciting subscriptions." Hemingway, *Landscape Imagery*, 35, erroneously argued in his interpretation of the BI, "In sum, the bulk of the English landed classes does not seem to have felt that their wealth and political power placed on them an individual duty to support the visual arts, or a public responsibility to raise state revenues to do so."

¹²⁶ *Catalogue . . . of the British Institution* (1811), 11-12.

¹²⁷ See von Erffa and Staley, *Paintings of Benjamin West*, 347 no. 336. The purchase was funded by the exhibition of the picture and by raising a subscription for an engraving after the painting. As a token of thanks, West presented medals to each of the subscribers. The next two out of three purchases were of historical paintings by Academicians. However, purchases stopped in 1814 and did not resume again until 1820, when the BI bought the Academician James Ward's *Battle of Waterloo in an Allegory* for 1050 guineas. Nicholas Tromans, "Museum or Market?: The British Institution," in *Governing Cultures: Art*

thousand guineas, which is believed to have been the highest price paid to a modern artist for a single painting.¹²⁸ Although it provided West with much-needed income following the loss of his royal stipend, its purchase by the Directors was meant to function as an example to the government of enlightened patronage, not simply as a way to line the painter's pockets.¹²⁹

However, the sale of West's painting to the BI also stirred tensions between the Academy and the Institution because, unusually, it was shown at the British Institution without first being exhibited at the Royal Academy. Shortly after the Directors decided to purchase the painting, Henry Thomson, RA, in conversation with Farington, "expressed apprehension that the British Institution might be put over the Royal Academy."¹³⁰ Tempers soon flared again between the two societies when the Directors decided to mount a Reynolds retrospective in 1813 at the same

Institutions in Victorian London, eds. Paul Barlow and Colin Trodd (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2000), 45, has described Ward's painting as "an empty, overblown pseudo-Rubensian monster."

¹²⁸ Von Erffa and Staley, *Paintings of Benjamin West*, 347 no. 336. Gerald Reitlinger, *The Economics of Taste*, 3 vols. (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1961-1970), 1:70, stated that only Jacques-Louis David had received more (100,000 francs or £4000) for *The Coronation of the Emperor Napoleon I* (1806-07).

¹²⁹ As Jordana Pomeroy, "Collecting the Past," 196, has noted, "the Institution's governors saw West's painting as the ideal painting with which to begin their own national gallery, or, alternatively, as a way of enticing the government to open one." See also Pomeroy, "Creating a National Collection," 44; Fullerton, "Patronage and Pedagogy," 66. Farington, *Diary*, 11:3893-3894 (March 15, 1811), recorded Thomas Bernard telling him that the purchase of *Christ Healing the Sick* "was to be considered as the commencement of a national gallery." Hoare, *Epochs*, 208, "Finally, redeeming the neglect of the age, and offering to the State an example of Patronage, the Directors purchased of our great Historical Painter one of his best and latest works, at the splendid price of 3,000 guineas, purposing at the same time that it shall form the commencement of a Gallery of the *English School*." The Directors presented the painting to the National Gallery in 1826. It was destroyed in the Tate flood of 1928. See Farington, *Diary*, 7:2543 (April 23, 1805) for Bernard's plans for setting up a national gallery during the discussions to form the British Institution, "On our way home [West] desired me to be at his house tomorrow evening at 8 to hear a Plan read which had been drawn up by Mr. Barnard for the establishing a National Gallery of painting & for encouraging Historical painting. – West had invited Sir George Beaumont, Wm. Smith, & Knight to meet him and meant to ask Lawrence & Smirke." See also Farington, *Diary*, 7:2779 (June 6, 1806) when "[Dartmouth] spoke of the British Institution & hoped to obtain more space for accommodation and that Willis's rooms would be got, where something like a National Gallery might be begun."

¹³⁰ Farington, *Diary*, 11: 3961 (July 1, 1811). As Fullerton, "Patronage and Pedagogy," 66, suggested, Thomson's reaction was likely caused by the success and purchase of West's *Christ Healing the Sick*.

time as the Academy's annual exhibition.¹³¹ The Academy at first refused to loan works by Reynolds from its collection, since several Academicians "thought the plan of exhibiting a collection of pictures by Sir J. Reynolds at the British Institution during the exhibition of the Royal Academy invidious towards the Artists of the present day."¹³² The landscape painter and Academician Augustus Wall Callcott, who was opposed to loaning the pictures, also feared that "the active Directors of the British Institution will gradually assume a controuling [sic] power over Artists."¹³³ Eventually, due to Lawrence's influence, the Academy relented and handed over the pictures. After the exhibition opened, Farington recorded that Thomson "seemed to be much out of humour with the Exhibition of the pictures of Sir Joshua Reynolds, and with the persons who have caused it & who direct the proceedings, thinking it is calculated to operate against the Artists of the present time."¹³⁴

This exhibition was followed in the summer of 1814 by a group exhibition of works by four deceased artists – Hogarth, Richard Wilson, Thomas Gainsborough, and Johan Zoffany. Although this show was also up at the same time as the Academy's exhibition, it seemed to be a less controversial show among Academicians, but as in the previous year, the Institution's

¹³¹ Fullerton, "Patronage and Pedagogy," 68, and Haskell, *Ephemeral Museum*, 51. Farington, *Diary*, 7:2734 (April 25, 1806), recorded some early objections to the Institution holding any exhibitions at the same time as the Academy's annual exhibition. Previously, as mentioned, the Directors had made it a policy that "the British Institution will be shut up during [the Academy's] annual exhibition." *Account of the British Institution*, 3.

¹³² Farington, *Diary*, 12:4272 (December 26, 1812), recorded that one of those Academicians ardently opposed to the exhibitions was Turner.

¹³³ Farington, *Diary*, 12:4328 (April 8, 1813). Callcott also fretted that, should the Directors "obtain the application of any funds by Government for promoting the Arts [it] will sink the importance of the Academy."

¹³⁴ Farington, *Diary*, 12: 4372 (June 16, 1813).

exhibition of works for sale by living British artists was cut short, in order to accommodate the opening of this retrospective.¹³⁵

Then, in the summers of 1815 and 1816, the British Institution put together the first public exhibitions ever held of Old Master paintings.¹³⁶ These ran concurrently and in competition with the Academy's annual exhibition. Those Academicians – West, Farington, and Lawrence – who had been involved in the Institution's founding and were once friendly to its interests and designs, now believed that, due to implementing such an innovation, the Institution was giving up on its original mission to work with the Royal Academy to promote modern British art and to obtain public protection for historical painters.¹³⁷ Moreover, the fear that invidious comparisons would be made between their works and some of the most revered

¹³⁵ Fullerton, "Patronage and Pedagogy," 69.

¹³⁶ See "The Old Master Exhibition Established," in Haskell, *Ephemeral Museum*, 64-81.

¹³⁷ Fullerton, "Patronage and Pedagogy," 68, "It was radical innovation which marked the beginning of the Institution's second decade, and more important, signaled a shift in its energies (from which it was not fully to recover)." Pullan, "Public Goods," 37, "In 1815 and 1816 the British Institution introduced what became its most contested 'innovation' – the annual exhibition of old master paintings, beginning with the Dutch and Flemish masters in 1815 and followed by the Italian and Spanish Schools in 1816. . . . The public was being invited to judge modern work against the standards of the latter ['masterpieces' of past European Schools]." Funnell, "London Art World," 161, "These tensions between artists and connoisseurs reached a climax in 1815, when the Institution arranged the first of a series of exhibitions of old master paintings. In retrospect the exhibition can be seen as a further innovation on the part of the Directors, but to the artists it was evidence that they were neglecting their prime duty of fostering contemporary British art." Haskell, *Ephemeral Museum*, 66, stated that "for a short time [c. 1814-1816] there had been perceptible omens indicating that the happy relationship between the Old Masters and modern British art might not survive for very long." However, referring to the Institution's bylaws, Haskell, *Ephemeral Museum*, 48, incorrectly asserted, "In addition to 'the Exhibition and Sale of the productions of British artists', the 'Exhibition of Pictures by the Old Masters' had, from the first, been one of the declared aims of the British Institution." According to his footnote, Haskell was here relying on an 1860 reprinting of the bylaws in Smith's *Recollections*, 4, which had stated that "the British Gallery [another name for the Institution] is appropriated to the Exhibition and Sale of the productions of British Artists; and also to the Exhibitions of Pictures by the Old Masters." However, Smith also had noted, "The following are the By-Laws, as they now exist, the originals having been modified from time to time, as circumstances required." In fact, the original bylaws, printed in 1805, made no mention of plans to stage Old Master exhibitions. Lawrence also told Farington, *Diary*, 14:4774 (February 3, 1816) that the British Institution's annual exhibition of art by living artists that year had been "the *worst display* they had made since the Exhibition was formed."

masterpieces of European art set many Academicians' teeth on edge.¹³⁸ Visiting the Institution's 1815 exhibition of Dutch and Flemish Old Masters, the Academician Thomas Stothard muttered darkly to the painter Benjamin Robert Haydon (whom we will meet again in the next chapter), "This will destroy us."¹³⁹ Lawrence turned towards Haydon "his face boiling with rage as he grated out between his teeth, 'I suppose they think we want teaching.'"¹⁴⁰ When the first installment of the notorious *Catalogue Raisonné* [sic], frequently attributed to Smirke, was published in 1815, denouncing the Institution's decision to mount Old Master exhibitions, Thomson and Farington "agreed that by the publication of the catalogue some good might be done, & that whether dissatisfaction [sic] should cause the Institution to be neglected or the principle on which it was professed to be established shd. be better attended to, an advantage wd. be derived from it."¹⁴¹ That year, the Academy also arranged to borrow Old Master paintings

¹³⁸ Back in 1805, when some of the Directors toyed with the idea of exhibiting Old Masters and moderns together at the British Institution, Farington, *Diary*, 7:2592 (July 21, 1805), recorded, "On the new Institution I remarked to [West] that if, as *they proposed*, they should make it an Exhibition of *old pictures* as well as *modern works* they would entirely counteract their design, by continuing the prejudices in favour of old pictures & enabling the invidious to make disadvantageous comparisons." Lawrence and Bernard then arrived and joined the conversation, "Lawrence strongly urged the disadvantage of *exhibiting old pictures*, and I proposed that a few only at a time should be placed *in a private* room for the study of young artists. Mr. Barnard felt the objection to exhibiting old works." For additional early discussions on the issue, see Farington, *Diary*, 7:2596 (July 27, 1805).

¹³⁹ Benjamin Robert Haydon, *Life of Benjamin Robert Haydon, Historical Painter, from His Autobiography and Journals*, ed. and comp. Tom Taylor, 3 vols. (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1853), 1:269. Haydon had not yet fallen out with the Academy. The following year, he published an article in the *Examiner* (March 17, 1816) entitled "On the Judgment of Connoisseurs Being Preferred to That of Professional Men," which specifically "attacked the supposition that people versed in classical literature were automatically competent to appraise works of art" and specifically mentioned Richard Payne Knight of the British Institution. See Colbert Kearney, "B. R. Haydon and 'The Examiner,'" *Keats-Shelley Journal* 27 (1978): 122.

¹⁴⁰ Haydon, *Life of Haydon*, 1:269.

¹⁴¹ Farington, *Diary*, 13:4651 (June 22, 1815). The 1815 exhibition of the works of Dutch and Flemish Old Masters sparked the publication of the anti-Institution *A Catalogue Raisonné* [sic] *of the Pictures Now Exhibiting at the British Institution: Printed with a Sincere Desire to Assist the Noble Directors in Turning the Public Attention to Those Particular Pieces Which They Have Kindly Selected with the Benevolent Intention of Affording the Most Favorable Contrast to Modern Art, the Encouragement, of*

from Dulwich College, so that it could end its dependence on the Institution for access to established masterpieces, from which RA students could copy.¹⁴²

Following the British Institution's 1816 exhibition of Italian and Spanish Old Masters, West, who had done so much to bring the Institution into being and had personally benefited from the purchase of his *Christ Healing the Sick*, told Lawrence that the eleven-year partnership that had once existed between the two societies had broken down.¹⁴³ Lawrence also believed the BI "had departed from the original object . . . and were becoming Preceptors of Artists; thereby acting in direct rivalry or opposition to the Royal Academy as a Seminary."¹⁴⁴

Therefore, the following year (1817), when John Martin became disgusted with the Academy over the hanging of his pictures, he turned to the British Institution as the only viable alternative in the metropolis to show and sell his major paintings.¹⁴⁵ That year, he reexhibited his

Which It Is Well Known, Is the Sole Aim and Profession of the Institution (London: W. Bulmer and Co, 1815). Although its authorship is a matter of dispute, the *Catalogue Raisonné* is frequently attributed to Smirke. Redgrave and Redgrave, *A Century of Painters* 2:153, however, said that it "was well known to be written by Reinagle, R.A." Haydon also attributed it to Philip Reinagle. Regardless, as Haskell, *Ephemeral Museum*, 66, has pointed out "most readers at the time felt that it must have been written, or at least inspired, by some member of the Royal Academy." See also Fullerton, "Patronage and Pedagogy," 69.

¹⁴² Sandby, *History of the Royal Academy*, 1:281, "A school of painting was formed for the purpose, on a similar plan to that of the British Institution."

¹⁴³ Farington inscribed in his *Diary*, 14:4912 (October 24, 1816), "Sir Thomas [Lawrence] had conversation with Mr. West a few nights ago respecting the British Institution & found him decidedly of opinion that the views of the principal Directors of the Institution are hostile to the Royal Academy." Another volume of the *Catalogue Raisonné* was published following the 1816 exhibition.

¹⁴⁴ Royal Library Windsor, Farington Diary MS, November 10, 1816, quoted in Fullerton, "Patronage and Pedagogy," 67.

¹⁴⁵ On Martin as "particularly associated with the Institution," see Hemingway, *Landscape Imagery*, 120. According to Martin in "Report on Arts and Manufactures" (1836), para. 818, "[The RA's] ill usage, or what I considered ill usage, compelled me to go to the British Institution; and finding that I had much better treatment there, I ceased sending any more of my principal works to the Royal Academy." See also para. 819. Martin had been exhibitor at the BI since 1813. However, until 1817, he had always reserved what he considered to be his principal paintings for the Academy's exhibition. Martin exhibited a large painting, *The Bard* (1817, Laing Art Gallery), at the RA in 1817 and the BI in 1818, but it attracted little

Joshua Commanding the Sun to Stand Still upon Gibeon (1816, National Gallery of Art, Washington, fig. 4), which had been “hidden” (his words) the previous year at the RA, at the Institution, where it was hung at eye level, in good light, “attracted great attention,” and was awarded a premium of £100.¹⁴⁶ Martin later recounted to the Select Committee on Arts and Manufactures:

The picture of ‘Joshua,’ which was hung in a corner of the ante-room, was so injured by the bad light, that it produced little or no effect in the Royal Academy. I sent it afterwards to the British Institution, where it was placed in an excellent situation, and I received the principal premium [sic] of that year. From the difference of treatment in the two places, we may suppose that the picture was not ill hung because it was unworthy of a better place.¹⁴⁷

Although it failed to sell at the exhibition, Martin stated in his 1849 letter to the editor of the *Illustrated London News* that the attention *Joshua* had received at the Institution “opened a new era to me.”¹⁴⁸ Following *Joshua*’s success at the BI, Martin decided to bypass the Academy altogether and exhibited his next major historical landscape, *The Fall of Babylon*, at the Institution in 1819. It was purchased off the wall by Henry Philip Hope for Martin’s inflated asking price of 400 guineas.¹⁴⁹ Martin explained in his letter to the *ILN* that because he had

notice. He did not consider it to be one of his major paintings and, as Balston, *John Martin*, 43, has noted, “It was never mentioned in any of Martin’s lists of his chief works.” See Balston, *John Martin*, 48.

¹⁴⁶ “Hidden” was the term Martin used in *Illustrated London News* (March 17, 1849), 176. The Academician Thomas Phillips told Farington that he believed William Hilton, ARA, “had a greater claim” to the £100 premium for his *Raising of Lazarus*. See Farington, *Diary*, 14:4983 (March 7, 1817).

¹⁴⁷ “Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1836), para. 826. Martin was awarded the second, not the principal, premium.

¹⁴⁸ *Illustrated London News* (March 17, 1849), 176. Martin also produced a series of etched views of “Sezincot [sic] House,” the home of Sir Charles Cockerell, in 1817/1818.

¹⁴⁹ Until 1819, the highest price Martin had received for one of his paintings was 70 guineas from a Mr. Spong for *Adam’s First Sight of Eve* (1812, Glasgow Art Gallery and Museum), which he had exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1813. H. P. Hope, from whom the Hope Diamond gets its name, was heir to the banking firm, Hope and Co. See also C. R. Leslie’s letter to Washington Allston, February 6, 1819, in *The Correspondence of Washington Allston*, ed. Nathalia Wright (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press,

moved into “a superior house” in 1818, “[I] had to devote my time mainly to executing some immediately profitable works.”¹⁵⁰ Having borrowed £200 from William Manning, MP, Governor of the Bank of England and owner of Martin’s *Sadak*, to purchase his home, Martin could not contain his excitement at selling the *Fall of Babylon* at a markup and being able to pay off his debt and have money to spare:

Mr. Hope saw, admired, and bought my picture. He at once sent me a cheque for four hundred guineas in a letter which fills my breast with rapture now, and whenever I think of it. Four hundred guineas! A sum which is enough to set me free, to unmanacle me from the chains of debt, to place me above want: aye, to secure me a year’s affluence . . . No prisoner liberated, no manumitted slave, ever tasted a more exquisite relish of happiness than I did at the moment I read that sweetest of epistles. . . . I lost not an hour redeeming my bond from Mr. Manning and paying the debt with the interest due; thus canceling the monetary part of the obligation, but the grateful remembrance of it never. If I had not succeeded now, I must have sunk. Increased rent, increased expenses every way. . . . I felt as much joy, and glut of delight, at painting a picture on which I put four hundred guineas and getting it, as Wellington must have felt in conquering Bonaparte. I had thirsted to succeed as a Painter. Was not this success? If not with the world, it was for me and my family, my friends, my creditors, and my encouragement.¹⁵¹

Martin later described the exhibition of *The Fall of Babylon* at the British Institution as “second only to the ‘Belshazzar’ in the attention it excited.”¹⁵² Here he was referring to his next large historical landscape, *Belshazzar’s Feast* (1820, private collection, fig. 5), which he showed

1993), 137, regarding another prominent collector’s interest in the *Fall of Babylon*, “I mention it last, yet very far from *least*, a magnificent picture of the fall of Babylon by Martin, which I think even surpasses his Joshua. I need say no more. It attracts universal admiration; & Sir John Leicester has been to see him on the strength of it. I hope it will benefit his purse.”

¹⁵⁰ *Illustrated London News* (March 17, 1849), 176.

¹⁵¹ Diaries of Ralph Thomas, quoted in Pendered, *John Martin*, 89. The practice of artists overpricing their pictures at the British Institution seems to have been common. See Pullan, “Public Goods,” 36.

¹⁵² *Illustrated London News* (March 17, 1849), 176. Boyd Alexander, ed., *Life at Fonthill, 1807-1822, with Interludes in Paris and London, from the Correspondence of William Beckford* (London: R. Hart-Davis, 1957), 279, recorded Beckford as saying, “I’ve been three times running to the Exhibition in Pall Mall to admire The Capture of Babylon by Martin. He adds the greatest distinction to contemporary art. Oh what a sublime thing!”

at the British Institution in 1821 – again, ignoring the Academy altogether.¹⁵³ Martin’s son Leopold recalled that it was said “on the eve of the public opening of the exhibition John Martin went to bed comparatively unknown, and rose in the morning ‘famous.’”¹⁵⁴ Flush from the success of *The Fall of Babylon*, Martin chose to depict in this companion piece the prelude to the fall, when King Belshazzar learns from the Old Testament prophet Daniel, who interprets the writing on the wall, of the city’s impending doom and of his own imminent demise.¹⁵⁵ David Wilkie described *Belshazzar’s Feast* to one of the Institution’s Directors, George Beaumont, as “a phenomenon” and, for the first time at the Institution’s annual exhibition of modern British art, a painting had to be railed off to protect it.¹⁵⁶ The Institution also took the exceptional step of extending its exhibition by three weeks. The Directors awarded Martin the first premium of £200 and the Duke of Buckingham offered Martin double the price H. P. Hope had paid for *The Fall of Babylon*.¹⁵⁷

Unlike West, Farington, Shee, and other RAs, who had held “visionary” hopes that the British Institution could be used as a lobbying platform to convince the government by liberal

¹⁵³ In 1820, he exhibited his *Macbeth* at the BI only. However, it failed to sell, and many years later was still in Martin’s studio, where Sir Walter Scott saw it. According to Leopold Martin, Scott expressed “great regret at his inability to purchase it, as he should so like to place it on the walls at Abbotsford. My father’s like inability to offer it as a gift was a great regret.” See Leopold Martin, “Reminiscences,” *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* (January 26, 1889), front page.

¹⁵⁴ Leopold Martin, “Reminiscences,” *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* (January 26, 1889), front page.

¹⁵⁵ “Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1836), para. 860, “I shall never forget the kind and generous treatment I received from Mr. H. P. Hope, at the time of purchasing the picture of the ‘Fall of Babylon,’ which preceded and indeed led to the painting of ‘Belshazzar’s Feast,’ as a companion-subject.”

¹⁵⁶ David Wilkie to Sir George Beaumont, February 16, 1821, in Allan Cunningham, *The Life of Sir David Wilkie*, 3 vols. (London: John Murray, 1843), 2:56-57. Constable, however, called it a “pantomime,” in C. R. Leslie, *Memoirs of the Life of John Constable, Esq., R.A., Composed Chiefly of his Letters*, 2nd ed. (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1845), 86.

¹⁵⁷ *Belshazzar’s Feast*, however, had already been sold to Martin’s previous employer, the glass manufacturer William Collins. For further discussion of the painting, see Chapter 5.

example to protect British art and to fund the purchase of historical paintings by Academicians, Martin's reasons for turning to the Institution came down to pure economic self-interest, not public utility; as he told the Select Committee on Arts and Manufactures investigating the Royal Academy, he began exhibiting historical landscapes like the *Fall of Babylon* and *Belshazzar's Feast* at the BI instead of the RA simply because "artists have a much better chance of selling their works at the British Institution than at the Royal Academy."¹⁵⁸ As Nicholas Tromans, has argued, "In 1821 the picture of the year was John Martin's *Belshazzar's Feast*: evidently much more closely related to popular panoramas than to the grand style of the classic Old Masters, the huge popularity of this image seemed to make a further mockery of the BI's attempts to forcibly graft living art on to the stem of that classic tradition."¹⁵⁹ It also provided the Institution's critics, like William Hazlitt, with ammunition to ridicule the Institution's Directors and their lofty claims to encourage heroic historical painting, as when he said, "I would fain now say something about Martin's '*Feast*,' but it is impossible to see it at present, for a mob of fancied connoisseurs, the sounding dogmatism of whose remarks is equitably balanced by their emptiness and folly."¹⁶⁰

Despite the initial spirit of cooperation between the Academy and the British Institution when campaigning for government protection and encouragement of the arts, the success of the latter's annual exhibitions of British art year after year, coupled with its innovative series of Old

¹⁵⁸ "Report on Arts and Manufactures" (1836), para. 860. See also para. 901, "It appears to me that the system at the institution is the better; at least I had more fair play from the directors of the institution than from the managers of the academy; indeed I am indebted for the major part of my success to the institution."

¹⁵⁹ Tromans, "Museum or Market?," 45.

¹⁶⁰ [William Hazlitt, with T. G. Wainwright], "The British Institution," *London Magazine* 3 (April 1821), 440. Balston, *John Martin*, 55, attributed this largely deprecatory review to "the famous poisoner, Thomas Griffiths Wainwright." However, Duncan Wu in the *New Writings of William Hazlitt*, ed. Duncan Wu, 2 vols. (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 1:347-348, has attributed it to Hazlitt "with Thomas Griffiths Wainwright." On Hazlitt's opposition to historical painting and to the BI as a possible solution to the neglect of this genre, see Funnell, "William Hazlitt."

Master exhibitions in 1815 and 1816, ultimately caused dissension between the two institutions, and their shared, visionary enthusiasm for heroic historical painting devolved into a vulgar competition for power. Initially, the British Institution had set lofty goals in its bylaws to elevate the fine arts in Britain by working with Academicians to obtain state support for historical painting, but in reality, the paintings shown at its annual exhibitions of modern British art were commodities, or “pictures to sell.” As Ann Pullan has explained, “The patron/consumer was able to select from a variety of goods on offer and, hopefully, get a bargain in the form of a painting which would be in keeping with his/her collection, without having to commission a work. . . . New market conditions carried with them the concept of the work of art as a commodity, to be bought and sold like any other commodity.”¹⁶¹ The Institution’s exhibition of modern British art may, in the short run, have provided Academicians with a second chance to show (and sell) their work after the Academy’s exhibition had closed.¹⁶² However, the success year after year of the BI’s exhibition of modern British art also effectively represented “the breaking of the Academy’s monopoly in exhibition” that it had held since the demise of the Society of Artists of Great Britain in 1791.¹⁶³ This opened the door for the creation of a new exhibiting society, the Society

¹⁶¹ Pullan, “Public Goods,” 35-36. Pomeroy, “Creating a National Collection,” 44, also noted that price tags were prominently displayed on modern works exhibited at the Institution, “thus placing an emphasis on the paintings as commodities.”

¹⁶² Fullerton, “Patronage and Pedagogy,” 62; Funnell, “London Art World,” 158.

¹⁶³ I am excepting the short-lived, commercial exhibiting society the British School (1802-1804), which had been set up in direct competition with the Royal Academy and “instituted for the perpetual exhibition and sale of the original works of modern artists” but failed after eighteen months. On the British School, see John Gage, “The British School and the British School,” in *Towards a Modern Art World*, ed. Brian Allen (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 109-120. Fullerton, “Patronage and Pedagogy,” 64. William T. Whitley, *Art in England, 1821-1837* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1930), 206, also said the British Institution “had destroyed the monopoly of the Royal Academy.” On the BI breaking the Academy’s monopoly on exhibitions, see also Fullerton, “Patronage and Pedagogy,” 62; Pullan, “Public Goods,” 41; Haskell, *Ephemeral Museum*, 48; Helen Valentine, “The Royal Academy Schools in the Victorian Period,” in *Art in the Age of Queen Victoria: Treasures from the Royal Academy of Arts Permanent Collection*, ed. Helen Valentine, exh. cat. (London: Royal Academy of

of British Artists, which Martin helped set up in 1823, two years after the exhibition of *Belshazzar's Feast*.¹⁶⁴

The SBA immediately established itself as the metropolis' third society for the exhibition of modern British art:

Whatever merits the Royal Academy or the British Institution may possess, and no artist would write to depreciate them, yet they are both insufficient; and, in order to keep pace with the rapid progress the Fine Arts are making in this country, to afford them due encouragement, a third institution is wanted, on a larger scale and on a more liberal principle. It is only by enabling an artist to live by his labours, that he can be expected to give full scope for his genius and it is by the sale of his works that he expects to live. Now neither the Royal Academy nor the British Institution are favourable to the sale of works of artists. In the first they can scarcely be seen, in the latter, they are exhibited when the fashionable world is out of town.¹⁶⁵

Unlike the founders of the RA and the BI, the founders of the Society of British Artists and its *Annual Exhibition for the Sale of Works of Art by Living British Artists* did not make any claims to public utility. Writing in 1837, Shee contrasted the RA, “an Establishment . . . disinterestedly devoting large funds of their own creation, to the noblest public purposes,” with the SBA, “a recent private speculation of a few individual Artists, for their own advantage . . . pledged to no public duties, and performing no public services; – with no other purpose than the exhibition of

Arts, in association with Yale University Press, 1999), 38. Following the first exhibition in 1806, Farington, *Diary*, 7:2724 (April 19, 1806), wrote down, “[John Hoppner] is also for ordering that no work shall be sent there which had not been previously exhibited at the Royal Academy. At another time, forgetting what He had said, He spoke of the improbability of any picture being sold at the British Institution which had not met with a purchaser at the Academy Exhibition. Westall & Rigaud immediately proved the contrary by mentioning pictures which they had sold at the *Institution*.” Farington, *Diary*, 7:2746 (May 4, 1806), “Mr. Matthews, Member for Herefordshire, called on me. He thought the British Institution a desirable [sic] establishment as it rendered the difficulty of finding Artists at their respective dwellings unnecessary.”

¹⁶⁴ Edwards, *Administrative Economy*, 256.

¹⁶⁵ *Literary Chronicle*, no. 212 (June 7, 1823), 367. The engraver Abraham Raimbach, claimed the establishment of the SBA was also due to artists' frustration over the management of the British Institution. See M. T. S. Raimbach, ed., *Memoirs and Recollections of the Late Abraham Raimbach, Esq., Engraver* (London: F. Shoberl, 1843), 257.

their works and employing their funds, – as they have an unquestionable right to do – solely for their own benefit.”¹⁶⁶ Reviewing the SBA’s 1824 inaugural exhibition, in which Martin showed for the first time his large historical landscape, *The Seventh Plague of Egypt* (1823, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, fig. 6), the *European Magazine* also seemed amazed to find:

in these laws of the S.B.A., no grand animating principle, and no aim at any nobler purpose than may be supposed to govern an assembly of ware-shewing money-getters, of narrow views, met for a selfish and present purpose merely. . . . Let it be imagined that, when the founders of a Society of British Artists met together, for the purpose of forming a permanent association, someone had proposed, that they should, in this first instance, declare their object, or purpose. This proposal, simple as it is, would probably have led to some discussion, because, while the more mercenary members had said, ‘Why to sell our works, to be sure, and get as much money as we can;’ others, would have felt shame at this idea, and would have replied, ‘No: this is not a thing to be publicly stated; nor is it more than a secondary object. Our primary purpose, as professors of liberal arts, must be, both ostensibly and really, the advancement of those arts, as connected with that of society itself.’¹⁶⁷

As we have seen, to publicly state that, since he had left Collins’s glassworks, his primary objective had been “to get as much money” as he could from his paintings, like his *Fall of Babylon*, was no source of shame for Martin, although it certainly would have been for Shee or, for that matter, any of the other Academicians who were hoping to raise art above trade by obtaining government protection.¹⁶⁸ Indeed, for Martin, the fact that “no other grand animating principle” besides money-getting had motivated him was something he was proud to proclaim when he explained in 1849, “Having, from my earliest years, attempted to draw, and expressed a

¹⁶⁶ Martin Archer Shee, *A Letter to Joseph Hume, Esq., MP in Reply to His Aspersions on the Character and Proceedings of the Royal Academy* (London: Ridgway, 1838), 8-9. See also *Literary Chronicle*, no. 212 (June 7, 1823), 367.

¹⁶⁷ “New Exhibition of the Society of British Artists, (in Suffolk Street.),” *European Magazine, and London Review* 85 (April 1824), 371.

¹⁶⁸ Shee, *Rhymes*, li, “The Painter who pursues his Art as a trade, and thinks when he is *paid* that he is rewarded, should certainly be content if he is allowed, on equal terms, to play at the round game of profit and loss, and shuffle his cards with the contentious crowd, ‘Who follow Fortune through her filthy maze.’”

determination to ‘be a painter,’ the question arose ‘how to turn my desires to profitable account.’”¹⁶⁹ As we shall see in the next chapter, Martin testified before the 1835-36 Select Committee on Arts and Manufactures that what he did not want was the kind of government protection and support for British art that the Royal Academy had been seeking to obtain since 1800, because, invariably, it would benefit first and foremost the Royal Academy and its members.¹⁷⁰ What Martin and his associates from the SBA wanted instead was a level playing field and open competition between all artists in the free-for-all of the market, or as Martin put it, “‘Clear stage and no favour.’”¹⁷¹ The establishment of this select committee, which was set up specifically to investigate the constitution and management of the Royal Academy prior to its move to the new National Gallery building in 1837, was in no small part a result of a petition put forward by the Society of British Artists that such a move would create for the SBA an “inability to compete with an institution so favoured at the public expense.”¹⁷² As Hoock has pointed out regarding the committee’s hearings, “In language that echoed the anti-monopoly critiques from the 1760s” of the RA by members of the eighteenth-century Society of Artists of Great Britain, “the oligarchic Academy was contrasted with the Society of British Artists, a ‘broad and liberal Society . . . the genuine republic of art.’”¹⁷³ For many of those associated with the SBA, like

¹⁶⁹ *Illustrated London News* (March 17, 1849), 176.

¹⁷⁰ For Martin’s claims that whenever subsidies, patronage, and sponsorship did exist, they only benefited the Royal Academy, see “Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1836), paras. 902-910.

¹⁷¹ “Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1836), para. 878.

¹⁷² “Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1836), ix. See also “Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1836), v. For the full text of the SBA’s petition, see para. 755. The National Gallery was founded in 1824. Initially it was housed at 100 Pall Mall, the former home of the collector J. J. Angerstein.

¹⁷³ Hoock, *King’s Artists*, 301. Shortly after the Academy was established, the engraver Robert Strange, a member of the SAGB, wrote in *An Inquiry into the Rise and Establishment of the Royal Academy of Arts* (London: Printed for E. and C. Dilly, J. Robson, and J. Walter, 1775), 98, that Academicians “were establishing a monopoly in the arts, and promoting the seeds of discord, by excluding from the royal

Martin, “the sole panacea” to any government protection for the arts that would benefit an oligarchic and monopolistic Royal Academy was “loudly proclaimed to be ‘*free trade in art, as in commerce.*’”¹⁷⁴

protection every one who was not of their immediate cabal.” On the links made between the Society of Artists of Great Britain and the Society of British Artists, see Hooock, *King’s Artists*, 301. On the Society of Artists of Great Britain representing “those social values and consensual relations befitting a market society,” see Kriz, *Idea*, 11. On the association of the Society of Artists of Great Britain with Wilkite radicalism, see Solkin, *Painting for Money*, 262-263; Hargraves, “*Candidates for Fame*,” 145.

¹⁷⁴ Edwards, *Administrative Economy*, 154.

CHAPTER 2

**“FREE TRADE IN ART, AS IN COMMERCE”:
MARTIN AND THE
1835-36 SELECT COMMITTEE ON ARTS AND MANUFACTURES**

Political economists have denied the advantages of such institutions [academies], and artists themselves, of later years, have more than doubted them. . . . It seems probable that the principle of free competition in art (as in commerce) will ultimately triumph over all artificial institutions.¹

“Report from the Select Committee on Arts and Their
Connexion with Manufactures,” 1836

What do you think of . . . allowing all societies, like the British Institution, and the [Society of] British Artists in Suffolk-Street and the Royal Academy itself to compete freely with one another? – Competition is the fairest way.²

John Martin, responding to a question from William Ewart,
Select Committee on Arts and Manufactures, June 24, 1836

Do you know that Mons. Say, in a chapter devoted to them [academies] in his treatise on political economy, conceives they are hostile to the fine arts? – I have seen it quoted, and have no respect for the opinion of a political economist on the subject of the arts; for the principle of commerce and the principle of art are in direct opposition the one to the other.³

Martin Archer Shee, responding to a question from William
Ewart, Select Committee on Arts and Manufactures, July
15, 1836

On August 17, 1835, and again on June 24, 1836, Martin testified before the Select Committee on Arts and Manufactures. Excerpts from his testimony were reprinted in Balston’s and Feaver’s monographs to illustrate Martin’s antipathy towards the Royal Academy and his

¹ “Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1836), viii.

² “Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1836), para. 897.

³ “Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1836), para. 1973. Presumably Ewart was referring to Jean-Baptiste Say, *A Treatise on Political Economy; or the Production, Distribution, and Consumption of Wealth*, trans. C. R. Prinsep, 2 vols. (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1821), 314-315.

anger over the piracy of his prints by foreign engravers.⁴ Yet, no hint was given in these texts of the committee's historical importance as "the key political event in the establishment of a system of public art and design education in Britain."⁵ Nor was mention made that "the evidence began that long national debate on the relationship between art and industry which has continued into our own times."⁶

Nikolaus Pevsner omitted discussion of the Select Committee on Arts and Manufactures altogether from his *Academies of Art*, which examined the centuries-old tension between practical art training, which would benefit industry, and fine art training to produce painters and sculptors as a pan-European phenomenon.⁷ However, much has subsequently been written about this committee in histories of art and design education in Britain because, as a result of its deliberations, the first Government School of Design (today, the Royal College of Art) opened its doors in London on June 1, 1837, ten months after the publication of the committee's final report.⁸ Between 1842 and 1852, twenty-one branch schools, partially funded by the

⁴ Balston, *John Martin*, 176-180; Feaver, *Art of John Martin*, 14-15, 24, 112-113, 130, 140. Excerpts were also reprinted in Christopher Johnstone, *John Martin* (London: Academy Editions, 1974), 22. Pendered did not discuss the select committee.

⁵ Mervyn Romans, "An Analysis of the Political Complexion of the 1835/6 Select Committee on Arts and Manufactures," *International Journal of Art and Design Education* 26 (June 2007): 215. Lars Kokkonen, "Apocalypse Now (Nächtliche Ergüsse): John Martins Profanität im England des 19. Jahrhunderts," *Belvedere: Zeitschrift für bildende Kunst* 9, no.1 (2003): 32-45, 91-99, was an early attempt to evaluate Martin's testimony in light of the committee's investigation of art education.

⁶ Quentin Bell, *The Schools of Design* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), 52.

⁷ Pevsner, *Academies of Art*, 238, briefly mentioned attacks on the Academy by B. R. Haydon and Joseph Hume MP in 1834, 1837-39, and 1844, but skipped over the Select Committee on Arts and Manufactures.

⁸ The Board of Trade recommended to the Treasury that a Vote in the Estimates of £1,500 be submitted for the Normal School of Design in London in July 1836, one month before the hearings had ended. However, the school's committee did not meet for the first time until December 1836, four months after the final report was published. See "Report on Arts and Manufactures" (1836), v; Stuart Macdonald, *The History and Philosophy of Art Education* (New York: American Elsevier, 1970), 69; Janet Minihan, *The*

government, also were created across the country (still a relatively small number compared with the eighty design schools in France).⁹ By mid-century, nearly 15,000 men and women had received training at these schools.¹⁰ However, the committee members' interest in discussing art and design education was entirely utilitarian and practical; art was viewed strictly as a commodity. For instance, Quentin Bell in his *Schools of Design* has stated that by the 1830s there had grown among MPs "a widespread feeling that something must be done to educate artisans in art," and that "the source from which the demands for schools arose, clearly indicated that this was a matter directly related to industry and commerce."¹¹ In his essay on the select committee, Tom Gretton has said that the hearings are viewed today "as the moment when the English Art School system was engendered," even though for committee members "art seems to have been clearly, if not simply, something which has its price in the market and is a factor in the cost of commodity production."¹² Most recently, Lara Kriegel, building on the work of Bell, has

Nationalization of Culture: The Development of State Subsidies to the Arts in Great Britain (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1977), 44. Bell, *Schools of Design*, 60-61, listed the sum as £1,600.

⁹ On the branch schools of design in Britain, see Bell, *Schools of Design*, esp. 99-141. Macdonald, *History and Philosophy*, 103, stated that by 1847 there were fourteen branch schools.

¹⁰ Lara Kriegel, *Grand Designs* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 14.

¹¹ Bell, *Schools of Design*, 60. For other supporters of the economic argument for the establishment of the select committee, see Richard Carline, *Draw They Must: A History of the Teaching and Examining of Art* (London: Edward Arnold, 1968); Macdonald, *History and Philosophy*; Clive Ashwin, ed., *Art Education: Documents and Policies 1768-1975* (London: Society for Research into Higher Education, 1975); Minihan, *Nationalization of Culture*; Toshio Kusamitsu, "British Industrialization and Design before the Great Exhibition," *Textile History* 12 (1981): 77-95; Nicholas Pearson, *The State and the Visual Arts: A Discussion of State Intervention in the Visual Arts in Britain, 1760-1981* (Milton Keynes: The Open University Press, 1982); John Grant Rhodes, "Ornament and Ideology: A Study in Mid-Nineteenth-Century British Design Theory" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1983); Paul A. C. Sproll, "Matters of Taste and Matters of Commerce: British Government Intervention in Art Education in 1835," *Studies in Art Education* 35 (Winter 1994): 105-113; Christopher Frayling, *The Royal College of Art: One Hundred and Fifty Years of Art & Design* (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1987).

¹² Thomas Gretton, "'Art is Cheaper and Goes Lower in France': The Language of the Parliamentary Select Committee on the Arts and Principles of Design of 1835-6," in *Art in Bourgeois Society, 1790-*

argued that the committee “was concerned with large-scale economic reform” and that it “sought to do nothing less than reconfigure the relationship between art and the state.”¹³

It also has been acknowledged in these studies that the Royal Academy faced in these hearings the most serious attack on its legitimacy as a national institution since it was founded in 1768 as a “society for promoting the Arts of Design.”¹⁴ Indeed, Arthur Efland had said the

1850, eds. Andrew Hemingway and William Vaughan (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 84, 89.

¹³ Kriegel, *Grand Designs*, 2, 24. In their important dissertations, Mervyn Romans and Jane Alexandra Webb challenged the argument that economics was the only thing that mattered to the committee members. See Mervyn Romans, “Political, Economic, Social and Cultural Determinants in the History of Early to Mid-Nineteenth Century Art and Design Education in Britain” (D.Phil. thesis, University of Central England in Birmingham, 1998); Jane Alexandra Webb, “An Analysis of the Select Committee on Arts and Manufactures of 1835-6: Anatomy, Benthamism and Design” (Ph.D. diss, University of Wolverhampton, 2003). Nevertheless, they too acknowledged that the Select Committee on Arts and Manufactures was the first Parliamentary inquiry to weigh the political, social, cultural, and economic costs and benefits of government involvement in art and design education. For others who also argue that economic growth was one of a myriad of considerations, see Pearson, *State and the Visual Arts*, 14; Rhodes, “Ornament and Ideology,” esp. chap. 2; Frances Borzello, *Civilising Caliban: The Misuse of Art, 1875-1980* (London and New York: Routledge and K. Paul, 1987), 3-50; Carol Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 43; and Gretton, “Art is Cheaper,” esp. 92-96. Although he criticized the dominant economic argument, Romans did not offer an alternative explanation for the formation of the committee, saying, 4, “there is no intention to replace the old orthodoxy with a new one.” Romans, “Determinants,” 208, admitted, however, that this “approach might invite the charge of ‘sitting on the fence’ where interpretation is concerned.” Webb, 3, also believed there were “problems with depending on the economic argument for the existence of the Committee” but conceded that “this type of discussion was a major part of the debate.” In her investigation of how Benthamite theories of providing the “greatest good for the greatest number” shaped the debates, Webb preferred to say that the committee was swayed by “ideological economics.” Scholarship since Romans and Webb, such as Kriegel, still focuses heavily on the economic dimensions of the committee’s debate.

¹⁴ Instrument of Foundation of the Royal Academy of Arts, December 10, 1768. Hooock, *King’s Artists*, 300, 303, has described the select committee as debating the Academy’s “constitution, role, and achievements as a national institution,” as well as “the Academy’s role in the cultural state.” See also Hooock, “The King’s Artists: The Royal Academy of Arts as a National Institution, c. 1768-1820” (D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 2000). Ann Bermingham, *Learning to Draw: Studies in the Cultural History of a Polite and Useful Art* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), 230, has said the committee was formed “to determine just what, if anything, the Academy as constituted had achieved” in improving national taste and the design of manufactures and “if anything more was needed.” See also Lyndel Saunders King, *The Industrialization of Taste: Victorian England and the Art Union of London* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1985), 12; H. C. Morgan, “The Lost Opportunity of the Royal Academy: An Assessment of Its Position in the Nineteenth Century,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 32 (1969): 411-412.

“select committee studied the academy system in general and the Royal Academy in particular as a potential resource for solving the problem of training artisan designers,” and reached the conclusion that all academies “restricted the freedom of the artist in an economic sense by stifling competition.”¹⁵ He added, “What is remarkable about the 1836 report on arts and manufactures was the free trade economics of the British system were directly linked to the belief that the artist too should be free to practice his art.”¹⁶ As I will discuss in this chapter, this was exactly the argument that Martin made when he appeared before the select committee to call for “fair play” between artists and exhibiting societies.¹⁷

Celina Fox has argued that “Sir Martin Archer Shee, President of the Royal Academy, before the Select Committee of 1836, staked the claim of the Royal Academy to live in a building constructed with public funds on the Academy’s role as a school. It was against this role that the full weight of radical opposition was directed.”¹⁸ However, it has not been pointed in previous discussions of the committee that Shee attempted to define the Academy’s place in national life and to justify why it should be housed in a new National Gallery building built with public money to the members of the committee in terms they could understand – economics. He did this by insisting that the Royal Academy of Arts – “a species of institution considered of so much importance in most other civilized communities as to be supported by the state” – had been

¹⁵ Arthur Efland, “School Art and Its Social Origins,” *Studies in Art Education* 24 (1983): 151.

¹⁶ Efland, “School Art,” 151.

¹⁷ “Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1836), para. 913.

¹⁸ Celina Fox, “Fine Arts and Design,” in *Government and Society in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, ed. Gillian Sutherland (Dublin: Irish University Press, 1977), 82.

training designers for industry since its foundation at no expense to the government.¹⁹ Unlike in France, where Academicians could afford to stress “the non-commercial aspects of their profession” because they were state-subsidized, Shee and other British Academicians were members of a private society that (as discussed in the last chapter), under West’s presidency, “put a stronger emphasis on the indirect commercial benefits of its activities and of the promotion of the fine arts in general” to curry favor with politicians.²⁰ I will argue that Shee did the same in these hearings in order to counter the committee members’ argument that the RA was of no public utility. Despite the Academy’s failure between 1800 and 1815 to secure government support for historical painting on the basis of art’s economic utility for industry, West had been correct to think that a commercial pitch might find favor because, afterwards, the argument that spending public funds on art would spur the nation’s economy helped to make art a matter of government concern. For instance, it was a key factor in the government’s decision to purchase the Elgin Marbles in 1816 during a period of economic retrenchment following the Napoleonic Wars.²¹ When Robert Peel addressed Parliament on April 13, 1832, about the need

¹⁹ Shee, *Letter to Lord John Russell*, 8, also 13. See also his letter to Thomas Spring Rice, dated February 7, 1833, in Shee, *Life of Sir Martin Archer Shee*, 2:56, “From the foregoing observations, it appears that a national institution for the cultivation of the fine arts - an institution which in all other civilised countries is considered of such public utility, as to be allowed an establishment at the expense of the state - has been in this country supported for fifty-three years [George III had helped the Academy balance its books until 1780], by the unaided exertions of a body of artists associated under the title of the Royal Academy.”; and his *Letter to Joseph Hume*, 4, “One would suppose that a number of artists might associate together for the purpose of raising the depressed Arts of their country, - might disinterestedly devote their time, their talents, and their funds to the support of an establishment which ought to be maintained by the State.”

²⁰ Mainardi, *Art and Politics*, 8; Hoock, *King’s Artists*, 72. Hoock claimed the new emphasis was only temporary.

²¹ See Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, 1st series xxxiv (June 7, 1816), 1034, when John Wilson Croker, MP for Athlone and Secretary of the Admiralty, claimed that in purchasing the marbles, “The bargain was for the benefit of the public, for the honour of the nation, for the promotion of national arts, for the use of the national artists, and even for the advantage of our manufactures, the excellence of which depended on the progress of the arts in the country. . . . It was money spent for the use of the people, for the

for the government to build a new National Gallery, he framed the debate, as Janet Minihan has said, as a “question of art applied to the vital processes of a commercial nation which the parliamentary spokesmen of industry and trade could understand.”²² Three years before the Select Committee on Arts and Manufactures convened to question the legality of the Academy’s move to the National Gallery, the architect William Wilkins, RA, assured Viscount Goderich, former Prime Minister and former Chancellor of the Exchequer and head of the committee considering designs for the new National Gallery, that public expenditures for such projects like this building held out “the sure prospect of a usurious return.”²³ Channeling the economist Adam Smith, Wilkins explained to Goderich:

encouragement of arts, the increase of manufactures, the prosperity of trades, and the encouragement of industry; not merely to please the eye of the man of taste, but to create to stimulate, to guide the exertions of the artist, the mechanic, and even the labourer, and to spread through all the branches of society a spirit of improvement, and the means of a sober and industrious affluence.” B. R. Haydon’s biographer, Eric George, *The Life and Death of Benjamin Robert Haydon, Historical Painter*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967), 89, has said, “Croker made a forcible speech in favour of the purchase, for which he was warmly thanked by Lord Elgin. If any one man deserves the credit it is he and not Haydon; for the value of the Marbles as works of art . . . was not disputed by any speaker.” See also Eric Gidal, *Poetic Exhibitions: Romantic Aesthetics and the Pleasures of the British Museum* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2001), 117-119; Minihan, *Nationalization of Culture*, 17. Contradicting a tendency in the scholarship to claim that the advocates for design reform and of the application of art to industry were only Radical politicians, such as Ewart, it is important to note that Croker, like Henry Thomas Hope, a design reformer who sat on the 1835-36 select committee, was a Tory and an opponent of the 1832 Reform Act. Yet he was a strong advocate of free trade.

²² Minihan, *Nationalization of Culture*, 38. See W. T. Haley, *The Opinions of Sir Robert Peel, Expressed in Parliament and in Public* (London: Whittaker & Co., 1843), 235, for the text of Peel’s request for £30,000 to build a new National Gallery, “The interest of our manufacturers is involved in every encouragement being held out to the fine arts of the country. It is well known that our manufacturers are, in all matters connected with machinery, superior to their foreign competitors; but in the pictorial designs, which are so important in recommending the productions of industry to the taste of the consumer, they are; unfortunately, not equally successful, and hence they have found themselves unequal to their rivals. This deserves the serious consideration of the House in its patronage of the Fine Arts.”

²³ William Wilkins, *A Letter to Lord Viscount Goderich, on the Patronage of the Arts by the English Government* (London: J. Rodwell, 1832), 71, “Commissions to artists, as a means of rewarding successful merit, must be attended with a certain portion of public expenditure; but it ought not to be regarded on this account as objectionable in any government which has the courage to adopt a true and liberal course of policy, and on such grounds dare to lend the public money with the sure prospect of a usurious return.” On the title page of his *Letter*, Wilkins included a quote from Jacques Necker’s *Comptes rendus* as it had

The cry of the pseudo-economists, who, to obtain popularity with the multitude exclaim against all such expenditure of the public money as they deem not absolutely necessary in their contracted and near-sighted view of the objects essential to national prosperity, is unworthy the attention of an enlightened administration. With equal reason they might object to that part of the public expenditure which provides for the security of commerce where the profits arise to a few individuals of the community only. But the statesman knows that in the wealth of individuals consists the wealth of the community; and this axiom is equally true whether applied to a tangible commodity or to the advantages that flow from the treasury of the intellect. The cause, therefore, of the arts is the cause of the nation, and although the community at large may be unconscious of such an intimate connexion, statesmen are not.²⁴

As Jonathan Conlin has pointed out, it was this letter to Goderich arguing for art's economic utility to the nation that helped Wilkins clinch the commission to design this public building, which would eventually house the private Royal Academy, according to Wilkins, at his instigation.²⁵ Yet it also serves to show just how much further the Academy had drifted by the 1830s from its founding civic humanist principles, as articulated by Sir Joshua Reynolds, since West's presidency.

I first want to summarize the business of the select committee. I then will discuss the committee's argument that the RA was not a national public institution and should not be allowed to occupy rooms in a public building. I will examine Shee's claim that the best proof of

appeared in English in James Millingen's *Some Remarks on the State of Learning and the Fine-Arts in Great Britain* (1831), to reinforce his commercial argument, "Learning and Science repay the State with usury the assistance which the State affords to those who profess and cultivate them."

²⁴ Wilkins, *Letter*, 72-73. John Martin, F.L.S. [no relation to the artist], *A Bibliographical Catalogue of Books Privately Printed*, 2 vols. (London: J. and A. Arch, Payne and Foss, J. Rodwell, 1834), 309, said, "[The letter] is very justly severe on the miserable economy displayed by this country in the support of the fine arts." David John Farmer, "Invisible Hand and Visible Management," in *Handbook of Organization Theory and Management: The Philosophical Approach*, 2nd ed., eds. Thomas D. Lynch and Peter L. Cruise (Boca Raton, Florida: CRC Press, 2006), 235, has summarized Smith's argument for the invisible-hand doctrine in Book 4 of the *Wealth of Nations* as "the sum of the community is the sum of the wealth of individuals; and, therefore, an aggregate of people in a society will maximize aggregate wealth."

²⁵ Jonathan Conlin, *The Nation's Mantelpiece: A History of the National Gallery* (London: Pallas Athene, 2006), 60. On Wilkins's claim to being the originator of the proposal to move the Academy to the new National Gallery building, see "Report on Arts and Manufactures" (1836), para. 1430

the Academy's public utility was that it had trained designers for industry as an attempt to counter the assertion made, in his words, "throughout the whole course of evidence which has been given before this Committee respecting the academy, that it is a mere private institution, conducted for its own private purposes."²⁶ I will examine how Shee, a portrait painter and PRA, and the debt-ridden historical painter and former pupil of the RA Schools, Benjamin Robert Haydon, usually described as being at complete loggerheads in the hearings over the issue of state support for historical painters, had, in fact, both argued for it on the grounds that such patronage could rescue art from trade by giving historical painters a measure of independence from the market. After I discuss the parallels between Shee's and Haydon's pleas for state protection of historical painting, I then will discuss the arguments of Martin and others in the "anti-state camp" that only free competition between artists and private exhibiting societies, not government protection, would create great art and improve manufactures.²⁷ Unlike Shee and Haydon, these witnesses argued that artists and art societies need not be encouraged by the state and that art *was* a trade that should be left to find its price on the market like any other commodity; hence, Edward Edwards, a keeper at the British Museum, who wrote a book in response to the select committee's final report, described their position as "*free trade in art, as in commerce.*"²⁸ I will conclude the chapter by discussing for the first time in scholarship on Martin some of the industrial exhibitions in which Martin exhibited his paintings alongside operating machinery, scientific models, and other manufactures, not as high art objects, but as items of

²⁶ Shee, *Letter to Lord John Russell*, 9; "Report on Arts and Manufactures" (1836), para. 2027.

²⁷ Hoock, *King's Artists*, 302, "The anti-state camp argued that only private patronage, market forces, and competition between private societies, not state intervention and privileged institutions, produced great art." See also Minihan, *Nationalization of Culture*, 40-41.

²⁸ Edwards, *Administrative Economy*, 154.

trade competing with other commodities for the consumer's attention. These commercial exhibitions, which collapsed the distinctions between art and industry, were intended, in the spirit of the select committee's mandate, to improve the public's taste by extending a knowledge of art and science to the general population.²⁹ Then and now, these shows were and are recognized as precursors to the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations, in which I also have uncovered that Martin was an exhibitor.³⁰ My discussion of Martin's opposition to the Academy on the grounds that there should be free trade in art and of his interest in showing his work at industrial exhibitions, where art was shown as a trade, will help to explain why his denunciations of the Academy in the hearings should not be characterized, as has been the case, simply as opportunities to avenge himself on the Academy for past personal affronts.³¹ Rather, when seen in the historical context of the committee's argument for free trade both in art and commerce, his participation as just one witness among dozens will more fruitfully be understood as an attempt "in speaking against the academy . . . to be understood to apply to the system," which he and other "free-traders" testified distorted competition in the marketplace.³²

²⁹ Ana Filipa Vrdoljak, *International Law, Museums and the Return of Cultural Objects* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 34, "[The select committee] recommended . . . that public taste for well-designed British products be stimulated by mounting industrial exhibitions."

³⁰ Previously, it was argued that Martin did not take part in the Great Exhibition. See Balston, *John Martin*, 232, "In spite of his relations with Prince Albert, there is no evidence that Martin had any connection with the Great Exhibition of 1851, though he must have been interested in an enterprise with objects so akin to the [Royal] Panopticon's." On Martin's involvement with the Royal Panopticon of Science and Art, see below.

³¹ Balston, *John Martin*, 180; Feaver, *Art of John Martin*, 24. See also Johnstone, *John Martin*, 22.

³² "Report on Arts and Manufactures" (1836), para. 875. Martin had said this in response to the question, "Do you think art is better advanced by the existence of any society for the purpose of forwarding it, or by its being left to itself." He went on to answer, "I do not see how it can be of much service to such men as my friends Mr. Howard here, and Mr. Wilkie, and Mr. Turner, and of about twenty other very clever men among them, who may safely rest upon their own merits. In speaking against the academy, I wish it to be

On July 14, 1835, William Ewart, Radical MP for Liverpool and free trade advocate, rose in the House of Commons “to bring forward the Motion, of which he had long given notice, for the encouragement of the Fine Arts.”³³ He stated that in France national institutions for the encouragement of the fine arts had existed since the reign of Louis XIV and that public museums and art schools there had managed to infuse a reverence for art and a respect for the title of “artist” among all classes of that nation. As a result, one could see “good taste exhibited in all branches of manufactures” produced in France.³⁴ However, in Britain, government art schools were unheard of and artists, “he was sorry to say, stood in a lower degree than that of almost any other country whatever.”³⁵ While he doubted that a consensus could be reached among Members on what would be the best means of spreading a similar love of art among the British people, “he believed that the best mode was the opening of all the means by which a knowledge of the Arts was to be acquired. He was of [the] opinion, that arts, like commerce, ought to be essentially free. However, all those were questions for the consideration of the Committee.”³⁶ He therefore moved, “That a Select Committee be appointed to inquire into the best means of extending a

understood to apply to the system, and not to the individuals, for I am proud to reckon amongst my friends the most distinguished members of the body, and have to acknowledge on various occasions the kind and generous support they have rendered me.” On the issue of attacking the “system” and not the “individual,” see Ewart’s questioning of Shee in “Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1836), paras. 1917-1921.

³³ “Arts-Royal Academy,” Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd series, xxix (July 14, 1835), 553. William Arthur Munford, *William Ewart, MP, 1789-1869: Portrait of a Radical* (London: Grafton, 1960), 78, noted, “As luck would have it the Royal Academy exhibition of 1835 was regarded generally as a disappointing one and Ewart brought forward his Motion in the Commons on 14th July.” Ewart later described himself as “an advocate for perfect freedom in the arts as well as in commerce.” See *Mirror of Parliament* 6 (1839), 4506.

³⁴ “Arts-Royal Academy,” *Parliamentary Debates*, (July 14, 1835), 554.

³⁵ “Arts-Royal Academy,” *Parliamentary Debates*, (July 14, 1835), 554.

³⁶ “Arts-Royal Academy,” *Parliamentary Debates*, (July 14, 1835), 554.

knowledge of the Fine Arts, and of the Principles of Design among the People - especially among the manufacturing population of the country; and also, to inquire into the constitution of the Royal Academy, and the effects produced by it.”³⁷

In the discussion that followed, Thomas Wyse, Liberal MP for Waterford City, seconded the motion of his Honourable Friend the Member for Liverpool, adding he “could not but express his wonder and regret that a question so nearly allied, not merely to the arts, but the manufactures of the country, should have been so long left untouched.”³⁸ Dr. John Bowring, Radical MP for Kilmarnock Burghs, editor of the Benthamite *Westminster Review*, and advocate for the cause of free trade, spoke in favor of the motion and agreed that what the people needed was greater familiarity with art because “the people of France had become artistical by habit; while the people of England had acquired a capacity which had grown out of their mechanical appetite (if he might use such an expression).”³⁹ Mr. Ridley Colborne also agreed with the motion for the committee, and reminded his fellow Members, “It was a fact, that in England alone not a shilling was given by the Government for the encouragement of art; unless the

³⁷ “Arts-Royal Academy,” *Parliamentary Debates* (July 14, 1835), 555. See the select committee’s final report “Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1836), xiv, where the wording was slightly different, so that Ewart’s specific animus toward the Academy was expunged from the motion, “*Ordered*, That a Select Committee be appointed to inquire into the best means of extending a knowledge of the Arts and of the Principles of Design among the People (especially the Manufacturing Population) of the Country; also to inquire into the Constitution, Management and Effects of Institutions connected with the Arts.”

³⁸ “Arts-Royal Academy,” *Parliamentary Debates* (July 14, 1835), 555.

³⁹ “Arts-Royal Academy,” *Parliamentary Debates* (July 14, 1835), 559. This echoes a statement Bowring later made during a meeting of artists, politicians, and philanthropists to propose free public access to museums and churches, *Report of the Proceedings at a Public Meeting Held at Freemason’s Hall, on the 29th of May, 1837, to Promote the Admission of the Public without Charge, to Westminster Abbey, St. Paul’s Cathedral, and all Depositories of Works of Art, of Natural History, and Objects of Historical and Literary Interest in Public Edifices* (London: T. and W. Boone, 1837), “The continental artizans say that we in England are great in the possession of mechanical knowledge, and in return I say to them ‘your artizans are distinguished by your love and knowledge of art, and it becomes us, therefore, to aid one another’.”

5,000*l.* which was given by George the 3rd to the school of painting might be regarded as a public gift.”⁴⁰

Several MPs, however, made it abundantly clear that they thought state art institutions, like those in France, had no place in their country, with several alleging that the nation’s artists had been better off fending for themselves in the marketplace. Sir Robert Inglis, for one, “could point out many artists of eminence, who, in addition to the applause of Europe, received [without government assistance] in this country those more substantial rewards [i.e., money] which their talents deserved.”⁴¹ The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Thomas Spring Rice, “knew that there were instances of some celebrated men having been neglected, as for example Flaxman, but, in general, that arose from some peculiarity, or negligence, or fault of the artist himself.”⁴² Peter Borthwick, MP for Evesham, thought that without government support “our artists, in the higher departments of the arts, were as much superior to those of France as Italy was superior to England in the fine arts. In confirmation of this remark it was only necessary to mention the names of Wilkie, Martin, Lawrence, and others equally distinguished.”⁴³ Lord Sandon, who “looked more into the improvement of manufactures than of the arts in the appointment of the Committee,” noted that “without a single encouragement being given to the arts by the establishment of a public school our artists exceeded those of other countries who were petted

⁴⁰ “Arts-Royal Academy,” *Parliamentary Debates* (July 14, 1835), 559. George III had contributed £5116 1s 1d to the Royal Academy from the privy purse between 1768 and 1780 so that the fledgling institution could balance its books. From 1781 to the present day, the Royal Academy has been self-supporting, its main source of income being the Summer Exhibition. See Sidney Hutchison, *The History of the Royal Academy 1768-1986* (London: Robert Royce, 1986), 80. Hoock, *King’s Artists*, 35, has pointed out, “For the king, the sums were negligible, compared with the £1,500 or more that he allocated annually for the purchase of books for his library.”

⁴¹ “Arts-Royal Academy,” *Parliamentary Debates* (July 14, 1835), 558.

⁴² “Arts-Royal Academy,” *Parliamentary Debates* (July 14, 1835), 555.

⁴³ “Arts-Royal Academy,” *Parliamentary Debates* (July 14, 1835), 559.

and fostered in national academies.”⁴⁴ After further similar discussion, a vote was taken, the motion agreed to, and a committee appointed to investigate.

The first session of the Select Committee on Arts and Manufactures met fifteen times between July 27 and September 4, 1835. Ewart chaired the hearings and forty-eight other MPs of various political stripes, most with commercial and manufacturing interests, made up the rest of the large committee.⁴⁵ The members examined a total of twenty-eight witnesses ranging from painters, sculptors, and architects – including one Academician – to heads of silk and porcelain manufacturing companies, a stove grate manufacturer, the director of the Royal Gallery in Berlin, an interior decorator, the mayor of Coventry, the vice-president of the London Mechanics Institution, as well as the chief engraver to the Royal Mint, about the competition British manufacturers were facing from firms on the continent and whether the high demand, domestically and abroad, for these rival goods had anything to do with government-run art museums and schools in their countries of origin, and the lack thereof at home.⁴⁶ Nearly all of the witnesses agreed that British manufactures across the board were in peril because, although superior in quantity and durability, many British goods, such as patterned textiles, were

⁴⁴ “Arts-Royal Academy,” *Parliamentary Debates* (July 14, 1835), 560.

⁴⁵ “Arts-Royal Academy,” *Parliamentary Debates*, (July 14, 1835), 555, “[Ewart] had given a tolerably ample scope for his Committee, and his apology for the unusual number was, his wish to have as many practical and professional Gentlemen on the Committee.”

⁴⁶ “Report from the Select Committee on Arts and Manufactures” *Parliamentary Papers* 1835, v (598), iii, “The committee began its labours by dividing the subject of inquiry into the following parts: The state of Art in this country and in other countries, as manifested in their different Manufactures. The best means of extending among the People, especially the Manufacturing Classes, a knowledge of and a taste for Art. The state of the higher branches of Art, and the best mode of advancing them. The investigations of the Committee have been principally confined to the first and second sub-divisions of the subject.” C. R. Cockerell, architect was the Academician. William Wyon, chief engraver to the Mint, was still ARA.

artistically deficient to foreign, and especially French, manufactures.⁴⁷ The reason, they argued, came down to the lack of adequate schools to train designers for industry, as well as the virtual nonexistence of free public museums in Britain to elevate the taste of the labouring classes.⁴⁸

When asked, “To what circumstances do you attribute the superiority of foreign manufactures in art over our own?” the millionaire textile merchant, James Morrison MP, replied, “To the fact that on the continent they have public schools for teaching the art of design; that it has been part of their system to educate men as professors of the art of design as applied to the manufactures, and also as teachers; whereas in this country we have neither the one nor the other.”⁴⁹ Samuel Smith, of Harding, Smith & Co., Pall Mall, testified, “I attribute [the prevalence of French taste] principally to the want of artists and schools of design. In this country the manufacturers have no means of obtaining designs excepting by copies from the French for the most part.”⁵⁰ Robert Harrison of the silk manufacturing firm Brydges, Campbell & Harrison declared, “I think the principal difficulty arises from the circumstance of not having any school of art in this country, where young men would be enabled to pursue their studies for the purpose of perfecting themselves in drawing for that particular branch of the manufacture [in this case, the silk trade].”⁵¹ Reaching no conclusions, however, from the voluminous testimony on the artistic

⁴⁷ One of the only witnesses who refused to accept that British manufacturers lagged behind French manufacturers in any way, including artistically, was J. C. Robertson, editor of the *Mechanics Magazine*. Despite disagreeing with the committee’s investigations, his magazine was praised in the 1836 final report, vi, as “having conferred lasting advantages on the manufacturers of the country.”

⁴⁸ “Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1836), iii, “In nothing have foreign countries possessed a greater advantage over Great Britain than in their numerous public galleries devoted to the Arts, and open gratuitously to the people. The larger towns of France are generally adorned by such institutions. In this country we can scarcely boast of any.”

⁴⁹ “Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1835), para. 168.

⁵⁰ “Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1835), para. 273.

⁵¹ “Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1835), para. 460.

failings of various British manufactures and the potential damage to the country's competitiveness in home and foreign markets due to the lack of design schools and free public museums, the committee in a terse, one-page interim report recommended "the resumption of the inquiry early in the next Session of Parliament."⁵²

This second and final session of hearings began on February 25, 1836, and continued until August 13 of that year. A much smaller, and arguably more radical, committee of fifteen MPs, again with Ewart in the chair, met nineteen times and examined thirty-six witnesses, four of whom, including Martin, had appeared in the 1835 session.⁵³ Questions in the earlier session had been limited almost entirely to the first two divisions of inquiry.⁵⁴ However, the major focus of inquiry in 1836 was on the Royal Academy; on whether the advanced art education available

⁵² "Report on Arts and Manufactures" (1835), iii. See "Article III. Report from the Select Committee on Arts, and their Connexion with Manufactures; with the Minutes of Evidence," *British and Foreign Review* 6 (1838), 77, for an analysis of the 1835 hearings, "From their evidence we may learn at least two very important points with regard to the general cultivation of the fine arts, considered as a national object in a manufacturing country; 1. That the excellence of our manufactures, and our ability to compete in them with foreign nations, does very essentially depend on the degree to which a knowledge of those arts is extended among the people who are manually employed in the production of manufactures; and 2. That at the present time knowledge of that description is extremely limited among the operative classes in this country; in short, that we are in this respect much inferior to the nations of the continent." See also Jules Lubbock, *The Tyranny of Taste: The Politics of Architecture and Design in Britain 1550-1960* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 250-251.

⁵³ Shee, *Life of Sir Martin Archer Shee*, 2:96-118; Bell, *Schools of Design*, 54; Hoock, *King's Artists*, 303. However, Romans, "Determinants," 67-68, disputed the greater radicalism of the 1836 committee; see also his "Analysis of the Political Complexion," 215-224. Rhodes, "Ornament and Ideology," 75, pointed out, "The partisan balance of the new Committee was almost even. There were four Conservatives, six Whigs, two of whom had voted for the ballot in 1835, and five Radicals, two of them Philosophic Radicals. Thus the new Committee was proportionately more Conservative than the old but no less Radical."

⁵⁴ "Report on Arts and Manufactures" (1836), xv, "The Committee began its labours by dividing the subject of inquiry into the following parts: The state of Art in this country and in other countries, as manifested in their different Manufactures. The best means of extending among the People, especially the Manufacturing Classes, a knowledge of and a taste for Art. The state of the higher branches of Art, and the best mode of advancing them. The investigations of the [1835] Committee have been principally confined to the first and second sub-divisions of the subject."

on the continent that made historical painting possible there was even available in Britain; and on the plans for the new National Gallery, half of which was to be occupied by the RA.⁵⁵ Indeed, it was the imminent move of the Academy from Somerset House to the east wing of the new National Gallery complex, the entirety of which was being built with public money, that galvanized Ewart, urged on by artists, including Martin, to move for the committee.⁵⁶

In this session, hostile committee members and handpicked witnesses argued that the Royal Academy had no right to take up residence in the National Gallery, particularly because the RA was not a national public institution and, moreover, would continue to charge admission to its half of the building.⁵⁷ According to the complainants, the Royal Academy, unlike the continental schools and academies referred to in the first session, was not a national institution, but a privately run, self-financed society that did not belong in a public museum intended to elevate the national taste and assist in improving the design of the nation's manufactures by exposing, through free admission, a larger proportion of the population than ever before to masterpieces of art.⁵⁸ The Academy's president, keeper, and secretary all faced intensive questioning about the Academy's history, its schools, and its administration after a parade of witnesses, including Martin, complained in great detail about such matters as the RA's

⁵⁵ Bell, *Schools of Design*, 54; Macdonald, *History and Philosophy*, 68; Minihan, *Nationalization of Culture*, 43; Hoock, *King's Artists*, 300, 303.

⁵⁶ Quentin Bell, "Haydon versus Shee," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 22 (July-Dec. 1959), 348; Bell, *Schools of Design*, 51; Macdonald, *History and Philosophy*, 65; Pearson, *State and the Visual Arts*, 10; Rhodes, "Ornament and Ideology," 105; King, *Industrialization of Taste*, 13-14; Gretton, "Art is Cheaper," 84; Helen Valentine, "The Royal Academy Schools in the Victorian Period," in *Art in the Age of Queen Victoria: Treasures from the Royal Academy of Arts Permanent Collection*, ed. Helen Valentine (London: Royal Academy of Arts in Association with Yale University Press, 1999), 40; Prior, *Museums and Modernity*, 84; Hoock, *King's Artists*, 300-301.

⁵⁷ See for instance "Report on Arts and Manufactures" (1836), paras. 2030-2042. This is in keeping with Ewart's statement that "he was of [the] opinion, that arts, like commerce, ought to be essentially free."

⁵⁸ Prior, *Museums and Modernity*, 84-85.

exclusionary membership, the predominance of portraits by Academicians over historical paintings by non-members at the Royal Academy exhibition, and the inadequate fine arts training available at its schools.⁵⁹ The committee also spent a great deal of time demolishing Wilkins's plans for the gallery for a number of reasons, but especially for giving too much space to the Academy, and took him and the gallery's keeper, William Seguier, to task about their lack of collaboration in designing the layout of the galleries.⁶⁰

In its eleven-page final report, the committee concluded that the RA could in no way be considered a national institution (and hence, did not belong in a national building), since it was self-supported by admission fees to its annual exhibition and therefore competed with other London exhibiting societies for the public's attention. Noting that "it seems probable that the principle of free competition in art (as in commerce) will ultimately triumph over all artificial institutions," the committee declared in the report:

It is more than probably that our Royal Academy is indebted for the distinguished names which adorn its annals to the necessity of competing as a private society, with other institutions, rather than to the extraneous distinctions and privileges with which it is decorated and, perhaps, encumbered. As it stands, it is not a public national institution

⁵⁹ See "Report on Arts and Manufactures" (1836), para. 988, for Joseph Brotherton's, MP, questioning of the painter George Clint, a former associate of the Royal Academy, who resigned his position after failing to obtain full membership after fourteen years. For John Martin's testimony about the large number of portraits on display at the Summer Exhibition, see "Report on Arts and Manufactures" (1836), para. 835. On the inadequate training at the RA, George Clint testified, in "Report on Arts and Manufactures" (1836), para. 662, that "the schools I look upon to be, from the acknowledgment of the Royal Academy itself, in a very inefficient state. The president has more than once, of late years, reproved the students at his public lecture for the want of talent displayed in their works, and at the triennial competition two years ago no students were found deserving of the first premium in painting and architecture."

⁶⁰ Joseph Brotherton asked Seguier in "Report on Arts and Manufactures" (1836), para. 1659, "Were you consulted as to the formation of the present National Gallery? – No." Ewart followed up by asking Seguier, "Report on Arts and Manufactures" (1836), para. 1665, "Then I understand you had no immediate communication with the architect who planned the National Gallery, so that there might be a connexion between the pictures to be placed in the National Gallery and the construction of the gallery itself? – No." For Wilkins solo testimony, see "Report on Arts and Manufactures" (1836), paras. 1383-1438, and for joint testimony with Seguier, see "Report on Arts and Manufactures" (1836), paras. 1439-1680.

like the French Academy, since it lives by exhibition, and takes money at the door. Yet it possesses many of the privileges of a public body, without bearing the direct burthen of responsibility.⁶¹

The committee also concluded that the RA had been ineffective in spreading a love of art among the manufacturing population and that, as John Grant Rhodes has described it, “far from advancing the interest of British art and thus of British manufactures, [the RA] has had a positively bad influence.”⁶² The report stated:

In taking a general view of the subject before them, the Committee advert with regret to the inference they are obliged to draw from the testimony they have received; that, from the highest branches of poetical design down to the lowest connexion between design and manufactures, the Arts have received little encouragement in this country. . . . Yet, to us, a peculiarly manufacturing nation, the connexion between art and manufactures is most important; - and for this merely economical reason (were there no higher motive), it equally imports us to encourage art in its loftier attributes; since it is admitted that the cultivation of the more exalted branches of design tends to advance the humblest pursuits of industry, while the connexion of art with manufacture has often developed the genius of the greatest masters of design.⁶³

However, rather than refute accusations that the Academy had done nothing to encourage this “most important” connection between art and manufacture by claiming that the RA and its schools were unconcerned with industrial design, Shee responded in the hearings that the Academy had produced numerous designers for industry – without any cost to the government – and that, rather than attack the Academy and deprive it of housing in a national building, the government should instead be grateful to the RA for providing gratis services to industry.⁶⁴ Now,

⁶¹ “Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1836), viii.

⁶² Rhodes, “Ornament and Ideology,” 109.

⁶³ “Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1836), iii.

⁶⁴ Shee also made this point in his later *Letter to Lord John Russell*, 15, “But it may be reasonably alleged that the government have some interest in the preservation of an institution which has performed for them an important duty; a duty which, unquestionably, they would long since have been required to discharge, if the zeal and patriotism of the Academy had not furnished them with an excuse for neglecting it.” Shee, “Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1836) para. 2041, “I consider the Royal Academy a much more

whether or not the Academy had actually trained an extensive number of designers for industry – and the extant evidence, as Holger Hock has shown, suggests that it had – the point to be made here is that Shee did not aver that the Royal Academy “catered for pure art and for the artistic élite” or that “the Royal Academy, Britain’s bastion of high art, would certainly not allow its own facilities to be used for such purposes.”⁶⁵ Rather, he explained to Ewart that the RA, since 1768, had gratuitously supplied that which the state should have been providing in the first place: designers for manufacture.⁶⁶

[Ewart] I understand you to state that [the Royal Academy] brought the arts home to the population of the country? - [Shee] Of course.

How is that performed? - The Royal Academy since its establishment has educated nearly 1,800 students. Those students have not all become Raphaels and Michael Angelos; they do not even all become artists. They receive the education which the academy affords

important institution to the nation than the National Gallery; I look upon it that a garden is of more consequence than a granary; and you may heap up a *hortus-siccus* of art without producing any of the salutary effects which never fail to result from the operations of such a school as the Royal Academy. It would, therefore, I conceive, be an injury to the nation, as well to the Royal Academy, if they were to be removed [from the east wing of Wilkins’ building], in order to make room for even the best works of the old masters.” Edward Edwards in his *Letter to Sir Martin Archer Shee, F.R.S., President of the Royal Academy, on the Reform of the Royal Academy, with Observations on the Evidence Respecting the Academy, Given before the Select Committee of the Commons on Arts and Manufactures* (London: privately printed, 1839), 5, agreed, telling Shee, “As respects the past, and taking the past as a whole, I feel, for my own part, the pleasure of fully concurring in opinion with yourself, that for its mere outlay, so to speak (in affording house room) the public has been more than repaid.”

⁶⁵ Minihan, *Nationalization of Culture*, 38; Pearson, *State and the Visual Arts*, 14. Macdonald, *History and Philosophy*, 62, also claimed that, by 1800, the Royal Academy “had become a High Art club for oil painters, sculptors and a handful of architects.” On the training of designers for manufacture at the RA, see Hock, *King’s Artists*, 61-62. R.T. Stothard, “Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1836), para. 264, agreed that the RA Schools had produced prominent designers for manufacture, and mentioned the RA graduate Thomas Baxter, best known today for his ceramic work. Hock also discussed Baxter. On Baxter, see John O. Winstead and Bernard Morris, *Thomas Baxter: The Swansea Years, 1816-1819: A Study of the Artist’s Ceramic and Topographical Work at Swansea with a Survey of His Life and Its Background* (Llandysul, Ceredigion: Gomer, 1997). For a slightly later example of an industrial designer trained at the RA, see below on John Woody Papworth.

⁶⁶ Shee’s admission is a repudiation of Joshua Reynolds’ civic humanist vision. See Reynolds, “Discourse 1 (1769),” in *Discourses on Art*, 13. Eaves, *Counter-Arts Conspiracy*, 20, has noted that, in the first Discourse, Reynolds attempted to map an evolution “from a rudimentary commercial system that will support only manufactures to a more advanced one that will also support embellishment and ornament.”

them gratis; and if they have not talents for the higher class, they drop into humbler occupations; they spread through the country, and they are employed in the manufactures in various ways.

Can you give us many instances of persons educated in the Royal Academy now employed in manufacturing districts in the country? - I am not sufficiently conversant with these districts to be able to do that. I have no doubt of the fact. I conceive it is a very reasonable conclusion.

Are you aware that evidence has been given by manufacturers themselves of the extreme want of artists educated as you described; and I believe that only one case has been mentioned of persons educated in the academy applying themselves to manufactures? - I have not seen the evidence I speak merely with reference to what must be, I think, the conclusion of every reasoning mind upon the subject. For instance, there have been 1,800 students educated in the Royal Academy; what has become of those men? They have not all become artists.⁶⁷

In his major reassessment of the Royal Academy's place in national life, Hoock has maintained that Shee's argument that many RA graduates dropped "into humbler occupations" and became designers for industry reflected positively on the institution, since the Royal Academy "thus fulfilled a function which continental institutions such as the St Petersburg and Vienna academies accommodated in separate design schools."⁶⁸ Rethinking "Pevsner's

⁶⁷ "Report on Arts and Manufactures" (1836), paras. 1960-1963. This was a well-rehearsed argument by Shee. Thirty years earlier and nine years after becoming RA, Shee noted in his *Letter to the President and Directors*, 65 n., "Above eighty thousand pounds, produced during forty years by their united exertions, [Academicians] have disinterestedly devoted to the support of an Establishment, which has disseminated improvement through every channel of ornamental manufacture." See also Shee's letter to Thomas Spring Rice, dated February 7, 1833, in Shee, *Life of Sir Martin Archer Shee*, 2: 56, "between fifteen hundred and two thousand students have been gratuitously educated in the Royal Academy, many of whom have distinguished themselves in the highest departments of the arts, to the honour and advantage of their country, while those who have failed to attain the nobler objects of their ambition have all contributed, through the various channels of exertion in which their humble powers have found the means of operation, to refine the general taste and improve all the products of national industry." He also used the argument in his *Letter to Lord John Russell*, 9. See also Shee, *Elements*, 305 n., in which he referred to the Royal Academy's Summer Exhibition as filling a vacuum in the improvement of manufactures due to the lack of state encouragement for art, "An exhibition also, which the British public should regard with some kindness, if not with some gratitude, as the sole support of an establishment, to which the nation is indebted for a general diffusion of taste and talent through all these pursuits and occupations, which are most important to her manufacturing and commercial superiority."

⁶⁸ Hoock, *King's Artists*, 62. See also Hoock, *King's Artists*, 299, "By 1820 the Academy had educated some 1,200 students free of charge: the very best rose to international fame; those lacking sufficient talent

comparative consideration of artistic organization across Europe,” Hoock was challenging previous accounts (including Pevsner’s) that had claimed the Academy was peculiar in that it staunchly resisted commercial pressures and at no time made provisions for applied art.⁶⁹ He did this, he said, in order “to show that by 1800 the Royal Academy was not so different from, and not necessarily inferior to, some of Europe’s other major academies.”⁷⁰ However, what he unintentionally has shown, in my opinion, is just how different it was from continental academies and, specifically, the Parisian model, to which he explicitly likened it several times.⁷¹ He did this by stressing that the Royal Academy had conceded from at least the beginning of West’s presidency in 1792 into Shee’s tenure as PRA that, if it was going to establish links with the state, it would have to demonstrate art’s economic utility for industry.⁷² However, whereas the continental academies that Hoock cited as also making a commercial shift, like Berlin’s, received their directives from the state, the Royal Academy, as a private society, chose to take a

for the higher branches worked as drawing masters and in the applied arts and manufacturing design across the country.”

⁶⁹ Hoock, *King’s Artists*, 307; Pevsner, *Academies of Art*, 186. See also Hoock, *King’s Artists*, 231-232, “According to the orthodox account, the Royal Academy was among a decreasing minority (along with the academies in Florence, Rome, Madrid, Turin and Düsseldorf) which kept aloof from the new trend. However, the public rhetoric and arguments with which the RA courted political support and justified its activities from the 1790s mark a subtle but significant shift in its contributions to the discourse of an English School. For under President West the RA moved from solely deploying the civic-humanist to also using the commercial argument which it had hitherto left so carefully to the entrepreneurs of the art world, such as owners of private galleries and print sellers.”

⁷⁰ Hoock, *King’s Artists*, 307. Hoock repeated this assertion almost verbatim in at least three other places; see Hoock, *King’s Artists*, 228, 251, 294.

⁷¹ See for instance, Hoock, *King’s Artists*, 110, 228, 231.

⁷² Hoock, *King’s Artists*, 62, 72, 232, 247, 280. See for instance Benjamin West’s first address as PRA on March 24, 1792, in Galt, *Life of West*, 2:79, “Here ingenious youth are instructed in the art of design; and the instruction acquired in this place, has spread itself through the various manufactures of this country, to which it has given a taste that is able to convert the most common and simple materials into rare and valuable articles of commerce.” Pevsner, *Academies of Art*, 186, also mentioned this address but then said, “Nothing beyond this vague remark [to commercial interests] can be found. The Royal Academy remained a conservative institution.”

commercial turn in order to attract the attention of the government to the plight of artists in Britain in general, and of historical painters within the Academy in particular.⁷³

Hoock was also incorrect to assert that by making this shift towards commercial objectives, the Royal Academy was simply keeping in step with contemporaneous changes at the French Academy.⁷⁴ As Patricia Mainardi has shown, the French Academy did no such thing in the late 1790s or even the 1850s, let alone the 1830s.⁷⁵ Rather, Academicians in France were anxious to police the separation of art from industry and trade even after the administrative reforms following the French Revolution well on into the Second Empire. In France during this period, the state-sponsored *École des beaux-arts* (School of Fine Arts) in Paris stood at the pinnacle of the state art education system, while the eighty *écoles de dessin* (schools of design) established all across France in the mid-eighteenth century for the practical training of artisans and craftsmen in producing designs for manufactures were far below it in prestige.⁷⁶ The French model of art education thus kept the fine and the applied arts rigorously separate: one would never expect a student to enter the elite *École* only to come out a designer for manufacture.

Shee's claim, then, that the Royal Academy Schools produced designers for manufacture means that the Royal Academy was not (as Pevsner himself and most modern historians of art and design education have argued it was) an institution devoted, like the French Academy, exclusively to the fine arts, for as Carl Goldstein has also pointed out, "The French academy was

⁷³ Hoock, *King's Artists*, 232, "The Academy's shift in rhetoric helped facilitate the state's acknowledgement of the artistic professions' needs."

⁷⁴ Hoock, *King's Artists*, 231, "Most academies in Europe – even in Paris – shifted from a sole emphasis on the traditional aesthetic and moral arguments to also embrace commercial objectives."

⁷⁵ See Mainardi, *Art and Politics*.

⁷⁶ On the *écoles de dessin*, see Agnès Lahalle, *Les écoles de dessin au XVIII^e siècle. Entre arts libéraux et arts mécaniques* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2006).

not in fact involved with manufacture but was rather exclusively dedicated . . . to painting and sculpture, to the ‘fine’ as opposed to the applied arts; it neither admitted nor trained those destined to work in manufacture.”⁷⁷ The RA, then, was especially unusual in that, not only was it private, but, by arguing for its commercial utility in an attempt to forge a relationship with the state, it was also committed to the fine arts and manufactures at one and the same time. In another place in his testimony, Shee admitted as much, when he told Ewart the RA “had for its objects the promotion of the arts, the cultivation of the public taste, and the improvement of our manufactures.”⁷⁸ The following year (1837), he also explained to the Whig Home Secretary Lord John Russell in a letter defending the Academy’s policy of charging admission to its annual exhibition in the National Gallery complex, “They [Academicians] have *gratuitously* educated more than seventeen hundred students . . . the least successful of whom have been instructed in those acquirements which have qualified them to become useful agents of manufacturing improvement, when foiled in their ambition to fulfil a higher destination.”⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Carl Goldstein, *Teaching Art: Academies and Schools from Vasari to Albers* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 253. Pevsner himself wrote of the late eighteenth-century French Academy, “While the general trend was thus identical inside and outside France, it must once more be strongly underlined that in France a powerful academy with branch schools in the country carried on without taking notice of the requirements of the trades, whereas in most other European countries, and in Germany in particular, new trade classes were grafted upon existing academic institutions, or new establishments were from the beginning so organized as to serve both artistic and commercial purposes.” Pevsner, *Academies of Art*, 163-164. See also Pevsner, *Academies of Art*, 159, “It [the French Academy] stood aside [from technical instruction], concerned with the Fine Arts exclusively.” Instruction for painters at the École, however, centered on the teaching of drawing; painting was taught only in private ateliers. This system of instruction remained in place throughout the nineteenth century until the reforms of 1863, when three ateliers were established for instruction in painting. On the reforms of 1863, see Albert Boime, “The Teaching Reforms of 1863 and the Origins of Modernism in France,” *Art Quarterly* 1 (Autumn 1977): 1-39; Alain Bonnet, *L’enseignement des arts au XIXe siècle. La réforme de l’École des beaux-arts de 1863 et la fin du modèle académique* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2006).

⁷⁸ “Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1836), para. 1927.

⁷⁹ Shee, *Letter to Lord John Russell*, 9.

Unlike in France, then, it can be argued that little differentiated Academicians in early nineteenth-century Britain in practice from the mechanics they despised in theory, since art had not escaped from being one trade among many in “our *nation boutiquière*.”⁸⁰ Shee had complained in 1809, “If they [the arts] have become mercenary and mechanical, it is because they are degraded to a trade. We tie them down to earth, and then complain that they do not soar to the ancient heights: we strip them of their noblest plumes, and wonder at the weakness of their wing.”⁸¹ While Shee also believed that “the principle of commerce and the principle of art are in direct opposition the one to the other” and “the moment you make art a trade you destroy it,” he also was convinced, as I have shown in this and the previous chapter, that the Academy’s struggle to disentangle art from trade had not been successful, since a system of state support still did not exist.⁸² In Britain, as he said, “where trade is every thing, every thing must necessarily be trade; there is no exemption for Genius or Taste: they [artists] must take their stall in the market, and cry, ‘who buys?’ like the rest of the fraternity, though few esteem, and fewer still understand their commodities.”⁸³

Considering this confusion between art and trade, it should come, then, as no surprise to learn that, when the first School of Design was set up by the Board of Trade in 1837 to train designers for manufacture, it was established at Somerset House in rooms vacated by the Royal Academy when it moved to Trafalgar Square and that Academicians were the only artists to

⁸⁰ Shee, *Letter to Joseph Hume*, 16, “Unfortunately, Sir, the Fine Arts have long been paupers in our *nation boutiquière*; - without home or settlement, beyond the sheltering roof of the Academic workhouse.”

⁸¹ Shee, *Elements*, 146 n.

⁸² “Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1836), paras. 1973-1974.

⁸³ Shee, *Elements of Art*, 227 n.

serve on the school's council.⁸⁴ Although by Shee's own admission, not all graduates of the RA Schools became artists and many worked in the nation's manufactures, Academicians on the council of the new school did everything in their power to prevent the reverse from happening by compelling students to sign declarations that they would not attempt careers as painters.⁸⁵ But like a game of Chutes and Ladders, as Kriegel has argued, "In the heady early days of the School of Design, the choice between fine art and industrial design was not so easily resolved," and according to Minihan, "In fact, a considerable proportion of the students [of the School of Design] were not connected with a craft or industry at all, but were aspiring artists, a number of whom hoped to proceed from Somerset House to the Royal Academy Schools."⁸⁶ Meanwhile, John Woody Papworth, son of the School of Design's first director, John Buonarotti Papworth, entered the RA Schools in 1839 and, according to Samuel Redgrave, went on to work as an architect, but also to make "many designs for art manufactures."⁸⁷ Indeed he did, as he is listed

⁸⁴ Bell, *Schools of Design*, 66; Macdonald, *History and Philosophy*, 69. Haydon, Ewart and others set up a rival school, the Society for Promoting Practical Design, in Leicester Square in 1838. Thus, according to Haydon, *Correspondence and Table-Talk*, 1:199, "giving the Council [of the School of Design] a sharp lesson, that if they wished to exist they must enter into competition with the Savile House School." Shee, oddly, was one of the subscribers to the new school. It lasted only a year.

⁸⁵ Macdonald, *History and Philosophy*, 70; Kriegel, *Grand Designs*, 87. See Haydon, *Life of Haydon*, 3:58, "The Council has resolved, first, that the figure shall not be the basis of education; secondly, that every student who enters the School of Design shall be obliged to sign a declaration not to practice either as historical painter, portrait painter, or landscape painter!" See also "The School of Design Job," *The Spectator* (January 28, 1837), 90-91, which called the school "an inferior branch of the Royal Academy." F. W. Haydon, *Correspondence and Table-Talk*, 1:191, "The object of this [declaration] is clear. It was to prevent competition with established artists, and to maintain the official ascendancy of the Royal Academy."

⁸⁶ Kriegel, *Grand Designs*, 49; Minihan, *Nationalization of Culture*, 47. Bell, *Schools of Design*, 73, stated likewise.

⁸⁷ Samuel Redgrave, *A Dictionary of Artists of the English School: Painters, Sculptors, Architects, Engravers and Ornamentists: with Notices of Their Lives and Work*, new ed. (London: George Bell and Sons, 1878), 320. J.W. Papworth also made his name as an architect and antiquary. He served as secretary to the School of Design until 1838, when his father's position was abolished. His father had testified on copyright and the want of design instruction in the 1835 session.

in the *Official Descriptive and Illustrated Catalogue of the Great Exhibition* not as an architect, but as a designer of candelabra and carpets.⁸⁸

In histories of art and design education in Britain, Benjamin Robert Haydon is the most cited artist, almost to the exclusion of all others, among those who urged Ewart to move for a select committee to investigate the Royal Academy as a national institution, while the importance of the SBA has been comparatively ignored.⁸⁹ Since Bell wrote his first article, “Haydon versus Shee,” on the hearings in 1959, scholars have continued to present Haydon and Academicians as being at odds over the issue of state intervention in art.⁹⁰ However, in one of his petitions for public patronage of historical painting, Haydon acknowledged Shee – although not by name, of course – as being his predecessor in the campaign for government intervention. He would do so again in his testimony before the select committee on June 28, 1836. Haydon’s public recognition of Shee as his predecessor has not been discussed in previous writing on the

⁸⁸ *Official Descriptive and Illustrated Catalogue of the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations, 1851*, 3 vols. (London: Spicer Brothers, 1851), 2:821 no.22B. *Official Descriptive and Illustrated Catalogue*, 2:573 no. 379, was a 30 x 20 foot Berlin wool carpet designed by Papworth and executed by the Lady Mayoress and “150 Ladies of Great Britain.” Part of the pattern was presented to and exhibited by Queen Victoria. See John Woody Papworth, *The Ladies’ Carpet Presented to and Exhibited by Her Majesty* (London, 1852). The only copy of this I am aware of is in the British Library. To add to the confusion over which school cultivated artists and which trained designers for industry, Minihan, *Nationalization of Culture*, 47, noted, “In fact, a considerable proportion of the students [of the School of Design] were not connected with a craft or industry at all, but were aspiring artists, a number of whom hoped to proceed from Somerset House to the Royal Academy schools.” Bell, *Schools of Design*, 73, stated likewise. Kriegel, *Grand Designs*, 49, “In the heady early days of the School of Design, the choice between fine art and industrial design was not so easily resolved.”

⁸⁹ Bell, “Haydon versus Shee,” 350; Bell, *Schools of Design*, 52; Macdonald, *History and Philosophy of Art Education*, 67; Minihan, *Nationalization of Culture*, 40-41; King, *Industrialization of Taste*, 5; Kriegel, *Grand Designs*, 24. However, Romans, “Determinants,” 49-51, and Webb, “Analysis,” 12-14, questioned giving Haydon so much credit, but did not discuss the importance of the SBA to the formation of the committee.

⁹⁰ Bell, “Haydon versus Shee”; Macdonald, *History and Philosophy*, 62-65. Romans, “Determinants,” 26, noted, “There are no grey areas in [Bell’s] narrative. Haydon and the academicians equate with good and evil respectively.” Webb, “Analysis,” 12-13, also disagreed with this “oversimplification.”

select committee. Therefore, it is necessary to briefly review the occasions when he did in order to show that, if there was one thing the two antagonists actually agreed on it was that government support for historical painting was necessary. As a result, there was, and has been since, a great deal of confusion regarding who was the “reformer” and who was the “academic” in these hearings, despite modern scholars’ attempts to create a Manichean division between these two protagonists.⁹¹ I want to argue here that Shee preceded Haydon, the self-proclaimed “reformer of the art,” in the campaign to elevate the status of the British artist by seeking to obtain state assistance for historical painting.⁹² This will serve to illustrate the confusion of the age and just how attenuated and fragile the civic humanist theory of art had become, because while Barrell has described the portrait painter Shee, who by 1830 was President of the Royal Academy, as having abandoned by 1805 the civic humanist theory of painting on which this institution had been founded, he has also described Haydon, an independent historical painter and *bête noire* of the Royal Academy, as “the last British painter to articulate or even to understand that discourse.”⁹³ I then will discuss how Martin and the SBA publicly advocated the counter-discourse of political economy in the hearings and end with an examination of Martin’s participation in industrial exhibitions that promoted the principles of free trade and free competition.

⁹¹ For instance, Kriegel, *Grand Designs*, 14, 24, said, on the one hand, that Haydon was “a renegade artist” with a “dislike for the Royal Academy,” and on the other, pp. 21, 25, “Advocating the academy was the artist Benjamin Robert Haydon” and “Haydon actually endorsed the hierarchies enshrined by the Royal Academy.”

⁹² Haydon, *Life of Haydon*, 3:35.

⁹³ On Shee, see Barrell, *Political Theory*, 51. On Haydon, see John Barrell, “Benjamin Robert Haydon: The Curtius of the Khyber Pass,” in *Painting and the Politics of Culture: New Essays on British Art, 1700-1850*, ed. John Barrell (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 284. Haydon was asked by Ewart, “Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1836), para. 1071, “Why do you think the academy as a body has not wished to advance the interests of the nation in historical painting? – Because the portrait painters [like Shee] will lose their importance the instant the State votes money for high art.”

On June 14, 1824, John George Lambton, later 1st Earl of Durham, read out to the House of Commons “Historical Painting - Petition of R. B. [sic] Haydon for Encouragement.”⁹⁴ Lambton described Haydon, who had just spent time in prison for debt, to his fellow MPs as one whose financial misfortunes were “occasioned by no fault of his own, but by an enthusiastic attachment to the branch of art [historical painting] . . . which, however, it might lead to posthumous fame, could never, in this country, under existing circumstances, be cultivated with profit.”⁹⁵ Lambton referred Members to a section of Haydon’s petition where, as proof of the state’s nonexistent record of supporting historical painting, the painter had mentioned that, shortly after the establishment of the British Institution in 1805, “an application was made to the then chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Perceval, to grant some pecuniary assistance to the [British] Institution, to enable the governors to purchase historical paintings; but the application was resisted on the ground, that the country was then engaged in an expensive war.”⁹⁶ What Haydon did not say was that the application was the one (discussed in the last chapter) that the Earl of Dartmouth, President of the BI, had submitted to Spencer Perceval, directly as a result of Shee’s 1809 *A Letter to the President and Directors of the British Institution; Containing the Outlines of a Plan for the National Encouragement of Historical Painting in the United Kingdom*.

⁹⁴ “Historical Painting-Petition of R. B. [sic] Haydon for Encouragement.” Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, new series, xi (June 14, 1834), 1316.

⁹⁵ “Historical Painting-Petition.” *Parliamentary Debates*, (June 14, 1834), 1316.

⁹⁶ “Historical Painting-Petition.” *Parliamentary Debates*, (June 14, 1834), 1317.

Twelve years later, in his testimony before the 1836 committee, Haydon once more brought up the need for government patronage of historical painting.⁹⁷ Again, not naming Shee, he put forward as an example of the state's neglect of this branch of painting that the British Institution had applied to "Percival for 5,000*l.* annually to encourage the art [i.e., historical painting] and was refused."⁹⁸ This time, however, Shee called Haydon out on his selective retelling of events at the expense of the Royal Academy and of Shee himself, "The application for this sum has been stated in evidence; but it would not answer the purpose of that evidence to mention who was the author of that plan; that it was produced by an academician and a portrait painter; that has not been mentioned in evidence, and therefore it is I that supply it."⁹⁹

Shee's nearly two-page defense of his and the Academy's efforts in the opening decades of the century to convince the government to earmark funds for the protection of historical painting (as discussed in the last chapter) undermines the tendency in histories of art and design education in Britain to claim that Haydon's was a one-man crusade for state patronage of the arts. As John Eagles, a Scottish minister, painter, and art critic for *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, pointed out three years later (1839), Shee, "it must be confessed," in his 1805 *Rhymes on Art* and other strictures on the lack of state patronage, "has furnished a handle of satire, which the opponents of the Academy now very adroitly use."¹⁰⁰ (And use, I am arguing here, is exactly

⁹⁷ "Report on Arts and Manufactures" (1836), para. 1122. "You do not conceive there is any hope for historical painting unless a national vote is passed by Parliament? – Certainly not; unless there be a national vote to place historical painters on a level with portrait painters; there is an eternal demand for portraits, and it always will be for portraits while historical painting will hold an inferior place, unless the Government support it. After the destruction of the pictures at the reformation, there were petitions from the historical painter in the reign of Elizabeth, begging for bread."

⁹⁸ "Report on Arts and Manufactures" (1836), para. 1106.

⁹⁹ "Report on Arts and Manufactures" (1836), para. 1948.

¹⁰⁰ [John Eagles], "Royal Academy-and Its Exhibition," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 46 (September 1839), 311. Eagles here was specifically discussing Shee's *Rhymes on Art*.

what Haydon did.) Following the select committee hearings, Shee in 1837 republished his 1809 *Letter to the President and Directors of the British Institution*, noting in the new preface addressed to the Home Secretary (Lord Russell) that although the nation was no longer at war, “the suggestions which it contains are not less applicable, at the present day, to the state of the Fine Arts, than they were at the period of its original publication.”¹⁰¹ Although Eagles also said of Shee, “It may not be quite fair, to insist upon the opinions of 1809 to be necessarily the opinions of the same man in 1839,” Shee’s 1837 preface to his 1809 *Letter* shows that he felt the prospects for the fine arts in Britain were as grim as they had been three decades before, when the Academy was seeking closer ties with the government to escape the art market by obtaining state patronage, and that “to the timely interference of the government, therefore, we must look, as the only resource of the Arts in their present circumstances.”¹⁰² As he explained to Lord Russell:

I have had seven-and-thirty years’ experience of the ability and integrity with which the interests of the arts have been attended to and promoted by artists, while disregarded by statesmen, politicians, and philosophers; - I have witnessed their honest zeal, while uncheered themselves by a single ray of patronage from wealth or power, and struggling through the difficulties of a pursuit in which failure is poverty and contempt, and success, compared with the rewards of coarser occupations can scarcely be called prosperity.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Martin Archer Shee, *Outlines of a Plan for the National Encouragement of Historical Painting in the United Kingdom: Originally Addressed in 1809 to the Directors of the British Institution, and Now Respectfully Submitted to the Consideration of Lord John Russell, Her Majesty’s Principal Secretary of State for the Home Department* (London: James Ridgway and Sons, 1837), v. Two years earlier, “Sir Martin Archer Shee’s Plan for the Encouragement of Historical Painting,” *Literary Souvenir, and Cabinet of Modern Art* (1835), 33-45, reprinted parts of Shee’s original plan and noted, pp. 44-45, “Although upwards of twenty years have elapsed since it first suggested itself to him, it is as applicable to the state of the art at the present moment as it was then. A large sum of money is, it is true, expended annually in England, in furniture-paintings and water-colour drawings, but the sale of an historical picture of any importance in a public exhibition is of such rare occurrence, as to form almost an epoch in the history of modern patronage.” Alaric Watts, editor of the *Literary Souvenir*, dedicated the 1835 volume to Shee.

¹⁰² [Eagles], “Royal Academy-and Its Exhibition,” 311; Shee, *Outlines of a Plan*, 25.

¹⁰³ Shee, *Letter to Lord John Russell*, 16-17.

Given, then, that the “reformer” and PRA seemed to be fighting for the same thing (i.e., state patronage of historical painting), it is little wonder that Eagles published an entire article a few months after the hearings trying to answer the question, “WHAT is usually meant by ‘Historical Painting?’ The term has been so vaguely used by the professors of art, that we are often at a loss at how to apply it.”¹⁰⁴

I want to underscore again that Shee did not argue in his testimony that the RA was concerned exclusively with the fine arts. Rather, Shee argued that the RA had all along gratuitously supplied that which the government should have been providing in the first place: designers for industry.¹⁰⁵ Art and manufacture thus seemed hopelessly confused, or rather, as Eagles said, fused like “Siamese twins.”¹⁰⁶ Was painting and sculpture, seventy years after the Royal Academy had been founded and despite its efforts to obtain public patronage for the arts

¹⁰⁴ See [Eagles], “Historical Painting,” *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* 40 (November 1836), 663. Eagles is identified as the author of these unsigned articles by the *Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals*. Eagles wrote two articles on the select committee for *Blackwood’s* in February and March 1837.

¹⁰⁵ See also Shee, *Letter to Lord John Russell*, 15, “This duty, my Lord, the Academy are still willing to perform without stipend or stipulation. They are still willing to employ their time, their talents, and their funds, for the advantage of their art and their country. But if their services are not considered of sufficient importance to insure them respect, and entitle them to protection; if those whose office it is to watch over the great interests of the state disapprove of the manner in which the Academy perform their volunteered task; if it be at length discovered that the affairs of art can be conducted more beneficially for the country under ministerial management, and that a fund of ten or twelve thousand pounds a-year can be appropriated for that purpose, the members of the Royal Academy will, I have no doubt, be among the first to hail the flattering prospect, and will readily surrender the privilege which they have been so long allowed to enjoy that of supporting a National Institution at their own expense!”

¹⁰⁶ [John Eagles], “Historical Painting,” *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* (February 1837), 184, “Such is the general subject matter of the report [of the Select Committee on Arts and Manufactures]. We cannot but think that the committee have [sic] been hampered in the very outset, by having at one time two subjects under consideration, instead of one. Arts and manufactures – each most important! . . . Are they in common acceptance of the terms, fine arts and manufactures, Siamese twins, with but one and the same nervous system?” See also Ewart’s speech two years later in *Account of the Inaugural Meeting, of the Society for Promoting Practical Design and Diffusing a Knowledge and Love of the Arts Among the People Held at Exeter Hall, January 11th. 1838* (London: Taylor & Walton, 1838), 12, “There is the greatest connexion between the Arts and Trade: they are interwoven with each other.”

just forms of manufacture, no different from patterned silks, ribbons, furniture, or stove grates?¹⁰⁷ Did the Academy produce fine artists or designers for manufacture? Two years after the hearings, Shee still seemed unsure when he penned an open letter to one of the RA's enemies, the Radical Scottish MP and free trade advocate Joseph Hume, who had served on the 1835 committee. Shee in this letter indicated that the Academicians were, at long last, getting back to the pro-bono work they had been forced to drop due to the select committee's investigations and were "congratulating each other on their escape from the formidable denunciations of the Parliamentary Committee on the Fine Arts – philosophically contemplating the dawn of that bright day which is to arise for them, in the newly awakened zeal with which their interests are advocated, as – aids to mechanics and manufacturers."¹⁰⁸ Shee then closed the letter by referring back to his early career as a newly appointed Academician and crusader for state protection of art, in words that the "reformer" Haydon could have written about himself just before taking his own life in 1846:

At an early period of my progress . . . I ventured to raise a feeble voice in the cause of the Arts, neglected and disregarded as they were, - and in defence of a profession then little favoured by the public or the State. The attempt was surely pardonable, though perhaps presumptuous. But as the follies, the vanities, and the prejudices which chilled the heart of genius, had not been spared - as I ventured to remonstrate against the frivolous pursuits of the wealth, and the unpatriotic apathy of the great, - as the ignorant critic - the trading connoisseur, and the timid truckling artist met their deserts, - the vain and venal were

¹⁰⁷ Gill Perry, "Mere Face Painters? Hogarth, Reynolds and Ideas of Academic Art in Eighteenth-Century Britain," in *Academies, Museums, and Canons of Art*, eds. Gill Perry and Colin Cunningham (New Haven: Yale University Press in association with the Open University, 1999), 128, "In early eighteenth-century Britain the practice of painting was still widely perceived as a trade rather than a profession. The early academicians were keen to be presented as professionals with intellectual qualifications, thereby separating themselves from what they saw as the more 'mechanical' practices of, for example, printmakers, topographical and animal painters, copyists and wax modelers. This attempt to set up hierarchical distinctions between 'high art' and supposedly lower art has influenced art practice and theory in Britain since the eighteenth century."

¹⁰⁸ Shee, *Letter to Joseph Hume*, 18.

aroused to an enmity which has followed me more or less, unappeased even to the present hour.¹⁰⁹

Statements, then, such as Christopher Frayling's that in the 1830s Haydon "had been conducting a one-man crusade to persuade successive governments to fund 'the public encouragement of High Art'" are hardly credible, since such efforts by Academicians were still ongoing when Haydon took up the cause.¹¹⁰ As Hoock was right to point out, "When considering the role which the state ought to adopt vis-à-vis the arts, discussants in the 1830s built on positions first set out by Academicians Hoare and Shee and by their critics in the 1800s, and on the Academy's public campaigns. . . . State funding for the arts was called for with reference to a now standard combination of arguments: the improvement of manufacturing design and the balance of trade . . . expected from a spread of the arts."¹¹¹

As noted earlier, traditional life-and-work studies of Martin have characterized his appearances before the select committee as being motivated simply by a desire to settle old personal scores with the Academy and nothing else. There is no mention in Martin studies of his

¹⁰⁹ Shee, *Letter to Joseph Hume*, 26-27. In his *Letter to the President and Directors*, 84, Shee compared himself in his campaign for state intervention to Shakespeare's "To thine own self be true" Polonius from *Hamlet*, "I am well aware, that they who are so *indiscreet* as to obtrude themselves in matters of this sort, will, like Polonius, 'Find that to be busy is some danger.' The fate of us meddlers has always been, to be sneered at as officious, to be suspected as designing, or to be caviled at as absurd." See F.W. Haydon, *Correspondence and Table-Talk*, 2:83, for Haydon's April 22, 1824 letter to Mary Russell Mitford where he also compared his predicament to that of the meddling Polonius, "In the bitterness of my heart I could go on like Polonius, for my heart is at last bitter. What am I to do?"

¹¹⁰ Frayling, *Royal College of Art*, 12. See also Lubbock, *Tyranny of Taste*, 250, who said Haydon's was "a one-man campaign whose aim was not to improve industrial design at all, but Fine Art." Kriegel, *Grand Designs*, 24, quoting Bell, *Schools of Design*, 43, also claimed, "Yet it was Haydon 'more than any other man' who spurred Britons to 'take a practical interest in art.'" See Shee in "Report on Arts and Manufactures" (1836), para. 1948, "There has been nothing within the power of the academy – nothing within their influence, either in-doors or out of doors – nothing they could say – no remonstrance they could offer – no representation which would reach the ears of the great, that they have not zealously employed for the purpose of raising the arts in this country, and inducing the Government to step forward in their behalf."

¹¹¹ Hoock, *King's Artists*, 302. See also Edwards, *Letter to Sir Martin Archer Shee*, 5-9.

support for the free trade recommendations of the committee, nor is there mention that a catalyst for the establishment of the committee and Martin's involvement was that the RA was about to move into the National Gallery building.¹¹² Unlike the “reformer” Haydon and the Academician Shee, Martin did not campaign for government sponsorship of the arts to elevate the status of the historical painter above the mechanic. Rather, along with the historical painter George Foggo, the president of the Society of British Artists Frederick Yeates Hurlstone, and the SBA's secretary T. C. Hofland, among others, Martin was part of a contingent of witnesses whose “sole panacea has been loudly proclaimed to be ‘*free trade in art, as in commerce.*’”¹¹³ For them, state

¹¹² Sandby, *History of the Royal Academy*, 2:79, provided the following explanation as to why the Academy was eligible for space in the National Gallery, “When it was ascertained that the Government were anxious to obtain possession of the rooms provided by George III for the Royal Academy at Somerset House, to add to the public offices already located there, Sir Martin Archer Shee urged upon the Prime Minister, Earl Grey, that, as a matter of strict justice, the Academicians would have a right to occupy the intended share of the new [National Gallery] building on precisely the same conditions, as regards the Crown and the country, on which they had been originally granted rooms in Somerset House; i.e., as completely independent of ministerial control and parliamentary interference as they had hitherto been. To this view of their position no opposition was made by the Government.” See also Shee, *Letter to Lord John Russell*, 5-8, for his argument along these lines as to why the Royal Academy was a candidate for inclusion in the new National Gallery building, while other private exhibiting societies were not. However, Ewart asked Wilkins, “Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1836), para. 1430, “Then you originally proposed the appropriation of part of the National Gallery to the Royal Academy; it was your suggestion? – [Wilkins] Certainly it was my suggestion. Sir Martin Shee had, very nearly about the same time, some communication with Lord Grey, reminding him of the promise that had been given to him; but that was a little subsequent to my original suggestion.”

¹¹³ Edwards, *Administrative Economy*, 154. Unlike Martin, Foggo, *et al.*, Edwards had “been long convinced that the principle of non-intervention on the part of Government, however sound in Commerce, has limits in respect to the Fine Arts.” Edwards wrote in his *Letter to Sir Martin Archer Shee*, 12, “Nor can I at all understand that new and mysterious doctrine of ‘Free Trade in Art’ which, contrary to all experience, proposes to advance the Fine Arts, by depriving artists of the most important of the meagre honours they at present enjoy, and by destroying that school which has, at least, trained a very considerable proportion of the best artists who have at any time adorned our country.” See also Edwards, *Letter to Sir Martin Archer Shee*, 16, “The principle of *free trade in art* (a phrase so repeatedly used by some of the witnesses before Mr. Ewart's committee) may be very applicable to *exhibitions*; it may or may not be equally applicable to *schools of instruction*; but to talk of it in connexion with the distinctive *honours* of one of the highest of the liberal professions is ludicrous.” James Millingen, *Some Remarks on the State of Learning and the Fine-Arts in Great Britain* (London: J. Rodwell, 1831), i, a few years earlier had said it was a “fallacy” that “[works of art] should be left, like any other commodity, to find their natural price at the market, according to the demand which may exist for them.” Haydon also was involved in the early years of the SBA and exhibited eight pictures at the first exhibition. He, like Shee, in

protection was, with the possible exception of copyright legislation, unwanted and unnecessary.¹¹⁴

In the 1835 interim report, in a note appended to Ewart's motion to appoint the committee, it was specified that the committee had received "Petitions of Artists and Admirers of the Fine Arts, and of several Members of the Society of British Artists" that were "against the proposal of granting rooms in the National Gallery to the Royal Academy, and evidence as to the injury likely to arise to that society [the SBA] therefrom."¹¹⁵ As mentioned, it was the Academy's impending occupation of the National Gallery that motivated Martin and others associated with the SBA to argue before the committee that the Academy would receive benefits

the words of John Steegman, *Consort of Taste, 1830-1870* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1950), 140, had urged "that High Art had flourished whenever it had been supported by State patronage." However, in its absence, he did not believe artists would meet free competition due to the existence of the RA but, in the words of his son, F. W. Haydon, *Correspondence and Table-Talk*, 2:204, "monopolists fighting for their monopoly against free trade. This mischievous action of the Academy Haydon met everywhere." Funnell, "London Art World," 166, described Haydon as "the obvious exception" among artists testifying against the Academy because he did not support free trade in art.

¹¹⁴ Hooek, *King's Artists*, 302, "The anti-state camp [in the hearings] argued that only private patronage, market forces, and competition between private societies, not state intervention and privileged institutions, produced great art. Their cultural economy envisaged freedom of trade and merely a facilitating role for the state in the provision of, say, copyright legislation, while individual government figures ought to stand as private patrons." For instance, Martin still attempted to secure the individual patronage of William IV, see his letter of August 1830 to the 1st Duke of Buckingham, quoted in Pendered, *John Martin*, 237, "I beg very respectfully to add that it is my ambition to be deemed worthy of competing for the honour of being appointed Historical Painter to their Most Gracious Majesties." According to the letter, Buckingham, who held the position of Lord Stewart at the time, arranged an audience with William IV so that Martin could personally explain his painting, *The Fall of Nineveh*. As Leopold recounted in "Reminiscences," *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* (March 2, 1889), front page, "The picture was duly forwarded to the palace, and was placed in a good light. As commanded, my father attended. His Majesty made his appearance, shook hands, glanced at the picture and remarked that it was 'very pretty.' What a criticism! His Majesty again shook hands and, saying no more, passed on. So ended the interview and with it my father's hopes and expectations." Buckingham had purchased *The Destruction of Pompeii and Herculaneum* from Martin in 1822 after failing to obtain *Belshazzar's Feast*.

¹¹⁵ "Report on Arts and Manufactures" (1835), iii; "*British Artists, Society of*" in the index to the "Report on Arts and Manufactures" (1836), 5. For the full text of the SBA's petition, see "Report on Arts and Manufactures" (1836), para. 755.

that it should not have as a private society free from parliamentary control.¹¹⁶ The SBA was established because, with the RA and the BI being the only two societies that held annual exhibitions of paintings, Martin and others felt there were not enough locations in the capital to show and sell their work.¹¹⁷ In less than fifteen years, it became, according to its president, “the largest market for art in London.”¹¹⁸ Shee, invidiously comparing it to the RA, called it instead “a recent private speculation of a few individual Artists, for their own advantage.”¹¹⁹ However,

¹¹⁶ “Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1836), ix, “Against this apportionment of the national building, a large number of artists have remonstrated. . . . They declare their inability to compete with an institution so favoured at the public expense. . . . They are uneasy under the ambiguous, half-public, half-private, character of the Academy; and they suggest that it should either stand in the simple position of a private institution, or, if it really represents the artists of Great Britain, that it should be responsible to, and eligible by them.” See also Ewart’s questioning of Martin, para. 915, “The question is, whether you thought from having those rooms [in the National Gallery], being in those rooms belonging to the Government, it is an advantage they possess over the other bodies of artists in other parts of the metropolis? – Certainly, if they are to have the same privileges they have had in the Royal Academy [Somerset House].”

¹¹⁷ King, *Industrialization of Taste*, 20. “Society of British Artists,” *Literary Chronicle*, no. 212 (June 7, 1823), 367, “Whatever merits the Royal Academy or the British Institution may possess, and no artist would write to depreciate them, yet they are both insufficient; and, in order to keep pace with the rapid progress the Fine Arts are making in this country, to afford them due encouragement, a third institution is wanted, on a larger scale and on a more liberal principle. It is only by enabling an artist to live by his labours, that he can be expected to give full scope for his genius ; and it is by the sale of his works that he expects to live.” “The Society of British Artists, and Their New Rooms Now Building in Suffolk-Street, Pall Mall East,” *European Magazine, and London Review* 84 (August 1823): 150, “The artists felt the want of a more extensive and liberal mart, and the public have long felt the inconvenience of the overcrowded walls of Somerset-House, which, like the changes in a home-made kaleidoscope, surprised the ignorant but ‘made the judicious grieve.’” See also Edwards, *Administrative Economy*, 256.

¹¹⁸ “Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1836), para. 756.

¹¹⁹ Shee, *Letter to Joseph Hume*, 8-9, went on to tell Hume, “I must conclude, Sir, that you are still marvellously mis-informed as to the nature and objects of the two societies which you thus attempt to bring into opposition . . . and practise such a delusion on . . . the public, as must result from the extraordinary statement that ‘*the two Establishments were equally competing for public favor!*’ With every respect for the society in question, and every wish for their success, - I would ask, what possible claim of competition with the Royal Academy, your ingenuity can set up for the Society of British Artists? . . . Really, Sir, the comparison which you have drawn between these two Institutions, does little credit to your discrimination, and still less to your impartiality.” Sandby, *History of the Royal Academy*, 2:88, supported Shee’s description of the SBA. King, *Industrialization of Taste*, 20, noted the SBA was “operated by the artists themselves and all the money from sales was paid to the artists without any commission.”

by 1842, *Punch* had declared that the SBA's success had proven "that a free trade in art, as in commercial matters, will in time work its own emancipation, whatever fetters may be imposed and riveted by the bony hand of monopoly."¹²⁰

Lyndel Saunders King has stated in her discussion of the SBA that a theme touched on time and again in the hearings was "that competition in the arts as in commerce was the best way to produce a high-quality product."¹²¹ This was certainly Martin's position. When asked by Ewart whether he considered "the basis of encouragement to an artist should be free competition," Martin replied, "'Clear stage and no favour' as the saying is."¹²² When asked, "What do you think of . . . allowing all societies, like the British Institution, and the [Society of] British Artists in Suffolk-street and the Royal Academy itself to compete freely with one another?," Martin responded, "Competition is the fairest way."¹²³ This was also the position of the SBA's president, its secretary, and Foggo, who told Ewart, "If I were to venture an opinion with regard to the remedy that the artists might have for all their grievances, it would be to leave the arts on the same system of free trade that every other department of industry is allowed to

¹²⁰ *Punch, or The London Charivari* 2 (January-June 1842), 172. "Alten Maler" (pseud.), "Art and Artists: The Royal Academy and Its Exhibitors," *Titan* 3 (August 1854), 170, said of the SBA's early exhibitions, "As there is nothing so offensive to monopoly as free competition in trade, so in art. The Royal Academy did what it could to render these unauthorized exhibitions as meager, and therefore unstable, as possible."

¹²¹ King, *Industrialization of Taste*, 21.

¹²² "Report on Arts and Manufactures" (1836) para. 878.

¹²³ "Report on Arts and Manufactures" (1836), para. 897. See also paras. 902-903, "Suppose you admit the principle of free competition among all societies, under whatever form they might like to be administered by artists or other individuals; do you think that they should all be on this principle of non-interference by Government? - The Royal Academy has an advantage over the [Society of] British Artists, in having the patronage of the King and the Court; and if that patronage was taken away or given to both societies, they would stand on equal grounds as they ought. [Ewart] In fact, the privileges and the exclusive system is injurious to the growth of art? - It is most injurious to all gentlemen who prefer relying independently on their own merits."

follow.”¹²⁴ This policy of leaving art to fend for itself like any other trade was, of course, what the Academy had been fighting against since 1768.¹²⁵ As Shee told the committee, “I say generally, as far as I am acquainted with the works of persons who apply the principles of political economy to the fine arts, that they are entirely mistaken in their views. They adapt to the

¹²⁴ “Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1836), para. 1381. For the president’s testimony, see “Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1836), paras. 731, 753. For the secretary’s, see “Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1836), paras. 1267-1272. See also Foggo, *Results of the Parliamentary Inquiry Relative to Arts and Manufactures* (London: T. and W. Boone, 1837), 15, “Government *interference* will perpetuate our faults, and blight our hopes, by ruining the rival establishments already in existence. It is in your [C. Poulett Thompson, President of the Board of Trade] power to save us: obtain for us a fair field for emulation, and a well secured property in our productions, and the eminence of our artists, and with it, the prosperity of England will proclaim you the best of Patrons.” See Foggo’s statement in *Report of the Proceedings at a Public Meeting*, 31-32, “All that the free artists of this country desire is a fair chance of competition, the opportunity of exhibiting their works to the public. . . . There can be no doubt that under a free system the arts would flourish as our manufactures and our commerce have done.” Martin was a member of the committee that organized this meeting. See also Foggo, “An Investigation of the Effects of Government Patronage,” *Arnold’s Library of the Fine Arts* 1 (1831), 94, “I trust that the historical facts contained in this treatise will show, that if the fine arts had, like any other branch of national industry, been suffered to steer their own course, we should boast a Phidias or a Raphael, as we do a Milton and a Shakespeare!” Martin’s support of Foggo’s views can be corroborated by his endorsement of Foggo to become keeper of the National Gallery in 1845 in a letter, to Joseph Hume, BL Add. MS. 40570 f. 75. Martin wrote to Hume because it looked as if Shee was going to resign the presidency of the RA, due to failing health. Charles Lock Eastlake, RA, who was then Keeper of the National Gallery, was favored to become the next PRA. Martin wrote, “Should this expectation be realized the Keepership of the National Gallery will become vacant, for the Office of Keeper is incompatible with that of the Trustee of the National Gallery, which the President of the Royal Academy holds by virtue of his Office; and the vacancy this occasion ought surely to be filled up from the general body of artists, and not necessarily from the ranks of the Academy. I think you will agree with me that no one is more eligible for the situation of Keeper of the National Gallery than Mr. George Foggo, and it can only remain to bring his claims properly forward to obtain a just acknowledgement of his merits.” Martin then goes on to list Foggo’s publications. His jockeying on behalf of Foggo can be attributed, as Hoock, “Reforming Culture,” 267, has pointed out, to the fact that, although a private society, the RA “claimed ‘national’ or ‘public’ status to secure . . . ex-officio appointments for the president as a trustee of the British Museum and the National Gallery.” Foggo had complained specifically about this practice in “Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1836), para. 1374, as did Hurlstone, para. 779. Thus, Martin’s lobbying for Foggo can be seen as an attempt to beat the Academy at its own game. However, Shee ended up not retiring and retained the presidency and trusteeship until his death. Balston, *John Martin*, 184-185, mentioned the letter to Hume, but did not discuss Foggo or Martin in his text as advocates of free trade in art.

¹²⁵ Shee had asked in his *Rhymes*, xviii, “Shall it be said of Britain, that from the millions supplied by her industry and wealth to answer the exigencies of the state for all the purposes of power and commerce, not a guinea can be spared . . . to save her arts from utter extinction, or to co-operate with those praiseworthy efforts, which oppressed and desponding individuals have made with such perseverance and success?”

arts a principle which belongs only to trade; and the moment you make art a trade you destroy it.”¹²⁶

That the Royal Academy would continue to charge admission once housed in a public building and would still retain the profits led Martin, Foggo, Hurlstone, and others, to join forces with several select committee members, including Ewart, Hume, Bowring, as well as over forty other MPs, to form a society in 1837 to promote free admission for the public “to Westminster Abbey, St. Paul’s Cathedral, and all Depositories of Works of Art, of Natural History, and Objects of Historical and Literary Interest in Public Edifices.”¹²⁷ One of the society’s resolutions was to petition Parliament to open the Royal Academy exhibition to the public without charge, since the RA was now in “a building erected at the public expence [sic]” and thus should not be allowed to inhibit the free circulation of knowledge.¹²⁸ Citing the committee’s “fundamentally economic approach to the arts,” Rhodes has remarked that “free trade provides a model not only for free competition within the arts but also for free access to the arts.”¹²⁹ Such a resolution was

¹²⁶ “Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1836), para. 1974. Celina Fox, “Design,” in *An Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age: British Culture 1776-1832*, ed. Iain McCalman (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 241, has argued, “Such an opinion seemingly ignored the successful efforts that had been made over the preceding half-century to apply the principles of design to manufactures, and of taste to consumption.”

¹²⁷ See *Report of the Proceedings at a Public Meeting*, title page.

¹²⁸ See *Report of the Proceedings at a Public Meeting*, 20, for this resolution. Foggo was Honorary Secretary to the society. Martin is listed as a committee member in *Report of the Proceedings at a Public Meeting*, 36. For Shee’s response to their objectives, see his *Letter to Lord John Russell*. A copy of a letter, signed by Martin, Foggo, Hurlstone, Hume, and thirty others, to Queen Victoria requesting “free and gratuitous access to every national building or establishment containing works of art, historical and literary monuments, or objects of national history” including “the annual exhibition of modern art in the National Gallery, Trafalgar Square [i.e., the RA Summer Exhibition]” is in “Copy of Correspondence Relating to Free Admittance to Public National Buildings, Museums, &c.,” *Parliamentary Papers 1837-38*, xxvi (119), 2. The activities of the society were recounted in Alexander Somerville’s *Free Trade and the League*, 2 vols. (Manchester: James Ainsworth, 1853), 2:588-589.

¹²⁹ Rhodes, “Ornament and Ideology,” 111.

also in keeping with Ewart's previous statement when moving for the committee that "he was of [the] opinion, that arts, like commerce, ought to be essentially free."¹³⁰

One of Martin's, and others', complaints about the Academy's unfair practices that they believed earmarked it as a private society and not a national institution representing the nation's artists was that only Academicians, were permitted to clean and retouch – if not finish painting - their canvases after they were hung during Varnishing Days.¹³¹ In addition, the Academy kept the revenues from admission fees and did not distribute them among the general body of exhibitors, even though the returns submitted by the Academy to the select committee showed that Academicians constituted only six to eight percent of the total exhibitors at each of the exhibitions between 1824 and 1833.¹³² Martin and others also believed that the Academicians "monopolized" the best locations in the Great Room in order to place commissioned portraits in the most conspicuous locations as advertisements, while historical paintings by non-members, which were most in need of buyers, were skied, relegated to the ante-room, or stuck in a dark corner, if even admitted.¹³³ When quizzed by Ewart about the fact that Martin believed "he could not have a fair exhibition" at the Royal Academy, Shee indicated to Ewart that he had "high respect for Martin's talents" and regretted to see him involved in the testimony.¹³⁴ However, he also believed that such statements by Martin against the Academy were due to disappointed

¹³⁰ "Arts-Royal Academy," *Parliamentary Debates* (July 14, 1835), 554.

¹³¹ For Martin's opinion on this, see "Report on Arts and Manufactures" (1836), para. 824. For Shee's response, see paras. 2017-2021. All exhibitors were allowed time to clean and retouch their works at the BI and SBA.

¹³² "Appendix to Report from Select Committee" (1836), 198. For Hurlstone's testimony on this, see "Report on Arts and Manufactures" (1836), para. 751. See also Hemingway, *Landscape Imagery*, 135.

¹³³ For an example of use of the term "monopolized" in this respect, see "Report on Arts and Manufactures" (1836), para. 827.

¹³⁴ "Report on Arts and Manufactures" (1836), paras. 2012.

ambition, because he had failed to gain membership and had felt (unjustly, according to Shee) injured by the hanging of his paintings; if he had been patient and submitted to the trials that all “juniors” must go through, he would have become an Academician.¹³⁵ When told by Ewart that Martin had found that, in the spirit of free trade, “much greater fairness and equity was exhibited there [in foreign countries], than in the Royal Academy in this country,” Shee replied, “I do not see what bearing that has on the conduct of the Academy.”¹³⁶

Martin, like Foggo, did not argue that, in lieu of dissolving the Academy, the remedy was for the government to begin commissioning historical paintings, since “you cannot expect an historical picture to be painted so well to order; for it is generally given by the taste of the patron, without any regard to the peculiar power of the artist, who is consequently often incompetent to the subject, and but rarely equals what he would do if he were left to his own judgment.”¹³⁷

Martin believed that the large-scale, public historical paintings Shee and Haydon were advocating would never find state encouragement or be cultivated for profit in Britain.¹³⁸ This

¹³⁵ “Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1836), paras. 2012.

¹³⁶ “Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1836), para. 2014-2015. On the popularity of Martin’s work in France, see Jean Seznec, *John Martin en France* (London: Faber and Faber, 1964); Barthélémy Jobert, “La recherche de l’école anglaise: Lawrence, Wilkie and Martin, Three British Artists in Restoration France,” in *English Accents: Interactions with British Art c.1776-1855*, eds. Christiana Payne and William Vaughan (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2004), 124-151.

¹³⁷ “Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1836), para. 832. This corresponds with Prince Hoare’s description of historical painting in Britain thirty years earlier in his *Inquiry*, 69-70, “That the exertions in the class of history (when they *are* made), are independent, may be easily ascertained by the circumstance of the historical works, in our exhibitions, having rarely, at the time of their being sent thither, any other owner than the painter himself. They are hardly ever bespoke, but painted at the risk of the artist, from his own arduous desire to excel, and are too frequently left, neglected, on his hands.”

¹³⁸ See “Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1836), para. 837, when Martin said, “So long as portrait painting is patronized as ‘the only true historie,’ so long must historic painting be dead as an art, for artists paint to live, and it is too much to expect any one to die a martyr to his love of any peculiar branch.” Shee also conceded this point in his 1809 *Letter to the President and Directors*, 33, “In times of pressure like these, few Artists of established reputation, who have families to maintain, could prudently undertake the execution of a great work upon a dependence so uncertain.” See also Shee, *Letter to the*

was because, as Wilkie remarked to William Bewick, “large historical pictures, such as Haydon’s, have this disadvantage, - that they are beyond the scale of private purchase; those of the size of Martin’s are more readily disposed of. You see Mr. Martin has always contrived to make his pictures profitable, either by sale, by exhibition, or by engraving them.”¹³⁹ Indeed, Martin did make his historical landscapes within the scale of private purchase, for one year after Lambton read out Haydon’s petition to the Commons, Lambton himself purchased Martin’s *Seventh Plague of Egypt* (144.1 x 214 cm) directly from the artist for 500 guineas after it was shown at the first SBA exhibition. It hung in his home, Lambton Castle, for over one hundred years.

Most of Martin’s 1835 testimony was taken up with his early training and work as a glass and china painter and with the subject of ineffective copyright laws, as well as the concomitant problem of pirated copies of his prints.¹⁴⁰ Although copyright legislation did exist in England, Martin argued “it costs so much money [for the plaintiff] to carry the law into execution . . . [and] we are not sure after all that we shall not be beaten.”¹⁴¹ Martin argued that there should be

President and Directors, 59-60, “Amongst us, perhaps, more than any other civilized people, it may be said, ‘There is no virtue in a threadbare cloak;’ and after the fate of [the historical painter, James] Barry, a second enthusiast will not readily be found, to devote himself to poverty and the contempt which it breeds, from the desire of doing honor to the country, which has neither the liberality to reward, nor the taste to appreciate his exertions.”

¹³⁹ Thomas Landseer, ed., *Life and Letters of William Bewick*, 2 vols. (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1871), 1:267.

¹⁴⁰ For Martin’s 1835 testimony, see “Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1835), paras. 908-946.

¹⁴¹ “Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1835), para., 944. National copyright protection for engravings did exist following the passage of the Engraving Copyright Acts of 1735 (8 Geo. II. c. 13) and 1766 (7 Geo. III. c. 38) and the Prints Copyright Act of 1777 (17 Geo. III. c. 57). However, it seemed the first two applied only to England, the last to Britain. Martin argued that the existing laws on the books “are all nonsense.” See also “Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1836), para. 866, when he was asked by Bowring, “But the introduction of copies of works emanating from England is protected by law, is it not? – [Martin] No, we are not really protected; if a man is detected selling pirated works, there is no real protection; for example, in a case of my own, upon going to law I proved that a man had sold one copy of

stronger laws against piracy, since a plagiarist “not only robs me of my ideas, but establishes a lucrative trade on the effects of my pecuniary outlay.”¹⁴² In his opinion, “there is not . . . any real protection to copyright, owing to the uncertain state of the law on the subject,” and by that he meant not only copyright protection for his prints, but also for his paintings, since only recently, he had unsuccessfully applied for an injunction against an unauthorized diorama of his *Belshazzar’s Feast*. As Martin complained, the exhibition of this diorama had taken “that from me which ought to be my own, my copyright. I ought to have power of demanding so much money for permission, but this copy was made not only without my leave, but my name given as the painter.”¹⁴³

Indeed, Martin discussed his oil paintings in the 1835 session as trade commodities, indistinguishable from the painted ceramic ware and glassware he had produced earlier in life and the prints he was currently producing. He stated that one of the reasons he began painting in oils (in addition to the apprenticeship issue mentioned in Chapter 1) was that the excise duties on glass had forced him to discontinue producing designs for the glass industry because he could no longer turn a profit.¹⁴⁴ Such taxes had caused glass painting to fall out of favor generally, he argued, since experimenting with painting on glass had become too costly for designers like himself “or else glass-painting must have surpassed all branches of art in splendour, as it is

each plate, and the jury only gave me damages to the amount of what I proved he had actually sold.” International copyright protection for prints did not exist until the 1886 Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works. See Robert Verhoogt, *Art in Reproduction: Nineteenth-Century Prints after Lawrence Alma-Tadema, Jozef Israels and Ary Scheffer*, trans. Michelle Hendriks (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007), esp. 48, 170-172, 604-605 n.153.

¹⁴² “Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1835), para. 946.

¹⁴³ “Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1835), para. 945.

¹⁴⁴ “Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1835), para. 941.

capable of producing the most splendid and beautiful effects, far superior to oil-painting or water-colours.”¹⁴⁵ Martin also stated to the 1836 committee that he had been forced to scale back his activities as a painter to become an engraver in the later 1820s because:

I have been obliged to become so, in order that the public might see and judge of my works . . . Finding that after I had been a long time engaged in painting a picture, I had no opportunity of showing it to the same advantage as many others; and as I could not afford to execute works merely to hang against my own wall, I was obliged to resort to some means which would enable the public to see my productions, and give me a chance of being remunerated for my labour.¹⁴⁶

After complaining further about the Royal Academy’s anticompetitive practices in the 1836 session, he was asked why he bothered to continue to submit his works there. He responded that he no longer did, since it had ceased to be to his pecuniary advantage and that he would not again “as long as it remains at the present place, and I never shall if it rests there till doomsday.”¹⁴⁷ However, as he told Ewart, “I feel that when they have moved into those rooms appropriated by the nation, at the nation’s expense, I shall have as much right to send my pictures there as any academician.”¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ “Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1835), para. 937. Rhodes, “Ornament and Ideology,” 113, “The model of free trade in the arts implies another economic notion that is frequently invoked in the Committee’s hearings, the protection of private property. The Committee and many of its witnesses charge that British law, besides imposing damaging restrictions through excise taxes, also damages through neglect, by failing to provide sufficient copyright protection to art as applied to manufactures. . . . A number of witnesses argue that if designs are not sufficiently protected, there is too little economic incentive to invest in good designs.”

¹⁴⁶ “Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1836), para. 858-859.

¹⁴⁷ “Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1836), para. 848. See also para. 913, “[Ewart] Then they must alter all their rules if they accept that place, you think? – [Martin] I think the Government would have the privilege of saying, ‘You have abused so and so; you must give fair play.’”

¹⁴⁸ “Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1836), para. 912. Martin began exhibiting again at the RA in 1837 at its first Summer Exhibition held in Wilkins’s building. See below on Martin’s *Deluge* at the Polytechnic Institution.

Instead, from 1819 until 1824, Martin sent his principal canvases first – with the exception of one large landscape, *The Paphian Bower* (1823, present location unknown) – to the British Institution, where his canvases were often hung at the proper (eye) level he conceived they should be and where “all have the same advantage” of retouching their works, or else he showed them at private exhibitions.¹⁴⁹

The banishment of his *Paphian Bower* to the Academy’s ante-room in 1823 had led him that year to join in the founding of the Society of British Artists.¹⁵⁰ In addition to exhibiting at the BI, the SBA, private commercial venues like Bullock’s Egyptian Hall and the Western Exchange, as well as overseas, during the 1820s and 1830s, Martin showed his works at two important industrial exhibitions in London in the 1830s where, in the spirit of open competition, art was one trade competing among many.¹⁵¹ On March 11, 1833, Martin told William Jerdan,

¹⁴⁹ “Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1836), para. 822. Hoock, *King’s Artists*, 65, remarked, “There was often a sense, though, that Academicians sent mainly works [to the BI] that were not sold at Somerset House, or, in Academician John Hoppner’s words, the ‘puke’ of the RA exhibition.”

¹⁵⁰ Balston, *John Martin*, 77. Charles Westmacott, *A Descriptive and Critical Catalogue to the Exhibition of the Royal Academy* (London: J. Fairburn, 1823), no. 427, said of Martin’s *Paphian Bower*, “There is a trick and mannerism about Mr. Martin’s works that is purely mechanical: the picture before us is a second edition of his ‘Paradise’ in the British Gallery [the BI] and is the only proof of good taste the hanging committee have given us, (the picture is placed where its gaudy effect cannot injure superior productions).” Martin was not a SBA member but did participate in 1823 in meetings to form the society. He also indicated in “Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1836), para. 828, that when the Society of British Artists was forming, he advised “that their rooms should be octagonal, as they would then have the advantage of twice the number of central situations, and as there would not be any right angles, even a corner would be no longer objectionable, since the angles would be so obtuse, that there would not be any of those reflections which are inseparable from right angles.”

¹⁵¹ “Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1836), ix, “It is . . . to be lamented . . . particularly that Mr. Martin should declare that his paintings have found that encouragement in the foreign exhibitions of France and Belgium which they have been denied at home.” “Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1836), para. 843, “Dr. Bowring.] What course do you now take for the exhibition of your works?—Finding the Royal Academy and the British Institution to be nearly one and the same, I rarely hazard painting a large picture; when I do so, however, I am obliged to exhibit it in foreign countries or on my own account, but it may easily be supposed how few persons are likely to see works shown at an occasional private exhibition, compared with the numbers who would see them at annual exhibitions so well known as the institutions named.” William Jerdan, *Men I Have Known* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1866), 72, said of William Bullock’s Egyptian Hall, where Martin mounted his first one-man show, featuring his

editor of the *Literary Gazette*, that he was preparing to display all of his works at the newly established National Gallery of Practical Science (fig. 7) in the Lowther Arcade, just down the Strand from the Royal Academy, “I am going full-tilt against our self-styled patrons of the Fine Arts who endeavour to ruin us independents; and as they will not give me the opportunity of showing my works decently at *their* exhibition, I have determined on setting up for myself, and am on the eve of showing all my works at present in my possession in the Lowther Arcade.”¹⁵²

Founded in 1832, the Adelaide Gallery, as it was also known, was strictly, in the words of Joseph Hume, “a trade,” and advertised itself as a venue “for the exhibition of new applications of known principles to mechanical contrivances of general utility.”¹⁵³ According to Leopold Martin, his father had even helped set up the institution, being:

induced by his friends, Ralph Watson and Thomas Brickwood, of the South Sea House, to join them in the establishment of a grand scientific exhibition. Its object in the first place was a grand display of machinery of every description in full working order. No

Destruction of Pompeii and Herculaneum (1821) in 1822, “The Crystal Palace is in great measure the old Egyptian Hall on an enlarged scale.” In 1828, Martin exhibited his newest picture, *The Fall of Nineveh* (1828), and several other paintings at the Western Exchange, Old Bond Street, which Whitley, *Art in England, 1821-1837*, 312, described as, “a kind of fashionable bazaar, composed of about forty shops and stalls, the whole covered with a lofty timber roof, with large skylights.” *Gentleman’s Magazine* 98 (September 1828), 254, indicated the painting was shown with “several of his other productions: the Deluge, Macbeth, Pan and Syrinx, and the Bower of Paphos.”

¹⁵² John Martin to William Jerdan, March 11, 1833, quoted in Pendered, *John Martin*, 184. That same month, *Arnold’s Magazine of the Fine Arts* (March 1833), 432, reported “Mr. Martin is about to open, or by this time has opened an exhibition of his works at the National Gallery of Practical Science, Adelaide Street. It appears that he is somewhat sore at the conduct of the bashaw or bashaws of the British Gallery [British Institution], in their treatment of his *Alpheus and Arethusa*, painted like most of Mr. Martin’s, to be placed on a level with the eye and which is there above it.”

¹⁵³ “Supply-Miscellaneous Estimates,” Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd series, xxxiii (May 30, 1836), 1160; *National Gallery of Practical Science, Blending Instruction with Amusement; Adelaide Street, and Lowther Arcade, West Strand. Catalogue for 1833*, 5th edition (London: J. Holmes, 1833), 1. The Adelaide Gallery also hosted subscription *soirées*, in which women were allowed to participate in the discussions of practical science. See “National Gallery of Practical Science, Adelaide Street, Strand,” *Repertory of Patent Inventions* 16 (August 1833), 111, “At some of these meetings we had the pleasure of being present, and cannot but congratulate the managers in having broken through the barrier which heretofore excluded ladies from joining in these highly intellectual treats.”

exhibition of such a description had as yet been attempted . Its second and more important object was to benefit and educate the public; and it was hoped that great good would accrue in this way by making more evident what science had already done to assist labour. Mr. Ralph Watson, a kind hearted philanthropist and a wealthy man, intimated his strong desire to establish such a scientific display, and offered to find the means, if Mr. Brickwood and my father would advise and assist him with such friends as should be brought together. My father, much liking the idea of education carried on in so popular a manner, at once agreed to render every assistance.¹⁵⁴

In illustration of what one could view there, an advertisement in the *Athenaeum* announced on April 13, 1833, that visitors would see:

[Jacob Perkins's] *Steam Gun* discharging a Volley of Seventy Balls in Four Seconds—Steam Boat Models propelled on Water by Paddle-wheels with great rapidity—an Apparatus showing a brilliant Combustion of the hardest Steel—a Magnet producing a Spark capable of igniting Gunpowder—an Electro-Magnet sustaining upwards of 400 pounds weight—Exemplification of a Plan for preventing Ships foundering at Sea—Model of an Oven in daily operation, showing the plan by which, during the process of baking bread, a spirituous liquid is obtained—an Apparatus daily exhibiting the cooking of Meat by Gas—a Mouse in a Diving Bell—an Air Balloon—Antediluvian Fossil Organic Remains—Pictures by the Old Masters, including some splendid productions of Murillo—Sculpture—Self-acting Musical Instruments—with numerous other interesting objects.¹⁵⁵

Although it has not been doubted that Martin was involved in the Adelaide's establishment, it has been supposed that he backed out at the last minute from showing his work "in so unsuitable

¹⁵⁴ Leopold Martin, "Reminiscences," *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* (April 20, 1889), front page.

¹⁵⁵ "National Gallery of Practical Science and Works of Art," *Athenaeum* (April 13, 1833), 269. Iwan Rhys Morus, *Frankenstein's Children: Electricity, Exhibition, and Experiment in Early Nineteenth-Century London* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 75, stated that the American-born Perkins established the venue as a way to promote his inventions. However, K. G. Beauchamp, *Exhibiting Electricity* (London: Institution of Electrical Engineers, 1997), 13-15, in line with Leopold Martin's account, said, "The gallery was founded in 1832 by a number of experimentalists and engineers . . . and supported by a wealthy philanthropist, Ralph Watson." A later lawsuit against the Adelaide Gallery, recounted in the *Legal Guide* 4 (October 31, 1840), 425-428, stated that Brickwood, Watson, and two others "were the original projectors of the institution. . . . The Bill stated that it was at first intended to be a commercial speculation, and it was contemplated to form a partnership, which was to consist of themselves and such other persons as should be desirous of joining them." There is no mention of Perkins in the lawsuit, although he may have been a shareholder. Beauchamp, *Exhibiting Electricity*, 13-15, indicated that Perkins only knew "the people who were busy setting up the exhibition." Leopold Martin, "Reminiscences," *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* (April 20, 1889), front page, said, "Fortunately, my father had nothing to do with the monetary portion of the Adelaide Gallery venture."

a place.”¹⁵⁶ However, in the above advertisement, the list of items on view continued with “The Fall of Nineveh-Macbeth-Satan, Sin, and Death-and other pictures; with several new Drawings and Engravings, by JOHN MARTIN.”¹⁵⁷ The fifth edition of the 1833 exhibition catalogue, moreover, announced that Martin himself had deposited these works in the upper gallery.¹⁵⁸

In 1839 and 1840, Martin also showed the second version of his *Deluge* (1834, Yale Center for British Art, fig. 8), which he previously exhibited at the Paris Salon in 1835 and at the first Royal Academy exhibition held in the National Gallery in 1837, at the Polytechnic Institution (fig. 9), Regent Street.¹⁵⁹ The Polytechnic had opened in 1838 and was formed, “for

¹⁵⁶ Balston, *John Martin*, 146-147, “No catalogue or advertisement or other reference to such an exhibition has been found.” Feaver, *Art of John Martin*, 140, “It is very likely that Martin thought better of this desperate resort for a showing as there was no mention of an exhibition of his work in the press.”

¹⁵⁷ “National Gallery of Practical Science and Works of Art,” *Athenaeum* (April 13, 1833), 269. The paintings at first were exhibited in a separate room, but the *Athenaeum* (June 8, 1833), 365, advertised “Mr. JOHN MARTIN’S most celebrated Picture of ‘*The Fall of Nineveh*,’ with several other of his Pictures and splendid Engravings, being no longer separately exhibited, constitute a highly valuable addition to the numerous other Objects of Interest and Amusement deposited in this most attractive Gallery.” According to advertisements in the *Athenaeum*, they remained on exhibit until the following September.

¹⁵⁸ See *National Gallery of Practical Science*, 5th edition, 31. As late as 1851 painting would be excluded from the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations on the grounds that “being but little affected by material conditions, it seemed to rank as an independent art.” *Reports by the Juries on the Subjects in the Thirty Classes into Which the Exhibition Was Divided*, 2 vols. (London: W. Clowes and Sons, 1852), 2:1547. However, according to the *Official Descriptive and Illustrated Catalogue*, 2:819, “as exhibiting any improvements in colours, they [paintings] become admissible.” Indeed, some oil paintings were, in fact, exhibited, including J. H. I. Caplin’s “Topographical oil painting: - Bird’s-eye view of the gulf of Naples. An Illustrative expression of the laws by which the surface of the earth assumes particular forms,” which was shown in the Fine Arts section. See *Official Descriptive and Illustrated Catalogue*, 2:833 no. 221.

¹⁵⁹ See *The Polytechnic Institution for the Advancement of the Arts and Polytechnic Science; especially in Connection with Agriculture, Mining and Manufactures, and Other Branches of Industry* (London: Polytechnic Institution, 1839), no. 66. The entry indicates that Martin deposited the work. Photocopy, no. R 45/2, of this exhibition catalogue is in the University of Westminster Archives, while the original is in the collection of the Royal Society of Arts. University of Westminster Archive Services also has a photocopy, no. R 45/3, of the 1840 catalogue, in which *The Deluge* is again no. 66, housed in The Literary & Philosophical Society, Newcastle. The painting is not listed in the 1838 catalogue, now in the City of Westminster Archives Centre. The painting is not listed in the 1844-45 catalogues also housed in the University of Westminster Archive Services, while the 1841-43 catalogues were not housed in the

the advancement of Practical Science, in connexion with agriculture, arts, and manufactures.”¹⁶⁰

At the time that Martin exhibited there, the *Deluge* was rubbing shoulders with fully-functioning steam and electrical machines, such as a steam engine governor and an operating Jacquard loom weaving figured silk. As Richard Daniel Altick has pointed out, “The Polytechnic and Adelaide Gallery were in strenuous competition from the day the former opened.”¹⁶¹ Unlike early modern curiosity cabinets, which were designed for an elite audience of gentlemen connoisseurs, the exhibitions at the Polytechnic and the Adelaide were intended to diffuse a knowledge of the practical arts and sciences among the general population by blending instruction with amusement.¹⁶² The Polytechnic Institution (today, the University of Westminster) “from its inception established a firm educational basis for training of technologists and engineers.”¹⁶³ For

university’s archives. I first discovered Martin’s participation in the 1839 exhibition while looking through these catalogues at the University of Westminster Archives in March 2007. This information has since been published in Brenda Weeden, *The Education of the Eye: History of the Royal Polytechnic Institution, 1831-1881* (Cambridge: Granta, 2008), 24. Weeden, however, did not mention that Martin also participated in the 1840 exhibition, citing only the 1839 catalogue (R 45/2). The first version of the *Deluge* is untraced.

¹⁶⁰ “The Polytechnic Institution, Regent Street,” *Mirror of Literature, Amusement, and Instruction* 32 (September 1, 1838), 145.

¹⁶¹ Altick, *Shows of London*, 382-383. “The Polytechnic Institution, Regent Street,” *Mirror of Literature, Amusement, and Instruction*, 32 (September 1, 1838), 146, noted the benefits of the two societies competing with one other, “if they should do so [“clash” is the word *The Mirror* used], in a small degree, it must urge them to greater exertions.” “Art. III,” *Eclectic Review* 6 (September 1839), 286, “Each always has something which the other has not, and it will be to the advantage of both to endeavour to maintain this variety as far as possible.” Leopold, “Reminiscences,” *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* (April 20, 1889), front page, “The institution named the Polytechnic was shortly afterwards initiated for the like purpose – the advancement of practical science and other branches of industry. To a certain extent it carried out the objects Mr. Ralph Watson and my father had at heart.”

¹⁶² The full name of the Adelaide Gallery was the National Gallery of Practical Science, Blending Instruction with Amusement. For a discussion of the educational roles of both institutions, see Iwan Rhys Morus, “Blending Instruction with Amusement: London’s Galleries of Practical Science,” in his *Frankenstein’s Children*, ch. 3. See also his “Manufacturing Nature: Science, Technology and Victorian Consumer Culture,” *British Journal for the History of Science* 29 (December 1996): 403-434, and his “Seeing and Believing Science,” *Isis* 91 (March 2006): 101-110.

¹⁶³ Beauchamp, *Exhibiting Electricity*, 21.

instance, the 1844 catalogue announced, “Another important feature is the establishment of a School for the proper instruction of Engine Drivers on Railways and others; and the Directors are happy to be able to add, that they are extensively supported by railroad authorities . . . A Class, also, for the Instruction of Officers in her Majesty’s Navy, and others interested in Marine Engines and Marine Navigation, is opened.”¹⁶⁴ There were also fully-equipped laboratories for inventors on premises and a 500 seat lecture hall where audiences could watch demonstrations of technological advances like the electric telegraph. In addition to exhibiting art, working machinery, and scientific models, the Adelaide also featured public lectures on natural philosophy and the mechanical arts.¹⁶⁵ There was no attempt by either institution to set up hierarchical distinctions between fine art and industry. Rather, in places such as the Adelaide and the Polytechnic, as well as the National Repository for the Exhibition of Specimens of New and

¹⁶⁴ *The Royal Polytechnic Institution, for the Advancement of the Arts and Practical Science; Especially in Connexion with Agriculture, Mining Machinery, Manufactures, and Other Branches of Industry, 309 Regent Street, and 5 Cavendish Square. Catalogue for 1844*, new ed. (London: Reynell and Weight, 1844), 6-7.

¹⁶⁵ Albert Smith, “The Casino” in *Gavarni in London: Sketches of Life and Character: with Illustrative Essays by Popular Writers*, ed. Albert Smith (London: D. Bogue, 1849), 13, said, “It was at first devoted to the diffusion of knowledge. Clever professors were there, who emulated the transatlantic acquirement of ‘knocking all creation into a cocked hat,’ by teaching elaborate science in lectures of twenty minutes each.” In his 1836 testimony, Martin advocated making the Adelaide Gallery and the National Gallery branches of the British Museum so that aspiring artists/designers could learn from lecturers the relationship between art and manufacture across the centuries. See “Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1835), para. 924, “The National Gallery and the National Gallery of Practical Science might become branches of the British Museum. The grand object of a student should be to divide his time so as not to lose any, and not to give too much study to one pursuit or branch of the art. I firmly believe that the arts are useful to every branch of manufacture in the land; there is hardly a branch one can name that is not useful, from the lowest to the highest state of society; even to our legislators, drawing is useful, for they are not capable of judging of a plan without a knowledge of it.” See also “Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1835), para. 946, when Martin also advocated using the British Museum as the central depot for copyright registration of designs for prints, textiles and other manufactures; and “Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1836), para. 884, “I have, in my evidence on arts and manufactures, given an opinion as to the formation of a national institution for the advancement of art, and its connexion with the British Museum.” See “Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1836), para. 877, for his reservations about establishing any national art institution, “Speaking selfishly, it would be to my advantage to have none.”

Improved Productions of the Artisans and Manufacturers of the United Kingdom (another private enterprise, founded in 1828 and demolished, ironically enough, in 1831 to make way for the National Gallery), a knowledge of great works of art from the past was not a prerequisite.¹⁶⁶ As the *Times* stated, “In seeing a manufactured article . . . to appreciate its excellence the taste of the purchaser or consumer does not require to be cultivated or purified, as in the case of the fine arts, by the repeated exhibition of master-pieces.”¹⁶⁷ Rather, as Iwan Rhys Morus has explained, “what went on at [these] galleries and displays of inventions was an education of the senses.”¹⁶⁸ In other words, painting, sculpture, working machinery, and scientific models “were all part of the same grand spectacle,” where for the consumer “a link was being forged between display and the progress of industry.”¹⁶⁹ By depositing his historical landscapes at the Adelaide and Polytechnic for exhibition, Martin’s paintings became part of these spectacles of popular education, which celebrated not only modernity, practical science, the factory system, and the division of labor, but also free trade.¹⁷⁰ As the fictional Oxbridge student, Joe Railton, in *Punch*’s “Academical Portraits” complained over his glass of port about the rapid changes happening in British society, “Quite absurd, you know, I believe Government or Lord John

¹⁶⁶ On “the regime of the picture” versus “the regime of the eye,” see Peter de Bolla, *The Education of the Eye: Painting, Landscape, and Architecture in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).

¹⁶⁷ “The ‘National Repository,’” *Times* (March 2, 1829). Excerpts from this article were reprinted, as noted by Morus, *Frankenstein’s Children*, 83, in the *Mechanics Magazine* 11 (1829), 58-60.

¹⁶⁸ Morus, “Seeing and Believing Science,” 107.

¹⁶⁹ Morus, “Manufacturing Nature,” 422, 426; “Panoptics and Polytechnics,” *Chambers’s Journal* 1 (June 10, 1854), 361, claimed that, at the Royal Polytechnic Institution, “There is a more obvious attempt here to combine science and fine arts with manufactures, than in the exhibitions hitherto noticed.”

¹⁷⁰ Morus, “Manufacturing Nature,” 422; Morus, *Frankenstein’s Children*, 82, also noted, “Scientific tourists keen to acquaint themselves with the new factory system and the workings of machinery visited the Adelaide and the Polytechnic just as they visited factories and workshops (where they could). The public exhibitions made accessible and simultaneously constructed the hidden world of labor.”

Russell, or some other swell in London, is going to make us get up all about machines, and hydrogen, and pumps, and things. Instead of coaching up here, fellas will have to go to town and take a season at the Polytechnic Institution. It's all Free Trade and that sort of thing has done it."¹⁷¹

Martin also invested heavily in the Royal Panopticon of Science and Art, Leicester Square (fig. 10), which was formed as a rival to the Royal Polytechnic.¹⁷² On the building's encaustic Minton tiles, visitors could see the Panopticon's arms depicting a scholar in cap and gown holding a quill standing opposite a mechanic wearing an apron and gripping a hammer, both standing on an equal footing. In between them, resting on a pedestal, was an artifact, which they had produced by their joint effort. Appearing with them was the Panopticon's motto "mente et manu" (with mind and hand).¹⁷³ As Brian Gee has said, such imagery of the "scholar-craftsman" is "reminiscent of the Baconian objective for uniting science and the trades towards some human beneficial purpose."¹⁷⁴ Founded by the instrument maker Edward Marmaduke Clarke, who had been involved in establishing the National Repository, its purpose was, among other things, "to exhibit various branches of the fine and mechanical arts, manufactures, and handicrafts, by

¹⁷¹ "Academical Portraits," *Punch, or The London Charivari* 24 (1853): 8. Russell was known to be a strong supporter of free trade.

¹⁷² Leopold Martin, "Reminiscences," *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* (April 20, 1889), front page, "Notwithstanding the want of success of Mr. Ralph Watson's attempt to benefit the public, my father was so impressed with the good that might be derived from similar exhibitions, that he was induced to try a fresh venture – the Panopticon – on a more extensive scale than that of the Adelaide Gallery." Pendered, *John Martin*, 234; Balston, *John Martin*, 231. See *Deed of Settlement of the Corporation, called the "Royal Panopticon of Science and Art." Incorporated by Royal Charter, 21st February, 1850* (London: privately printed, 1850), in which Martin is listed in the front matter as an associate. The Adelaide Gallery had been auctioned off in 1845 and at this point functioned largely as an amusement hall. The Polytechnic had received a Royal Charter in 1839.

¹⁷³ The arms also appeared in the *Deed of Settlement of the Corporation*.

¹⁷⁴ Brian Gee, "On Attending to the Instrument Maker in Physics History," in *Physicists Look Back: Studies in the History of Physics*, ed. John Roche (Bristol: Hilger, 1990), 221.

showing the progress to completion in the hands of the artisan and mechanic; . . . and generally to extend and facilitate a greater knowledge and love of the arts and sciences on the part of the public.”¹⁷⁵ At the Royal Panopticon, a free trade in knowledge was deemed essential to the British artisan, mechanic, artist, and manufacturer, in order to compete in the marketplace, as explained in the charter:

Here the artisan and mechanic may learn how to avail themselves of the discoveries and inventions of the master-minds who have taken the lead in their own pursuits. The artist may take the initiative from the admirable works around him and from the success which is shown to have accompanied talent and industry, gather fresh courage for the contest. The manufacturer, by devoting a few hours weekly to the enunciations of the chemical professor, and the oral explanations upon the models, will be better prepared to meet that competition which, though the very life of commercial enterprise, is ever fatal to the indulgence of inactivity and ignorance.¹⁷⁶

As Jane Alexandra Webb has noted, “there is a clear relationship between [the Panopticon’s] establishment and the aims of the Select Committee in extending knowledge to the manufacturing population.”¹⁷⁷

In the provinces, Martin also exhibited several of his paintings, along with a plan he had devised for of an intercepting sewer, at the Newcastle Polytechnic Exhibition of 1848 (fig. 11).¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁵ “Panoptics and Polytechnics,” *Chambers’s Journal* 1 (June 10, 1854), 362. Clarke had helped set up the National Repository in 1828 and, in 1837, the London Electrical Society, the latter of which came about as the result of discussions with scientists, such as William Sturgeon, at the Adelaide Gallery. On the London Electrical Society, see Morus, *Frankenstein’s Children*, ch. 4.

¹⁷⁶ *The Illustrated Hand Book of the Royal Panopticon of Science and Art: an Institution for Scientific Exhibitions, and for Promoting Discoveries in Arts and Manufactures* (London: John Hotson, 1854), 10. Also quoted in John Hollingshead, *The Story of Leicester Square* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co., 1892), 50.

¹⁷⁷ Webb, “Analysis,” 17. “Panoptics and Polytechnics,” *Chambers’s Journal* 1 (June 10, 1854), 362, said the Panopticon was “an attempt to combine science and fine art and productive industry, so far as illustrative examples are concerned, under one roof. . . . and, generally to extend and facilitate a greater knowledge and love of the arts and sciences on the part of the public.” “The Panopticon, in Leicester Square,” *Illustrated London News* (March 18, 1854), 235, “The scheme of the Panopticon promises much for the popular spread of science in its application to the arts and manufactures.” Despite the initial enthusiasm, the Panopticon closed after two years.

This exhibition, as Dianne Sachko Macleod has explained, was “[a] persuasive attempt to create an aesthetic bond between fine art and industrial products” that “anticipates the rhetoric associated with the Great Exhibition of 1851.”¹⁷⁹

Therefore, Martin was heavily involved in several of the most important exhibitions in and out of London combining art and industry in the lead up to the “Free Trade Festival,” the 1851 Great Exhibition.¹⁸⁰ Although Martin died before he could see the fruits of his investment in the Panopticon when it opened in 1854, he not only visited Paxton’s Crystal Palace in Hyde Park, but he also was an exhibitor in the North Gallery on the building’s northwest side.¹⁸¹ Here, “Martin, John, Lindsey House, Chelsea, Designer and Inventor” exhibited in class seven, “Civil Engineering, Architecture, and Other Building Contrivances,” some of the engineering projects

¹⁷⁸ See *Catalogue of the Exhibition of Arts, Manufactures and Practical Science at Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1848* (Newcastle: J. Blackwell and Co., 1848), 13 no. 171; 66 no. 74a; 78 nos. 56 & 62. Martin also deposited, 69 no. 149, “Portrait of John Martin, K. H. [sic]” but the artist’s name is not supplied. Another work, 91 no. 163, “Portrait of O. Muss – [by] J. Martin K.H. [sic], being one of the first attempts of that Artist” was deposited by J. Sewell.

¹⁷⁹ Dianne Sachko Macleod, “Private and Public Patronage in Victorian Newcastle,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 52 (1989): 194; Macleod, “Private and Public Patronage, 193, also pointed out, “The [Newcastle] Polytechnic exhibition of 1848 was designed to interest all sections of society by combining painting and sculpture with manufacturing, scientific, and natural history exhibits.” Macleod does not mention Martin as an exhibitor.

¹⁸⁰ *John Bull* (June 8 and December 7, 1850), quoted in Auerbach, *Great Exhibition*, 63. On the relationship between the Adelaide, Polytechnic, and Panopticon, and the Great Exhibition, see Altick, *Shows of London*, 387, 455, 472-473, 484, 496, and Morus, *When Physics Became King* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 115. “Panoptics and Polytechnics,” *Chambers’s Journal* 1 (June 10, 1854), 361-363, also connected all of these “industrial and artistic exhibitions.” See also “The Great Exhibition and the Royal Polytechnic Institution,” *Illustrated London News* (June 14, 1851), 548, which noted that the Royal Polytechnic’s facilities were used in 1851 as a lecture hall to explain the objects on display in the Crystal Palace. Another precursor to the Crystal Palace, which had a direct link to the free trade movement, was the Free Trade Bazaar in Covent Garden organized by the Anti-Corn Law League. According to the *Illustrated London News* (May 10, 1845), 296, “the upper saloon is designed for the exhibition of machinery, models, and works of art, and also as a place for promenade and exhibition.” On the connections between the Free Trade Bazaar and the Great Exhibition, see Peter J. Gurney, “‘The Sublime of the Bazaar’: A Moment in the Making of a Consumer Culture in Mid-Nineteenth Century England,” *Journal of Social History* 40 (Winter 2006): 385-405.

¹⁸¹ *Official Descriptive and Illustrated Catalogue*, 1:311 no. 25.

he had been working on years before he made his first appearance in front of the Select Committee on Arts and Manufactures. His Thames and metropolis improvement plans, in particular, almost cost him his fortune - and sanity - in his attempts to obtain government funding for them. These plans will be the focus of my next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

“THIS MAGNIFICENT NATIONAL UNDERTAKING”: MARTIN’S THAMES AND METROPOLIS IMPROVEMENT PLANS

To accomplish this gigantic undertaking, it must be evident that the sanction of Parliament and aid of Government are necessary. London would then in grandeur and pictorial effect surpass every other city in Europe.¹

James Noble, *The Professional Practice of Architects*, 1836

So said James Noble, one of the founding members of the Institute of British Architects, in 1836 about Martin’s most recent plan to embank and purify the Thames.² Martin would have been in complete agreement with his architect friend about the impossibility of implementing the massive project he envisioned without government funding. But the irony, of course, is that at the very same moment Martin was making the case against government support for the arts before the Select Committee on Arts and Manufactures, he was declaring in print and in public

¹ James Noble, *The Professional Practice of Architects and That of Measuring Surveyors, and Reference to Builders, &c. &c. from the Time of the Celebrated Earl of Burlington* (London: Architectural Library, 1836), 44 n. Noble’s book, which focuses on the subject of metropolitan improvements, is considered to be the first history of architectural practice in England; see Daniel M. Abramson, “Commercialization and Backlash in Late Georgian Architecture,” in *Articulating British Classicism: New Approaches to Eighteenth-Century Architecture*, eds. Barbara Arciszewska and Elizabeth McKellar (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 148, and Michael W. Fazio and Patrick A. Snadon, *The Domestic Architecture of Benjamin Henry Latrobe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 711 n.11. Noble added his name in 1836 to a list of endorsers of Martin’s plans. See *Reprint of Report of the Committee Appointed to Take into Consideration Mr. Martin’s Plan for Rescuing the River Thames from Every Species of Pollution, 1836* (London: privately printed, 1849), 18. This reprint is an edited version of the committee’s original 1836 report. While many copies of the reprinted report are extant, the only copy of the original report I have been able to trace was once, according to its catalogue, in the Institution of Civil Engineers’ Library and Archives in London, where it has now gone missing. This copy was previously unknown to Martin scholarship. See Balston, *John Martin*, 274. *Architectural Magazine* 3 (August 1836), 360-383, also reprinted sections of the original report in its review. Extracts of the original report also appeared in *The Times* (April 25, 1836), 6.

² The institute was granted a royal charter in 1837, becoming the Royal Institute of British Architects. Noble’s mentor was C. R. Cockerell, another RIBA founder. According to David Watkin, *The Life and Work of C. R. Cockerell* (London: A. Zwemmer Ltd., 1974), 91, Martin was Cockerell’s “special favourite” of all living artists. Another architect and founding member, T. L. Donaldson lectured on Martin’s plans in 1833 at the Royal Institution and in 1836 at the Institute of British Architects. See below.

that it was the duty and obligation of the government to embank and purify “the greatest commercial river in the world.”³

Previous scholars have argued that, in publishing these plans between 1828 and 1850, Martin was motivated by a combination of religious, environmental, and aesthetic concerns, that he wished to green and beautify the metropolis by bringing the countryside into the heart of London with the ultimate goal of transforming the capital into a kind of heavenly city or New Jerusalem on earth.⁴ David Bindman, for instance, has claimed, that Martin’s city planning

concerns are perfectly compatible with the images of destruction in his paintings and with millenarianism; they express once again the tension between the Holy City as vision and as a real city that needed to be built in its ideal form by careful thought and practice. Martin’s concerns with cleaning and purifying London were at one level a way of rebuilding Babylonish London as Jerusalem, as a city of pure air, clean water and stately buildings, according to the ambitions of urban improvers of the day.⁵

The historical geographer Anna Mallett has described Martin in her dissertation on his environmental concerns as “a moral and godly individual,” who lamented “the horrors of industrial and metropolitan development,” “was in defiance of industrialisation,” and “was part of a growing number of nineteenth-century artists who were questioning the ethics of industry.”⁶ For her, “in cleaning London physically, [Martin] could also imbue it with a new morality.”⁷

³ Statement made by Captain Frederick Bullock, RN, quoted in John Martin, *Martin’s Thames and Metropolis Improvement Plan: The Objects Being to Supply the Metropolis with Pure Water; to Embank the River Thames & Preserve the Sewage; to Improve the Navigation Below London Bridge; and to Connect the Port of London with the Inland Railways* (London: Ridgway, 1842), 44. Martin said he had quoted Bullock’s comments about the Thames because “I feel proud to say that his remarks in every way coincide with the views I have endeavoured to promulgate and work out.” See *Martin’s Thames and Metropolis Improvement Plan* (1842), 41.

⁴ See Balston, *John Martin*, 121; Feaver, *Art of John Martin*, 120, 129, 166.

⁵ David Bindman, “The English Apocalypse,” in *The Apocalypse and the Shape of Things to Come*, ed. Frances Carey, exh. cat. (London: British Museum Press, 1999), 224.

⁶ Mallett, “Chaos and Order,” 425, 99, 411, 287.

⁷ Mallett, “Chaos and Order,” 425.

Discussing the purportedly “Christian underpinning” of Martin’s plans, Jonathan Ribner, meanwhile, has said that “underlying . . . [Martin’s] efforts as [a] sanitary reformer is a faith in a just, providential order that rids the world of iniquity in a cleansing cycle of hellish disruption and edenic serenity. Virtue is rewarded by heavenly peace, in his visionary reformed London.”⁸

Their, and others’, attempts to establish Martin’s millenarian and anti-industrial views go back to Francis Klingender’s statement that, in his works illustrating the Bible and Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, Martin negatively “expressed, in a disguised way, emotions aroused in him by the contemporary industrial scene.”⁹ However, to claim that Martin’s Thames and metropolis improvement plans were anti-industrial in spirit and that he embarked on these projects for religious reasons does not tally with any of Martin’s statements over a period of nearly three decades about his motivations.

God is not mentioned anywhere in Martin’s pamphlets as a source of inspiration, but profit is.¹⁰ Moreover, for Martin, Britain was not “a decadent civilization engaged in worldly

⁸ Jonathan P. Ribner, “The Thames and Sin in the age of the Great Stink,” *British Art Journal* 1 (Spring 2000): 42.

⁹ Francis Klingender, *Art and the Industrial Revolution*, edited and revised by Arthur Elton (London: Evelyn, Adams & Mackay, 1968), 90. Stuckey, review of *Art of John Martin*, 631, pointed out that Feaver also subscribed to Klingender’s hypothesis; however, “Feaver is unable to strengthen Klingender’s inconclusive argument.” Mallett, “Chaos and Order,” 104, similarly claimed, “Martin used metaphorical inference in his paintings to reveal fears of the mechanical age.” Carol Woodring, *Nature into Art: Cultural Transformations in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 275, found Klingender’s argument to be persuasive. Joseph Rykwert, *Seduction of Place* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2001), 40, recently has described Martin as “horrified by the effects of industry” and communicating this horror in his paintings.

¹⁰ The Committee of Gentlemen did refer in *Reprint of Report* (1849), 5, to the Thames as “that most noble River, which has been given to us by Providence for our health, recreation, and beneficial use.” But from this it does not follow that in the absence of any specific reference to god by Martin that there was a “Christian dimension to Martin’s efforts.” See Ribner, “Thames and Sin,” 42, “In accord with the Christian dimension of Martin’s efforts, a distinguished government [sic] committee, chaired by Lord Euston, which had examined the artist’s comprehensive plan for ‘Rescuing the River Thames from Every Species of Pollution,’ offered in 1836 glowing approval of the proposal while lamenting the state of

pursuits.”¹¹ Rather, he considered it to be a “noble country” and “a great commercial nation.”¹² London was not a modern Babylon in dire need of spiritual cleansing and deliverance, but “the greatest metropolis in the world” and “the most wealthy, civilized, and enterprising city in the world.”¹³ The Thames was not a god-given natural wonder, but, “the great highway to the Metropolis,” “the greatest commercial river in the world,” and “the fountain of commerce,” to be subjected to embanking and dredging in order to improve shipping navigation.¹⁴ Therefore, I will argue in this chapter that Martin wanted to improve the condition of the Thames and the metropolis not in order to transform London into the New Jerusalem of Revelation, but to “succeed in drawing attention to the necessity of advancing by every possible means, such works

affairs that had necessitated it: ‘Thus that most noble River, which has been given to us by Providence for our health, recreation, and beneficial use, is converted into the Common Sewer of London.’” The committee was voluntary, not governmental.

¹¹ Bindman, “English Apocalypse,” 228.

¹² John Martin, *Outline of a Comprehensive Plan for Diverting the Sewage of London and Westminster from the Thames: and Applying It to Agricultural Purposes, for Improving the Navigation of the River, and for Establishing a Supply of Pure Water to the Metropolis* (London: Effingham Wilson, 1850), 4; *Martin’s Thames and Metropolis Improvement Plan* (1842), 46. The last comment was made by Captain Frederick Bullock, RN, and quoted in Martin’s pamphlet. Martin said he had quoted Bullock’s comments because “I feel proud to say that his remarks in every way coincide with the views I have endeavoured to promulgate and work out.” See *Martin’s Thames and Metropolis Improvement Plan* (1842), 41.

¹³ John Martin, *A Plan for Improving the Air and Water of the Metropolis, by Preventing the Sewage Being Conveyed into the Thames, Thereby Preserving Not Only the Purity of the Air But the Purity of the Water, and Likewise the Manure for Agricultural Purposes* (London: Published for the Author by Plummer and Brewis, 1833), 1 [text is dated April 1832; further references to this source will be cited as Martin, *Plan* (1832)]; *Martin’s Thames and Metropolis Improvement Plan* (1842), 44. The last comment was made by Captain Frederick Bullock, RN, and quoted in Martin’s pamphlet. Martin said he had quoted Bullock’s comments about the Thames because “I feel proud to say that his remarks in every way coincide with the views I have endeavoured to promulgate and work out.” See *Martin’s Thames and Metropolis Improvement Plan* (1842), 41.

¹⁴ *Martin’s Thames and Metropolis Improvement Plan* (1842), 39, 44, 46. The last two comments were made by Captain Frederick Bullock, RN, and quoted in Martin’s pamphlet. Martin said he had quoted Bullock’s comments about the Thames because “I feel proud to say that his remarks in every way coincide with the views I have endeavoured to promulgate and work out.” See *Martin’s Thames and Metropolis Improvement Plan* (1842), 41.

as would effectually and permanently benefit both the agricultural and commercial interests of the country at large.”¹⁵

The country/city dichotomy used by Bindman, Mallett, Feaver, and others when discussing Martin’s plans as anti-industrial in spirit is a false one because, as Raymond Williams observed in *The Country and The City*, it masks what was by the eighteenth century in England not a divide but a rural-urban continuum shaped by the rise of capitalism.¹⁶ In Williams’ words, “my central case in *The Country and the [C]ity* was these two apparently opposite and separate projections – country and city – were in fact indissolubly linked within the general and crisis-ridden development of a capitalist economy, which had itself produced this division in its modern forms.”¹⁷ Ann Bermingham has similarly pointed out more recently that “early nineteenth-century English society was not cleanly divided between country and city. . . . Rather than separating the country from the city, such activities [she had been discussing rural industrial enterprises] intertwined them.”¹⁸ Indeed, an enterprise, which I will discuss later, projected by Martin to ship human waste, or night soil as it was called, from London to the countryside for

¹⁵ *Martin’s Thames and Metropolis Improvement Plan* (1842), 21.

¹⁶ See Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1973).

¹⁷ Raymond Williams, “Between Country and City,” in *Reading Landscape: Country-City-Capital*, ed. Simon Pugh (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), 7. Essay first published in *Second Nature*, ed. Richard Mabey, with Susan Clifford and Angela King (London: Jonathan Cape, 1984), 209-219.

¹⁸ Ann Bermingham, review of *Landscape Imagery and Urban Culture in Early Nineteenth-Century Britain*, by Andrew Hemingway, *Art Bulletin* 76 (June 1994): 371-372. As Steven Adams and Anna Gruetzner Robins, “Introduction,” in *Gendering Landscape Art*, eds. Steven Adams and Anna Gruetzner Robins (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 6, have pointed out, studies on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British landscape painting in the 1980s by Bermingham, John Barrell, Michael Rosenthal, and David Solkin, among others influenced by the cultural studies of Williams and E. P. Thompson, were some of the earliest histories of British art to posit “the notion that landscape painting of the period emerges as an ideological form, an object of social relations and of social prescription.”

use as agricultural fertilizer boasted in one of its pamphlets “the bane of the town is the boon of the country.”¹⁹

Birmingham elsewhere has described the landscapes of Martin’s contemporary, John Constable, as being “debased vehicles of a rancid nostalgia for ‘little England’” that sought to disguise the economic relationships between country and city by using “a naturalism which erases all its cultural signs.”²⁰ Yet while Constable depicted “a paternalistic fantasy of rural social harmony” in his works and pined for the old rotten planks and slimy posts of his childhood, Martin pushed for the intensified exploitation of the countryside, the industrialization of agriculture, and the development of a national railroad network for transporting raw materials and foodstuffs between cities, as well as for conveying metropolitan sewage to agricultural districts and the resulting produce of the land back to London.²¹ If Martin’s grandiose plans had been realized, not one inch of country would have been protected from the encroachment of technology, industry, and commerce and an “idealized countryside” certainly would not have been brought to the capital creating “a green belt in the heart of a city.”²² Instead, a new

¹⁹ “Analysis of Evidence, &c.,” in *Report of the First Meeting of the Metropolitan Sewage Manure Company, Incorporated 1846. Together with an Analysis of Evidence, &c.* (London: Hatton and Co., 1846), 3.

²⁰ Birmingham, review of *Landscape Imagery*, 368; Birmingham, “Reading Constable,” in *Reading Landscape: Country-City-Capital*, ed. Simon Pugh (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), 97. Birmingham also pointed out in her *Landscape and Ideology: The English Rustic Tradition, 1740-1850* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 141-142, “For what can be seen as Constable’s nostalgic hearkening back to a world that, if it ever existed, was disappearing also has a more strictly contemporary pertinence. . . . Quite as much as it points to a preindustrial fantasy of organic production, it points to contemporary model of alienated labor.” On this, see also Birmingham, “Redesigning Nature: John Constable and the Landscape of Enclosure,” in *NowHere: Space, Time and Modernity*, eds. Roger Friedland and Deirdre Boden (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 236-256.

²¹ Birmingham, *Landscape and Ideology*, 141.

²² Feaver, *Art of John Martin*, 120-121. Mallett, “Chaos and Order,” 410, also described Martin’s plans as aiming to bring the “idealized countryside” into the city. Justine Hopkins, “The Paintings and Projects of John Martin,” in *Fields of Influence: Conjunctions of Artists and Scientists, 1815-1860*, ed. James

“London Connecting Railway, and Railway along the Banks of the Thames” would have gone “into the very heart of the city, touch[ed] every railway both existing and projected, and border[ed] closely upon all the populous quarters,” while “greatly increasing the convenience of the suburban districts” by expanding railway service to and beyond the capital.²³ In addition, a network of tubular iron tentacles carrying human waste would have spread out from London - and then eventually every other urban center in the kingdom - “to convey the sewage into the country, and distribute it over the soil by a series of pipes and pumping apparatus.”²⁴ “All parts of the country,” according to Martin, should:

be drained by a permanent filter drainage, and then effectually and frequently manured; rivers should be embanked from their very sources, with good flood-gates, sluices, weirs, and locks, for the improvement of navigation; the banks of the tributary rivulets should be lined where they are soft and earthy, to prevent the water from becoming muddy, choking the bed of the rivers, and thus injuring the navigation. By such means all bogs and marshes in the kingdom, and the immense flats along the banks of the Thames, Lee, &c., would be rendered most valuable land, and the air consequently improved that

Hamilton (Birmingham: University of Birmingham Press, 2001), 75, likewise also described Martin as “an early exponent and supporter of the Green Belt system.” On the differences between Martin’s plans and the later Green Belt system, see the negative review of the “Report of the Committee on Mr. Martin’s Plan for the Improvement of the Banks of the Thames,” in Loudon’s *Architectural Magazine* 3 (August 1836), 360-383. This review contrasts Martin’s ideas unfavorably with Loudon’s by including excerpts from Loudon’s 1829 article, “Hints On Breathing Places for the Metropolis, and for Country Towns and Villages, on Fixed Principles.” On Loudon’s article calling for rings of “breathing places” around the metropolis as anticipating the Green Belt (London and Home Counties) Act of 1938 by 109 years, see T. H. D. Turner, “Landscape Planning: The Need to Train Specialists,” *Landscape Planning* 11 (April 1984): 75. My thanks to Wendy Lesser for suggesting I discuss the issue of the Green Belt system.

²³ John Martin, *Description of the London Connecting Railway, and Railway along the Banks of the Thames* (London: privately printed, 1846); Martin, *Thames and Metropolis Improvement Plan: Third Division* (London: by the author, 1846), 4. Both pamphlets were previously unknown to scholarship.

²⁴ John Martin, KL, *Description of Plans for Affording an Unlimited Supply of Pure Water to London, in Connection with an Improved System of Draining the Metropolis; for Rescuing the River Thames from Every Species of Pollution; for the Supply of Sewage Manure to the Country; and for Other Objects of Public Utility and Sanitary Importance* (London: privately printed, 1850), 2. This pamphlet also was previously unknown to scholarship. It appears to be an early version of his *Outline of a Comprehensive Plan* (1850).

mansions might be built, and fertile gardens, orchards and parks formed, on spots now only dreaded as the sources of pestilence, fevers and agues.²⁵

In short, Martin was primarily driven in his Thames and metropolis improvement plans by agricultural and commercial considerations, not religious ones. I will argue in this chapter that Martin's plans celebrated modern London as "this great city" and Britain as a commercial nation and, moreover, promoted the exploitation of the countryside for maximum profit.²⁶

Although his research on the subject had started in 1827, Martin's Thames and metropolis improvement plans officially began in 1828 with the publication of his first pamphlet on the subject, *Mr. John Martin's Plan for Supplying with Pure Water, and Materially Beautifying the Western End of the Metropolis*.²⁷ Previously unknown to Martin scholarship, this pamphlet is today in the collection of the London Metropolitan Archives. Dated April 17, 1828, it is without question the missing first edition of *Mr. John Martin's Plan for Supplying with Pure Water the Cities of London and Westminster and of Materially Improving and Beautifying the Western Parts of the Metropolis*.²⁸

²⁵ *Martin's Thames and Metropolis Improvement Plan* (1842), 4.

²⁶ John Martin, KL, *Mr. John Martin's Plan for Supplying with Pure Water the Cities of London and Westminster and of Materially Improving and Beautifying the Western Parts of the Metropolis*, 2nd ed. (London: Plummer and Brewis, 1828), 8.

²⁷ John Martin, *Mr. John Martin's Plan for Supplying with Pure Water, and Materially Beautifying the Western End of the Metropolis* (London: Plummer and Brewis, 1828).

²⁸ The text of Martin, *Plan* (1828), 2nd ed., is dated September 1, 1828. On the missing first edition, see Balston, *John Martin*, 121, 271; Feaver, *The Art of John Martin*, 118-119; Campbell, *La oscuridad visible*, 511 n.1. Less than a week after its appearance, the *Times* (April 30, 1828), 3, published an article about the first edition entitled "Introduction of Pure Water into the Metropolis." A condensed version of the plan appeared in House of Commons, "Report of the Royal Commission on the Supply of Water in the Metropolis," *Parliamentary Papers* 1828, ix (267), 110. Balston, *John Martin*, 121, had dated the missing first edition to 1827, but in a letter to the editor of the *Times* (March 23, 1833), 6, Martin said the first edition had been published "early in the spring of 1828."

As far as we know, Martin worked unassisted on this first edition. Although Leopold claimed his father had tested the current of the Colne in 1827 with the American engineer Joseph Saxton, this is impossible, since Saxton did not arrive in Britain from Philadelphia until the following year at the earliest.²⁹

Both editions of Martin's plan proposed to supply the western parts of the metropolis with drinking and cooking water from the River Colne, located to the west of London, rather than from the increasingly polluted Thames. However, the first edition suggested taking water either from a branch of the river near Cowley or else from a branch at Denham, while the latter only proposed the branch at Denham as a possible source. The water would then be carried to London by canal, aqueduct, or both, and deposited in a reservoir at Paddington. From there, it would be distributed throughout the West End of London without the use of steam engines, except for those areas which were above Thames high water mark. Martin also proposed using Colne river water to create public baths, ornamental ponds, fountains, and waterfalls that "would add much to the beauty of the western end, and much to the comfort of thousands, and the salubrity of the air."³⁰ Yet, only those, like Martin and his family, who were fortunate enough to

²⁹ Leopold Martin, "Reminiscences," *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* (February 23, 1889), front page. Michael S. Reidy, "Gauging Science and Technology in the Early Victorian Era," in *The Machine in Neptune's Garden: Historical Perspectives on Technology and the Marine Environment*, eds. Helen M. Rozwadowski and David van Keuren (Sagamore Beach, MA: Science History Publications, 2004), 27. Arthur H. Frazier, *Water Current Meters in the Smithsonian Collections of the National Museum of History and Technology*, exh. cat. (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1974), 53, gave a later date for the measurement, "Saxton, Charles Wheatstone (famed for the 'Wheatstone Bridge' for making electric measurements), together with a John Martin and two other persons, made a measurement of the flow of the Colne River at Denham Point near London with Saxton's current meter on 22 June 1834, in accordance with a plan proposed by Martin for improving London's water supply." See also "Report from Select Committee on Metropolis Water," *Parliamentary Papers* 1834, xv (571), 175, when Martin submitted documents signed by Saxton and others that the measurement took place on June 22, 1834. Saxton also was associated in the 1830s with the Adelaide Gallery where, as we have seen in the last chapter, Martin exhibited his paintings.

³⁰ Martin, *Plan* (1828), 1st ed., 5; Martin, *Plan* (1828), 2nd ed., 5.

live in the West End would enjoy such benefits, while for the poor living in other parts of London, “The nature of the labour would permit the employment of many who may otherwise, without any resulting advantage, cost to the country as great a sum in Poor Rates as would be demanded for the accomplishment of this most salutary purpose.”³¹

The second edition of Martin’s plan is over three times longer than the first. It contains a folding map illustrating the watercourse and ornamental waterworks, illustrations of the proposed water recreation spots (fig. 12), and several plates depicting an aqueduct (fig. 13), a “Fence Filterer” (fig. 14), a water wheel (fig. 15), and – a topic not included in the first edition but something that would obsess Martin for the remainder of his life (fig. 16) – “a proposition for separating the soil of the sewers from the water previous to its entering the river, securing the water of the Thames against the admission of the soil, and rendering that soil available and highly valuable as manure.”³² In this edition, Martin quoted numerous authorities to support his claims.³³ However, most of these quotations did not specifically speak to Martin’s plan but were extracts taken from the 1828 “Report of the Royal Commission on the Supply of Water in the Metropolis,” in which the first edition of Martin’s plan had appeared in a condensed form.³⁴ Martin also alluded in the second edition to a conversation he had had with a friend, James Weale, author of the tract *Water Monopoly: The Case of the Water Companies Stated and Examined*, about similar plans submitted to Parliament around 1725 to supply London with water

³¹ Martin, *Plan* (1828), 1st ed., 8. The Poor Rate was a tax levied at the parish level to provide relief to the parish poor.

³² Martin, *Plan* (1828), 2nd ed., 11.

³³ Martin, *Plan* (1828), 2nd ed., 12-25.

³⁴ See “Report of the Royal Commission on the Supply of Water in the Metropolis” (1828), 110.

from the Colne.³⁵ As Martin's efforts gathered steam over the years, he would seek direct assistance and advice from many others involved in the battle for sanitary reform against the water monopolies.³⁶ However, his primary focus from the beginning was to obtain government backing of his very expensive plans.³⁷ As the *Morning Chronicle* noted in its review of the second edition, "We should be disposed to fear that the expence would be greater than, in the present state of things, any company would be able to incur; but of its excellence and practicability, with a proper supply of capital, there can be no doubt."³⁸

Martin's 1828 plans for diverting water from the river Colne met with resistance from riparian property owners along the Thames, but especially from the private water companies, which, as James Weale had noted in his pamphlet, had been pumping untreated river water directly into the homes of the metropolis. As a result of this opposition, the following year Martin drew up a "Second Plan for Supplying London with a Purer Water" as the sixth part of his *Outlines of Several New Inventions for Maritime and Inland Purposes*.³⁹ Although he

³⁵ James Weale, *Water Monopoly: The Case of the Water Companies Stated and Examined; or, The Calm Address Dissected; with Remarks thereon, Calculated to Settle Opinions on the Subject of the Additional Water Rates* (London: C. Richards, 1820). Weale, who worked in the Office of Woods and Forests, also testified before an 1821 Select Committee on the Supply of Water to the Metropolis.

³⁶ On the private water companies, see Bob Millward, "Emergence of Gas and Water Monopolies in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Contested Markets and Public Control," in *New Perspectives on the Late Victorian Economy: Essays in Quantitative Economic History 1860-1914*, ed. James Foreman-Peck (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 96-124.

³⁷ Martin, *Plan*, 1st ed., 3. "Feeling a deep conviction that the measure which he proposes would most importantly affect the health and comfort of millions, he may, he trusts, be excused for earnestly intreating all those who have power to further so great an object, to give to it their attention unfettered by considerations of conflicting temporary interests." The text on page 3 of the second edition differs slightly, referring to the "comfort of millions, present and future." See also Martin, *Plan*, 1st ed., 8, "To the consideration of the Legislature, and of the Public, the designer respectfully submits [this plan]."

³⁸ *Morning Chronicle* (September 25, 1828).

³⁹ John Martin, *Outlines of Several New Inventions for Maritime and Inland Purposes: Namely, Elastic Iron Ship; New Principle of Steam Navigation; Elastic Chain Cable; Coast Lights on a New*

believed that his 1828 plans for drawing water from the Colne were far superior to his new scheme, he now proposed taking drinking and cooking water from the Thames above Millbank, yet also recommended that sewage should no longer be discharged above this point so that it could not contaminate the water supply.⁴⁰

Martin further proposed building a cast iron dam at Millbank with two locks at each end for the passage of commercial vessels, so that the tide, ascending twice daily from the east, would not push sewage back up the river and into the water companies' dolphins, or suction pumps. As a result of these changes, "the river, for miles up, might be considered as one grand reservoir of water, which, if not so pure as that from the Coln[e], would assuredly be far purer than any with which London is now supplied."⁴¹ The dam also would improve river navigation for commercial ships by "having at all times sufficient depth of water" in the river above the dam.⁴² In its review of his 1829 plan, the *Gardener's Magazine* applauded Martin's newest scheme, but commented, "Such works . . . ought to be intrusted to a general commission, or undertaken by government."⁴³

Construction; Ventilation of Coal Mines; London Water Supply; and Drainage of Houses (London: Plummer and Brewis, 1829), 15-17.

⁴⁰ His earlier Martin, *Plan* (1828), 2nd ed., 24, had included a statement by J. Wright taken from the House of Commons' "Report of the Royal Commission on the Supply of Water in the Metropolis" (1828), "Thus are nearly 140 common sewers daily and nightly disgorging their horrid contents into the Thames, in that very direction in which certain water-companies draw up the supply for half the inhabitants of the Metropolis. . . . Why! disguise the fact as we may, the whole River Thames from Chelsea to the Tower is neither more nor less than one enormous common sewer – the *cloaca maxima* of London – containing the impurities of a million of human beings, and forming a mass of filth, pollution, and putridity, in a state of constant agitation to and fro, such as never before was or could be collected together in so small a space."

⁴¹ Martin, *Outlines* (1829), 16.

⁴² Martin, *Outlines* (1829), 15.

⁴³ "Preserving the Purity of the Thames Water," *Gardener's Magazine* 8 (August 1832), 465.

Three years later, Martin produced *A Plan for Improving the Air and Water of the Metropolis, by Preventing the Sewage being Conveyed into the Thames, thereby Preserving not only the Purity of the Air but the Purity of the Water, and Likewise the Manure for Agricultural Purposes*.⁴⁴ Balston stated that, with this revised plan, Martin's interest shifted "from the water-supply to the sewage."⁴⁵ Feaver likewise said, Martin "for a time . . . left the water-supply problem and turned to the issues of pollution and flood control."⁴⁶ However, from the beginning, as we have seen with the second edition of his 1828 pamphlet, one of Martin's main goals in procuring clean water for domestic purposes was to keep solid waste from entering the Thames by gathering it in a central receptacle, then loading it into wagons and barges and hauling it into the countryside for use as night soil on fields.⁴⁷ Martin himself described this 1832 plan calling for sewers parallel to the river topped by a public walkway (fig. 17) on the north as an extension of "my plan published in 1828."⁴⁸ What distinguishes this new plan from the 1828 version is that Martin now recommended the construction of a receptacle near Vauxhall Bridge to receive the waste of the western extremity of the metropolis as well as two iron intercepting sewers running along both sides of the river commencing at College Street, Westminster, on the north – with a

⁴⁴ The text is dated April 1832, but the pamphlet was published in 1833.

⁴⁵ Balston, "John Martin and Metropolitan Improvements," *Architectural Review* 102 (Dec. 1947): 202; Balston, *John Martin*, 122. Martin, *Plan* (1832), 7, "The cause of altering my original plan alluded to, as having been published five years ago, of erecting a line of quay raised on pillars, with the sewer passing underneath; is the change that will be made in the river by the removal of Old London Bridge. . . . for it can now scarcely be doubted, that when the bridge is completely removed, the water will be so low at ebb tide, as to expose a large portion of the bed of the river, the exhalations from which will be so injurious to the health of the metropolis, that the consequences are dreadful to contemplate."

⁴⁶ Feaver, *Art of John Martin*, 121.

⁴⁷ See Martin, *Plan* (1828), 2nd ed., 11 and plate D. See also the first title listed in "Plans Devised and Published by Mr. Martin" in *Thames and Metropolis Improvement Plan: by John Martin, KL . . . Second Division . . . Third Division . . .* (London: Lindsey House, Chelsea, 1849), 2.

⁴⁸ Martin, *Plan* (1832), 2.

quay on top to accommodate river traffic - and Vauxhall Bridge on the south.⁴⁹ Each iron intercepting sewer then would carry the waste several miles along both banks into one “grand receptacle” for the north and another for the south, “from which the soil could be conveyed to barges, and transported by the canals to various parts of the country.”⁵⁰

Although he briefly addressed in this pamphlet the subject of waterborne illness (a subject still in its scientific infancy and awaiting the pioneering studies of John Snow), Martin stated that his primary reason for wanting to build the intercepting sewers was not, despite a raging cholera epidemic, to minimize the human costs of Thames pollution.⁵¹ Rather, it was to prevent great economic waste to the nation by gathering human excreta, otherwise needlessly polluting the river, for use as night soil in agricultural districts.⁵² Martin did not limit his scheme for gathering sewage to the metropolis, but recommended that “this manner of preserving the manure from waste, and the river from pollution, should be adopted in every town or village

⁴⁹ College Street, Westminster is today known as Great College Street, see Henry B. Wheatley, *London Past and Present: Its History, Associations, and Traditions*, 3 vols. (London: J. Murray, 1891), 1:445.

⁵⁰ Martin, *Plan* (1832), 2.

⁵¹ In 1832, over 5000 people died in London alone. See “Table 3: Month by Month Progress of Cholera, 1831-1832” in R. J. Morris, *Cholera 1832: The Social Response to an Epidemic* (London: Croom Helm, 1976), 75. Although Martin did note the harmful effects of drinking water polluted by sewage, it must be mentioned that he did not explicitly make the connection between polluted drinking water and the spread of cholera. See *Plan* (1832), 6. Like many of his contemporaries, he subscribed to the miasmatic explanation of the disease whereby it was thought that cholera was spread by the inhalation of contaminated air. It was John Snow who later exploded the orthodox miasmatic theory and proved that an 1854 outbreak of the disease in Soho could be traced back to polluted drinking water taken from a pump in Broad Street, Golden Square. On the competing theories of cholera diffusion, see Stephen Halliday, “Death and Miasma in Victorian London: An Obstinate Belief,” *British Medical Journal* 323 (December 2001): 1469-1471. For popular accounts of Snow and the Broad Street pump story, see Steven Johnson, *The Ghost Map* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2006); Sandra Hempel, *The Strange Case of the Broad Street Pump: John Snow and the Mystery of Cholera* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007). For a scholarly treatment, see Peter Vinten-Johansen et al., *Cholera, Chloroform and the Science of Medicine: A Life of John Snow* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

⁵² Martin, *Plan* (1832), 4, “I do not consider the principal merit of my plan to consist in merely preserving the river from pollution by means of these lines of sewer, but in *saving the manure* which is of the most valuable quality.” This same phrase reappears later in Martin’s comments in *Reprint of Report* (1849), 23.

throughout the country.”⁵³ At the time, it was not known that the utilization of untreated night soil as a fertilizer in agriculture could spread disease by oral-fecal transmission; Martin believed that night soil could simply be mixed with lime to reduce the smell and remove pestilential vapors, then be safely distributed for use as fertilizer by canals and rivers, as well as by rail, across the country “so that the farmer should not have to go more than 3 or 4 miles for manure.”⁵⁴ If canals or navigable rivers were not available in the outlying areas, then “a railway should be made in the most convenient level place for the advantage of the interior; by these means the poor, and at present, unproductive lands would be rendered rich and fertile, and they would very shortly in the produce, return *more* than the amount expended in forming the drains and receptacles.”⁵⁵ Thus, Martin’s primary focus in gathering night soil from cities and towns was not on improving the physical or moral health of the population, but on improving the agricultural economy, since “as we already know, that no land, however rich the soil may be, can continue to yield plentiful crops, unless it is constantly invigorated by artificial means.”⁵⁶ On March 15 of that year, the architect Thomas Leverton Donaldson, Honorary Secretary of the Institute of British Architects, lectured approvingly on the latest iteration of Martin’s plan at the Royal Institution. The *London Medical and Surgical Journal* in its review of the talk was of the opinion that “the project is too magnificent and too expensive to be carried into effect.”⁵⁷ The

⁵³ Martin, *Plan* (1832), 4.

⁵⁴ Martin, *Plan* (1832), 4. The sanitary reformer Edwin Chadwick also advocated the sale of night soil to farmers not knowing it could transmit disease via the oral-fecal route. On Martin as a forerunner of Chadwick’s ideas, see P. L. Cottrell, “Resolving the Sewage Question: Metropolis Sewage & Essex Reclamation Company, 1865-81,” in *Cities of Ideas: Civil Society and Urban Governance in Britain, 1800-2000*, eds. Robert Colls and Richard Rodger (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2004), 68.

⁵⁵ Martin, *Plan* (1832), 4.

⁵⁶ Martin, *Plan* (1832), 5.

⁵⁷ “Royal Institution. Friday, March 15,” *London Medical and Surgical Journal* (March 23, 1833), 246.

London Medical Gazette, however stated, “The expense would be very great – at least 60,000*l.* a mile; but Mr. Martin thinks that it would be economical after all, not only from the value of the new quays, but the positive riches which the manure collected by the proposed sewerage would preserve.”⁵⁸

As a supplement to this 1832 plan with pagination continued, Martin produced a four-page proposal for *Plan [for Permanent Filter] Inland Drainage*.⁵⁹ This proposal, he stated, for draining all of the nation’s marshlands and bogs to create new farmland from wasteland had evolved from his 1829 “Plan for more effectually Draining certain Marshy Lands contiguous to the Thames,” which was included as the seventh part of his *Outlines of Several New Inventions for Maritime and Inland Purposes*.⁶⁰ Thus, both of these 1832 plans were meant to be seen not as discrete works, but as revisions of his earlier ideas on how to optimize agricultural production for the economic gain of the nation.

In the 1829 plan, Martin had recommended that his drainage scheme be tried out on Tilbury Marsh in Essex. With *Inland Drainage*, Martin specifically recommended that his newest plan “for improving the drainage of the country in general” be tried out on bogs in Hampstead Heath, where Constable was permanently living.⁶¹ Although the experiment was never carried out, Martin’s full plan for inland drainage was to take the rival, older painter’s

⁵⁸ “Royal Institution. Friday, March 15. Drainage and Sewerage of the Metropolis,” *London Medical Gazette* (March 23, 1832): 864. It also pointed out, “it is a curious subject to occupy the attention of the illustrator of Milton and the painter of Belshazzar’s feast.”

⁵⁹ The text is dated September 1832.

⁶⁰ Martin, *Outlines of Several New Inventions* (1829), 18-19.

⁶¹ John Martin, *Plan [for Permanent Filter] Inland Drainage* (London: Published for the author, 1832), 9. The words “for permanent filter” were inscribed by what looks like Martin’s hand on the title page of the copy in the London Metropolitan Archives. Balston, *John Martin*, 272, refers to this pamphlet only as *Inland Drainage*.

vision of Hampstead Heath as an English arcadia, as depicted in paintings from the 1820s and 1830s, and turn it into an industrial landscape of railway lines, man-made reservoirs, stone-lined wells, and public thoroughfares teeming with commercial activity. For instance, according to Martin's proposal, cattle would not depend for drinking water on natural ponds, as in Constable's *Branch Hill Pond, Hampstead Heath* (1825, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, fig. 18), but would drink from enormous tanks (fig. 19) fed by underground pipes built "so large as to hold a sufficiency of water for the use of cattle in the dry season."⁶² Moreover, while Constable, not only distanced himself in his life and work from the increasing industrialization around him, but also from the specter of unemployed workers, Martin wrote of his *Inland Drainage* project, "I take leave to point out, that the first and greatest use of my plan is, that it furnishes employment, to great public advantage, for an immense number, if not all, the poor who are now begging for work all over this country."⁶³ The reasons he gave, however, for wanting to help the poor were strictly economic, since by providing the poor with jobs and reducing the Poor Rates, "the returns would be more than proportioned to the labour expended." "It is an undeniable fact,"

⁶² Martin, *Inland Drainage* (1832), 12. Another version of the Virginia painting is in the Oskar Reinhart Collection, Winterthur. Martin's illustrations for *Inland Drainage* appear to have been recycled from his Tilbury Marsh scheme (Tilbury Fort can be seen in the upper left of Plate 2 of *Inland Drainage*). Even so, he claimed that his 1832 drainage scheme "for improving the drainage of the country in general" was derived from his one-size-fits-all 1829 plan and should be tried out on "each bog in the vicinity" of Hampstead Heath and further suggested its applicability to Ireland. According to F. E. Baines, ed., *Records of the Manor, Parish, and Borough of Hampstead, in the County of London, to December 31st, 1889* (London: Whitaker & Co., 1890), 214, Branch Hill Pond was "drained dry" by 1890. On Constable's Hampstead as an English arcadia, see Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (New York: Knopf, 1995), 524-525. For a discussion of a later view by Constable of Branch Hill Pond, entitled *Hampstead Heath with a Rainbow* (1836, Tate, London), as a nostalgic pastiche of his earlier Hampstead paintings, see Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology*, 148-150. On the various versions, see William S. Talbot, "John Constable: Branch Hill Pond, Hampstead Heath," *Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* 61 (March 1974): 97-115.

⁶³ Martin, *Inland Drainage* (1832), 10. On Constable's concealing the plight of the poor in his landscapes, see John Barrell, *The Dark Side of the Landscape: The Rural Poor in English Painting, 1730-1840* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 131-164.

Martin argued, “that we have at the present time not less than a million of able hands begging for employment, who have the undoubted right to be employed; now whether they work or not, they must live; is it not better that they should *work* and *earn* the means of their own subsistence? [F]or it costs more to keep men in idleness than in work.”⁶⁴

In April 1834, Martin published his *Plan for Abundantly Supplying the Metropolis with Pure Water from the River Coln[e]*, which was a revised version of the second edition of his 1828 *Plan*.⁶⁵ However, it dealt less with purifying London’s water supply than with the opposition of the canal monopolies to Martin’s proposed expansion of the railway network. Regarding pure water provision, Martin referred the reader of the pamphlet back to the second edition of his 1828 plan to take water from the Colne at Denham and provided a large etched plate from that edition illustrating *Mr. John Martin's Plan for Supplying with Pure Water and Materially Beautifying the Western End of the Metropolis* (fig. 20). Martin’s new

proposition now combined with that, is, to make the line by which the water is to come to London, serve also for a Railway (fig. 21), by forming a roof over the aqueduct, of strength sufficient to support the Iron Rails, and the Carriages to move thereon, the whole distance to Denham, where the railways should branch off, that for the North still using the banks of the canal, and that to the West, going across the country to Windsor, and thence to Bristol.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Martin, *Inland Drainage* (1832), 10. Martin also referred the reader for further remarks on the subject of reducing the Poor Rates to an article from the *Times* on G. Poulett Scrope’s *Poor Laws for Ireland*, as well as the pamphlet itself, and John Ilderton Burn’s *Familiar Letters on Population*.

⁶⁵ John Martin, *A Plan for Abundantly Supplying the Metropolis with Pure Water from the River Coln[e], Forming at the Same Time a Railway, for [the] Rapid, Economical, and Safe Transit of Passengers and Goods between London and Denham, a Distance of Fifteen Miles in the Direction of the Projected Great Western Railroads; Confirming the Two Grand Objects, and Requiring for Both of Them neither the Occupation of More Land, nor Any Greater Expense in the Formation of Levels or Embankments than Would Be Separately Required for Either One* (London: by the author, 1834).

⁶⁶ Martin, *Plan* (1834), 1.

Regarding opposition from one of the canal companies to this plan to build rail lines along canal routes, Martin doubted that, even if it successfully opposed his plan, it would be able to halt the eventual development of a national railroad network:

It has been remarked to me, that the Grand Junction Canal Company would never agree to this proposition, its interest being entirely opposed to the railway. But I ask, will it be able to prevent the railway? No. Would it not be better, then, to endeavour to make something by it, in place of idly opposing what cannot be avoided; and if it was proved that the railway might become [economically] advantageous instead of injurious, I think the opposition would be withdrawn.⁶⁷

In the spirit of free competition, Martin further reasoned that his plan “for the rapid, economical, and safe transit of passengers and goods between London and Denham” might actually be economically advantageous to the Grand Junction Canal Company.⁶⁸ That is, if it would acquiesce to the construction of his proposed aqueduct and railway, rather than be rendered obsolete by railway development, “the improvement of the banks of the canal would be so great that the company might have a fair chance of competing with the railway, since steam vessels might ply on the canal without any chance of injury to the banks.”⁶⁹

In June and July of 1834, Martin testified four times before the Select Committee on Metropolis Water, offering the same plan for taking water from the Colne at Denham, combining

⁶⁷ Martin, *Plan* (1834), 2. Martin also argued that “the sale of the bank, and small portion of the bed of the canal where required to the railway and water companies, might be very profitable” to the canal company. Harold G. Moulton, *Waterways versus Railways* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1914), 119-120, stated that “in the earlier part of the nineteenth century canals had a virtual monopoly of the transportation business of England. They possessed, therefore, the tremendous competitive advantage of a well-established trade. . . . Overcoming the tremendous handicap of the long lead obtained by the canals during the half-century of their uninterrupted prosperity, the railroads succeeded, in a surprisingly short space of time, in diverting from the canals the greater part of their traffic and in gaining a complete ascendancy. . . . The canal owners, facing the possibility of a destruction of their vested interests, cannot reasonably be considered as having been apathetic in regard to the future of the waterways.”

⁶⁸ Martin, *Plan* (1834), 1.

⁶⁹ Martin, *Plan* (1834), 2.

aqueduct and railway.⁷⁰ However, in case there was further resistance by the Thames water companies to taking water from the Colne, Martin submitted yet another alternative scheme to draw water from the Thames at Teddington Lock, pump it into a reservoir at Richmond Hill, and then distribute it across an iron bridge over the Thames to the rest of London. However, the first plan was met by the committee with indifferent silence while the latter was declared to be impracticable. Although this select committee described Martin's plans as unfeasible, the following February, Donaldson (who had lectured on Martin's plans in 1833 at the Royal Institution) lectured again on Martin's plan to construct iron intercepting sewers, this time at the Institute of British Architects. In a letter, dated March 3, 1836, to Martin, Donaldson indicated that it was received with approval "by a body of Professional Men, whose practical experience enables them, even from so brief a view of the subject, to appreciate, in a general way, the important results, which might arise from the adoption of a plan of such a nature."⁷¹ The same day this letter was written, a voluntary committee "of Noblemen and Gentlemen" met to further evaluate Martin's plan to build these intercepting sewers along both banks of the Thames.⁷² In its report, published on April 23, 1836, the committee, chaired by Lord Euston and deputy chaired

⁷⁰ Martin also appeared on July 7, 1834 before the Select Committee on Metropolis Sewers and submitted his 1832 *Plan for Improving the Air and Water of the Metropolis*. See "Report from Select Committee on Metropolis Sewers," *Parliamentary Papers* 1834, xv (584), paras. 2337-2344.

⁷¹ Donaldson to Martin, March 3, 1836, in *Reprint of Report*, 20, also printed as Appendix D. No. IV in the original report. The *Architectural Magazine* (February 1836), 183, reported in "Domestic Notices" that on February 29, "Mr. Donaldson explained Mr. Martin's plan for improving the Sewage of the Metropolis; and Mr. Martin being present, and having given additional information on the subject, - Resolved, that the best acknowledgements of the Institute be presented to John Martin, Esq., for the communications just made."

⁷² *Reprint of Report*, 16, "Lest, however, the Committee should be deemed too sanguine and precipitate in their conclusions, they consider it necessary to state, that the opinion of several individuals belonging to a body of men, perhaps the best entitled, and certainly the best able, to form one on the subject - namely, that of the Institute of British Architects - is favourable to Mr. Martin's plan, of which they expressed their approbation at their Meeting on the 29th of February last."

by Sir Frederick Trench, MP, and Major-General Sir Patrick Ross, found Martin's to be "the simplest, as well as the most completely effectual plan for affording, at once, all that the public require."⁷³ Trench, whose own plan to embank the Thames from Hungerford to Blackfriars had preceded Martin's, "with high-minded liberality . . . declared Mr. Martin's Plan to comprise more than his own, to be greatly superior in usefulness to the public, and to deserve his utmost support."⁷⁴

In its report, the committee presented a detailed budget listing expected construction and yearly maintenance expenditures and determined "in an undertaking of such magnitude . . . that *one million and a half* will be required to accomplish it in all its various ramifications."⁷⁵ Due to the income anticipated from tolls for public walkways and manure sales, among other things, the committee members concluded "that Mr. Martin's Plan offers a safe pecuniary operation either for the Government to adopt, or for a Company to undertake, willing to execute that Plan under the specified and publicly expressed sanction and approbation of the Government."⁷⁶ Although if "subjected to the calculations of the mere man of business, these mighty results would, the Committee feel assured, be made the channel for a safe and lucrative investment of Capital," the report also made perfectly clear that "this magnificent National Undertaking" should be carried out under the auspices of the government.⁷⁷ Thus, as the *Times* reported, the committee's resolutions included:

⁷³ *Reprint of Report*, 7.

⁷⁴ *Reprint of Report*, 11.

⁷⁵ *Reprint of Report*, 15.

⁷⁶ *Reprint of Report*, 16.

⁷⁷ *Reprint of Report*, 16. See also *Reprint of Report*, 14, where it was described as "so magnificent a National Work."

Resolved, that a copy of the said report be forthwith transmitted to the Right Hon. the Chancellor of the Exchequer [Thomas Spring Rice], by the Earl of Euston, accompanied with a request that he will be kind enough to name an early day to receive a deputation on the subjects therein contained.

Resolved, that the Right Hon. the Earl of Euston, Colonel Sir F. Trench, MP, Major-General Sir P. Ross . . . J. Martin, Esq., . . . be such deputation to wait on the Chancellor of the Exchequer to ascertain the views of the Government on the report, and the plan that had been submitted to him.

Resolved, that the said deputation be empowered to add to their numbers, after having ascertained the intentions of His Majesty's Government, so as to constitute a provisional committee, with a view of acting in accordance with the determination finally settled at the interview with Mr. Spring Rice.⁷⁸

According to one of the deputation, Nathaniel Ogle, writing in 1838, "The Government applauded the scheme and were ready to support it; Mr. Spring Rice paid earnest attention to the statement of Lord Euston, Sir Patrick Ross and other members of the Committee."⁷⁹ However, another member of the deputation, the physician Augustus Bozzi Granville, recounted a different story several years later before a House of Commons select committee investigating metropolitan sewage manure:

Did you form one of a deputation at this period which waited upon Mr. Spring Rice, the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, to ask whether the Government would take up the subject; and was not the answer that the Government would not undertake it, but it ought to be carried out by a private company?

Yes, I recollect that perfectly well; we had deputations without number; we struggled very hard to try to persuade the City and the Government authorities to have an embankment, before we gave up altogether Mr. Martin's plan.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ "Improvement and Conservancy of the River Thames," *Times* (April 25, 1836), 6.

⁷⁹ Nathaniel Ogle, "Prospective Changes in Mechanics," *British and Foreign Review; or, European Quarterly Journal* 6 (April 1838), 688.

⁸⁰ "Report from the Select Committee on Metropolitan Sewage Manure," *Parliamentary Papers* 1846, x (474), para. 1091. The questioner, "Mr. Duncan," was probably George Duncan, MP for Dundee.

Regardless of these differing recollections of the meeting with Spring Rice, the important matter is that nothing came of the deputation. So, in 1836, Martin and several committee members took matters into their own hands and formed a business, the Thames Improvement Company, to further Martin's efforts to divert sewage from the river and to provide clean drinking water to Londoners.⁸¹ Regarding the Thames Improvement Company's additional attempts to gain government support for Martin's plan, Cuthbert Johnson in his 1839 history of the business stated that "many attempts were unsuccessfully made to engage in its support the government, the chief civic authorities, and the commissioners of public sewers, since it was evident to the gentlemen who formed the original committee, that without such support all the efforts of the proposed Association to carry any plan into execution would be unattended with success."⁸² However, that support remained as elusive as ever, the scheme proved abortive, and the company folded shortly after its establishment.⁸³ Speaking of the company's failure to enlist the government's support, the *Farmer's Magazine* reflected several years later, "The times . . . were not then ripe for such a gigantic project."⁸⁴

⁸¹ Augustus Bozzi Granville, *Autobiography of A. B. Granville, M.D., F.R.S.,-Being Eighty-Eight Years of the Life of a Physician*, 2nd ed., ed. Paulina B. Granville, 2 vols. (London: Henry S. King & Co., 1874), 2:281. According to Cuthbert W. Johnson, *The Objects and History of the Thames Improvement Company* (London: Ridgway, 1839), 3, the committee – and by extension, the company – had its origins in meetings with Martin dating back to 1833.

⁸² Johnson, *Objects and History of the Thames Improvement Company*, 3.

⁸³ Johnson, *Objects and History of the Thames Improvement Company*, 15, "It is only by the combined exertions of such a company, the civic authorities, and the Government, that so great a national work can be accomplished."

⁸⁴ "Drainage of Towns-Metropolitan Sewage Company," *Farmer's Magazine* 12 (December 1845), 510. According to Ogle, "Prospective Changes in Mechanics," 688, the company's efforts were also undermined by "such jobbing [which] Mr. Martin resented with calm and becoming dignity, refused his assent and retired from the concern." Ogle specifically named Granville as the jobber in question. See also diaries of Ralph Thomas, quoted in Pendered, *John Martin*, 218-219, for references to "Dr. G." as having made "a job" of Martin's plans. Pendered was the last person to have possession of Thomas's

In the meantime, Martin continued to promote his plans on his own. In May 1836, he lectured on the technical details of his embankment plan at the Institution of Civil Engineers, where its feasibility was openly questioned, despite the corroborative Report of the Committee of Gentlemen being first read aloud.⁸⁵ However, emboldened by the argument put forth by the committee and by the Thames Improvement Company that the government should finance such large-scale efforts that directly benefited the public and the economy, Martin appeared before the Select Committee on Metropolis Improvements in 1838, and pointed the finger at the government for its lack of assistance when challenged by Sir Robert Inglis about the projected expenses of undertaking such a project:

However splendid your plan may be, and however important and useful might be its execution, are you prepared to state to this Committee, or to lay before them any estimate of the actual expense which the execution would involve...?

No; that would cost a very large sum of money, and it has already cost me a vast sum to do what I have already done. The estimate of such a plan would first require a very careful and accurate survey of the banks, and it would really be too serious a thing for any private individual to do. Unless, therefore, a sum of money was advanced for that purpose it never could be ventured upon.⁸⁶

Martin then handed in six plans and recounted his self-financed efforts over the past decade. In his final statements, he underscored his belief that an undertaking like his Thames embankment

manuscript diaries. The diaries have been lost since the publication of her book in 1923, and so must be cited from Pendered, *John Martin*, which provides often incomplete references.

⁸⁵ See *ICE Minutes of Conversation 3* (1835-36), f. 203. My thanks to Carol Morgan, archivist at the ICE, for pointing this out to me. The minutes record the date of Martin's lecture as May 3, 1836. Benjamin Ward Richardson, *Thomas Sopwith, M.A., C.E., F.R.S.: with Excerpts from His Diary of Fifty-Seven Years* (London: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1891), 108, stated that Sopwith heard Martin speak again at the ICE seven days later and "was very greatly impressed."

⁸⁶ "First Report from the Select Committee on Metropolis Improvements," *Parliamentary Papers 1837-1838*, xvi (418), para. 1873.

and sewage removal systems should be regarded as a project of public utility, since it would benefit the nation as a whole:

In conclusion, I would observe, that the method of preserving the manure from waste, if adopted throughout the kingdom, would enable the country to be maintained in a most complete and fertile state of cultivation; for all those waste lands, unproductive lands in the hands of Government, should be attached to the system . . . Until this system is adopted, we can never justly complain of want of employment for the poor, occasion for emigration, or use for the system of poor-houses, excepting for the infirm, when their occupation would be no degradation; and how long would it be before we should be obliged to resort to such measures, when so vast an extent of land is still in a state of savage barrenness, and even that which is cultivated has not half the labour bestowed upon it which is necessary for its utmost produce. Such great and beneficial effects as these should be encouraged throughout Her Majesty's dominions, and the returns would soon show the advantage of making them Government undertakings.⁸⁷

Once more, however, Martin's testimony came to nothing. A four-year hiatus ensued, during which he sunk into a depression from the deep financial problems brought on by the plans. Then, in 1842, he returned and published a forty-two page pamphlet, *Martin's Thames and Metropolis Improvement Plan*, which Balston has rightly called his magnum opus and "the most complete statement of all his schemes for the improvement of London."⁸⁸ The text is broken down into three divisions: "The supply of water to the metropolis: - The embankment of the River, and preservation of sewage: - And the improvement of the navigation of River from London Bridge to the Nore."⁸⁹ While the first two divisions are expansions of his earlier water supply, embankment, and sewage schemes, the last was an entirely new development calling for a channel to be cut straight through the Isle of Dogs in east London in order to artificially speed up the current of the Thames and to shorten the sailing distance for commercial ships by two

⁸⁷ "First Report from the Select Committee on Metropolis Improvements" (1838), para. 1887.

⁸⁸ Balston, *John Martin*, 126, incorrectly dated the pamphlet to 1844; Balston, "Martin and Metropolitan Improvements," 203.

⁸⁹ *Martin's Thames and Metropolis Improvement Plan* (1842), 6.

miles, thus improving navigation conditions.⁹⁰ Martin in this division also called for the construction of a central London terminus for the inland railways in order to connect all of the nation's railroads with docks on the Thames, therefore enhancing the flow of commerce between London and the countryside while also "facilitating the communication of the extremities of the country with foreign ports."⁹¹ Again, Martin made it perfectly clear that his primary motivation in devising this "grand and general plan for the IMPROVEMENT OF THE THAMES" was to "permanently benefit both the agricultural and commercial interests of the country at large."⁹²

He contended that:

if it were put into practice in its entire state, that exclusive of the saving in the present expenditure which would be effected, a great revenue would be obtained. [He then lists all the sources of revenue] . . . Obviously an immense revenue would be raised in this way without being viewed as a tax, the full value and ample benefit being given in return for the money paid, rendering the river a most valuable property.⁹³

The plan did promise to provide jobs for the unemployed, again, not out of any sense of Samaritan duty, but only because without work they would remain, in the language of capitalism, "many idle consumers who afford no return."⁹⁴

⁹⁰ See statement made by Captain Frederick Bullock, RN, quoted in *Martin's Thames and Metropolis Improvement Plan* (1842), 44, "The interest which the Corporation of the City of London has in the prosperity of the trade of the metropolis renders it imperative that, in order to secure the public a clear and unembarrassed water-way, and thus a free intercourse with the fountain of commerce, every cause of impediment, however remote, extraneous, or artificial, should be investigated and, as soon as possible, removed." Martin said he had quoted Bullock's comments about the Thames because "I feel proud to say that his remarks in every way coincide with the views I have endeavoured to promulgate and work out." See *Martin's Thames and Metropolis Improvement Plan* (1842), 41.

⁹¹ *Martin's Thames and Metropolis Improvement Plan* (1842), 37. Later versions of this plan for a connecting railway include the previously unknown *Thames and Metropolis Improvement Plan: Third Division* (1846), and *Description of the London Connecting Railway* (1846).

⁹² *Martin's Thames and Metropolis Improvement Plan* (1842), 4.

⁹³ *Martin's Thames and Metropolis Improvement Plan* (1842), 40.

⁹⁴ Martin's entire statement in *Martin's Thames and Metropolis Improvement Plan* (1842), 3-4, reads, "It is, at present, sufficient for me that our poor, honest, and able-bodied countrymen are willing to work

In the pamphlet, Martin called on the government to test out his manure plan on royal parks because if it “would try this system on the crown lands, it would afford an admirable example to the nation.”⁹⁵ However, a royal commission appointed in 1842 “to consider the most effectual means of improving the metropolis and of providing increased facilities of communication within the same” found the claims of Martin’s 1842 plan “were not considered equal to those of other Plans prepared for the same objects and lying at the same time before us; and we felt, therefore, at a very early period of our proceedings, that we should not be justified in making it the subject of further inquiry.”⁹⁶

Despite this new blow, Martin published in 1846 a revised and expanded edition of the first division of his 1842 plan.⁹⁷ He described how this new version of his scheme to collect and distribute sewage for agricultural purposes formed “a combination of objects so truly national as

their native land, and at moderate wages; and that it is, therefore, the bounden duty of the legislature to supply them with remunerating occupation to avert worse calamities; for, as they cannot be allowed to die of want before our eyes, their support falls heavily upon the rest of the community, who already begin to suffer, and are becoming unequal to maintain so many idle consumers who afford no return.” Martin appears in the last sentence to have paraphrased the work of John Wade, who wrote in the journal he edited *The Gorgon* (August 8, 1818): 90, “Productive classes are those who, by their labours increase the funds of the community, as husbandmen, mechanics, labourers, &c.; and are thus termed to distinguish them from the *unproductive* classes, as lawyers, parsons, and aristocrats; which are termed idle consumers, because they waste the produce of the country without giving any thing in return. To render our enumeration complete, we ought to notice the class of paupers and public creditors, and we shall then have mentioned all the elements, which form that strange compound, English society.” Karl Marx quoted Wade’s *History of the Middle and Working Classes*, 3rd ed. (London: Effingham Wilson, 1835) several times in *Kapital*, including Wade’s statement in *History*, 161, that “Labour is the agency by which capital is made productive of wages, profit, or revenue.”

⁹⁵ *Martin’s Thames and Metropolis Improvement Plan* (1842), 21.

⁹⁶ “First Report of the Commissioners Appointed by Her Majesty to Inquire into and Consider the Most Effectual Means of Improving the Metropolis, and of Providing Increased Facilities of Communication within the Same,” *Parliamentary Papers* 1844, xxv (15), 14.

⁹⁷ John Martin, *Thames and Metropolis Improvement Plan: First Division* (London: by the author, 1846).

to deserve, and even demand the support and co-operation of the Government.”⁹⁸ However, with no government funding on the horizon, Martin set about founding a new business, the Metropolitan Sewage Manure Company, “for conveying the Sewage-Water of London, by means of a system of pumping engines and pipes . . . and thus distributing the fertilizing fluid over the land.”⁹⁹ With Martin identified in the front matter as projector, the company’s prospectus claimed that its “objects are of sufficient importance to the welfare of the community to warrant their being undertaken at the public expense; but it must be satisfactory to learn that they can be effected with a considerable profit, and consequently form a legitimate object of commercial enterprise.”¹⁰⁰ Inside was a form of application for shares to raise the £300,000 necessary to start up operations. When the company that year also became incorporated under an Act of Parliament to lay sewers – at its own expense – under the Thames and to transport the sewage to the countryside, the Metropolitan Working Classes’ Association for Improving the Public Health speculated hopefully that the increased activities of the MSMC would further break down the distinctions between city and country through industrial enterprise.¹⁰¹

As in the case of the Thames Improvement Company, Martin and other MSMC directors also actively sought financial aid from the government. In a letter to the Prime Minister, Martin

⁹⁸ Martin, *First Division* (1846), 3.

⁹⁹ Metropolitan Sewage Manure Company, *Prospectus of the Metropolitan Sewage Manure Company: with an Analysis of Evidence Given before the Health of Towns Commission; and Extracts from Works of Authority Proving the Advantages Sanitary, Economical, and Productive of the Application of the Refuse of Towns, in the Form of Liquid Manure to the Surrounding Agricultural Districts* (London: T. Hatton, 1845), 3-4.

¹⁰⁰ MSMC, *Prospectus*, 3.

¹⁰¹ Metropolitan Working Classes’ Association for Improving the Public Health, *Drainage and Sewerage* (London: John Churchill and B. Wertheim, 1847), 16, “The promoters of this undertaking anticipate a handsome profit, which they will have well deserved should they succeed in thus combining the advantage of town and country – conferring health on the one and abundance on the other: if successful, it will be to agriculture what the first railroad was to locomotion.”

outlined the company's goals "to benefit the metropolis, and to benefit the agriculturalists," adding that since "its objects are of momentous importance to the public generally, I must respectfully solicit your attention to the subject, and hope for your support in according an opportunity for discussion."¹⁰² However, Martin soon fell out with the company's directors over details of a plan for laying the proposed intercepting sewer and, by 1848, was no longer listed as a director.¹⁰³ The following year, he alluded to his former MSMC colleagues in a new pamphlet, *Objections to the Tunnel Sewer Proposed by the Metropolitan Sewage Manure Company by Their New Bill*, as "enemies of their country" for thwarting "an object of so much importance – an object which combines the advantages of not only preventing waste, but of rendering the labour and money expended remunerative."¹⁰⁴

Then in 1849 Martin published a new edition of the second and third divisions of his 1842 plan, commenting bitterly on the internecine battles within the MSMC and on the government's inaction:

When I first published the outlines of the foregoing plans more than 20 years ago, my impression was, that the works of the above nature were far too extensive and important to be intrusted to private speculation; but that as the government has charge of all relating to the physical and moral condition of the people, to which ends nothing can be more

¹⁰² John Martin to Sir Robert Peel, May 8, 1846, Peel Papers, BL Add. MS. 40591, f. 242.

¹⁰³ A letter dated October 6, 1845, from Martin's daughter, Isabella, to his son-in-law, Joseph Bonomi, indicates that Martin and the other company members were quarrelling even before the prospectus was issued. See Bonomi Papers, Add. 9389/14/3, Manuscripts Room, Cambridge University Library. George Drysdale Dempsey, *Rudimentary Treatise on the Drainage of Towns and Buildings: Suggestive of Sanatory Regulations Conducive to the Health of an Increasing Population*, 4th ed. (London: Virtue and Co., 1867), 31, said the company "proposed to carry into effect, for the general benefit of the metropolis, a plan for collecting the sewage by means of a receiving sewer which should cut the existing sewers at a mean distance of 620 yards from the river. Mr. Martin, the founder of the Company, however, objected to this, preferring to receive the contents of the sewers near their outfall into the river."

¹⁰⁴ John Martin, *Objections to the Tunnel Sewer, Proposed by the Metropolitan Sewage Manure Company by Their New Bill: Together with an Alternative Plan, Consistent with the Recommendations of the Select Committee of the House of Commons upon Metropolitan Sewage Manure, 1846; and with the Powers Given to the Company by the Act of Last Session* (London: Printed by J. Plummer 1847), 16.

essential than cleanliness and good air, the government alone should direct the supplies of water, and systems of drainage, and of ventilation, and not leave these vital subjects to the caprices of corporations or of individuals. Although general opinion at the time was against public interference, my early impression has since been fully confirmed by actual experience; for in consequence of the government in 1836 declining any participation in such works [after the meeting with Spring Rice], I exerted myself to accomplish my objects by other means, and eventually succeeded in establishing a Company for carrying out one portion of my project – the “Diversion of the Sewage from the River, and its application to agricultural purposes.” Thus I would appear to have attained a desired point of success, but on the contrary every object has been retarded by an unavoidable defect in the constitution of all companies – namely, that individuals gradually enter the direction, who, however favorable to the ends in view, are quite unacquainted with the details of the operations. Unfortunately, the Metropolitan Sewage Manure Company is in this position.¹⁰⁵

Martin went on to add that “public attention, however, is now so alive to the necessity for improving the sanitary condition of the country, and for providing remunerative employment for the people, that I am encouraged again to hope for governmental support to my proposals.”¹⁰⁶

However, as we learn from a letter to Martin from Lord Grosvenor that same year, such optimism proved ill-founded:

I sincerely regret to learn from your letter . . . that your exertions for the public good in forming plans for the improvement of the Sewage, so far from being rewarded, have hitherto proved serious inroads on your finances, and are likely to reduce you to still greater difficulties, if some compensation should not be very speedily made by those who have the power, substantially, to recognise the claims of distinguished merit.¹⁰⁷

That same year (1849), Martin reprinted the 1836 report of Lord Euston’s committee, lamenting in a new preface “that if the Government had made the same demonstrations in 1836 as it has

¹⁰⁵ Martin, *Plan* (1849), 36.

¹⁰⁶ Martin, *Plan* (1849), 37.

¹⁰⁷ Lord Robert Grosvenor to John Martin, quoted in Pendered, *John Martin*, 210. Grosvenor and Martin had earlier been on a deputation to Sir Robert Peel “to induce the Premier to turn his attention to an inquiry into the measures which government ought to originate for the improved health, comfort, and convenience of the metropolis; instead of leaving the matter wholly in the hands of private speculators and sectional interests, as is now the case.” See “Metropolitan Improvements,” *Art-Union* 4 (July 1842), 163, which gave the date of the meeting with Peel as June 15, 1842.

done since, the whole question of Sanitary Improvement would have been triumphantly carried.”¹⁰⁸ Then, in the preface to one of his final pamphlets, *Outline of a Comprehensive Plan* (1850), Martin said of his plans that he was

fully prepared to prove their practicability and to carry them into effect, if I am favored with that degree of support from the Government and from the Public at large, which the vast importance of the proposed improvement urgently demands. . . . Having so long ‘borne the burden and heat of the day,’ I venture to hope that my matured plans may receive both from the Government and the Public that support and encouragement, which in this noble country is rarely withheld from inventive skill, and which certainly should not be withheld from inventive skill, which aims at the general good.¹⁰⁹

According to Balston, this *Outline* marked the end of Martin’s campaign for Thames and metropolis improvements.¹¹⁰ Yet in an 1850 letter to John Forster, editor of the radical weekly, *The Examiner*, that accompanied a copy of the *Outline*, Martin insisted, “For myself I shall not relax any efforts [in] the cause in which I laboured during the last twenty-three years; and with such aid as may reasonably be expected I will not admit the possibility of failure.”¹¹¹ As we have seen in the last chapter, Martin also set up as an exhibitor in 1851 at the Great Exhibition, where according to the *Official Catalogue of the Great Exhibition* he showed a “Design for the embankment of the River Thames” in class seven, “Civil Engineering, Architecture, and Other

¹⁰⁸ *Reprint of Report* (1849), 3.

¹⁰⁹ Martin, *Outline* (1850), 3-4. On the title page under Martin’s name appears the title “Projector of the Metropolitan Sewage Manure Company.” What appears to be an earlier version of this plan, without the preface, appeared as *Description of Plans for Affording an Unlimited Supply of Pure Water to London, in Connection with an Improved System of Draining the Metropolis; for Rescuing the River Thames from Every Species of Pollution; for the Supply of Sewage Manure to the Country; and for Other Objects of Public Utility and Sanitary Importance* (London: by the author, 1850).

¹¹⁰ Balston, *John Martin*, 129; Balston, “Martin and Metropolitan Improvements,” 204.

¹¹¹ John Martin to John Forster, March 26, 1850, F.P. 260, Forster Collection, National Art Library, London. See also Martin’s letter to the editor of the *Illustrated London News* (March 17, 1849): 177, describing himself as “being so bent upon my object that I was determined never to abandon it.”

Building Contrivances.”¹¹² Martin’s 1852 correspondence with an associate of the MSMC also suggests that, just two years before his death, he had not given up hope that his plans would someday be realized.¹¹³ Martin’s son-in-law, the Egyptologist Joseph Bonomi the Younger, also testified (for his own self-interested reasons, as I will explain) before an 1861 Thames Embankment Commission that Martin had “continued to the very last to urge and promote the objects he had at heart.”¹¹⁴

Yet, despite cholera epidemic of 1832, it was not until the outbreak of 1848 – the year before Martin reprinted the 1836 report of Lord Euston’s committee – that “central government intervention became inescapable, leading to the Government establishing the first Metropolitan Commissioners of Sewers” to draw up plans for the drainage of London and the embankment of the Thames.¹¹⁵ However, the MCS adjourned for good in 1854 – the year Martin died – without accomplishing its objective.

One of the MCS engineers, Joseph Bazalgette, would go on to become the chief engineer to the commission’s more powerful and better-funded successor, the Metropolitan Board of Works. Formed by the Metropolis Local Management Act of 1855, it was this public body set up

¹¹² *Official Catalogue of the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations, 1851* (London: Spicer Brothers, 1851), 48 no. 25. However, for differing and conflicting accounts of what Martin exhibited, see *Official Catalogue of the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations*, second corrected and improved ed. (London: Spicer Brothers, 1851), 43 no. 25; *Official Descriptive and Illustrated Catalogue*, 1:311 no. 25.

¹¹³ Oliver Hargreave to John Martin, quoted in Pendered, *John Martin*, 212-214. Balston, *John Martin*, 128, noted, “But by 1852 the [Metropolitan Sewage Manure] Company’s failure was complete.”

¹¹⁴ “Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into Plans for Embanking the River Thames within the Metropolis, with Plans and Appendices,” *Parliamentary Papers* 1861, xxxi (2872), para. 1192. The *Preston Guardian* (December 24, 1853) also reported that in November 1853 Martin was “in the Isle of Man, where he was planning improvements to the harbour of Douglas” when he suffered the paralyzing stroke that eventually killed him.

¹¹⁵ Denis Smith, ed., *London and the Thames Valley*, Civil Engineering Heritage, vol. 6 (London: Published for the Institution of Civil Engineers by Thomas Telford, 2001), 56.

by Parliament that under the direction of Bazalgette built between 1859 and 1874 intercepting sewers north and south of the Thames, as well as the embankment that enclosed them.¹¹⁶

Engineering historians have often noted that Bazalgette's intercepting sewer system, still in use today, was developed from the concept introduced by Martin.¹¹⁷ Martin's contribution to Bazalgette's solution was even recognized by the Institution of Civil Engineers in 1856, when Bazalgette's ideas were still in their formative stages.¹¹⁸ In addition, William Carpmael, a civil engineer and member of the MBW, appeared before the Select Committee on Metropolis Local Taxation in 1861 to discuss Bazalgette's Thames Embankment designs and told the committee that "having studied the subject a good deal many years ago, with Mr. Martin, the Painter, who originated the proposition of an embankment coupled with a sewer, I have the vanity to think that I know something about it."¹¹⁹ George Drysdale Dempsey in his *Rudimentary Treatise on the Drainage of Towns and Buildings* also noted in 1867, when work on the Embankment was underway, that "Mr. Martin's plan was one of the first which embraced provisions for a great sewer, in addition to the other objects of an embankment, and on that account it deserves notice,

¹¹⁶ Dale H. Porter, *The Thames Embankment: Environment, Technology, and Society in Victorian London* (Akron, OH: University of Akron Press, 1998), 76, "The perceived degradation of the metropolitan environment took many decades to develop, but at key moments (1848, 1854, 1858) the impact of cholera and climate provoked decisive action by public authorities which the engineers were in a position to exploit."

¹¹⁷ Bill Luckin, *Pollution and Control: A Social History of the Thames in Nineteenth Century* (Bristol and Boston: A. Hilger, 1986), 14; Denis Smith, ed., *Water Supply and Public Health Engineering*, Studies in the History of Civil Engineering, vol. 5 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 343; Dale Porter, *Thames Embankment*, 64; Jonathan Schneer, *The Thames* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 148. Bazalgette's system, however, carried the sewage east to be discharged into the river, rather than use it as night soil.

¹¹⁸ *Minutes of Proceedings of the Institution of Civil Engineers* 15 (1856), 203.

¹¹⁹ "Second Report from the Select Committee on Metropolis Local Taxation, &c.; Together with the Minutes of Evidence, and Appendix," *Parliamentary Papers* 1861, viii (372), para. 2944.

as a sort of precursor of the plan now actually being adopted.”¹²⁰ The nineteenth-century civil engineer Thomas Sopwith also believed Martin’s plan was “an anticipation, indeed, of the improvement that has been made in what is now called the Thames Embankment.”¹²¹

However, according to Frederick Clifford in his 1887 *A History of Private Bill Legislation*, Martin’s efforts were “too far in advance of the time” to be realized, not because they were visionary or fantastic, Gandy-esque dreams of escape from “the reality of a modern commercial Britain,” but because a major engineering work like the Thames Embankment could not be implemented without the kind of large outlay of capital that only central government could provide.¹²² As David Owen has more recently put it in his history of the MBW, the Thames Embankment “was a task beyond the resources of private individuals. Plainly it awaited the intervention of the State.”¹²³

¹²⁰ George Drysdale Dempsey, *Rudimentary Treatise on the Drainage of Towns and Buildings: Suggestive of Sanatory Regulations Conducive to the Health of an Increasing Population*, 4th ed. (London: Virtue and Co., 1867), 207.

¹²¹ Richardson, *Thomas Sopwith*, 108.

¹²² Frederick Clifford, *A History of Private Bill Legislation*, 2 vols. (London: Butterworths, 1885-1887), 2:334. Clifford called Martin’s embankment and sewer system “a bold and original conception, anticipating, in principle, both the works ultimately executed.” Clifford, *History*, 2:354, noted that by the 1880s “in financial powers and position the Metropolitan Board [of Works] stand at the head of British local authorities, and their annual budget and debt exceed those of many minor European States.” Sir George W. Humphreys, Chief Engineer to the London County Council, wrote in his report, *Main Drainage of London* (London County Council, 1930), 10, “As early as 1834 the painter John Martin designed a plan by which it was proposed to embank both sides of the River Thames and to construct an intercepting sewer in each embankment for the purpose of collecting the sewage and conveying it to points in the river below London. The plan was examined by the Committee but was in advance of the times and was not proceeded with.” Christopher Woodward, “Building Castles in the Air,” review of *Joseph Gandy: An Architectural Visionary in Georgian England*, by Brian Lukacher, *Country Life* 200 (March 30, 2006): 92, “As a Romantic, and a kindred spirit of Coleridge and Blake, Gandy was unable to accept the reality of a modern, commercial Britain.”

¹²³ David Owen, *The Government of Victorian London, 1855-1889: The Metropolitan Board of Works, the Vestries, and the City Corporation* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1982), 75. See also Halliday, *Great Stink*, 46-47, “Martin’s scheme bore many of the characteristics of the one eventually devised by Bazalgette and, though nothing came of [Martin’s] scheme (no body existed that could have carried it out), a number of Parliamentary initiatives then followed which led eventually

As Feaver has noted, “Martin resented the fact that he received virtually no official recognition for his ideas.”¹²⁴ With his characteristic flair for self-promotion, Martin complained in his 1849 letter to the editor of the *Illustrated London News*:

though I have reaped no other advantage, I have, at least, the satisfaction of knowing that the agitation thus kept up, constantly, solely by myself, has resulted in a vast alteration in the quantity and quality of water supplied by the companies, and in the establishment of a Board of Health, which will, in all probability, eventually carry out most of the objects I have been so long urging.¹²⁵

After his death, several of his children sought recognition (and remuneration) from the government for his ideas. Shortly after work on the Embankment got underway, Martin’s daughter Isabella and Bonomi, widower to Martin’s daughter Jessie, gave evidence before the 1861 Royal Commission on Plans for Embanking the River Thames within the Metropolis seeking financial compensation from the government.¹²⁶ In 1889, Leopold wrote in his

Reminiscences that

with the sanction of the Government, under the superintendence of the Board of Works, this noble work has now been carried out. . . . Yet both the Government and the Board of

to the establishment of the Metropolitan Board of Works for whom Bazalgette constructed the system.” Regarding government spending on infrastructure and public works in the first half of the nineteenth century, Philip Harling and Peter Mandler, “From ‘Fiscal-Military’ State to Laissez-faire State, 1760-1850, *Journal of British Studies* 32 (January 1993): 57, have noted, “Overall, per capita spending on civil government did not begin to rise at all until the 1840s. . . . The real shift in spending priorities to such new areas of government responsibility as education, public health, and public works was largely a consequence of the much-maligned ‘Victorian revolution,’ triggered by Whigs and Benthamites.”

¹²⁴ Feaver, *Art of John Martin*, 129.

¹²⁵ *Illustrated London News* (March 17, 1849), 177. According to Brian Bowers, *Sir Charles Wheatstone F.R.S., 1802-1875*, 2nd ed., IEE History of Technology Series, eds. B. Bowers and C. Hempstead, no. 29 (Stevenage: Institution of Electrical Engineers in association with the Science Museum, 2001), 210-211, “At length in 1848 Parliament passed the Public Health Act and created the General Board of Health which was empowered to make regulations dealing with water supply and sewerage and to investigate anything injurious to health. The Board was established for five years in the first instance, but the Act was extended annually until 1858 when other government departments took over its functions.”

¹²⁶ “Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into Plans for Embanking the River Thames” (1861), paras. 1192-1194, appendix: 84; Porter, *Thames Embankment*, 273 n.31.

Works quite ignored [my father] and his name, and without scruple adopted his plans in nearly every particular. . . . His family look upon it not only as a matter of justice, but as their right, that the claims of John Martin should have some public recognition.¹²⁷

In his role as a civil engineer, Martin was the “first to disclaim all motive but that of the Public good: he has no desire, in any *manner whatever*, to reap a private advantage from the realization of his design.”¹²⁸ Leopold referred to his father’s Thames and metropolis improvement plans as “philanthropic projects . . . all tending to the public benefit or welfare” and recalled his father explaining to him the difference between being an artist and a civil engineer, “Oh! my boy!, if I had only been an engineer! Hundreds with me would then have been thousands. Instead of benefiting myself and a few only, I should have added to the comfort, prosperity, and health of mankind in general.”¹²⁹

In his career as an artist, as I have shown in Chapters 1 and 2, Martin made it clear that he was in it for the money. Martin’s calls for state support of his public utility projects may seem to be at odds with his *laissez-faire* belief in “free trade in art, as in commerce.” However, it was also the position of some of the age’s fiercest supporters of *laissez-faire* and Poor Law reform: the Parliamentary Radicals William Ewart, Dr. John Bowring, and Daniel O’Connell, all of whom sat on the 1835-36 Select Committee on Arts and Manufactures, challenging what they perceived to be the monopolistic practices of the Royal Academy, and all of whom put their

¹²⁷ Leopold Martin, “Reminiscences,” *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* (March 30, 1889), front page.

¹²⁸ [Martin], *Plan* (1828), 1st ed., 3; Martin, *Plan* (1828), 2nd ed., 3. This appeared in the first paragraph of both editions. See also “Introduction of Pure Water into the Metropolis,” *The Times* (April 30, 1828), 3, “Mr. Martin . . . disclaims every motive but the public good.”

¹²⁹ Leopold Martin, “Reminiscences” (February 23, 1889), front page; Leopold Martin, “Reminiscences” (March 30, 1889), front page. Leopold (March 30, 1889) added, “Such was the oft-repeated cry of my father, not only to me, but to many of his associates. Great as his mark might be as a painter, his constant idea seemed to be that he had mistaken his vocation, and was fully under the impression that he ought to have followed that of an engineer. He felt certain that his mark would have been still more important. Be this as it may, it is quite clear that engineering pursuits were more congenial to his inclinations.”

names down in support of Martin's call for government backing of his plans.¹³⁰ As Chantal Stebbings has written, "traditional laissez-faire doctrine did not . . . exclude government intervention altogether, for even Adam Smith allowed for public works and institutions which no individual could undertake."¹³¹

According to Martin, making and selling art was a business that should be left to the marketplace because it only benefited himself. Yet he argued that, since his Thames and metropolis improvement plans were concerned with urban sanitation issues that affected a broad swathe of the population and, moreover, "would effectually and permanently benefit both the agricultural and commercial interests of the country at large," the government should foot the bill, as did the 1836 Committee of Gentlemen who reviewed his plans:

The Committee viewing them as the means to a great end – THE WELL-BEING OF THE METROPOLITAN POPULATION – particularly of the middle and working classes, cannot forbear expressing their opinion, that the Enterprise assumes a much more noble character, and becomes worthy of the patronage of his Majesty's Government, the sanction of the Legislature, and the support of every individual who feels an interest in the prosperity, the happiness, and the glory of the British Empire.¹³²

¹³⁰ See *Reprint of Report*, 18, 20. J. M. W. Turner also put his name down as a supporter.

¹³¹ Chantal Stebbings, *Legal Foundations of Tribunals in Nineteenth-Century England* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 82. Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* (New York: The Modern Library, 1937), 397, "Political œconomy, considered as a branch of the science of a statesman or legislator, proposes two distinct objects: first, to provide a plentiful revenue or subsistence for the people, or more properly to enable them to provide such a revenue or subsistence for themselves; and secondly, to supply the state or commonwealth with a revenue sufficient for the public services." See also Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, 681, "The third and last duty of the sovereign or commonwealth is that of erecting and maintaining those public institutions and those public works, which, though they may be in the highest degree advantageous to a great society, are however of such a nature, that the profit could never repay the expence to any individual or small number of individuals, and which it therefore cannot be expected that any individual or small number of individuals should erect or maintain."

¹³² *Martin's Thames and Metropolis Improvement Plan* (1842), 21; *Reprint of Report*, 17.

Thus, while Shee was in contact with Thomas Spring Rice in 1833 to try to convince him of the public utility of the arts and the Academy, Martin took part – as we saw earlier – in a deputation to Spring-Rice in 1836 to attempt to convince him of the public utility of his plans.¹³³

The argument that Martin was driven to create his Thames and metropolis plans by religious visions or apocalyptic expectations simply cannot be made, unless – as Bindman has done – one commits a fallacy of association by linking Martin’s own beliefs with those of his fanatical brothers William and Jonathan.¹³⁴ All the evidence, however, strongly indicates that Martin and his brothers held divergent beliefs about matters such as science and god. For instance, while Martin was one of the earliest members of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, an organization advocating scientific naturalism, William, the self-described “Christian Philosopher” decried the BAAS as a “Natural History Society” of “unbelievers” and as the “British Association of Asses, which we properly call the Rich Folks’ Hopping or the False Philosophers in an Uproar.”¹³⁵ Jonathan, in his own words, “set fire to York Minster, because he thought that his god was not there properly worshipped” and

¹³³ On Shee’s argument for the RA’s public utility in a letter to Spring-Rice, see Shee, *Life of Sir Martin Archer Shee*, 2:56. The “Public Utility and Importance” of Martin’s plans were referred to in the extended title of the 1836 report of the Committee of Gentlemen.

¹³⁴ See Bindman, “English Apocalypse,” 223-228. The section of Bindman’s essay that deals with Martin’s plans is subtitled, “Destroying Babylon and Building Jerusalem: the Martin Brothers and the City.” Paley, *Apocalyptic Sublime*, 127-128, claimed, “In Martin’s brother Jonathan, the York incendiary, we see elements of the artist’s thought as in a distorting mirror. . . . It is the difference between artistic vision and delusion. Jonathan Martin went on to set fire to York Minster: John painted *Belshazzar’s Feast*.”

¹³⁵ William Martin, *The Defeat of the Eighth Scientific Meeting of the British Association of Asses* . . . (Newcastle: Printed by Pattison and Ross, 1838), 4. Now known as the British Science Association, the BAAS was founded in 1831. The word “scientist” was coined by Martin’s friend, William Whewell, at a BAAS meeting in 1833. See Patricia Fara, *Newton: The Making of Genius* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 234. One of its early members was Charles Darwin and in 1860, Samuel Wilberforce and Thomas Henry Huxley famously debated Darwin’s theory of evolution by natural selection at the annual meeting of the BAAS held at the Oxford University Museum of Natural History.

threatened to shoot the Bishop of Oxford because “if he were really so good a man, and so eminent a christian, he would not fear death.”¹³⁶ John, meanwhile, was a longtime friend and patient of the “flamboyant atheist” Dr. John Elliotson, professor of medicine at the University of London and author of *Surgical Operations in the Mesmeric State without Pain*.¹³⁷

In Martin’s Thames and metropolis improvement plans, nature is presented strictly as an economic resource to be exploited: there is no mention of religion or god in his pamphlets, lectures, or testimony on the subject, as a source of motivation for his proposals.¹³⁸ While apologists for the water companies used religious rhetoric to argue that consuming contaminated river water could not make people ill, since god in his wisdom had provided humans with organs to filter out harmful impurities, Martin presented up-to-the-minute scientific evidence that this

¹³⁶ “To the Right Hon. Robert Peel, Secretary of State for the Home Department. On the Case of Jonathan Martin,” *The Lion* 3 (April 24, 1829): 514; Jonathan Martin, *The Life of Jonathan Martin, of Darlington, Tanner: Written by Himself*, 3rd ed. (Lincoln: R. E. Leary, 1828), 20.

¹³⁷ Adrian Desmond, “Lamarckism and Democracy: Corporations, Corruption and Comparative Anatomy in the 1830s,” in *History, Humanity, and Evolution: Essays for John C. Greene*, ed. James R. Moore (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 116. Leopold Martin, “Reminiscences” (April 20, 1889), front page, recalled that when the news arrived from the Isle of Man that Martin had suffered the stroke that eventually killed him, “the medical report was on the instant taken to Dr. Elliotson as a very old and trusted friend.” According to Pendered, *John Martin*, 248, “Shortly after his arrival at Harold Towers, Douglas, John Martin was stricken with paralysis, and his old friend, Dr. John Elliotson, went at once to the Isle of Man to see him.” Pendered, *John Martin*, 248, also quoted a letter from Elliotson to Isabella Martin, February 1, 1854, in which he described Martin as “a glorious man.” In another letter to Isabella, February 22, 1854, shortly after Martin’s death, Elliotson called Martin, “a truly great man & endowed with surpassing talent, a highly enlightened mind & the most noble feelings.” See Bonomi Papers, Add. 9389/5/x/2, Manuscripts Room, Cambridge University Library.

¹³⁸ For instance, when asked by the chair of the 1834 Select Committee on Metropolis Water about his motives for turning his attention to the condition of the Thames, Martin did not mention religion as an impetus; see “Report from Select Committee on Metropolis Water” (1834), para. 1233. He also did not discuss religion as a motive in his letter to the editor of the *Illustrated London News* (March 17, 1849), 177, saying instead that his engineering plans and inventions were “all conducing to the great ends of improving the health of the country, increasing the produce of the land, and furnishing employment for the people in remunerative works.”

was nonsense.¹³⁹ Martin's objective in his Thames and metropolis improvement plans was not to spiritually cleanse London or to turn it into a New Jerusalem, but to "benefit both the agricultural and commercial interests of the country at large" due to an exploding population.¹⁴⁰ By calling upon the government to embank and purify the Thames and to transport sewage from London by barge, wagon, and rail, for use as fertilizer in the country, and to drain, plough, and manure "all bogs and marshes in the kingdom" using machinery, some of which Martin himself had created and patented, Martin was hoping to achieve what Raymond Williams has called "the application of industrial methods to traditional farming practices."¹⁴¹ For Martin, unlike Constable, there

¹³⁹ William Matthews, *Hydraulia; an Historical and Descriptive Account of the Water Works of London, and the Contrivances for Supplying Other Great Cities, in Different Ages and Countries* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, and Co., 1835), 403-404, "The benevolent Creator having furnished men with organs to separate the salutary from the noxious parts of the air 'in which they move and live,' is it not probable that they likewise possess those which are similarly adapted to water in its usual state, so as not only to prevent its being hurtful, but actually to render it conducive to health?" In his testimony before the 1834 Select Committee on Metropolis Water, Martin provided chemical analyses of the purity of the water to be supplied from the Colne that he had commissioned from Dr. Robert Masters Kerrison, surgeon, fellow of the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society, and author of *The Elements of Physiology: Containing an Explanation of the Functions of the Human Body*. See "Report from Select Committee on Metropolis Water" (1834), 176-178. Kerrison had earlier written *A Letter to the Right Hon. Robert Peel . . . on the Supply of Water to the Metropolis . . .* (London: Printed for Thomas Butcher, 1828), in which he stated on page 1, "The advantage of possessing a cheap and abundant Supply of wholesome Water for the inhabitants of a metropolis, seems to form so prominent a feature in the domestic policy of a well-governed state, that the means of obtaining such Supply must ever be an important object of care to a Minister of State for the Home Department."

¹⁴⁰ *Martin's Thames and Metropolis Improvement Plan* (1842), 21. Martin, *Outline* (1850), 13, "It is then our solemn duty to boldly face the evil, and to provide according to the great necessities of the increasing population – to grasp at some broad comprehensive measure, and not to be scared by its cost, or by considerations of return. Ample direct returns, however, can be shown from the foregoing plans; but the direct returns are as nothing compared with the advantages that would accrue from the permanent employment created for the people; -the consequent diminution of the poor's rates;-and the augmentation of agricultural produce."

¹⁴¹ Williams, "Between Country and City," 7. On Martin's patents, see "Specification of the Patent Granted to John Martin, KL, of Allsop's-terrace, in the County of Middlesex, for Improvements in Apparatus and Means Used When Draining Cities, Towns, and Other Inhabited Places and Land.-Sealed May 10, 1847," *Repertory of Patent Inventions* 11 (1848): 11-14, and Martin, *Thames and Metropolis Improvement Plan: . . . Second Division . . . Third Division* (1849), 32-33. Leopold Martin, "Reminiscences" (March 30, 1889), front page, had wrongly claimed that his "father never took out patents." The fact that Martin took out patents suggests that his motives were not entirely disinterested.

was no point in retreating into nostalgia and holding on to small-scale farming methods, since such practices could not meet the needs of “a crowded and rapidly augmenting population ... for it is quite impossible that the old and primitive system, containing so many abuses and not one advantage, should be any longer maintained.”¹⁴² Instead, “I would suggest that the land, which is acknowledged on all hands to be most imperfectly cultivated, should be *thoroughly worked in every way*, for the land will always produce in proportion to the labour that is put upon it.”¹⁴³ As we will see in the next chapter, it was Martin’s fundamentally capitalist approach to nature – and to art – that incensed his contemporary, John Ruskin.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² *Martin’s Thames and Metropolis Improvement Plan* (1842), 27.

¹⁴³ *Martin, Plan* (1846), 2-3.

¹⁴⁴ The cultural geographer Stuart Oliver also has explained in his article, “The Thames Embankment and the Disciplining of Nature in Modernity,” *Geographical Journal* 166 (Sept. 2000): 234-235, that by advocating embanking the Thames and its concomitant – artificially speeding up the current – Martin, and others like him, advocated “the free circulation of capital and the free circulation of the river which the embankments were intended to help.” In other words, “the embankments created a fundamental reengineering of the Thames as managed capital through a ‘regime of discipline’ in which the deviance constructed as having arisen since premodernity was subordinated to engineered modernity.”

CHAPTER 4

RUSKIN VS. MARTIN: THE CASE AGAINST CAPITALIST ART

Now, whatever efforts we make, with a true desire to produce, and possess, things that are intrinsically beautiful, have in them at least one of the essential elements of success. But efforts having origin only in the hope of enriching ourselves by the sale of our productions, are *assuredly* condemned to a dishonourable failure; not because, ultimately, a well-trained nation is forbidden to profit by the exercise of its peculiar art-skill; but because that peculiar art-skill can never be developed *with a view* to profit.¹

John Ruskin, *Lectures on Art*, Lecture I, 1870

As we have seen in the first two chapters, Martin believed in laissez-faire, so far as the role of government in art was concerned, because for him art was a business. The government's role was, if anything, to ensure free and open competition between artists and to protect against the creation of a monopoly by any one exhibiting society. Yet, on the other hand, as we have seen in Chapter 3, Martin argued that government support, financial and otherwise, was critical to the success of certain large-scale, public utility projects, and in particular as his proposed Thames and metropolis improvement plans, which were in the interests of national economic development. However, as I have shown in these chapters, Martin (according to his arguments) was driven by the profit motive in his work as an artist and an engineer, either, respectively speaking, to make money for himself or for the nation. His primary goal as an artist was to financially benefit himself and his family because, as he said, "artists paint to live and it is too much to expect any one to die a martyr to his love of any peculiar branch."² The objective of his various Thames and metropolis improvement plans, meanwhile, was to create "a great national

¹ John Ruskin, "Lectures on Art" (*Inaugural Course Delivered at Oxford in Hilary Term, 1870*), in *The Works of John Ruskin*, ed. E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, 39 vols. (London: George Allen, 1903-1912), 20:23.

² "Report on Arts and Manufactures" (1836), para. 835.

work” that would benefit the nation economically by employing “the people upon works which would eventually repay the outlay, add to the revenue of the country, and decrease the taxation for the support of the poor.”³

As it turns out, however, Martin’s commitment to political economy was anathema to one of his most vocal critics, John Ruskin. Ruskin’s damning comments about Martin and his art span a forty-five year period: the first appeared in 1839, the last in 1884. These criticisms have appeared in all of the major life-and-work studies on Martin since Pendered’s biography in 1923. Yet, in every case, they were quoted in a vacuum, without any explanation whatsoever of Ruskin’s writings about and belief in social and economic reform. More specifically germane to my dissertation, none of these earlier studies considered the possibility that Ruskin’s contempt for laissez-faire capitalism – and those who supported it – could have informed his criticisms of Martin’s work as an artist. The objective of this chapter, therefore, is to rectify this historiographical imbalance by showing how Ruskin’s criticisms of Martin and his art were rooted in his social criticism, which, as David Anthony Downes has argued, “is a natural growth of his art criticism.”⁴ As Francis G. Townsend has also written in *Ruskin and the Landscape of Feeling*, “The two are merged so tightly that they are inseparable. The virtues of one are the vices of the other: what is present in one is present in the other. The basis of his social criticism was the analogy between society and nature, and what he sought in society was the order he saw in nature in *Modern Painters I*.”⁵

³ Martin, *Plan* (1849), 36, 38.

⁴ David Anthony Downes, *Ruskin’s Landscape of Beatitude* (New York: Peter Lang, 1984), 185.

⁵ Francis G. Townsend, *Ruskin and the Landscape of Feeling: A Critical Analysis of His Thought During the Crucial Years of His Life, 1843-56* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1951), 56.

Ruskin's contempt, however, for the works of a later artist – James McNeill Whistler – “as articles of trade” is, by contrast, very well-known generally.⁶ Ruskin famously said in 1877 of Whistler's *Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket* (1875, Detroit Institute of Arts, fig. 22), “I have seen, and heard, much of Cockney impudence before now, but never expected to hear a coxcomb ask two hundred guineas for flinging a pot of paint in the public's face.”⁷ This led, of course, in 1878 to a suit for libel brought by Whistler against Ruskin that resulted in Whistler being awarded a farthing damages.⁸

During the trial, Ruskin wrote an unfinished manuscript entitled “My Own Article on Whistler,” in which he discussed the relationship between art and economics and the persistent confusion between art and manufacture in England:

It gives me no little pain to be compelled to point out, as the essential grounds of the present action, the confusion between art and manufacture, which, lately encouraged in the public mind by vulgar economists, has at last, in no small manner, degraded the productions even of distinguished genius into marketable commodities, with the sale of which it is thought as unwarrantable to interfere as with the convenient dishonesties of popular trade. . . . The nineteenth century may perhaps economically pride itself on the adulteration of its products and the slackness of its industries. But it ought at least to instruct the pupils of its schools of Art, in the ancient code of the Artist's honour, that no piece of work should leave his hands, which his diligence could further complete, or his reflection further improve, and in the ancient decision of the Artist's pride, that his fame should be founded on what he had given, not on what he had received.⁹

⁶ Linda Merrill, *A Pot of Paint: Aesthetics on Trial in Whistler v. Ruskin*. (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press in collaboration with the Freer Gallery of Art, 1992), 244.

⁷ Ruskin, *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 29, in *Works*, 29:160.

⁸ On the trial, see Merrill, *A Pot of Paint*.

⁹ Ruskin, “My Own Article on Whistler,” in *Works*, 29:587. Speaking of the manuscript, E. R. & J. Pennell, *The Whistler Journal* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1921), 322, quipped, “That the price an artist asks for his work is nobody's affair but his own and the purchaser's, would never have been questioned by any critic less pontifical and autocratic than Ruskin.”

In his article “Ruskin vs. Whistler: The Case against Capitalist Art,” the art historian David Craven has said of Ruskin’s comments:

Implicit in his remarks is the association of Whistler’s paintings with the vulgar commercialization fostered by laissez-faire capitalism. . . . By condemning Whistler’s paintings, Ruskin felt he was defending the art world against the debilitating effect of capitalism. . . . The implications are clear. To Ruskin, Whistler’s art represented manifestations of Adam Smith’s economic system, while the art of Turner . . . reflected a condemnation of this same system. In volume five of *Modern Painters*, Turner’s *Garden of the Hesperides* [fig. 26] is interpreted as a great document since it symbolizes the lamentable state of Victorian society in which the triumph of Mammon, the love of money, displaced all else. According to Ruskin, Turner’s painting proclaimed the predominance of gross materialism, “Here, in England, is our great spiritual fact for ever interpreted to us – the Assumption of the Dragon.”¹⁰

What has not been noted before in Martin studies, however, is that Ruskin’s association here of Whistler’s paintings with marketable commodities and capitalist manufactures is remarkably similar in nature to a comment he made a quarter of a century earlier in a draft of “The Nature of Gothic,” the famous sixth chapter of the second volume (1853) of *The Stones of Venice*, that Martin’s works could not be classified as art, but “are merely a common manufacture, as much makeable to order as a tea-tray or a coal-scuttle.”¹¹ I will argue in this chapter that the key to understanding this, and other, denunciations by Ruskin of Martin and his works – as in the case of Whistler later – lies in Ruskin’s unbending belief that laissez-faire capitalism was the nation’s greatest enemy and that “the greatest of all economists are those most opposed to the doctrine of ‘laissez faire’” because “the ‘Let-alone’ principle is, in all things which man has to do with, the

¹⁰ David Craven, “Ruskin vs. Whistler: The Case against Capitalist Art,” *Art Journal* 37 (Winter 1977-1978): 142. Marc Simpson, “The Dream of the Dragon: Ruskin’s Serpent Imagery,” in *The Ruskin Polygon: Essays on the Imagination of John Ruskin*, eds. John Dixon Hunt and Faith M. Holland (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1982), 39, identified the dragon “as money-worshipping industrialism.” See also Raymond E. Fitch, *The Poison Sky: Myth and Apocalypse in Ruskin* (Athens, Ohio, and London: Ohio University Press, 1982), 414, who described it as “the Mammon dragon of nineteenth-century materialism.” See also my further discussion of the painting at the end of this chapter.

¹¹ Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice II*, in *Works*, 10:223 n. For a discussion of the painted tea tray as a perfect symbol of bourgeois taste in England, see my discussion in the next chapter.

principle of death.”¹² I will argue that Martin’s work was, as Whistler’s would be later, a potent symbol for Ruskin of the worst aspects of laissez-faire economic and social development and what he believed was its attendant elevation of quantity over quality, as well as a symbol of the glorification of mechanical precision over depth of feeling and personal expression.¹³ This will provide further support for my dissertation’s overarching argument: that once we consider Martin’s career from the perspective of someone who adopted the discourse of political economy, his status in the history of British art as an apocalyptic visionary who harbored “an abhorrence towards decadent civilization engaged in worldly pursuits” will fall away.¹⁴

Ruskin began his career as a critic of art and architecture in 1837 with a series of articles in J. C. Loudon’s *Architectural Magazine*. Writing under the pseudonym of Kata Phusin (Greek for “according to nature”), one of his contributions to Loudon’s journal was a brief commentary

¹² Ruskin, *Munera Pulveris*, Appendix I, in *Works*, 17:285; Ruskin, *A Joy Forever*, in *Works*, 16:26. Catherine Gallagher, *The Body Economic: Life, Death, and Sensation in Political Economy and the Victorian Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 73, “John Ruskin, to name another of orthodox political economy’s critics, ranged all activities on a continuum from death enhancing to life enhancing, or from negative to positive work.”

¹³ Harro Maas, “Pacifying the Workman: Ruskin and Jevons on Labor and Popular Culture.” *History of Political Economy* 31 (Winter 1999 supplement): 88, “For Ruskin, the vocabulary of art furnished the clue to reveal the truths of political economy, which were hidden behind a veil of smoke. The aesthetic valuation of an object, the enjoyment of a commodity, be it a work of art or a ‘mere’ consumer good . . . directed Ruskin’s attention to the conditions under which it was produced.” T. W. Heyck, *The Transformation of Intellectual Life in Victorian England* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1982), 205, has explained, for Ruskin “bad art is the result of a morally corrupt society. Hence in Ruskin’s mind, the moral poverty of laissez-faire capitalism, its fragmentation of society, and the ugliness of the monuments of Victorian taste were intimately connected.” See also Ruskin, *The Queen of the Air*, in *Works*, 19:389-390, “The faults of a work of art are the faults of its workman, and its virtues his virtues. Great art is the expression of the mind of a great man, and mean art, that of the want of mind of a weak man. . . . So that when once you have learned how to spell these most precious of all legends, – pictures and buildings, – you may read the character of men, and of nations, in their art, as in a mirror; – nay, as in a microscope, and magnified a hundredfold; – for the character becomes passionate in the art, and intensifies itself in all its noblest or meanest delights. Nay, not only as in a microscope, but as under a scalpel, and in a dissection; for a man may hide himself from you, or misrepresent himself to you, every other way; but he cannot in his work: there, be sure, you have him to the inmost.”

¹⁴ Bindman, “English Apocalypse,” 228.

published in 1839 in the form of a footnote to Humphrey Repton's *Sketches and Hints on Landscape Gardening* (1795). Discussing the first illustration in Repton's book, Ruskin expounded his own theories on how good paintings and engravings can produce a pleasing effect on the eye and the mind of the beholder. In a discussion of reproductive engraving, and of the problems associated with reducing a painting to a fraction of its original size, Ruskin drew an invidious comparison between Turner and Martin, something he would do repeatedly in the first two volumes of *Modern Painters* when attempting to illustrate the technical – and spiritual – deficiencies of Martin's work:

When an engraving is six or eight inches in its greatest dimension, the details are generally so delicate as to compel the eye to approach within its true distance; but as a very slight alteration in position is of great consequence, and will throw the limit within the vision, it is a general rule that those pictures are best adapted for engraving which have most light on the edges, so that the termination may not be harsh. And this is *one* of the innumerable beauties of engravings from J. M. W. Turner; namely, that the dreamy brilliancy of light which envelops them extends to their extreme limits, and their edge hardly ever cuts harshly on the paper. Martin, on the contrary, whose chief sublimity consists in lamp-black, never made a design yet which the eye could endure, if reduced to a small size.¹⁵

Ruskin's comments about Martin and Turner in this piece for Loudon's magazine were necessarily brief due to the marginal nature of the footnote; space did not permit him to lecture his reader on the greatness of Turner in comparison with Martin. However, writing under another pseudonym, "A Graduate of Oxford," Ruskin presented a "theological account of Turner" a few years later in the first volume (1843) of his *Modern Painters*, "arguing that Turner's art was a faithful use of divine figurative language drawn from nature and the Bible."¹⁶ Ruskin dedicated

¹⁵ Ruskin ["On the Proper Shapes of Pictures and Engravings (from Repton's 'Landscape Gardening')"], in *Works*, 1:243.

¹⁶ Paul Barlow, *Time Present and Time Past: The Art of John Everett Millais* (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2005), 141; Elizabeth K. Helsinger, *Ruskin and the Art of the Beholder* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982), 225.

this first volume “to the landscape painters of England,” whom he believed, as a whole, had been unjustly neglected by English collectors in favor of the Old Masters.¹⁷ Turner, of course, was held up to the highest praise by Ruskin as “the greatest landscape painter who has ever lived. But his superiority is, in matters of feeling, one of kind, not of degree.”¹⁸ Martin’s name was excluded altogether from the first edition.¹⁹ However, Ruskin took what is widely believed to have been an indirect swipe at Martin in a discussion of how “the multiplication of objects, or increase of their size, will not give the impression of infinity, but is the resource of novices.”²⁰

Even in the works of the moderns . . . we shall frequently perceive an erroneous choice of means, and a substitution of mere number or bulk for real infinity, ending, as in the works of one of our artists most celebrated for *sublimity* of conception, (the general admiration of whose works, however ill-founded, I can perfectly understand, for I once admired them myself,) in morbid and meaningless tautology.²¹

¹⁷ The full title of volume one is “*Modern Painters: Their Superiority in the Art of Landscape Painting to All the Ancient Masters, Proved by Examples of the True, the Beautiful, and the Intellectual from the Works of Modern Artists, Especially from Those of J.M.W. Turner.*” Ruskin, *Modern Painters I*, in *Works*, 3:168, described the best modern English landscape painters as having “looked at nature with totally different eyes, seeking not for what is easier to imitate, but for what is most important to tell. . . . And there is, in consequence, a greater sum of valuable, essential, and impressive truth in the works of two or three of our leading modern landscape painters, than in those of all the old masters put together.”

¹⁸ Ruskin, *Modern Painters I*, in *Works*, 3:617. The young Samuel Palmer also was praised in *Modern Painters I*, in *Works*, 3:604–605 n.2, because “his feeling is as pure and grand as his fidelity is exemplary.” Others, like John Varley, meanwhile, also received approval – albeit qualified – because their works revealed deep feelings for nature, despite their deficiencies as painters. Varley, for instance, was described in *Modern Painters I*, in *Works*, 3:275 n, as “frequently deep in his feeling.” Ruskin rebuked Constable, David Cox, Thomas Creswick, and Copley Fielding for their technique, but he also praised in *Modern Painters I*, in *Works*, 3:45 n., 389, 471, 604, 614, “the feelings of Constable,” “those feelings which direct Cox to the painting of wild, weedy banks, and cool, melting skies,” the “sweet feeling” of Creswick, and the “delicate feelings” of Fielding.

¹⁹ Ruskin explained to the painter Samuel Prout, whom he also praised in *Modern Painters I* for the quality of his “feeling,” that Martin and several other painters he disliked would have been his “victims,” but others had advised him not to attack them outright. See Ruskin to Samuel Prout, December 7, 1843, in *Works*, 38:335.

²⁰ Ruskin, *Modern Painters I*, in *Works*, 3:389.

²¹ Ruskin, *Modern Painters I*, in *Works*, 3:389.

In the preface to the second edition (1844), Ruskin, however, mentioned Martin twice by name in order to illustrate to the reader how Martin's art was the antithesis, both in feeling and technique, to that of Turner. These two references to Martin occur in a section in which Ruskin was disputing "that constantly enunciated dogma of the parrot-critic, that the features of nature must be 'generalized.'"²² Here, he was attacking a critic for the *Athenaeum* who, in a review of the first edition, had claimed that Ruskin's theory of "truth to nature" was mistaken because "landscape painting must not be reduced to mere portraiture of inanimate substances, Denner-like portraiture of the earth's face. . . . Ancient landscapists took a broader, deeper, higher view of their art: they neglected particular traits, and gave only general features."²³ Ruskin, in turn, responded that in advocating what he called the "right statement of generic difference," he was not encouraging artists to reproduce every minute detail they saw before them. He challenged the critic to "find anything like Denner in what I have advanced as the utmost perfection of landscape art – the recent works of Turner."²⁴ To provide an example of the kind of Denner-like

²² Ruskin, *Modern Painters I*, in *Works*, 3:34.

²³ Quoted in Ruskin, *Modern Painters I*, in *Works*, 3:34. Balthasar Denner was an eighteenth-century German portrait painter, active in England. Horace Walpole, *Anecdotes of Painting in England*, 2nd ed., 4 vols. (Strawberry-Hill: Thomas Kirgate, 1765-1771), 4:24-25, described him as "one of those laborious artists, whose works surprise rather than please, and who could not be so excellent if they had not more patience than genius. . . . [H]is fame however rose very high on his exhibiting the head of an old woman, that he brought over with him, about sixteen inches high and thirteen wide, in which the grain of the skin, the hairs, the down, the glassy humour of the eyes, were represented with the most exact minuteness. It gained him more applause than custom, for a man could not execute many works who employed so much time to finish them." Graham Hough, *The Last Romantics* (London: Duckworth, 1949), 6, "The particular purpose of *Modern Painters* is to show the superior truth to nature of the modern English school, Turner especially, and to the landscape painters of the seventeenth century – Claude and Salvator on the one hand, and the Dutch school on the other."

²⁴ Ruskin, *Modern Painters I*, in *Works*, 3:36. Ruskin added, "Denner-like portraiture would be the endeavour to paint the separate crystals of quartz and felspar in the granite, and the separate flakes of mica in the mica slate; an attempt just as far removed from what I assert to be great art (the bold rendering of the generic characters of form in both rocks), as modern sculpture of lace and buttonholes is from the Elgin Marbles."

detail he despised, Ruskin made reference to a large (305 x 452 cm) cartoon illustrating *The Trial of Canute* (present location unknown), which Martin had entered in the 1844 Westminster Hall competition for the decoration of the new Houses of Parliament.²⁵ Speaking of the now missing cartoon, Ruskin said, “Martin has attempted this Denner-like portraiture of sea foam with the assistance of an acre of canvas; with what success, I believe the critics of his last year’s ‘Canute’ had, for once, sense enough to decide.”²⁶ Ruskin’s reference to “last year’s ‘Canute’”

²⁵ For the most recent discussion of the competitions to decorate the new Houses of Parliament with paintings, see Clare A. P. Willsdon, *Mural Painting in Britain 1840-1940* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2000), 27-61. These competitions were not only an outgrowth of the 1834 fire that destroyed the old Palace of Westminster, but also were a direct result of the 1835-1836 Select Committee on Arts and Manufactures. Martin’s decision to participate in a government-sponsored competition offering cash prizes may seem to be at odds with his endorsement of his “free trade in art” principles. However, Martin did testify in the 1836 session of the Select Committee on Arts and Manufactures that he would be willing to accept the idea of the government giving cash awards to artists “indiscriminately,” as long it remained only a distributor of premiums and did not become the “administrators of any laws” that would impact the operations of private societies. For Martin’s testimony on this subject, see “Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1836), paras. 889-900. Several other artists, like George Foggo, who also advocated the same laissez-faire policies as Martin, entered their works in the competition, as well. On the Westminster Cartoon Competitions as answering the Select Committee on Art and Manufactures’ call for “free competition in art,” see Paul Barlow, “‘Fire, Flatulence and Fog’: The Decoration of Westminster Palace and the Aesthetics of Prudence,” in *Governing Cultures: Art Institutions in Victorian London*, eds., Paul Barlow and Colin Trodd (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2000), 72. As T. S. R. Boase, “The Decoration of the New Palace of Westminster, 1841-1863,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 17 (1954): 320, has noted, the 1841 Select Committee on the Fine Arts was the first official step leading to the competitions. This committee had been set up on the motion of “Benjamin Hawes, Member for Lambeth, free trader and industrialist.” William Ewart, who chaired the Select Committee on Arts and Manufactures, also sat on the 1841 Select Committee on the Fine Arts, as did Prince Albert, who as Willsdon, *Mural Painting*, 39 n.59, pointed out, later supported “Peel’s Free Trade principles in 1846.” For Ruskin’s opinion of competitions between artists as an extension of laissez-faire principles, see my discussion later in this chapter.

²⁶ Ruskin, *Modern Painters I*, in *Works*, 3:36. If, as Balston, *John Martin*, 213, Johnstone, *John Martin*, 94, and Feaver, *Art of John Martin*, 181, have all stated, Ruskin was referring to Martin’s competition entry, he could not have seen the cartoon or else he was in error here. Even though Martin’s entry is untraced and, to my knowledge, no study for or engraving after it exists, contemporaneous published accounts make it absolutely certain that – as befits the title – *The Trial of Canute* depicted an interior scene, while the 1843 watercolor *Canute the Great Rebuking His Courtiers* depicted the king, queen, and courtiers standing by the sea. For descriptions of the missing cartoon, see “The Westminster Hall Exhibition,” *Civil Engineer and Architect’s Journal* 7 (July 1844), 256-257; “The Art Exhibition in Westminster Hall,” *New Monthly Magazine* 71 (August 1844), 551. Martin’s work was not, as Ruskin described it, on canvas but was executed - according to the competition rules - in chalk or charcoal on paper.

was to Martin's watercolor, *Canute the Great Rebuking His Courtiers* (1842, Laing Art Gallery, fig. 23), which had been exhibited in 1843 at the Royal Academy. Ruskin, in his second reference to Martin two pages later, said, (presumably of the watercolor's Denner-like detail) that "Martin, if the time which he must have spent on the abortive bubbles of his 'Canute' had been passed in walking on the sea-shore, might have learned enough to enable him to produce, with a few strokes, a picture which would have smote, like the sound of the sea, upon men's hearts for ever."²⁷

The point that Ruskin was making in his criticisms of Martin in the first and second editions of *Modern Painters* I was that Martin's work (like Denner's, but unlike Turner's) was simply all hand and no heart – it was precise, mechanical, and loaded with detail.²⁸ Yet it lacked any understanding of or feeling for the natural world, "which God has appointed to be the

²⁷ Ruskin, *Modern Painters* I, in *Works*, 3:38 n. The entire footnote reads, "Is not this, it may be asked, demanding more from him [any artist] than life can accomplish? Not one whit. Nothing more than knowledge of external characteristics is absolutely required; and even if, which were more desirable, through scientific knowledge had to be attained, the time which our artists spend in multiplying crude sketches, or finishing their unintelligent embryos of the study, would render them masters of every science that modern investigations have organized, and familiar with every form that nature manifests. Martin, if the time which he must have spent on the abortive bubbles of his 'Canute' had been passed in walking on the sea-shore, might have learned enough to enable him to produce, with a few strokes, a picture which would have smote, like the sound of the sea, upon men's hearts for ever." This is a footnote to the sentence, "I have just said that every class of rock, earth, and cloud, must be known by the painter, with geologic and meteorologic accuracy." The next sentence, however, qualifies this statement, in order to make it clear that Ruskin did not advocate a Denner-like approach, "Nor is this merely for the sake of obtaining the character of these minor features themselves, but more especially for the sake of reaching that simple, earnest, and consistent character which is visible in the *whole* effect of every natural landscape." It is not clear here whether Ruskin is speaking of the watercolor or, mistakenly, of the cartoon.

²⁸ Ruskin, *Modern Painters* I, in *Works*, 3:32, "It is not, therefore, detail sought for its own sake, . . . nor the numbered hairs and mapped wrinkles of Denner, which constitute great art, they are the lowest and most contemptible art; but it is detail referred to a great end, sought for the sake of the inestimable beauty which exists in the slightest and least of God's works, and treated in a manly, broad, and impressive manner."

perpetual source of fresh pleasure to the cultivated and observant eye.”²⁹ Moreover, in Ruskin’s opinion, Martin had attempted in his works to cheat the viewer by substituting quantity for quality: in the first instance, by making “a substitution of mere number or bulk for real infinity,” resulting in “morbid and meaningless tautology”; and, in the second, by paying too much attention to unnecessary details (i.e., “abortive bubbles”).³⁰ As we shall see later, it was this conflict between quantity and quality that came to define Ruskin’s critique of political economy in *Unto This Last* (1860), *Munera Pulveris* (1862-63), and other economic writings.³¹

In volume two (1846) of *Modern Painters*, Ruskin once again set up an invidious comparison between Martin and Turner. This comparison was included in a section dealing with the topic of permissible exaggeration in painting and “of things capable of variety of scale.”³² Ruskin here was discussing the way in which only an imagination, like Turner’s, developed in accordance with God’s natural laws, could exaggerate the number and size of ocean waves for pictorial effect without falling into the fallacy of substituting quantity for quality. To illustrate his theory of permissible exaggeration, Ruskin compared Turner’s depiction of the sea in the *Slave Ship* (1840, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, fig. 24) with the sea in Martin’s now untraced

²⁹ Ruskin, *Modern Painters* I, in *Works*, 3:329. James Clark Sherburne, *John Ruskin, or the Ambiguities of Abundance: A Study in Social and Economic Criticism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972), 31, “By portraying nature, the artist reveals God’s creation and inspires noble emotions. The performance of this task requires rare qualities of sympathy, discipline, earnestness, and sensitivity.”

³⁰ For Ruskin’s association of the words “abortion” and “abortive” with “methodizing”, artificiality, showy dexterity, and vanity, see Ruskin, *Modern Painters* I, in *Works*, 3:178; Ruskin, “Modern Painters: A Reply. To the Editor of ‘The Weekly Chronicle,’” in *Works*, 3:643; and Ruskin, *Modern Painters* IV, in *Works*, 6:36, 47, 399. Feaver, *Art of John Martin*, 177, inexplicably argued that, in the watercolor, “Martin anticipated, to a considerable degree, Ruskin’s demands for a trustworthy knowledge about a place rather than a reconstruction of the past.”

³¹ Sherburne, *Ambiguities of Abundance*, 200, 273, 350 n.40.

³² Ruskin, *Modern Painters* II, in *Works*, 4:311.

canvas, *Christ Stilleth the Tempest* (1843, present location unknown; reduced version, 1852, York Art Gallery, fig. 25).³³

Another kind of Exaggeration is of things whose size is variable to a size or degree greater than that usual with them, as in waves and mountains; and there are hardly any limits to this exaggeration, so long as the laws which Nature observes in her increase be observed. Thus, for instance, the form and polished surface of a breaking ripple three inches high, are not representative of either the form or the surface of the surf of a storm, nodding ten feet above the beach; neither would the cutting ripple of a breeze upon a lake, if simply exaggerated, represent the forms of Atlantic surges: but as Nature increases her bulk, she diminishes the angles of ascent, and increases her divisions; and if we would represent surges of size greater than ever existed, which it is lawful to do, we must carry out these operations to still greater extent. Thus, Turner, in his picture of the *Slave Ship*, divides the whole sea into two masses of enormous swell, and conceals the horizon by a gradual slope of only two or three degrees. This is intellectual exaggeration. In the Academy exhibition of 1843, there was, in one of the smaller rooms, a black picture of a storm [Martin's *Christ Stilleth the Tempest*], in which there appeared on the near sea, just about to be overwhelmed by an enormous breaker, curling right over it, an object at first sight liable to be taken for a walnut shell, but which, on close examination, proved to be a ship with mast and sail, with Christ and his twelve disciples in it. This is childish exaggeration, because it is impossible, by the laws of matter and motion, that such a breaker should ever exist.³⁴

As with *Canute the Great Rebuking His Courtiers*, Ruskin was again arguing that Martin's depiction of the sea in *Christ Stilleth the Tempest* was artificial and mechanical because Martin did not use nature as his starting point. In addition, he had again traded quantity for quality in his depiction of the huge breaker ("a substitution of . . . bulk for real infinity") bearing down on Christ and his followers, making the boat that carries them "an object at first sight liable to be taken for a walnut shell."³⁵

³³ This was one of Martin's other contributions (besides his *Canute the Great Rebuking His Courtiers*) to the 1843 Royal Academy exhibition. Ruskin said of the *Slave Ship* in *Modern Painters* I, in *Works*, 3:572, "I believe, if I were reduced to rest Turner's immortality upon any single work, I should choose this."

³⁴ Ruskin, *Modern Painters* II, in *Works*, 4:311.

³⁵ Ruskin, *Modern Painters* I, in *Works*, 3:389; Ruskin, *Modern Painters* II, in *Works*, 4:311. Ruskin, *Modern Painters* II, in *Works*, 4:309, "Exaggeration . . . as it is the vice of all bad artists, and may be constantly resorted to without any warrant of imagination, it is necessary to note strictly the admissible limits." From Ruskin's viewpoint, however, Turner was within the bounds of permissible exaggeration in

Martin's errors in execution in these paintings, however, were no longer in Ruskin's estimation simply aesthetic failures, as in the footnote to Repton, but had become by *Modern Painters* I and II tantamount to hubris or self-deification.³⁶ By not starting with and taking from nature, "that which ought to have been a witness to the omnipotence of God, has become an exhibition of the dexterity of man; and that which would have lifted our thoughts to the throne of the Deity, has encumbered them with the inventions of his creatures."³⁷ Indeed, in an unpublished section of volume two, Ruskin wrote of the abuse by artists of God's natural laws purely for pictorial effect and how "some artists are dependent on little else. If black and red were not productive of the sublime, what would become of the pictures of Martin?"³⁸

Ruskin's next published comment on Martin appeared in 1851, in the first volume of *The Stones of Venice*.³⁹ In a chapter on the art and architecture of St. Mark's Basilica, Ruskin seemed to digress from the subject of his chapter by saying:

the *Slave Ship* because he was "the only man who has ever given an entire transcript of the whole system of nature, and is, in this point of the view, the only perfect landscape painter whom the world has ever seen." See Ruskin, *Modern Painters* II, in *Works*, 3:616. Ruskin described Turner's depiction of the agitated sea in the *Slave Ship* in *Modern Painters* I, in *Works*, 3:571-572, as "the noblest certainly ever painted by man" and believed the painting's "daring conception – ideal, in the highest sense of the word – is based on the purest truth, and wrought out with the concentrated knowledge of a life." In the preface to the third edition (1846), *Works*, 3:52, Ruskin went so far as to claim "that Turner *is* like nature, and paints more of nature than any man who ever lived."

³⁶ Ruskin, *Modern Painters* I, in *Works*, 3:141, "The truth of nature is a part of the truth of God; to him who does not search it out, darkness, as it is to him who does, infinity."

³⁷ Ruskin, *Modern Painters* I, in *Works*, 3:22. See also Ruskin, *Modern Painters* I, in *Works*, 3:174, "If it be a display of mere manual dexterity or curious manufacture, or if in any other mode it show itself as having its origin in vanity, - Cast it out. It matters not what powers of mind may have been concerned or corrupted in it, all have lost their savour, it is worse than worthless – perilous, – Cast it out."

³⁸ Ruskin, *Modern Painters* II, in *Works*, 4:366.

³⁹ Robert Rhodes and Del Ivan Janik, "Preface," in *Studies in Ruskin: Essays in honor of Van Akin Burd*, eds. Robert Rhodes and Del Ivan Janik (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1982), xvi, described it as "a transitional work that heralded the shift in Ruskin's attention from aesthetics to social criticism." See also Willie Henderson, *John Ruskin's Political Economy* (London: Routledge, 2000), 16, has noted, "It is

I believe that the four painters who have had, and still have, the most influence, such as it is, on the ordinary Protestant Christian mind, are Carlo Dolci, Guercino, Benjamin West, and John Martin. Raphael, much as he is talked about, is, I believe in very fact, rarely looked at by religious people; much less his master, or any of the truly great religious men of old. But a smooth Magdalen of Carlo Dolci with a tear on each cheek, or a Guercino Christ or St. John, or a Scripture illustration of West's, or a black cloud with a flash of lightning in it of Martin's, rarely fails of being verily, often deeply, felt for the time.⁴⁰

Ruskin's complaint was that the "ordinary Protestant Christian mind" in England regarded highly finished paintings by Dolci, Guercino, Benjamin West, and Martin (Ruskin judged all their works to be formulaic and devoid of true spirituality) as religious art, but regarded the mosaics of St. Mark's, which Ruskin described as the most effective "of all works of religious art whatsoever," to be "mere childish efforts at coloured portraiture."⁴¹ Ruskin's overall claim in *The Stones of Venice* was that the transition from Gothic to Renaissance architecture in Venice during the late fifteenth century had been concomitant with the republic's economic, moral, and spiritual decline. Similarly, Ruskin believed that if the average Protestant in England could be moved by the paintings of Martin, West, etc., but thought of the mosaics of St. Mark's as "barbarous," it had to be due to a defect of "the modern religious mind" in nineteenth-century

widely recognized in the literature that Ruskin makes a strong transitional move towards economic criticism in *The Stones of Venice*."

⁴⁰ Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice I*, in *Works*, 10:125.

⁴¹ Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice I*, in *Works*, 10:125, 130. Michael Wheeler, *Ruskin's God*, (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), has stated that here "Ruskin confronts most directly the gap between the Protestant beholder and this alien Catholic building which earlier in the chapter he has striven so hard to close, and in the process enunciates the tension between the spiritual and the aesthetic eye." Ruskin said in 1846 in *Modern Painters III*, in *Works*, 5:88, "The group calling themselves Evangelical ought no longer to render their religion an offence to men of the world by associating it with only the most vulgar forms of art. It is not necessary that they should admit either music or painting into religious service; but, if they admit either the one or the other, let it not be bad music or bad painting; it is certainly in nowise more for Christ's honour that His praise should be sung discordantly, or His miracles painted discreditably, than that His word should be preached ungrammatically. Some Evangelicals, however, seem to take a morbid pride in the triple degradation."

England because it had become corrupted by, and too engrossed with, the affairs of this world.⁴²

This is evident from Ruskin's statements immediately preceding his comments about the paintings of Martin, *et al.*:

One great fact first meets me. I cannot answer for the experience of others, but I never yet met with a Christian whose heart was thoroughly set upon the world to come, and, so far as human judgment could pronounce, perfect and right before God, who cared about art at all. I have known several very noble Christian men who loved it intensely, but in them there was always traceable some entanglement of the thoughts with the matters of this world, causing them to fall into strange distresses and doubts, and often leading them into what they themselves would confess to be errors in understanding, or even failures in duty. I do not say that these men may not, many of them, be in very deed nobler than those whose conduct is more consistent; they may be more tender in the tone of all their feelings, and farther-sighted in soul, and for that very reason exposed to greater trials and fears, than those whose hardier frame and naturally narrower vision enable them with less effort to give their hands to God and walk with Him. But still, the general fact is indeed so, that I have never known a man who seemed altogether right and calm in faith, who seriously cared about art; and when casually moved by it, it is quite impossible to say beforehand by what class of art this impression will on such men be made. Very often it is by a theatrical commonplace, more frequently still by false sentiment.⁴³

Having stated that the typical English Protestant male, who was more familiar with the affairs of the world than with great religious art, would likely fall victim to the false sentiment of a Dolci, a Guercino, a West, or a Martin, Ruskin also explained that such a man would be unable to appreciate and, most likely, be offended by great religious art of the past, simply because "all truly great religious painters have been hearty Romanists."⁴⁴ Thus, this Englishman, who

⁴² Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice I*, in *Works*, 10:129, 128.

⁴³ Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice I*, in *Works*, 10:124.

⁴⁴ Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice I*, in *Works*, 10:125. Ruskin's text is gender-specific. Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice I*, in *Works*, 10:221, "The modern English fact-hunter, despising design, wants to destroy everything that does not agree with his own notions of truth, and becomes the most dangerous and despicable of iconoclasts, excited by egotism instead of religion." Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice I*, in *Works*, 10:451-452, "I have no manner of doubt that half of the poor and untaught Christians who are this day lying prostrate before crucifixes, Bambinos, and Volto Santos, are finding more acceptance with God than many Protestants who idolize nothing but their own opinions or their own interests. I believe that those who have worshipped the thorns of Christ's crown will be found at last to have been holier and wiser than those who worship the thorns of the world's service, and that to adore the nails of the cross is a less sin than to adore the hammer of the workman." Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice I*, in *Works*, 10:205, "I

theoretically had been brought up to be familiar with the facts, accounts, and amounts needed to succeed in the world of business, would prefer methodical, precise, and highly finished works (fruits from “the Renaissance poison tree”) by artists whom Ruskin scorned as irreligious.⁴⁵ This was because in commercial England “all unpolished power is in the present state of society lost; in other things as well as in the arts, but in the arts especially: nay, in nine cases out of ten, people mistake the polish for the power.”⁴⁶

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Ruskin also referred to Martin in a draft of “The Nature of Gothic” from *The Stones of Venice*. Here, Ruskin was discussing the division of all artists into three classes: “Those on the right perceive, and pursue the good, and leave the evil: those in the centre, the greatest, perceive and pursue the good and evil together, the whole thing as it verily is: those on the left perceive and pursue the evil, and leave the good.”⁴⁷ Unlike the first two, the last group Ruskin considered “in nowise of Divine institution” and included in

would not impeach love of order: it is one of the most useful elements of the English mind; it helps us in our commerce and in all purely practical matters; . . . Experience, I fear, teaches us that accurate and methodical habits in daily life are seldom characteristic of those who either quickly perceive, or richly possess, the creative powers of art; there is, however, nothing inconsistent between the two instincts, and nothing to hinder us from retaining our business habits, and yet fully allowing and enjoying the noblest gift of Invention.”

⁴⁵ Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice* I, in *Works*, 10:370. Elizabeth K. Helsinger, “History as Criticism: *The Stones of Venice*,” in *Studies in Ruskin*, 173, has said, “The historical account of Venetian architecture in *The Stones of Venice* is reshaped throughout by an extrahistorical intention: to celebrate medieval art and values and condemn, on moral as well as aesthetic grounds, Renaissance Italy and nineteenth-century England.” J. B. Bullen, *Continental Crosscurrents: British Criticism and European Art 1810-1910* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 162, “The affinity which dominates *The Stones of Venice* is the connection between Renaissance and modern. . . . In the Renaissance ‘we shall find’, said Ruskin, ‘partly the root, partly the expression, of certain dominant evils of modern times’. Consequently, Ruskin’s hunting out of the ‘pestilent art of the Renaissance’ from the Grand Canal to Gower Street is, as he freely admits, ‘the final purpose’ of *The Stones of Venice*.”

⁴⁶ Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice* I, in *Works*, 10:128. He added, “a truly religious painter will often be ruder, quainter, simpler, and more faulty in his manner of working, than a great irreligious one.” Ruskin said of Carlo Dolci in *Modern Painters* I, in *Works*, 3:91, “Three penstrokes of Raffaele are a greater and a better picture than the most finished work that ever Carlo Dolci polished into inanity.”

⁴⁷ Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice* II, in *Works*, 10:221.

it Salvator Rosa, Caravaggio, Murillo, Zurbaran, and Rembrandt, because they “perceive and imitate evil only.”⁴⁸ In an alternative paragraph or footnote to the paragraph enumerating those who belonged to this last group, Ruskin wrote in the draft chapter:

I do not mean in this general statement to include workmen, such as John Martin, whom I do not regard as painters at all. Martin’s works are merely a common manufacture, as much makeable to order as a tea-tray or a coal-scuttle – such may be made and sold by the most respectable people, to any extent, without the least discredit to their characters. But I speak of men really deserving to be called painters, such as Zurbaran or Salvator; and of works which involve real skill and certain imagery truly, though coarsely terrible.⁴⁹

In other words, if Ruskin had considered Martin to be an artist at all, he would have lumped him with “the degraded or evil-loving class” of painters.⁵⁰ However, he did not, concluding that Martin’s works were, as in the later case of Whistler, not even art but manufacture.

Six years later, in a lecture entitled “The Unity of Art” given at the newly opened School of Art in Manchester, “the capital of free trade,” Ruskin explained what he meant when he distinguished fine art from manufacture.⁵¹ Once again, he resorted to a tripartite analysis in order to “strenuously” warn the student “against supposing that they can ever be one and the same thing, that art can ever be followed on the principles of manufacture.”⁵² According to Ruskin, manufacture was anything that proceeded from the hand only, “acting mechanically, and

⁴⁸ Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice II*, in *Works*, 10:223; Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice II*, in *Works*, 10:222.

⁴⁹ Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice II*, in *Works*, 10:223 n. It is not clear how the passage might have been inserted into the published text.

⁵⁰ Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice II*, in *Works*, 10:224.

⁵¹ Asa Briggs, *Victorian People: A Reassessment of Persons and Themes, 1851-1867* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), 21. The school was opened in 1838 as the School of Design and renamed the School of Art in 1853.

⁵² Ruskin, *The Two Paths*, in *Works*, 16:294.

uninfluenced at the moment by direct intelligence.”⁵³ Art, meanwhile, involved the operation of the hand wedded with intelligence, as “there is an art of making machinery; there is an art of building ships; an art of making carriages; and so on.”⁵⁴ However, the highest form of human creation, “FINE ART is that in which the hand, the head, and the *heart* of man go together.”⁵⁵ So, for Ruskin, Martin’s paintings, like Whistler’s (but unlike Turner’s), represented the lowest level of this “triple group” of human creation because:

manufacture is simply the operation of the hand of man in producing that which is useful to him, it essentially separates itself from the emotions; when emotions interfere with machinery they must spoil it: machinery must go evenly, without emotion. But the Fine Arts cannot go evenly; they always must have emotion ruling their mechanism, and until the pupil begins to feel, and until all he does associates itself with the current of this feeling, he is not an artist.⁵⁶

Just as Ruskin decried Martin’s and Whistler’s work as a form of manufacture destitute of intelligence and emotion – unlike the works of those artists he praised in *Modern Painters* – so he also condemned the political economists Adam Smith and John Stuart Mill in his first published work on political economy, *Unto This Last* (1860), for “considering the human being merely as a covetous machine,” for whom “the social affections are accidental and disturbing elements in human nature.”⁵⁷ In these essays, Ruskin argued, contra Smith and Mill, that “labour of good quality, in any kind, includes always as much intellect and feeling as will fully and

⁵³ Ruskin, *The Two Paths*, in *Works*, 16:294.

⁵⁴ Ruskin, *The Two Paths*, in *Works*, 16:294.

⁵⁵ Ruskin, *The Two Paths*, in *Works*, 16:294. Sherburne, *Ambiguities of Abundance*, 172, “Every art is fine, he [Ruskin] maintains, which is founded on skill of hand, not mechanism, and gives evidence of ‘soul’ or imagination.”

⁵⁶ Ruskin, *The Two Paths*, in *Works*, 16:295.

⁵⁷ Ruskin, *Unto This Last*, in *Works*, 17:25. First published serially in the *Cornhill Magazine* in 1860 and in book form in 1862. See also Fitch, *Poison Sky*, 458, “The ‘dismal science’ has created this abstract entity of calculable impulses as an alienated projection of man’s selfish and competitive impulses that function predictably within the market mechanism.”

harmoniously regulate the physical force.”⁵⁸ In *Unto This Last*, Ruskin rejected Smith’s and Mill’s concept of “economic man” as the basis of society because it assumed “man’s selfish desire for material goods to be universal and constant to the neglect of sentiment, imagination, and force of habit.”⁵⁹ Ruskin explained that “political economy,” as laid down by Smith and Mill, was in fact a misnomer for a theory that should instead be called “mercantile economy,” because it took no account of the intelligence, the heart, the emotions, or the spirit.⁶⁰ True political economy “(the economy of a State, or of citizens) consists simply in the production, preservation, and distribution, at fittest time and place, of useful or pleasurable things” to produce the greatest number of happy people, who find joy in labor.⁶¹ Mercantile economy, on the other hand, “the economy of ‘merces’ or of ‘pay,’ signifies the accumulation, in the hands of individuals, of legal or moral claim upon, or power over, the labour of others; every such claim

⁵⁸ Ruskin, *Unto This Last*, in *Works*, 17:95.

⁵⁹ Sherburne, *Ambiguities of Abundance*, 99. On the concept of economic man, see Allen Oakley, *Classical Economic Man: Human Agency and Methodology in the Political Economy of Adam Smith and J. S. Mill*, Advances in Economic Methodology Series, ed. Warren J. Samuels (Aldershot and Brookfield: E. Elgar, 1994). Henderson, *Ruskin’s Political Economy*, 18, 19, 20, “It is in *Unto This Last* that Ruskin constructs a figure to analyse, a face to look into and to interpret with the same rhetorical skill and manipulation that he uses in his earlier texts. The figure is that of economic man, presented to his readers in the form of a denuded skeleton. When he examines the face of this figure he finds a skull, a death’s head. His elaboration of the consequences of unregulated capitalism as death constitutes a main thread which is shot through this his most dramatic of texts. . . . As Ruskin sees economic man as a representation of all that negates ‘true’ economy and hence ‘true’ life so it becomes a force of evil. . . . ‘Economic man’ pitches the standard of human behavior too low, and a greedy, money-grubbing class readily conforms to the social expectations that the concept generates.”

⁶⁰ John Tyree Fain, “Ruskin and the Orthodox Political Economists,” *Southern Economic Journal* 10 (July 1943): 2, and John Tyree Fain, *Ruskin and the Economists* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1956), 41. Ruskin, *Unto This Last*, in *Works*, 17:85, argued, “The real science of political economy, which has yet to be distinguished from the bastard science, as medicine from witchcraft, and astronomy from astrology, is that which teaches nations to desire and labour for the things that lead to life: and which teaches them to scorn and destroy the things that lead to destruction.”

⁶¹ Ruskin, *Unto This Last*, in *Works*, 17:44.

implying precisely as much poverty or debt on one side, as it implies riches or right on the other.”⁶²

As James Clark Sherburne has noted in his discussion of *Unto This Last*, Ruskin “points to the phrase ‘quality not quantity’ as the key to his social criticism.”⁶³ He believes that in modern England “men fail to distinguish between quantity and quality” because they have been fooled by political economy into believing that amassing money and material goods, which Ruskin described as leading to death, meant being wealthy.⁶⁴ True wealth, however, was a quality not a quantity – as per Ruskin’s maxim, “THERE IS NO WEALTH BUT LIFE.”⁶⁵ Value for Ruskin was an intrinsic quality, not something that could be measured by market forces or the law of supply and demand.⁶⁶ The wealthiest country, according to Ruskin, is “that which nourishes the greatest number of noble and happy human beings.”⁶⁷

⁶² Ruskin, *Unto This Last*, in *Works*, 17:44-45.

⁶³ Sherburne, *Ambiguities of Abundance*, 350 n.40. See, for instance, Ruskin, *Unto This Last*, in *Works*, 17:95-96.

⁶⁴ Sherburne, *Ambiguities of Abundance*, 200. J. A. Hobson, “Ruskin as Political Economist,” in *Ruskin the Prophet and Other Centenary Studies*, ed. J. Howard Whitehouse (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1920), 83, has said, “To the academic, as to the business man, it never seems to have occurred that wealth is primarily a quality, not a quantity, and that the understanding or appreciation of that quality demanded qualifications which Ruskin had, and they had not.”

⁶⁵ Ruskin, *Unto this Last*, in *Works*, 17:105. Josef Paul Hodin, *The Dilemma of Being Modern: Essays on Art and Literature* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1956), 244, “The aesthetic, and as we see also the moral point of view connected with it, was Ruskin’s answer to materialism. He underlined quality against quantity and reached the essence of his philosophy with the words: ‘There is no wealth but life; life with all its powers of admiration, hope and love.’”

⁶⁶ Ruskin went so far as to deny the existence of the law of supply and demand. See Ruskin’s letter to the editor of the *Scotsman* (November 10, 1873), reprinted in *Arrows of the Chase* in *Works*, 18:246-247, “I have never ‘denounced’ the principles expounded by the Professor. I have simply stated that no such principles exist; that no ‘law of supply and demand,’ as expounded by Professor Hodgson and modern economists, ever did or can exist.”

⁶⁷ Ruskin, *Unto This Last*, in *Works*, 17:105.

The Ruskinian economist J. A. Hobson has explained that, due to his hatred of laissez-faire capitalism, what Ruskin was calling for in *Unto This Last* was “the deposition of the money-standard of value and the substitution of a vital standard. . . . In a word, he proposes to substitute for the money-measurement of wealth adopted by the business man and the mercantile economist a standard of human utility.”⁶⁸ As John Tyree Fain has explained in his discussion of *Unto This Last*, for Ruskin, this “right definition of wealth . . . is attainable only if society has reached a sufficiently high moral level.”⁶⁹ The problem, however, for Ruskin was that the prevailing laissez-faire ideology of nineteenth-century England was (according to Ruskin) Satanic, immoral, and blasphemous because it emphasized competition, individual material wealth, and negated the existence of the soul.⁷⁰ For Ruskin, political economy had been founded in the eighteenth century by “the blackest devil” Adam Smith and developed even further in the nineteenth century by “the root of nearly all immediate evil among us in England,” John Stuart Mill.⁷¹ It was “peculiarly and alone the science of darkness; probably a bastard science – not by

⁶⁸ J. A. Hobson, *John Ruskin: Social Reformer*, 3rd ed. (London: James Nisbet & Co., 1904), 77. Fitch, *Poison Sky*, 457, described the distinction between the two measurements of wealth as being Ruskin’s “own humanist vital-wealth against the death-wealth laissez faire system.”

⁶⁹ Fain, *Ruskin and the Economists*, 104. Ruskin also chastized an audience at Oxford in 1870, “You must have the right moral state first, or you cannot have the art.” See Ruskin, “*Lectures on Art*” (*Inaugural Course Delivered at Oxford in Hilary Term, 1870*), in *Works*, 20:73.

⁷⁰ Ruskin, *Unto This Last*, in *Works*, 17:26, “Assuming, not that the human being has no skeleton, but that it is all skeleton, it [modern political economy] founds an ossifant theory of progress on this negation of a soul.”

⁷¹ Willie Henderson, *Evaluating Adam Smith: Creating the Wealth of Nations* (London: Routledge, 2006), 11; Ruskin to Charles Eliot Norton, September 12, 1869, in *Works*, 36:590. Ruskin continued, “I am in earnest – the man [Mill] being looked up to as ‘the greatest thinker’ when he is in truth an utterly shallow and wretched segment of a human creature, incapable of understanding *Anything* in the ultimate conditions of it, and countenancing with an unhappy fortune whatever is fatallest in the popular error of English mind.” See also Ruskin, *Fors Clavigera*, letter 78, in *Works*, 29:134, “And finally, by word of the Devil, in short summary, through Adam Smith, ‘A new commandment give I unto you: that ye hate one another.’” P. D. Anthony, *John Ruskin’s Labour: A Study of Ruskin’s Social Theory* (Cambridge and New

any means a *divina scientia*, but one begotten of another father, that father who, advising his children to turn stones into bread, is himself employed in turning bread into stones, and who, if you ask a fish of him (fish not being producible on his estate), can but give you a serpent.”⁷² For Ruskin, political economy clearly represented, as Clive Wilmer has put it, “the devil’s philosophy.”⁷³ The “science of getting rich,” as Ruskin called it, was “scornful of religion and Christian morality.”⁷⁴ Indeed, he told his friend, Dr. John Brown, in 1862:

The Science of Political Economy *is* a Lie, - wholly and to the very root (as hitherto taught). It is also the Damnedest, that is to say, the most Utterly and to the Lowest Pit condemned of God and His Angels, that the Devil, or Betrayer of Men, has yet invented. . . . To this ‘science’ and to this alone (the Professed and organised pursuit of Money) is owing *All* the Evil of modern days. I say All. The Monastic Theory is at an end. It is now the Money theory which corrupts the church, corrupts the household life, destroys honour, beauty, and life throughout the universe. It is *the* Death incarnate of Modernism, and the so-called science of its pursuit is the most cretinous, speechless, paralysing plague that has yet touched the brains of mankind.⁷⁵

All those who preached or practiced it - including painters - were viewed by Ruskin as “the most perfectly miscreant crowd that ever blasphemed creation. Not with the old snap-finger blasphemy of the wantonly profane, but the deliberate blasphemy of Adam Smith: ‘Thou shalt

York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 73, has said that Ruskin identified “Adam Smith . . . along with John Stuart Mill as one of the founding fathers of villainy.”

⁷² Ruskin, *Unto This Last*, in *Works*, 17:92-93.

⁷³ Clive Wilmer, “Introduction,” in John Ruskin, *Unto this Last, and Other Writings* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), 25. See also Sherburne, *Ambiguities of Abundance*, 178, and Mark A. Lutz, *Economics for the Common Good: Two Centuries of Social Economic Thought in the Humanistic Tradition* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 66.

⁷⁴ Ruskin, *Unto This Last*, in *Works*, 17:61; Fain, *Ruskin and the Economists*, 38.

⁷⁵ Ruskin to Dr. John Brown, August 1862, in *Letters of Dr. John Brown*, ed. John Brown [Jr.] and D. W. Forrest (London: A. and C. Black, 1907), 296.

hate the Lord thy God, damn His laws, and covet thy neighbour's goods."⁷⁶ Unfortunately for Ruskin, it was also, as he was fully aware, regarded by many of those in power as a legitimate "branch of the science of a statesman or legislator."⁷⁷

Ruskin soon followed his destructive critique of laissez-faire political economy in *Unto This Last* with a more constructive series of essays proposing an alternative theory of political economy. These were published serially in *Fraser's Magazine* between 1862 and 1863 under the title of "Essays on Political Economy, Being a Sequel to Papers which appeared in the 'Cornhill Magazine'" and in book form in 1872 as *Munera Pulveris*.⁷⁸ Although a resounding flop when they first appeared, Ruskin later described them as "the first accurate analysis of the laws of

⁷⁶ Ruskin, *Fors Clavigera*, letter 72, in *Works*, 28:764. See also Henderson, *Ruskin's Political Economy*, 18, "Those who are taken in become themselves the product of 'vulgar political economy'. And so they too are fooled by false value and by 'illth', the natural and oppressive opposite of wealth."

⁷⁷ Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, 397. Ruskin, *Munera Pulveris*, in *Works*, 17:147, "Political economy is neither an art nor a science; but a system of conduct and legislature, founded on the sciences, directing the arts, and impossible, except under certain conditions of moral culture." Ruskin, *Fors Clavigera*, letter 72, in *Works*, 28:764, "Adam Smith is accepted as the outcome of Practical Philosophy, at our universities; and their youth urged to come out high in competitive blasphemy."

⁷⁸ Gallagher, *Body Economic*, 91, has said, "'Munera Pulveris,' 'Gifts of the Dust,' a phrase he takes from Horace's Odes, seems to signify the deathliness of mere accumulation." Frederick Kirchhoff, *John Ruskin* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1984), 94, has also said the title "*Munera Pulveris*, 'Gifts of the Dust,' [is] presumably an ironic reference to the fruits of laissez-faire economics." Fitch, *Poison Sky*, 463, "It points to the choice between vital and fatal conceptions of wealth, which is the central theme of the work; either we are to take 'dust for deity,' as received political economy does, or accept the 'religion of Humanity,' where wealth is life." Ruskin ended *Munera Pulveris*, in *Works*, 17:282, with a warning to the reader not to "take dust for deity, spectre for possession." Wilmer, "Introduction," 29, "Where the latter [the four essays comprising *Unto This Last*] are essentially destructive of the classical position, *Munera Pulveris* attempts to replace it with positive proposals. Ruskin had 'resolved to make it the central work of my life to write an exhaustive treatise on Political Economy.'" Sherburne, *Ambiguities of Abundance*, 94, "*Unto This Last* and its sequel *Munera Pulveris* must be considered together, for they contain the theoretical core of Ruskin's social criticism. In them he exposes what he believes to be the ideological root of competition and social waste, orthodox political economy, and attempts to construct a true economic theory which will provide accurate guidance in the managing of social abundance." See also Anthony, *Ruskin's Labour*, 74; Linda M. Austin, "Labor, Money, and the Currency of Words in *Fors Clavigera*," *ELH* 56 (Spring 1989): 226 n.2.

Political Economy which has been published in England.”⁷⁹ He genuinely believed this to be the case because, in his mind, “no exhaustive examination of the subject [of political economy] was possible to any person unacquainted with the value of the highest industries, commonly called the ‘Fine Arts;’ and no one acquainted with the nature of those industries has, so far as I know, attempted, or even approached, the task.”⁸⁰ For Ruskin, art and economics were inseparable. As J. T. Fain has said of Ruskin’s remarks just quoted, “Ruskin believes, then, that a knowledge of art is an essential qualification for the political economist, and indeed his writings on art form the basis of his political economy.”⁸¹

Ruskin argued in this new series of essays that in nineteenth-century England, where laissez-faire was the golden rule, “modern art is mostly on a false basis” because it was bought and sold as a commodity, and not viewed as a spiritual, life-providing necessity that must be intrinsically good.⁸² He explained:

So that the economist, in saying that his science takes no account of the qualities of pictures, merely signifies that he cannot conceive of any quality of essential badness or

⁷⁹ Ruskin, *Munera Pulveris*, in *Works*, 17:131. As with *Unto This Last*, the publisher terminated the series of articles early due to a barrage of complaints from readers.

⁸⁰ Ruskin, *Munera Pulveris*, in *Works*, 17:131.

⁸¹ Fain, *Ruskin and the Economists*, 24. Marc Shell, *The Economy of Literature* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1978), 129, has said, Ruskin “attempted to hold in a single vision the theoretical and practical problems of esthetics and economics.” Shell, *Economy of Literature*, 133, also said of *Munera Pulveris*, “Ruskin believes that his main thesis is original because it centers on the importance of artistic value.” Fitch, *Poison Sky*, 464, “In the preface to the collection Ruskin refers to his particular qualifications as a political economist. His studies in art have made him the only economist able to deal with the question of *intrinsic* value.” Henderson, *Ruskin’s Political Economy*, 15-16, “[Ruskin] understands how it is that his concern for social economics grows naturally from his aesthetics and is unprepared for the recurrent criticism that, in writing upon political economy, he has reached beyond his legitimate sphere of knowledge. . . . The roots of Ruskin’s economic criticism are to be found deep in his aesthetics.”

⁸² Ruskin, *Munera Pulveris*, in *Works*, 17:278. Sherburne, *Ambiguities of Abundance*, “As Ruskin comes to doubt the usefulness of art, he places more emphasis on the deterministic side of his aesthetic theory. He implies that good art will be possible only when the social and economic structure has changed.”

goodness existing in pictures; and that he is incapable of investigating the laws of wealth in such articles. Which is the fact. But, being incapable of defining intrinsic value in pictures, it follows that he must be equally helpless to define the nature of intrinsic value in painted glass, or in painted pottery, or in patterned stuffs, or in any other national produce requiring true human ingenuity. Nay, though capable of conceiving the idea of intrinsic value with respect to beasts of burden, no economist has endeavoured to state the general principles of National Economy, even with regard to the horse or the ass. And, in fine, *the modern political economists have been, without exception, incapable of apprehending the nature of intrinsic value at all.*⁸³

As a substitute for the dominant labor theory of value, Ruskin devised a new theory of a work of art's vital or intrinsic value, which he defined as "the absolute power of anything to support life."⁸⁴ However, he also argued that producing in the consumer the acceptant capacity to appreciate the intrinsically good work of art as having "vital value" was equally important, or else there could be no true wealth.⁸⁵ The consumer's capacity to distinguish good art from bad art and from manufacture could come about only through the deprogramming and reeducation of

⁸³ Ruskin, *Munera Pulveris*, in *Works*, 17:134-135.

⁸⁴ Ruskin, *Munera Pulveris*, in *Works*, 17:152, "A sheaf of wheat of given quality and weight has in it a measurable power of sustaining the substance of the body; a cubic foot of pure air, a fixed power of sustaining its warmth; and a cluster of flowers of given beauty a fixed power of enlivening or animating the senses and heart. It does not in the least affect the intrinsic value of the wheat, the air, or the flowers, that men refuse or despise them. Used or not, their own power is in them, and that particular power is in nothing else." For Ruskin's analysis of how a political economist, applying the labor theory of value, might conclude that a lithographic stone in Paris was worth more than a damaged Tintoretto in Venice, see Ruskin, *Munera Pulveris*, in *Works*, 17:132-134, "The labour employed on the stone of one of these lithographs is very much more than Tintoret was in the habit of giving to a picture of average size. Considering labour as the origin of value, therefore, the stone so highly wrought would be of greater value than the picture; and since also it is capable of producing a large number of immediately saleable or exchangeable impressions, for which the 'demand' is constant, the city of Paris naturally supposed itself, and on all hitherto believed or stated principles of political economy, was, infinitely richer in the possession of a large number of these lithographic stones, . . . The vulgar economist would reply that his science had nothing to do with the qualities of pictures, but with their exchange-value only; and that his business was, exclusively, to consider whether the remains of Tintoret were worth as many ten-and-sixpences as the impressions which might be taken from the lithographic stones."

⁸⁵ *Munera Pulveris*, in *Works*, 17:154, "A horse is no wealth to us if we cannot ride, nor a picture if we cannot see, *nor can any noble thing be wealth except to a noble person.*" Hobson, *Ruskin: Social Reformer*, 96, has said, "It is this thought which links Mr. Ruskin's Art of Education to his Political Economy, and furnishes one more condemnation of the commercial measurement of wealth by quantity of material forms."

consumers by Ruskin, who in lectures and texts aimed to reform their taste and to show them how they – and he – had been deceived into valuing works of art as commodities without regards to intrinsic quality as he defined it.⁸⁶ According to Ruskin, a work of art could be intrinsically good or bad depending on whether the artist had the right feelings and approach at the time the object was produced.⁸⁷ Martin, whose work embodied the triumph of quantity over quality, however, was not in Ruskin’s estimation even a good or a bad artist, but a mechanic or a manufacturer, because, in the spirit of Smith and Mill, individual monetary gain had been his primary motivating force:

The whole question is one of first or second. Does your art lead you, or your gain lead you? . . . The test is absolute, inevitable—Is your art first with you? Then you are artists; you may be, after you have made your money, misers and usurers; you may be, after you have got your fame, jealous, and proud, and wretched, and base: but yet, *as long as you won’t spoil your work*, you are artists. On the other hand—Is your money first with you, and your fame first with you? Then, you may be very charitable with your money, and very magnificent with your money, and very graceful in the way you wear your reputation, and very courteous to those beneath you, and very acceptable to those above you; but you are *not artists*. You are mechanics, and drudges.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Although he later decried his paintings as modern bombast, Ruskin, *Modern Painters I*, in *Works*, 3:389, admitted that “the general admiration of [Martin’s] works, however ill-founded, I can perfectly understand, for I once admired them myself.” Ruskin, *Munera Pulveris*, in *Works*, 17:190, “The prices lately given at sales for pictures and MSS. indicate some tendency to change in the national character in this respect, so that the worth of the currency may even come in time to rest, in an acknowledged manner, somewhat on the state and keeping of the Bedford missal, as well as on the health of Caractacus or Blink Bonny; and old pictures be considered property, no less than old port.” Cook and Wedderburn explained that Caractacus and Blink Bonny were the names of Derby-winning horses.

⁸⁷ Jeffrey L. Spear, *Dreams of an English Eden: Ruskin and His Tradition in Social Criticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 144, “As in his art criticism wherein the opposite of good art is bad art, art turned to an evil purpose, and not merely unskilful art, so in economics the opposition of wealth is not poverty, but what Ruskin called *illth*. If material wealth consists of things that avail towards life, useful things we are capable of using . . . so *illth* consists of death-dealing things, things that cannot be consumed or whose consumption is harmful.”

⁸⁸ Ruskin, *The Two Paths*, in *Works*, 13:98-99. See also Ruskin, *Fors Clavigera*, letter 67, in *Works*, 28:646, “Whatever in literature, art, or religion, is done for money, is poisonous itself; and doubly deadly, in preventing the hearing or seeing of the noble literature and art which have been done for love and truth.”

Martin, as I have shown in earlier chapters, from the very outset of his career, painted first and foremost for profit. He explained in a letter to the *Athenaeum* that he produced his first large oil, *Sadak in Search of the Waters of Oblivion*, because he had lost his job at Collins's and had "married . . . at nineteen. It was now indeed necessary for me to work, and as I was ambitious of fame, I determined on painting a large picture."⁸⁹ But as Ruskin warned students of the School of Art in Manchester, "So you may be as thirsty for fame as a cricket is for cream; but, if it come to a fair question, whether you are to please the mob, or do the thing as you know it ought to be done; and you can't do both, and choose to please the mob,-it's all over with you;- there's no hope for you; nothing that you can do will ever be worth a man's glance as he passes by."⁹⁰

Martin also determined the price of his paintings based on the amount of labor that went into them (a topic discussed further in the next chapter), explaining again to the select committee that one of the reasons he had turned to engraving was because "my pictures are so extensive, and cost so much labour, that I cannot subsist by painting, as very few can pay me 1,000 *l.* or 2,000 *l.*, and I cannot execute them for less."⁹¹ Such a purely economic definition of his work's value (with its emphasis on the quantity over the quality of labor that went into making the object) was, according to Ruskin, symptomatic of the evils of *laissez-faire*. In a series of lectures given in Manchester in 1857 during the Art Treasures Exhibition, he stated:

⁸⁹ *Athenaeum* (June 14, 1834), 459.

⁹⁰ Ruskin, *The Two Paths*, in *Works*, 16:370.

⁹¹ "Report on Arts and Manufactures" (1835), para. 943. Shortly before, Martin had also stated (para. 936) that one of the reasons glass painting, which he had practiced before becoming an oil painter, had fallen out of favor "is this: it is so liable to be broken, that no person can venture to pay the artist sufficiently for his labour, on account of the thin and brittle material on which he is obliged to work." When Martin was asked (para. 941), "Why did you discontinue it?" he replied "I could not get a sufficient price for a highly-finished work to pay for the hazard."

For remember always that the price of a picture by a living artist, never represents, never *can* represent, the quantity of labour or value in it. . . . A great work is only done when the painter gets into the humour for it, likes his subject, and determines to paint it as well as he can, whether he is paid for it or not; but bad work, and generally the worst sort of bad work, is done when he is trying to produce a showy picture, or one that shall appear to have as much labour in it as shall be worth a high price.⁹²

Hobson has described these Manchester lectures, which preceded *Unto This Last* and *Munera Pulveris* by a few years, as containing Ruskin's "first exposure of the essential defects of competitive commercialism in its bearing upon the production and distribution of that species of wealth classed as art. Here for the first time we find the fundamentally socialistic assumption that it is the business of the State to educate, organise, and in every way economise, the artistic ability of the nation."⁹³ More recently, Elizabeth Helsinger has explained that, in these lectures, Ruskin

⁹² Ruskin, *A Joy Forever*, in *Works*, 16:86-87. In a footnote to this section added years later, Ruskin, *A Joy Forever*, in *Works*, 16:87, wrote, "I may state roughly, that prices above a hundred guineas are in general extravagant for water-colours, and above five hundred for oils. An artist almost always does wrong who puts more work than these prices will remunerate him for into any single canvas – his talent would be better employed in painting two pictures than one so elaborate." Ruskin, *A Joy Forever*, in *Works*, 16:200, "A real painter will work for you exquisitely, if you give him, as I told you a little while ago, bread and water and salt; and a bad painter will work badly and hastily, though you give him a palace to live in, and a principedom to live upon. Turner got, in his earlier years, half-a-crown a day and his supper (not bad pay, neither); and he learned to paint upon that. And I believe that there is no chance of art's truly flourishing in any country, until you make it a simple and plain business, providing its masters with an easy competence, but rarely with anything more. And I say this, not because I despise the great painter, but because I honour him; and I should no more think of adding to his respectability or happiness by giving him riches, than, if Shakespeare or Milton were alive, I should think we added to *their* respectability, or were likely to get better work from them, by making them millionaires." See also Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, in *Works*, 8:218, "I believe the right question to ask, respecting all ornament, is simply this: Was it done with enjoyment – was the carver happy while he was about it? ... You cannot get the feeling by paying for it – money will not buy life." Anthony, *Ruskin's Labour*, 77, "Enterprise directed at the manufacture of things for sale in markets to bring profits will not produce things of value and, ultimately, will not bring profits. Things of value are those that 'avail towards life'."

⁹³ Hobson, *Ruskin: Social Reformer*, 40-41. First published in 1857 as *The Political Economy of Art*, the lectures were republished in 1880 as "*A Joy Forever*" (*and Its Price in the Market*): *Being the Substance (with Additions) of Two Lectures on the Political Economy of Art*. Willie Henderson, *Economics as Literature* (London: Routledge, 1995), 113, has characterized these lectures as Ruskin's "first sustained exercise in economics." Christopher Bliss, "Ruskin's Political Economy of Art," *Oxford Art Journal* 2 (April 1979): 35, has said *The Political Economy of Art* "shows Ruskin as having moved away from his wholehearted concern with art criticism towards an interest in art as an institution, the examination of which provided him with a perfect platform for his attack on the political economists and the formulation of his own ideas on the organization of society."

was calling for the state to regulate the art market because “his goals were at once to free artists from commercial pressures, to separate the art object from a market-driven monetary equivalent (discouraging the collection of art for commercial or investment purposes), and to provide access to art for all.”⁹⁴ Yet, government protection of the arts by means of cash prizes, like those advocated by Shee, the Royal Academy, and the British Institution, discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, could do nothing to offset the evils of the prevailing “let-alone” principle and its impact on the arts.⁹⁵ Indeed, Ruskin specifically attacked the idea of government-sponsored contests simply because they were competitive:

I believe all emulation to be a false motive, and all giving of prizes a false means. All that you can depend upon in a boy, as significative of true power, likely to issue in good fruit, is his will to work for the work’s sake, not his desire to surpass his school-fellows; and the aim of the teaching you give him ought to be, to prove to him and strengthen in him his own separate gift, not to puff him into swollen rivalry with those who are everlastingly greater than he: still less ought you to hang favours and ribands about the neck of the creature who is the greatest, to make the rest envy him. Try to make them love him and follow him, not struggle with him.⁹⁶

For Ruskin, all competition was an extension of laissez-faire economic theory and scattered the seeds of anarchy and death across England by pitting human beings against one other and against

⁹⁴ Elizabeth Helsinger, “Ruskin and the Politics of Viewing: Constructing National Subjects,” *Harvard University Art Museums Bulletin* 3 (Autumn 1994): 14.

⁹⁵ It should be reminded that Shee, like Ruskin, was against the laissez-faire policy of “free trade in art.” See Fox, *Graphic Journalism*, 4. However, as discussed in earlier chapters, Shee waged war against this policy in a very different way, wanting the state to step in and fund triennial competitions between artists.

⁹⁶ Ruskin, *A Joy Forever*, in *Works*, 16:120-121. W. G. Collingwood, *The Life and Work of John Ruskin*, 2 vols. (London: Methuen and Co., 1893), 2:69, “Competition as a principle he denounced; national competition, on which the theory of trade was based, meant national animosity, and the recurrent necessity of war meant standing armaments and heavy taxation; individual competition, the struggle for life, he considered barbarous; and the whole object of morality, of government, of civilisation was to make it unnecessary.”

nature.⁹⁷ As Ruskin had stated in *Unto This Last*, his principles on the subject of political economy “were all summed in a single sentence in the last volume of *Modern Painters* - “Government and co-operation are in all things the Laws of Life; Anarchy and competition the Laws of Death.”⁹⁸ As Sherburne has explained, Ruskin believed that competition was “the cause of waste in artistic, and, indeed, all forms of work.”⁹⁹ Indeed, in 1860, Ruskin was asked by Arthur Kinnaird, MP for Perth, when testifying before a Select Committee on Public Institutions, “It is your conviction that we may look upon the vast extension of trade, and commerce, and competition, altogether as an evil?” Ruskin replied, “Not on the vast extension of trade, but on the vast extension of the struggle of man with man, instead of the principle of help of man by man.”¹⁰⁰ When the committee chairman followed up this line of questioning by asking, “You did not intend to cast a slur upon the idea of competition?,” Ruskin confirmed, “Yes, very distinctly;

⁹⁷ After speaking out against the prevailing spirit of commercial competition in England, Ruskin, *Modern Painters V*, in *Works*, 7:207-208, spoke of the “mud or slime of a damp, over-trodden path, in the outskirts of a manufacturing town. . . . Take merely an ounce or two of the blackest slime of a beaten footpath on a rainy day, near a large manufacturing town.” He then described how, in this tainted mud created by industrial manufacture, one will find that “all these elements are at helpless war with each other, and destroy reciprocally each other’s nature and power, competing and fighting for place at every tread of your foot.” However, if left alone from industrial interference, “to follow its own instinct of unity,” each individual element (clay, sand, soot, and water) that makes up the mud will stop warring and begin to cooperate, so that each element is allowed to reach its highest state of perfection: respectively, the sapphire, the opal, the diamond, a snowflake shaped like a star. “And for the ounce of slime which we had by political economy of competition, we have by the political economy of co-operation, a sapphire, an opal, and a diamond, set in the midst of a star of snow.” Sherburne, *Ambiguities of Abundance*, 79, “It [competition] destroys that ‘unity of membership’ which is the perfection of all creatures, whose strength and delight are in their ‘inseparable dependency on each others’ being” and is “symptomatic of an ‘impure,’ disorganized state – a state of ‘death’ or ‘decomposition.’”

⁹⁸ Ruskin, *Unto This Last*, in *Works*, 17:75. The text in *Modern Painters V*, in *Works*, 7:207, actually reads slightly differently, “Government and co-operation are in all things and eternally the laws of life. Anarchy and competition, eternally, and in all things, the laws of death.”

⁹⁹ Sherburne, *Ambiguities of Abundance*, 78.

¹⁰⁰ “Evidence Given before the Select Committee on Public Institutions (March 20, 1860),” in *Works*, 16:486.

I intended not only to cast a slur, but to express my excessive horror of the principle of competition, in every way.”¹⁰¹

For Ruskin, all human creations – including works of art – had value only if they “avail towards life” and this depended almost entirely on whether they were created in the spirit of cooperation or of competition.¹⁰² What Ruskin wanted in place of the dominant laissez-faire philosophy of the day that forced artists and exhibiting societies to compete with one another for profit was a paternalistic system of trial schools to root out talent and of regularized and steady employment for those trained in these schools.¹⁰³ In return for free education and constant

¹⁰¹ “Evidence (1860),” in *Works*, 16:486-487. John D. Rosenberg, *The Darkening Glass: A Portrait of Ruskin’s Genius* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 105, “The inquiry was held in March of 1860. No one present should have been surprised that the witness who, in July, published the final volume of *Modern Painters* would in September issue the first chapter of *Unto This Last*.”

¹⁰² Ruskin, *Unto This Last*, in *Works*, 17:84. William D. Grampp, “Classical Economics and Its Moral Critics,” *History of Political Economy* 5 (Fall 1973): 368-369, “He was outraged, literally, by the idea that value is something to be determined on the market and to be measured in money. He said it is a quality in commodities and in work which enhances the life of people. The value of labor is the service the worker renders the user of his product and is also in the good he does himself when he does his job honestly and in a way that imparts something of himself to it. We all have work to do, according to Ruskin. It is valuable when it is life-availing. The influence of [Thomas] Carlyle is noticeable in this – in the idea of obligation and in the importance attached to work. But Ruskin went beyond Carlyle in an application of his value theory. He used it to judge the value of art. That is a tour de force: to reconcile economic and aesthetic value. With a single, and fairly simple, idea he thought he was able to explain what a painting is worth whether it is on sale in a gallery, is hanging in a museum, or is in the vaults of a collector who buys art for (price) appreciation.”

¹⁰³ See Ruskin, *A Joy Forever*, in *Works*, 16:30-56. For Ruskin’s use of the term “paternal” when discussing his ideal government, see *A Joy Forever*, in *Works*, 16:25, 44, 105, 106, 108. On Ruskin’s proposals for government-sponsored art schools and projects, see Wolfgang Kemp, *The Desire of My Eyes: The Life and Work of John Ruskin*, trans. Jan van Heurck (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1990), 237-239. Alan Lee, “Ruskin and Political Economy: *Unto this Last*,” in *New Approaches to Ruskin: Thirteen Essays*, ed. Robert Hewison (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), 75, “There are ample indications that Ruskin was, as he claimed, ‘by nature and instinct Conservative’. ‘I am,’ he confessed in *Fors [Clavigera]*, ‘and my father was before me, a violent Tory of the old school.’”

employment, Ruskin argued that the government could expect from its citizens “yielding obedience” to “the father’s authority.”¹⁰⁴

In his struggle against unregulated capitalism, Ruskin “identified with the crusading virtues” of St. George battling the dragon.¹⁰⁵ Indeed, as John Rosenberg has said, Ruskin founded the Guild of St. George in the 1870s, with himself as its “Master,” to slay “the dragon of industrial capitalism.”¹⁰⁶ However, the hopelessness of his crusade had been foreshadowed in 1860 by his own words in the final volume of *Modern Painters*, when discussing the painting mentioned by Craven at the beginning of this chapter, Turner’s *The Goddess of Discord*

¹⁰⁴ Ruskin, *A Joy Forever*, in *Works*, 16:27. Julie F. Codell, “Constructing the Victorian Artist: National Identity, the Political Economy of Art and Biographical Mania in the Periodical Press,” *Victorian Periodicals Review* 33 (Fall 2000): 284, has said, “Ruskin’s ideal artist, what I call a prelapsarian artist, was purposely ignorant of economics and entirely outside the social hierarchy. Ruskin argued that the state should educate and control artists by monitoring and even determining their production. Artists, in Ruskin’s view, were best cloistered to make art, like children at play. Their economic subordination to the state and to their patrons would then protect them from the forbidden knowledge of political economy and the Fall of Mammon.” See also Julie F. Codell, “From Culture to Cultural Capital: Victorian Artists, John Ruskin, and the Political Economy of Art,” in *The Political Economy of Art: Making the Nation of Culture*, ed. Julie F. Codell (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2008), 35.

¹⁰⁵ Henderson, *Ruskin’s Political Economy*, 19. See also Henderson, *Ruskin’s Political Economy*, 171, “St George, the Christian knight who came to the defence of the weak, was Ruskin’s figurative and aesthetic response to the debased anti-hero, economic man, whose response to weakness and poverty was exploitation.” On Ruskin’s identification with St. George, see also Michael Wheeler, *Ruskin and Environment: The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 29.

¹⁰⁶ John D. Rosenberg, *Elegy for an Age: The Presence of the Past in Victorian Literature* (London: Anthem Press, 2005), 78. The Guild of St. George was run along the lines of a cooperative and its members were known as “Companions.” It still exists today in Sheffield as a charitable trust. According to Frederic Harrison, *John Ruskin* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1903), 171, its “scheme rested on the central ideas on which Ruskin’s whole philosophy was based – (1) That there could be no civilization without practical religion; (2) no prosperity apart from labour on the soil; and (3) no happiness without honesty and truth. The task of St. George was to slay the dragon Industrialism; to deliver the people from the moral and physical abomination of city life, and plant them again on the soil of an England purified from steam, from filth, and from destitution. In this regenerated country there were to be no competition, no engines, no huckstering, no fraud, no luxury, no idleness, no pernicious journalism, no vain erudition or mechanical book-learning.”

Choosing the Apple of Contention in the Garden of the Hesperides (BI 1806, Tate, London, fig.

26), which depicts the dragon (Ruskin's "Mammon") on a hilltop, guarding the golden apples.¹⁰⁷

Such then is our English painter's first great religious picture; and exponent of our English faith. . . . That power, it appears, on the hill-top, is our British Madonna: whom, reverently, the English devotional painter must paint, thus enthroned, with nimbus about the gracious head. Our Madonna, - or our Jupiter on Olympus, - or, perhaps, more accurately still, our unknown god, sea-born, with the cliffs, not of Cyrene, but of England, for his altar; and no chance of any Mars' Hill proclamation concerning him, 'whom therefore ye ignorantly worship.'

This is no irony. The fact is verily so. The greatest man of our England, in the first half of the nineteenth century, in the strength and hope of his youth, perceives this to be the thing he has to tell us of utmost moment, connected with the spiritual world. In each city and country of past time, the master-minds had to declare the chief worship which lay at the nation's heart; to define it; adorn it; show the range and authority of it. Thus in Athens, we have the triumph of Pallas; and in Venice the Assumption of the Virgin; here, in England, is our great spiritual fact for ever interpreted to us - the Assumption of the Dragon. No St. George any more to be heard of; no more dragon-slaying possible: this child [Turner], born on St. George's Day, can only make manifest the dragon, not slay him, sea-serpent as he is; whom the English Andromeda, not fearing, takes for her lord.¹⁰⁸

Ruskin's awakening by the late 1850s to the nation's fallen state due to laissez-faire economics resulted in his bitter crusade to banish modern political economy - "the devil's

¹⁰⁷ Sherburne, *Ambiguities of Abundance*, 94, "The year 1860 is an important one in Ruskin's life. It marks, in his own words, 'the beginning of the days of reprobation' - of a 'new epoch of life and death.' Although he has long been moving toward social criticism, there is a real change. No longer does he conceal his critique behind a façade of artistic studies." See also Gertrude Himmelfarb, ed., *The Spirit of the Age: Victorian Essays* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 172, "The year 1860 is often said to be the demarcating line in Ruskin's life, the year when the critic of art (*Modern Painters* had just been completed) was transmuted into the critic of society (with the appearance of the first chapters of *Unto This Last*). But the critic of society was there all along."

¹⁰⁸ Ruskin, *Modern Painters V*, in *Works*, 7:407-408. See also Ruskin, *Modern Painters V*, in *Works*, 7:437, "I will only point, in conclusion, to the intensity with which his [Turner's] imagination dwelt always on the three great cities of Carthage, Rome, and Venice - Carthage in connection especially with the thoughts and study which led to the painting of the Hesperides' Garden, showing the death which attends the vain pursuit of wealth." Fitch, *Poison Sky*, 414-415, "This, then . . . is the picture's true message: 'the Assumption of the Dragon,' the apotheosis of greed. Turner's 'first great religious picture' becomes through Ruskin's mythic analysis a true apocalypse of the nineteenth century. . . . In Turner's vision at this time the Mammon-dragon reigned supreme over a polluted land, and he had no means with which to challenge it, though he was Saint George's child." Turner was born on St. George's Day (April 23), 1775.

philosophy” – from England and thereby eliminate its impact on the art market. In the final volume (1860) of *Modern Painters*, Ruskin had written:

I had no conception of the absolute darkness which has covered the national mind . . . until I began to come into collision with persons engaged in the study of economical and political questions. The entire naïvité and undisturbed imbecility with which I found them declare that the laws of the Devil were the only practicable ones, and that the laws of God were merely a form of poetical language, passed all that I had ever before heard or read of mortal infidelity. I knew the fool had often said in his heart, there was *no* God; but to hear him say clearly out with his lips, “There is a foolish God,” was something which my art studies had not prepared me for.¹⁰⁹

Two months later, Ruskin wrote in *Unto This Last*:

Nothing in history had ever been so disgraceful to human intellect as the acceptance among us of the common doctrines of political economy as a science. I have many grounds for saying this, but one of the chief may be given in few words. I know no previous instance in history of a nation’s establishing a systematic disobedience to the first principles of its professed religion. The writings which we (verbally) esteem as divine, not only denounce the love of money as the source of all evil, and as an idolatry abhorred of the Deity, but declare mammon service to be the accurate and irreconcilable opposite of God’s service: and, whenever they speak of riches absolute, and poverty absolute, declare woe to the rich, and blessing to the poor.¹¹⁰

As one reviewer of *Unto This Last*’s sequel, *Munera Pulveris*, put it:

The apparent antagonism between economic science and the teaching of the Gospel has struck many minds of late years; it has seemed to them that the problem which has perplexed all ages of the world has in these latter days become more dark and insoluble. Thinkers for countless generations had asked themselves how evil could coexist with the Divine goodness. . . . Many have attempted to solve the difficulty. . . . This is the labour which Mr. Ruskin has undertaken.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ Ruskin, *Modern Painters* V, in *Works*, 7:448.

¹¹⁰ Ruskin, *Unto This Last*, in *Works*, 17:75-76.

¹¹¹ Unsigned review of Ruskin’s “Essays on Political Economy,” *London Review* (October 1865), reprinted in J. L. Bradley, ed., *Ruskin: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge, 1984), 291. David Sonstroem, “Millett versus Ruskin: A Defense of Ruskin’s ‘Of Queen’s Gardens,’” *Victorian Studies* 20 (Spring 1977): 285, “His leading concern during this time [the 1860s] was combating the laissez-faire theories of the political economists of the day – theories contrary to his sense of social and even cosmic order and personal worth.”

Martin, conversely, had no wish to slay “the Mammon dragon of nineteenth-century materialism,” but embraced “the devil’s philosophy” of laissez-faire political economy.¹¹² He endorsed the idea of a free market for art’s production and consumption, telling the Select Committee on Arts and Manufactures that, in the business of art, “competition is the fairest way” and “‘clear stage and no favour’ as the saying is.”¹¹³ Government was not needed to reform a society where “we are all too much in the habit of confusing art as *applied* to manufacture, with manufacture itself,” but only to ensure that free and open competition existed between artists and exhibiting societies.¹¹⁴

Political economy represented for Ruskin “the principle of death” and “the laws of the devil,” so too Martin’s works became for Ruskin in later life, during bouts of mental illness, not only soulless, manufactured products, but also visual evidence that the Devil was winning the war for the hearts and minds of England. At a time when his lifelong battle with the “Evil One” was taking the form of hallucinations, Ruskin still seemed to be obsessed with Martin – who had been dead for over twenty-five years– when in 1880 he described the “reckless accumulation of false magnitude” (again, the quantity vs. quality dichotomy) in Martin’s pictures as “allied to nightmare,” “insolent,” and “not reverent.”¹¹⁵

¹¹² Fitch, *Poison Sky*, 414.

¹¹³ “Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1836), para. 897, 878.

¹¹⁴ Ruskin, *The Elements of Drawing*, in *Works*, 15:12. He also warned, “Farther: it is surely inexpedient that any reference to purposes of manufacture should interfere with the education of the artist himself.” Martin in Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1836), para. 863, however, was unashamed of his own time spent working in the manufacturing sector before becoming an oil painter, responding to the question, “Might I ask if you have not pursued the arts in another shape formerly, and more connected with manufactures, than as an historical painter?” with “Yes; I was compelled to do so from circumstances in the former part of my life, as all artists must have a beginning.”

¹¹⁵ Ruskin, *Notes by Mr. Ruskin on Samuel Prout and William Hunt*, in *Works*, 14:399 n., “Reckless accumulation of false magnitude – as by John Martin – is merely a vulgar weakness of brain, allied to nightmare; so also the colossal works of decadent states in sculpture and architecture, which are always

Four years later, another comment about Martin took the form of an uncontrolled outburst. In *The Bible of Amiens*, Ruskin had been discussing a series of quatrefoil sculptures on the west façade of Amiens Cathedral in which each sculpture depicted a scene symbolic of an Old Testament prophet.¹¹⁶ When he came to the scene depicting the story of Belshazzar's Feast from the Book of Daniel, Ruskin described and interpreted the relief, then exclaimed, "For modern bombast as opposed to old simplicity, compare the *Belshazzar's Feast* of John Martin!"¹¹⁷ As Michael Wheeler has explained, "Like Ruskin's reading of his paranoid delusions, his interpretation of . . . the sculptures of the cathedral in *The Bible of Amiens* . . . is informed by belief in the wisdom of 'the Creator of all', and a sense of urgency in St George's fight against the (modern) world, the flesh and the Devil."¹¹⁸ Martin's art thus represented for Ruskin not only the complete antithesis of Turner's works in its profaneness but also the antithesis of the sculptures of Amiens Cathedral. These Ruskin described as "the alphabet and epitome of the religion, by the knowledge and inspiration of which an acceptable worship might

insolent, not reverent." In 1878, Ruskin suffered his first breakdown and believed that the devil or "Evil One" was menacing him at his home at Brantwood in the shape of a black cat, a crowing cock, or a shrieking peacock. See Sherburne, *Ambiguities of Abundance*, 301, 352 n.61. Tim Hilton, *John Ruskin* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), 699, "There now begins, from the late autumn of 1880, a deterioration in Ruskin's mental condition that would end in his second breakdown." Wheeler, *Ruskin's God*, 238, "As he pieced together fragments of Christendom and recorded his longing for unity and order in a divided and chaotic world, the boundaries between external reality and internal delusion became harder to define. In moments of psychological crisis, Ruskin turned to the Old Testament wisdom literature on which he had always relied. His personal faith, his understanding of divine wisdom, and indeed his sense of divine peace, deepened, and biblical texts which had formerly meant nothing now spoke to him for the first time. At the same time his sense of evil, experienced in direct encounters with the Devil in his madness, intensified."

¹¹⁶ Hilton, *John Ruskin*, 708, "But the resumption of 'St George's work', at first tentative, soon acquired a momentum . . . Once again he took up *The Bible of Amiens*."

¹¹⁷ Ruskin, *The Bible of Amiens*, in *Works*, 33:157.

¹¹⁸ Wheeler, *Ruskin's God*, 241.

be rendered, within those gates, to the Lord whose Fear was in His Holy Temple – and whose seat was in Heaven.”¹¹⁹

It should be noted before concluding, that Martin’s plans discussed in Chapter 3 also would have been contrary to Ruskin’s beliefs about humanity’s relationship to nature as a conduit to God. Although Ruskin did not, so far as I know, comment specifically on Martin’s plans to embank the Thames, he described Bazalgette’s recently completed Victoria Embankment to an Oxford audience in 1870 as a place “worth your visit, for you are not likely to find elsewhere a spot which, either in costly and ponderous brutality of building, or in the squalid and indecent accompaniment of it, is so far separated from the peace and grace of nature, and so accurately indicative of the methods of our national resistance to the Grace, Mercy, and Peace of Heaven.”¹²⁰

Ruskin surely also would have disapproved of Martin’s plans to expand the national railroad network to improve international commerce and to increase competition with the canal companies, having said in 1843, two years before Martin published his plan for a London Connecting Railway, “I see what the world is coming to. We shall put it into a chain armour of railroad, and then everybody will go everywhere every day until every place is like every other

¹¹⁹ Ruskin, *The Bible of Amiens*, in *Works*, 33:123.

¹²⁰ Ruskin, *Aratra Pentelici*, in *Works*, 20: 257. The Victoria Embankment runs along the north side of the Thames from Westminster Bridge to Blackfriars Bridge. It was begun in 1864 and completed in 1870. Stewart M. Ellis, *Mainly Victorian* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1925), 76, has noted, “[Martin] drew up designs for a Thames Embankment, of which he claimed to have originated the idea. He died in 1854, and the Victoria Embankment was commenced ten years later.” Oliver, “Thames Embankment,” 236, has argued the embanked Thames “became an emblematic product of modernity, disciplined both in content and form by embankment, the concrete and representational forms of which were the product of the bureaucratic and economic forces manifested at that time and in that place.”

place, and when they are tired of changing stations . . . they will congregate in knots in great cities.”¹²¹

In a curious twist, as Sherburne has noted, the anti-Malthusian Ruskin also believed that “the only cure for the growth of cities and the destruction of rural life is the restriction of population.”¹²² Martin, on the other hand, devised plans to better “provide for the future population” of the metropolis with jobs.¹²³ Martin also proposed solutions to boost industrial

¹²¹ Ruskin to Joseph Severn, September 1843, in *Works*, 38:353. Sherburne, *Ambiguities of Abundance*, 269, “The second area in which he [Ruskin] calls for a halt or limit is that of accelerating speed in communication and transportation, of diminishing distances, and of physical crowding in cities. . . . Ruskin views the new means of communication and transportation as just that – means, not ends. In themselves, they are useless or even harmful, for, by shortening time and space, they sacrifice quality of perception to quantity.”

¹²² Sherburne, *Ambiguities of Abundance*, 273. Sherburne added, “Although Ruskin’s vision of abundance [for all] prevents him from agreeing with Malthusians . . . he does believe that there is a definite limit to the number of people who can live in England.” On Ruskin’s opposition to Malthus’s population doctrines, see Sherburne, *Ambiguities of Abundance*, 88-89, 160; Henderson, *Ruskin’s Political Economy*, 60; Gallagher, *Body Economic*, 88; Harold A. Boner, *Hungry Generations: The Nineteenth-Century Case Against Malthusianism* (New York: King’s Crown Press, 1955), 182-184. See also Ruskin, *Unto This Last*, in *Works*, 17:106, “In all the ranges of human thought I know none so melancholy as the speculations of political economists on the population question.” According to Ruskin’s father, when the *Cornhill Magazine* published the essays later collected in *Unto This Last*, “John was obliged to put ‘J. R.,’ as the Editor would not be answerable for opinions so opposed to Malthus and the *Times* and the City of Manchester”; John James Ruskin to Mrs. John Simon, July 21, 1860, in *Works*, 17:xxvi-xxvii. During a one-month visit to England, Jules Michelet, *Voyage en Angleterre: août-septembre 1834* (Arles: Sulliver, 2005), 32 wrote in his journal on August 7, 1834, that “*Bentham, Malthus, Martin* are the expression of England. The self-interest, the crowd, the stifling population. England stifles. The rich say to the poor (by way of Malthus): breed no more.” [*Bentham, Malthus, Martin* sont l’expression de l’Angleterre. L’intérêt, la foule, l’étouffement de la population. L’Angleterre étouffe. Le riche dit au pauvre (par Malthus): N’engendre plus.]. On Michelet’s remarks, see Sez nec, *John Martin en France*, 29.

¹²³ Martin, *Outline* (1850), 13. He continued by describing this as “a subject of serious moment when we reflect on the present rate of increase, for in a country where die annually many who have attained 100 years, it is not too much to assert that the child is already born amongst us who will live to see 10,000,000 of people in our Metropolis. . . . And what, yet again, as the population increases? It is then our solemn duty boldly to face the evil [of Thames pollution], and to provide according to the great necessities of the increasing population – to grasp at some broad comprehensive measure, and not to be scared by its cost, or by considerations of return. Ample direct returns, however, can be shown from the foregoing plans; but the direct returns are as nothing compared with the advantages that would accrue from the permanent employment created for the people;—the consequent diminution of the poor’s rates;—and the augmentation of agricultural produce.”

agriculture in order to feed, not just London's, but also Britain's, swelling population. Ruskin, who despised the machine age, commanded:

Get your heads quite clear on this matter. Out of so much ground, only so much living is to be got, with or without machinery. You may set a million of steam-ploughs to work on an acre, if you like – out of that acre only a given number of grains of corn will grow, scratch or scorch it as you will. So that the question is not at all whether, by having more machines, more of you can live. No machines will increase the possibilities of life.¹²⁴

In many ways then, it is Ruskin, not Martin, who was visionary and apocalyptic in his approach to the social and economic problems facing nineteenth-century England. P. D. Anthony has argued, “Indeed, the heart of the attack [by Ruskin] on *laissez-faire* is that it represents an ugly, competitive unnatural scramble, quite out of tune with the balance to be observed around us. Ruskin sees the times and human society as so far out of joint that they will, by reason of the extent of their disorder, produce and require a millenarian disturbance in order to restore something like the Kingdom of God on earth.”¹²⁵ As Sherburne has said, Ruskin “spent his entire

¹²⁴ Ruskin, *Fors Clavigera*, letter 5, in *Works*, 27:87. Hobson, *Ruskin: Social Reformer*, 165, who considered himself a disciple of Ruskin, stated that Ruskin advocated “a tempered feudalism, with nominal ownership and some real control and responsibility vested in ‘great old families,’ while complete security of tenure and freedom of cultivation is secured to a peasant class.” However, even he found it impossible to endorse Ruskin’s “new agricultural feudalism” and “hardly conceivable that the present land system should be revolutionized by the voluntary cession of the right to draw rents and to control cultivation, enjoyed now by private landowners.” See Hobson, *Ruskin: Social Reformer*, 166-167. P. J. Cain, *Hobson and Imperialism: Radicalism, New Liberalism, and Finance, 1887-1938* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 45, argued that Ruskin’s agrarianism was “a late emanation of the civic humanist tradition of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in England where the land was associated with virtue and independence and towns with luxury, corruption and loss of autonomy. Indeed, Ruskin argued that a society whose wealth was based on manufacturing . . . was also demonstrating moral weakness because it had become too dependent on industry will all its attendant evils.” See also Linda M. Austin, *The Practical Ruskin: Economics and Audience in the Late Work* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 13.

¹²⁵ Anthony, *Ruskin’s Labour*, 187. On Ruskin and the apocalypse, see also Fitch, *Poison Sky*.

life in “strategic retreat” from the nineteenth century; Martin, by contrast, plowed full steam ahead into it.¹²⁶

Having established in this and previous chapters that Martin was very much a “clear stage and no favour” capitalist and that his art, like Whistler’s, represented the best or worst – depending on one’s point of view – that nineteenth-century laissez-faire England had to offer in art, I shall examine in the final chapter how in Martin’s works:

the mode by which the capitalist surface reflected its true, underlying relationships in a mystified and distorted form was precisely inversion. In the *Grundrisse* Marx wrote that “Competition, in order to compel capital to obey its inner laws through outer necessity, reverses them all in appearance. It *inverts* [*verkehrt*] them.” The point was made often in *Capital*, particularly in Volume Three and in the section on the profit law. “*Everything appears reversed in competition. . . . All things appear distorted, namely reversed, in competition. . . . It is an enchanted, perverted topsy-turvy world.*”¹²⁷

As one reviewer described Martin’s large painting of the *Deluge* (fig. 8) where positive and negative space has been reversed or inverted, “We know not at first what it is – at any distance where such a subject should be seen it is nothing – it looks like a large polished dark japanned tea-tray, over which some red ink and cream had been spilt and run into streaks.”¹²⁸ Yet another seemed amazed to find that Martin had also “taken good care to varnish his ‘Deluge’ so highly that you may see your face in it.”¹²⁹

¹²⁶ Sherburne, *Ambiguities of Abundance*, 273. Sherburne also said of Ruskin, “One could hardly withdraw farther from the advanced positions of Victorian England.” Sherburne, *Ambiguities of Abundance*, 268.

¹²⁷ Jerrold Seigel, *Marx’s Fate: The Shape of a Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 357.

¹²⁸ “Exhibitions-The Royal Academy,” *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* 42 (September 1837), 340. This echoes Ruskin’s comment, “Martin’s works are merely a common manufacture, as much makeable to order as a tea-tray,” and anticipates his later comment that Whistler’s *The Falling Rocket* was like a pot of paint flung in the public’s face.

¹²⁹ “Exhibition at the Royal Academy,” *New Sporting Magazine* 12 (June 1837), 405. Steven Best and Douglas Kellner, *The Postmodern Turn* (New York: Guildford Press, 1997), 51, “This triumph of the market can be interpreted in terms of inversion and abstraction. Capitalist inversion takes place on several levels, beginning with the inversion of subject-object relations and the domination of the subject by the

And speaking of inverted points of view: in 1849 Martin recalled that before his *Sadak in Search of the Waters of Oblivion* (fig. 3) was put on view at the Royal Academy in 1812, he “overheard the men who were placing it in the frame disputing as to which was the top of the picture!”¹³⁰ As it turns out, Martin’s friend and diarist Serjeant Ralph Thomas, who recorded the *Sadak* story, was also an early patron of the young Whistler.¹³¹ Thomas’s son (also named Ralph) recounted in the first published catalogue of Whistler’s etchings that “while Whistler was etching this [*Soupe à trois sous*] (Paris, 1859), at twelve o’clock at night, a gend’arme came up to him and wanted to know what he was doing. Whistler gave him the plate upside down, but officialism could make nothing of it.”¹³² These two stories of capitalist inversion or topsy-turviness relating to the art of Ruskin’s *bêtes noires* are almost surely not a coincidence, because five months before Whistler’s counsel Serjeant Parry himself presented *Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket* (fig. 22) to the court upside down at Ruskin’s trial, Whistler pasted in his press-cutting book a news clipping entitled “The ‘Upside Down’ Joke” from the *Piccadilly* that likened another one of his paintings, which had been hung upside down at an exhibition, to Martin’s *Sadak in Search of the Waters of Oblivion*.¹³³

object. Ironically, the subject is posited by modern theory as the sovereign power that is to rule nature and the world of objects, but under capitalism objects come to rule human beings.”

¹³⁰ Martin’s letter to the editor of the *Illustrated London News* (March 17, 1849), 176.

¹³¹ George du Maurier, *The Young George du Maurier: A Selection of His Letters, 1860-67*, ed. Daphne du Maurier (London: Peter Davies, 1951), 282, “Serjeant Thomas . . . was a lawyer who opened a print shop in Bond Street. A fervent admirer and patron of Whistler, he allowed the artist to print the etchings of the lower Thames on a press installed in his house, and there the plates were bitten while Thomas plied the artist with excellent port.” Thomas sold Whistler’s etchings from his store at 39 Old Bond Street.

¹³² Ralph Thomas, *A Catalogue of the Etchings and Drypoints of James Abbott Macneil [sic] Whistler* (London: Privately printed by John Russell Smith, 1874), no. 25.

¹³³ For the press-cutting book, see Glasgow University Library, Whistler PC 2/32. The clipping is dated June 6, 1878. The trial began on November 15, 1878. On the upside-down presentation of Whistler’s *Falling Rocket* at the trial, see Merrill, *A Pot of Paint*, 127.

CHAPTER 5

**“A DISPOSITION TO RENDER ART
SUBSERVIENT TO MATERIAL INTERESTS”:
MARTIN AS PAINTER (AND PRINTMAKER)**

The bourgeoisie . . . has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous “cash payment.” . . . It has resolved personal worth into exchange value, and in place of the numberless indefeasible chartered freedoms, has set up that single, unconscionable freedom - Free Trade.¹

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*,
1848

You cannot be surprised at my applying to you respecting the prints provided so long since – especially after the letter I received from you promising to acquaint me by the end of January with your final determination as to purchasing or retaining those in hand on commission and paying for the Belshazzar orders. As you were to have certain terms in consideration of cash payment I must desire a reply by return of post for the time which has elapsed ~~was~~ is certainly far from understood as cash payment.²

Martin to [Henry?] Lacey, a Liverpool printseller, March 1,
1841

I owed Martin 25. I left him out in my schedule on a principle of honor & affection. 6 months ago I wrote him to say my prospects were better, and offered to arrange to pay him. I got no answer, but today, without notice, got a lawyer’s letter. . . . Martin is beginning to feel wealthy & love accumulation.³

The Diary of Benjamin Robert Haydon, July 24, 1832

¹ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (1848; trans. Samuel Moore, 1888, London: Penguin, 2002), 222.

² Anderdon Royal Academy Catalogues, Dept. of Prints and Drawings, British Museum, vol. 12 (1841); also quoted in Balston, *John Martin*, 205.

³ *The Diary of Benjamin Robert Haydon*, ed. Willard Bissell Pope, 5 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960-1963), 3:629. On July 26, 1832, Haydon also recorded, “Painted only an hour; obliged to go out, & try to arrange about Martin’s debt & my water rate. My God, when I consider what I have lent Artists & never got it again, and never thought of proceedings, I am shocked at Martin’s conduct. Never mind – he who has known necessity to embarrass me at this critical moment is shocking. However, peace to him.” Four months later, on November 28, he added, “Out, on Martin’s balance, to beg for time, & got it. It is cruel of Martin to press me now, opulent as he is.” Then, three days later, he entered in his diary, “Out all day, & exceedingly harassed for want of money. . . . In great difficulties I ran in to my dear old Friend Cockerell, and though he has great reason to complain of my irregularity he lent me £5. I wanted him to buy my sketch of Sir Walter. He could not, but advised me to ask Lord Francis. To him I wrote, and if he does it, it will rescue me from Martin’s fangs, & enable [me] to get on.” See *Diary of Benjamin Robert Haydon*, 3:630, 4:18-19.

In the last chapter I demonstrated that Ruskin's condemnations of "the Professed and organised pursuit of Money" informed his criticisms of Martin's work as repetitive and substituting quantity for quality.⁴ In this final chapter, I will develop Ruskin's line of thinking further, by arguing that Martin developed his repetitive and theatrical style of painting that became his trademark and referred to by some as "Martinesque" in order to compete in the free-for-all of the London art world.⁵ In pursuing Ruskin's line of thinking further, however, I am not claiming that Martin's pursuit of money is the sole explanation for the calculated manipulations of his paintings. As Ann Bermingham has argued, there were other operative factors - such as the rise of popular entertainments like the panorama and the diorama - that "encouraged artists," like Martin, "to inflate the size of their works and to introduce eye-catching effects into their landscapes."⁶ Others have also fruitfully explored how Martin's polymathic interests, ranging from civil engineering to theories of evolution to archaeology, influenced his approach and choice of subjects.⁷ However, I will argue in this chapter that Martin's belief in economic self-interest as the driving force of society was the most important factor in his development as an artist; so much so that, as I will illustrate later, he priced his paintings according to a simplified version of the classical labor theory of value (the exchange value of any commodity is regulated

⁴ Ruskin to Dr. John Brown, August 1862, in *Letters of Dr. John Brown*, 296.

⁵ For examples of use of the term "Martinesque," see *Library of the Fine Arts* 1 (June 1831), 425; *Eclectic Review* 6 (December 1831), 556; *Court Magazine* 3 (June 1833), 156; *Athenaeum*, no. 909 (March 29, 1845), 314; *Fraser's Magazine* 46 (August 1852), 165. For a brief discussion of the use of *martinienne* in France, see Jean Seznec, *John Martin en France* (London: Faber and Faber, 1964), 29.

⁶ Ann Bermingham, "Landscape-O-Rama: The Exhibition Landscape at Somerset House and the Rise of Popular Landscape Entertainments," in *Art on the Line: The Royal Academy Exhibitions at Somerset House, 1780-1836*, ed. David H. Solkin (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), 127.

⁷ See, respectively, Klingender, *Art and the Industrial Revolution*, 120-126, 210-211; Hopkins, "Terrible and Traditional Muses," 17-117; Frederick Bohrer, "Inventing Assyria: Exoticism and Reception in Nineteenth-Century England and France," *Art Bulletin* 80 (June 1998): 336-356.

by the amount of labor embodied in it).⁸ This, in turn, as I will argue towards the end of the chapter, contributed to his destroying the illusion of deep space created in his paintings by linear perspective by overworking the surfaces of his canvases with pigment in an effort to turn them into luxury commodities. Before the modern period, when guilds were predominant across Europe, a painting contract between a master artist and a client would have specified the price of a painting based on the amount of labor required, as well as the materials to be used and the size of the work. By the middle of the eighteenth century, this sort of pricing structure had been abandoned by Academic painters, who had wanted to break away from craft traditions and guild practices in order to raise the status of painting from a mechanical to a liberal art.⁹ Although it may seem as if Martin's practice of pricing his paintings according to the quantity of labor needed to produce them was a return to pre-Academic practice, the prices of Martin's paintings – as befitting his self-image as an “independant [sic]” artist - were never fixed by a trade association and no standards for quality were ever set for his works by a professional corporation.¹⁰ These matters were Martin's concern alone. Moreover, Martin nearly always

⁸ “Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1836), viii. There are various versions of the labor theory of value; but, at the time Martin was working, the dominant model, which Marx appropriated and revised, was the Ricardian model. According to Richard D. Wolff, Antonio Callari, and Bruce Roberts, “A Marxian Alternative to the Traditional ‘Transformation Problem,’” *Review of Radical Political Economics* 16 (Summer/Fall 1984): 118, “Ricardo is known for the attempt to reduce commodity value to a magnitude of physically embodied labor-time. . . . For Ricardo, commodity value was determined by the quantity of labor-time – both living and embodied in the used-up means of production – technically required to produce it . . . This Ricardian theory of value we call the ‘physical quantity labor theory of value.’”

⁹ The best comparative study of art guilds and academies in Europe remains Pevsner, *Academies of Art*.

¹⁰ *Illustrated London News* (March 17, 1849), 176. On the Painter-Stainers' Company setting standards of workmanship and publishing lists of trade prices of painters' work according to labour and materials, see Alexander Pulling, *The Laws, Customs, Usages, and Regulations of the City and Port of London*, 2nd ed. (London: William Henry Bond, [1854?]), 287-288 (h).

painted “on spec,” not by commission or contract.¹¹ As he explained his reasons for painting “on spec” to the Select Committee on Arts and Manufactures, “You cannot expect an historical picture to be painted so well to order; for it is generally given by the taste of the patron, without any regard to the peculiar power of the artist, who is consequently often incompetent to the subject, and but rarely equals what he would do if he were left to his own judgment.”¹² Although the Academicians Gainsborough, West, and Copley, had also painted “on spec” years before Martin even picked up a brush, all, as Academicians, nurtured ambitions to distinguish painting as a liberal profession, rather than a mechanical trade, in Britain.¹³ Martin, by contrast, was intent on keeping British painting firmly anchored in its place as a mechanical trade by placing emphasis on the amount of manual labor that went into his canvases and, as discussed in Chapter 2, exhibiting his historical landscapes at exhibitions of scientific and mechanical ingenuity alongside other forms of manufacture.

¹¹ James Heilbrun and Charles M. Gray, *The Economics of Art and Culture*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 175, “Artistic products can be regarded as either commissioned or speculative. Commissioned works are those that are specifically requested by a client who familiar with the artist’s technique, such familiarity having been gained from previous exposure. Portraits typically are commissioned, and established artists are more likely to secure commissions. . . . Speculative works are those produced by the artist with no guarantee of sale. The artist invests time, talent, and materials in producing art that may – or may not – subsequently be purchased for an acceptable price. . . . These works are offered in the primary market.”

¹² “Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1836), paras. 830, 832. Three notable exceptions are: the *Destruction of Pompeii and Herculaneum*, commissioned by the Duke of Buckingham in 1821; the *Eve of the Deluge*, commissioned by Prince Albert in 1839; and, the *Assuaging of the Waters*, commissioned by the Duchess of Sutherland also in 1839. However, in all three cases, Martin had a great say in the final composition.

¹³ On Gainsborough painting “on spec,” see Ronald Paulson, *Breaking and Remaking: Aesthetic Practice in England, 1720-1820* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1989), 313. On West and Copley, see Oskar Bätschmann, *The Artist in the Modern World: The Conflict between Market and Self-Expression* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 29-36. On the establishment of the Royal Academy’s as an interventionist attempt to distinguish British painting as a liberal art rather than a mechanical trade, see Barrell, *Political Theory of Painting*; Solkin, *Painting for Money*; Fox, “Art and Trade.”

My goal in this chapter, therefore, is to show that Martin's trademark "Martinesque" style was not so much a side effect of his lack of academic training, as the consequence of his conception of his paintings as handmade commodities. Indeed, Richard Beamish, an associate of Martin's spiritualist physician John Elliotson, ascertained something from a tracing of Martin's left hand that Ruskin, as discussed in Chapter 4, had already deduced from examining Martin's works: "the full development of the third phalanges indicates a love of material things, and a disposition to render art subservient to material interests."¹⁴ While I will briefly discuss Martin's economic reasons for turning to printmaking (1824-1840) and watercolors (1839-1853) as a major source of income, I want to give a special emphasis in this final chapter to his oil paintings. This is because Martin is best-known today as for his achievements as a printmaker, while his technical innovations as a painter in oils have been largely overlooked, if not completely denied.¹⁵ In doing so, I am not making the case for Martin as a great artist; however, I am making the argument that Martin sought to break away from the traditional Renaissance conception of a painting as a window onto the world in order to set himself apart as a native

¹⁴ Richard Beamish, *The Psychonomy of the Hand: or, the Hand an Index of Mental Development*, 2nd ed. (London: Frederick Pitman, 1865), 69. Martin had been dead for eleven years when Beamish's book was first published; however, Beamish, viii, stated that he had "collected from time to time, during the last twenty years, tracings of hands (amounting to some hundreds) of individuals whose characters were more or less ascertained." See also below regarding Martin's fear of damage to his painting hand (his right hand) by spiritualist experiments.

¹⁵ There has not been a retrospective of Martin's paintings since the 1975 exhibition at Hazlitt, Gooden & Fox. Yet there have been three touring exhibitions of his prints in Europe and the US since 1986, all organized by Michael Campbell. Campbell, *John Martin: Visionary Printmaker*, exh. cat. ([England]: Campbell Fine Art, in association with York City Art Gallery, 1992), 3, has noted, "It was his engravings, especially those contained between the protecting pages of impressive books such as Milton's *Paradise Lost*, rather than his paintings, which were to keep his name alive during more than a century of neglect." Balston, "Illustrator and Pamphleteer," 383, "It is chiefly on account of these works [his mezzotints illustrating *Paradise Lost* and the Old Testament], in which he proves himself one of the greatest illustrators of great literature, that his name should be held in permanent esteem." However, Martin's skill as a watercolorist is becoming more appreciated. See Tim Wilcox, *The Triumph of Watercolour: The Early Years of the Royal Watercolour Society, 1805-1855* (London: Philip Wilson Publishers; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 116.

genius in the highly competitive market for landscape painting in early nineteenth-century London. What differentiates him from someone like Turner, as discussed in my Introduction, is that while Turner deployed genius as an alibi or smokescreen to mask his commercial intent in order to reaffirm his place in a community bound together by mutual sympathy, Martin - by speaking about himself as a genius in pamphlets that he published to accompany exhibitions of his paintings - employed the notion of the artist as genius as a self-interested, promotional ploy to set himself off from his competitors.

In his 1978 article, “All That is Solid Melts Into Air: Marx, Modernism and Modernization,” Marshall Berman discussed how Marx, writing in London between 1847 and 1848, had argued that in bourgeois capitalist society:

Art, science, social theory . . . all are modes of production; the bourgeoisie controls the means of production in culture, as in everything else, and anyone who wants to create must work in the orbit of its power. As members of the proletariat, modern professionals, intellectuals, and artists, “live only so long as they find work, and . . . find work only so long as their labor increases capital. These workers, who must sell themselves piecemeal, are a commodity like every other article of commerce, and are consequently exposed to all the vicissitudes of competition, to all the fluctuations of the market.” Thus they can write books, paint pictures, discover physical or historical laws, save lives, only if someone with capital will pay them.¹⁶

As discussed in earlier chapters, exposure “to all the vicissitudes of competition” had been for a number of artists and critics, such as Shee and Ruskin, at the heart of all that was wrong with the London art world during the early nineteenth century because it had made artists slaves of the market.¹⁷ However, for Martin, free competition in art was an unmitigated good; it was the key

¹⁶ Marshall Berman, “‘All That is Solid Melts Into Air’: Marx, Modernism, and Modernization,” *Dissent* 25 (Winter 1978): 69; revised and republished in his *All That is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982), 111-129. Berman was quoting from the *Communist Manifesto* and assigns sole authorship to Marx, accepting Engels’s insistence in the preface to the German edition of 1883 that the “basic thought belongs solely and exclusively to Marx.”

¹⁷ Compare the Berman/Marx quote with Shee, *Elements*, 227 n., “Whatever rank he may hold in the opinion of the few who can understand and appreciate his claims, with the many, the Artist is but a maker

to economic and social advancement.¹⁸ As noted in the last chapter, Ruskin, writing a few years after Marx, opined that Martin's paintings were nothing more than articles of commerce, "merely a common manufacture, as much makeable to order as a tea tray."¹⁹ Ruskin was not alone in his opinion; several others before and after him said much the same thing, that Martin's paintings looked like gaudy tea-trays, designed to catch the eye of the consumer. This was so, in their opinion, because Martin seemed to lack a basic understanding of the theory and practice of painting as a liberal art, but still remained bent on a career as a painter, tackling even the grand

of pictures and statues - a manufacturer of figures and furniture; in no other respect distinguished from his brethren of the lathe and the loom, than as less employed, and worse rewarded; as contributing to the general stock of production, an article less useful in the exigence of society, and less available in the operations of commerce. But where trade is every thing, every thing must necessarily be trade; there is no exemption for Genius or Taste: they must take their stall in the market, and cry, 'who buys ?' like the rest of the fraternity, though few esteem, and fewer still understand their commodities. The intercourse of trade acknowledges no currency of commendation - no exchange of value in reverence - admits no items of praise or respect, to balance the account of ability, or make up the deficiency of coarser equivalents. He who is accustomed to pay, and to be paid, neither makes nor admits any other demand; money is the only reward he esteems or requires; it is therefore, the only reward which he bestows; and when he has paid the Artist his price, he conceives the account to be closed, and rejects all after claims of respect for his merit, as a species of imposition, and 'not to be found in the bond.' Thus it is, that in a commercial country, praise, honour, and respect, are put out of circulation, even amongst those, who value them above all other coin: thus it is, that money supersedes all other means of remuneration, and becomes the only measure of merit, without the power of rewarding it."

¹⁸ See "Report on Arts and Manufactures" (1836), para. 878, when Martin was asked whether he considered "the basis of encouragement to an artist should be free competition," he replied, "'Clear stage and no favour' as the saying is." See also para. 897, "Competition is the fairest way." Berman, "All That is Solid," 58, "The second great bourgeois achievement [for Marx] has been to liberate the human capacity and drive for development: for permanent change, for perpetual upheaval and renewal in every form of personal and social life. This drive, Marx shows, is embedded in the everyday workings and needs of the bourgeois economy. Everybody within reach of this economy finds himself under pressure of relentless competition, whether from across the street or across the world."

¹⁹ Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice II*, in *Works*, 10:223 n., "I do not mean in this general statement to include workmen, such as John Martin, whom I do not regard as painters at all. Martin's works are merely a common manufacture, as much makeable to order as a tea-tray or a coal-scuttle – such may be made and sold by the most respectable people, to any extent, without the least discredit to their characters. But I speak of men really deserving to be called painters, such as Zurbaran or Salvator; and of works which involve real skill and certain imagery truly, though coarsely terrible."

subjects of historical painting in his landscapes.²⁰ For instance, in 1822, the *General Weekly Register of News, Literature, Law, Politics and Commerce*, said of Martin's large canvas, the *Destruction of Pompeii and Herculaneum* (1822, damaged 1928, Tate, London, fig. 27):

We suspect, that to convey to us, as well as it could be conveyed, so peculiar and extravagant a scene, the soundest and most chastened professional theory would have been indispensable. And this, with all his undoubted genius, and with all his first-rate capabilities for excellence, we apprehend Mr. Martin does not possess. Possibly, we do not sufficiently recollect the natural difficulties of the subject: but we cannot regard this picture without beholding in it, the fling and play of a fine, but technically speaking, an unformed mind, licentiously rioting in its own egotistical confidence. It certainly does what nothing but genius could do – it excites – it astonishes – but it fails in doing what art alone can do – it does not please nor gratify. . . .

But our most serious charge against the very ingenious artist, is his mannerism – yes, his mannerism. The touch, touch, touch of his eternal and self-repeating pencil is tiresome and offensive, and unworthy of his higher claims to character as a painter. Not seldom it reminds us of the mere mechanical dexterity of a tea-tray [sic] artist; and this is particularly obvious in Mr. Martin's foliage, and in the making out and embellishments of his foregrounds.

To sum up our entire and candid opinion of Mr. Martin's pretensions, we would say – that with the advantages of a more regular professional education, as well in the theory as in the practice of his art, this gentleman would stand a fair chance of an eminent place in the highest class of his cotemporaries [sic].²¹

Similarly, John Eagles wrote of Martin's second version of the *Deluge* (fig. 8):

Mr. Martin has a very peculiar manner. But we doubt if he has ever closely and thoroughly reasoned with himself on his own style. . . . We know not at first what it is – at any distance where such a subject should be seen it is nothing – it looks like a large polished dark japanned tea-tray, over which some red ink and cream had been spilt and run into streaks. . . . It may be chaos indeed, but a japanned chaos, which, to our surprise,

²⁰ See Shee, *Elements*, 55, “The young votary of Taste has commonly more genius than money; hence he is obliged to pursue the *trade*, before he has had time to acquire the *art* of painting, and to commence business without capital or credit: ‘Gestit enim nummum in loculos demittere.’ [He is eager to drop a coin into his purse; see Horace, *Epistles*, 2.1.175 ff.]” After seeing Martin's *Belshazzar's Feast*, Thomas Griffiths Wainwright, writing as Janus Weathercock, said in “The British Institution,” *London Magazine* 3 (April 1821), 443, “Better still would it be for him if he could make up his mind to paint out all his little abortions, and renounce the ambition of becoming an historical painter; for which his professional education has in no ways qualified him, as his futile attempts on the human figure lamentably show.”

²¹ “Mr. Martin's Gallery,” *General Weekly Register of News, Literature, Law, Politics and Commerce*, no. 4 (April 28, 1822), 136. “Cotemporary” was a common variant spelling of “contemporary” in English before the twentieth century; see *OED* contemporary (β) for examples.

is no chaos at all, but an elaborate repetition of the same pattern over every inch of it, without the slightest attempt that we can perceive of any general effect as a whole.²²

The comparison of Martin's paintings to tea trays is a telling one: since the late eighteenth century, the painted tea tray had been a perfect symbol of bourgeois taste in England.²³ Martin's repetitive touch, like that of the tea-tray painter described by the *General Weekly Register*, was not, however, due simply to the fact that he lacked proper training as a painter; it was, as these critics recognized, a knack, or trick of the trade, designed to call the public's attention to his individual manner.²⁴ Indeed, many artists and critics noted throughout Martin's career that his "peculiar" (this word is used again and again) way of treating lofty subjects, such as scenes from the Bible, mythology, or ancient history, using repetitive details

²² [John Eagles], "Exhibitions-The Royal Academy," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 42 (September 1837), 340. The final sentence recalls Dostoevsky's comment made about London in his *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions* (1862), trans. Richard Lee Renfield (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1955), 90, and quoted in Berman's book, *All That is Solid*, 88, that the metropolis could be characterized by its "boldness of enterprise, that apparent disorder which in actuality is the highest degree of bourgeois order."

²³ See Cuthbert Bede, "Paintings on Tea-Trays," *Notes and Queries* (February 21, 1880): 159, "At that time [c. 1800] the tea-tray was usually placed upright on the side-tables of middle-class families, and was made an object of art and a room decoration by being ornamented with a well-executed painting." According to *Littell's Living Age* 36 (February 5, 1853), 243, one seldom missed seeing in Manchester "a huge, glaringly painted tea-tray, emblazoned with all the colors of the rainbow" in the homes of cotton mill operatives who aspired to middle-class respectability.

²⁴ [Wainewright], "The British Institution," 443, said of Martin, "His *forte* . . . is a knack of including a multiplicity of small parts, animate or inanimate, in some enormous area, natural or artificial." See Shee's verses in *Elements*, 269-272, that describe the sort of painter who regards painting as a trade:

With powers perverted, vulgar, vain, and cold,
The self-admiring mannerist behold! . . .
Thro' all his works one fav'rite system sways,
One touch attends him, and one tone betrays
His soul no emulative ardour fires,
No lofty sense of excellence inspires;
In trite routine, by knack, from Nature led,
The plodding hand still supersedes the head;
Pleased, in the present toil reflects the past,
And stamps the next dull ditto of the last.
Be this his praise, who thus his Art degrades,
A good mechanic in the worst of trades.

and miniscule figures was simply too frequent to be accidental. For instance, when Martin exhibited his *Paphian Bower* (1823, present location unknown) at the Royal Academy, Charles Westmacott noted that the painting looked to him like a revised version of Martin's *Adam and Eve Entertaining the Angel Raphael* (1823, Kirkcaldy Museum and Art Gallery, fig. 28), which Martin had exhibited just a few months earlier at the British Institution, "This picture partakes of all Mr. Martin's usual peculiarities. . . . There is a trick and mannerism about Mr. Martin's works that is purely mechanical; the picture before us is a second edition of his *Paradise* in the British Gallery, and is the only proof of good taste the hanging Committee have given us (the picture is placed where its gaudy effect cannot injure superior productions)."²⁵ The *New Monthly Magazine* likewise said that "as its merits and defects are, generally speaking, exactly similar to those included in his *Paradise*, exhibited at the British Institution last year, the opinion we expressed of that is in every respect applicable to the one before us. . . . [The picture] half disposes us to fear that the charges against this artist, of choosing his particular style, not from a conviction of its merits, but merely *ad captandum*, is [sic] not entirely unmerited."²⁶ In 1834, the

²⁵ Westmacott, *Descriptive and Critical Catalogue*, 11. Martin's *Adam and Eve Entertaining the Angel Raphael* was sometimes referred to as *Adam and Eve Entertaining the Angel Raphael in Paradise*, or simply *Paradise*. The painting takes its subject from Milton's *Paradise Lost*, while the *Paphian Bower* takes its subject from a popular ballad of the day, "Love among the Roses," by John Colston Doyle. Both, however, as Westmacott has suggested were compositionally very similar, and dealt with the theme of nature in a state of innocence. In the former, Martin depicted Adam, Eve, and Raphael seated under a bower in the Garden of Eden, listening, as the archangel explains to Adam that their happiness in the garden is contingent upon continued obedience to god. By way of explanation, the following lines, spoken by Raphael, from Book V of Milton's epic poem, were appended to the title, "Son of Heaven and Earth / Attend: that thou art happy owe / to God; / That thou continuest such, owe to thyself." The *Paphian Bower*, meanwhile, showed the Three Graces culling flowers and finding Love (Venus) on a bed of roses under a bower on the island of Paphos, as the appended – and slightly altered – lines from the song make clear, "The Graces there were gathering posies, and found young love among the roses."

²⁶ "Exhibition of the Royal Academy," *New Monthly Magazine* 9 (June 1, 1823), 256. *Ad captandum* is short for *ad captandum vulgus* (to catch the crowd). For another example where Martin's art is described as *ad captandum vulgus*, see "Thoughts on the Sublime in Music," *Analyst* 5, no. 8 (1836), 244. The *Literary Gazette*, no. 328 (May 3, 1823), 285, also said of the *Paphian Bower*, "This partakes, to a

Westminster Review, using terms that echoed Ruskin's economic critique of Martin's

“substitution of mere number or bulk for real infinity” as “morbid and meaningless tautology,”

claimed that Martin:

sees all things through the medium of one set of ideas. His imagination is morbid and feeble; morbid, because it never produces a scene of simple and natural beauty; feeble, because it does not conceive new scenes, but only reproduces new combinations of the same materials on the same principle and with similar effects. His pictures are made by recipe; differing only as the views produced by that ingenious toy ‘the myriorama,’ which by means of a few landscapes drawn with the same height of horizon, produces by shifting the portions an infinite variety of sameness that teazes till it disgusts; or like scenes composed out of the same set of models variously placed, and viewed under one kind of artificial light, only moved a little this way or that. If you have seen one or two of Martin's pictures, you have in a manner seen all; for you know by anticipation, how he will treat the subject, and are sure to find it composed of the same elements. With him every thing is in excess; multiplication is his favourite rule.²⁷

The opinion that Martin had found a technical trick and exploited it over and over in his paintings – as well as repeated his paintings – *ad nauseam* was shared by several of Martin's fellow painters. William Hazlitt, in his *Conversations of James Northcote, Esq., R.A.*, recorded that:

Northcote read something out of a newspaper about the Suffolk-street [SBA] Exhibition, in which his own name was mentioned, and M—'s [Martin's], the landscape painter. B— [William Beechey] said, his pictures were a trick – a streak of red, and then a streak of blue. But said Northcote, there is some merit in finding out a new trick. I ventured to hint, that the receipt for his [Martin's] was, clouds upon mountains, and mountains upon

considerable degree, of the qualities which marked his Paradise in the British Gallery – [it] has some extraordinary merits and some peculiarities, and is altogether a work of genius.”

²⁷ [R. H. Horne?], “Martin's *Illustrations of the Bible*,” *Westminster Review* 20 (April 1834), 457. [Horne?], 457-458, also noted the similarities between the *Paphian Bower* and *Adam and Eve Entertaining the Angel Raphael*, “His cities are composed of palaces piled on upon another with domes and towers; and whether it is the abode of mortals, devils, or angels, - Babylon, Pandæmonium, or the Celestial City, - there is no essential difference. His landscapes are all alike. The scene of the Paphian Bower is only one of Paradise with a Grecian temple.” The *Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals* tentatively attributed the article to Horne. On Ruskin's opinion, see Ruskin, *Modern Painters* I, in *Works*, 3:389.

clouds – that there was number and quantity, but neither form nor colour. He appeared to me an instance of a total want of imagination.²⁸

This charge of repetitiveness and lack of imagination hounded Martin, even when the illustration under consideration was a print by another artist after a drawing by Martin. In 1829, the *Edinburgh Literary Journal* said of J. T. Willmore's small steel engraving for the *Literary Souvenir* after Martin's *The Tournament* (fig. 29), "Like all Martin's productions, this picture is rather imposing at first sight, and when more closely examined, is something very like a piece of humbug. The eternal sameness – a sameness, too, of bad taste and absurdity – in this artist's style, is quite disgusting. He is a man of but *one* idea, and with that one idea he has gulled the public."²⁹

²⁸ William Hazlitt, *Conversations of James Northcote, Esq., R.A.* (London: H. Colburn and R. Bentley, 1830), 161. The date of the conversation was not given; however, it occurred sometime between 1824, when Martin exhibited his work at the inaugural exhibition of the Society of British Artists in Suffolk Street, and 1830, the year of Hazlitt's publication. See also Ernest Fletcher, ed., *Conversations of James Northcote R.A. with James Ward on Art and Artists* (London: Methuen & Co., 1901), 248, when Northcote also said that he considered the pictures of Martin and his rival Francis Danby "as mere tricks, and not historic art – the mere work of young beginners." Haydon also remarked (May 9, 1828) in his *Diary*, 3:276, "Martin & Danby are men of extraordinary imaginations, but infants in *painting*. These Pictures always seem to Artists as if a child of extraordinary fancy had taken up a brush to express its inventions. The Public, who are no judges of the Art, as an *Art*, over praise their inventions, & the Artists, who are always professional, see only the errors of the brush."

²⁹ "The *Literary Souvenir* for 1830; - *The New Year's Gift*, and *Juvenile Souvenir* for 1830; - *The Keepsake* for 1830," *Edinburgh Literary Journal* 2 (October 10, 1829), 263. The reviewer went on to quote another article from the *Atlas* that described Martin's pictures as "strange, fantastical, extravagant, chimerical fancies, without the range of the probable, and on the borders of the impossible. Acres of mountain, forests of pillar, crowds of figures, shoals of vases and flagons, pyramids of steps, piles of frieze and pediment, cram his pictures to choking – you are treated to a surfeit of material – it is a city feast of fancy – a wholesome warehouse of architecture. Quantity is his recipe in all things. . . . But when you have seen one, you have seen all; it is teasing like the ever-shifting monotony of those toy prints, the 'Myrioramas,' where the eye is tantalized by an endless variety of repetition. His structures are like an Egyptian temple seen through a prism – or a kaleidoscope of architectural details; the toy is perpetually presenting some new version of the old story; and Mr. Martin may, with the same facility, go on painting new pictures to all eternity. It is a glut of the stupendous – a nausea of the gorgeous." Fifteen months later, after seeing Martin's *Fall of Nineveh*, the *Edinburgh Literary Journal* 5 (January 8, 1831), 30, repeated itself by saying, "We are conscientiously of opinion that Martin's genius is a humbug; or, at best, that he is a man of one idea, with little or no knowledge of art, save in so far as regards perspective, and with no appreciation whatever of the calm and beautiful sublimity of nature, unexaggerated and unbedaubed."

The idea that Martin's art was a tautological trick did not die with him, of course. A critic for the *Manchester Guardian* said of Martin's *Fall of Babylon* (fig. 1) exhibited three years after his death at the 1857 Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition:

As we have all in us something of that susceptibility to the impressiveness of mere size and space (best expressible by repetition of parts,) which in Martin pervaded all the operations of the imagination, his inventions will always impress; though, when we have learnt the secret – the recipe – for them, they will be found (if we are not mistaken) to require for their production but little of what is commonly understood by imagination. There is, in fact, only one and the same act of the imagination in all Martin's pictures, and that is the conception – whatever be the particular object he is dealing with, arcade or terrace, forest or mountain – of that object, multiplied an infinite number of times, and exhibited in perspective, under impressive conditions of light and shade. Even blackness he felt, as he did everything else, as the expression of an infinite multiplication of lines. That imitators of Martin have not grown up is due, we imagine, at once to the simplicity of the recipe for such works, which deprives imitations of all value, to the fact that minds possessed by this idea of infinite repetition are rare, and to the circumstance that an effect on the public was not to be produced twice out of the fundamental idea of these pictures. Martin stands alone—a psychological, as we have said, rather than a pictorial phenomenon—a strange hybrid between arithmetician and artist. That his works have certain great qualities of vastness and effect cannot be denied—and they are like nothing else.³⁰

Martin's "peculiar" repetitiveness thus became a trademark of sorts and was due to a large degree, I would argue, to the fact that he determined the price of his paintings according to the amount of labor that went into producing them. As he explained to the Select Committee on Arts and Manufactures, "My pictures are so extensive, and cost so much labour, that I cannot subsist by painting, as very few can pay me 1,000 *l.* or 2,000 *l.*, and I cannot execute them for less."³¹ Therefore, one of the reasons that Martin overloaded his canvases with repetitive details

³⁰ *A Handbook to the Gallery of British Paintings in the Art Treasures Exhibition. Being a Reprint of Critical Notices Originally Published in the "Manchester Guardian."* (London: Bradbury and Evans, 1857), 86.

³¹ "Report on Arts and Manufactures" (1835), para. 943. See also Martin to J. Fairey, February 25, 1853, Archives, Queen Mary, University of London, WFD/JM/15, when he explained that "the prices of my pictures are regulated by the amount of work rather than by their size."

and minute figures, painting “a hundred pictures in one,” as it were, was to inflate their prices.³²

As Eagles had noted in his above review of Martin’s *Deluge* comparing it to a tea-tray:

The effort, the appearance of miniature, and elaborate handling in his pictures, is most painful, and destructive of all greatness – but when, upon examination, we find the detail to be the almost endless repetition of the same parts, with scarcely any variety, the original conception is lost in the infinite littlenesses that present themselves over every inch of the canvass. . . . We would the more urge him to review his notions on this subject, because we recollect, before the Committee of the House of Commons on arts and manufactures, he stated that the cost of time and labour bestowed on his pictures necessarily rendered them so expensive, that he could not follow the art with profit, or the expectation of patronage. Now we firmly believe if he were to bestow a tenth part of the time and labour, dash away more freely, and leave more to the imagination, one source of the sublime – we firmly believe he would paint much better pictures, better please both himself and the public, and obtain the patronage he would merit.³³

To provide an additional illustration that Martin priced his paintings according to the labor that went into them, the *European Magazine* in 1822 remarked that Martin was “employed on a work of perhaps much greater sublimity and difficulty of execution, than he has hitherto painted.”³⁴

This took six years to finish, becoming the *Fall of Nineveh* (1828, present location unknown), which Martin put up for sale at the Western Exchange. Martin’s asking price for the painting was 2000 guineas, his highest fee to date.³⁵ Yet whatever Martin’s pricing formula was exactly, it did not always work to his advantage, as Eagles had alluded above; *Nineveh* remained unsold until

³² [Edwin Atherstone], “British Painters-Mr. Martin,” *Edinburgh Review* (June 1829), 467.

³³ [Eagles], “Exhibitions-The Royal Academy,” 340. Discussing Burke’s account of sublime obscurity, F. P. Lock, *Edmund Burke*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 1:108, has pointed out that in Martin’s *Belshazzar’s Feast*, “the rows of receding columns create Burke’s ‘artificial infinity’ (II. ix. 75). Even the colours are consistent with Burke’s precepts (n. xvi. 81-2). One element is conspicuously absent: obscurity. From the banquet laid out in the foreground to the Tower of Babel in the distance, every detail is rendered with minuteness and clarity.”

³⁴ “Memoir of John Martin, Esq.,” *European Magazine* 82 (September 1822), 197.

³⁵ “On the Genius of John Martin,” *Arnold’s Magazine of the Fine Arts* 3 (December 1833), 104. Martin also solicited subscriptions for an engraving of the *Fall of Nineveh* at the exhibition and sold a descriptive catalogue of the picture for a shilling. Whitley, *Art in England, 1821-1837*, 312, described the Western Exchange, Old Bond Street, as “a kind of fashionable bazaar, composed of about forty shops and stalls, the whole covered with a lofty timber roof, with large skylights.”

1844, when Charles Scarisbrick at last bought it and two other canvases by Martin for the original asking price (2000 guineas) of *Nineveh* alone.

In addition to increasing their value, sometimes to exorbitant sums, filling his pictures with details also was, as the *New Monthly Magazine* had said of Martin's *Paphian Bower*, an *ad captandum* trick, a way to draw in viewers and distract them away from other paintings.³⁶ This was certainly the case with *Belshazzar's Feast* (fig. 5), which Martin exhibited at the British Institution in 1821.³⁷

That Martin would rather depend for his livelihood on the public than on the traditional patronage of the nobility and gentry was humorously (and prophetically, as we shall soon see) illustrated at this exhibition at the BI by the inclusion of Gilbert Stuart Newton's *The Importunate Author* (1821, present location unknown; 1836 steel-engraving by C. Rolls after the painting, fig. 30), for which Martin had stood for the patron.³⁸ In the painting, a wealthy nobleman (Martin) could be seen looking down at his watch while an author, "a man of fashion," has gotten hold of the young nobleman "by the arm & was reading with appearance of self satisfaction a huge manuscript."³⁹ "The Patron . . . wishes the Poet, and all his *dramatis personae*, good, bad, and indifferent, at the devil; in order that he may be released from this purgatory. . . . There they stand; the one growing more energetic as his piece approaches to its catastrophe; the other, a living personification of peevish irritation and annoyance."⁴⁰

³⁶ "Exhibition of the Royal Academy," *New Monthly Magazine* 9 (June 1, 1823), 256.

³⁷ Martin had been frustrated for years with the placement of his pictures at the Academy; so, before *Belshazzar's Feast*, he exhibited the *Fall of Babylon* in 1819 and *Macbeth* (present location unknown) in 1820 at the British Institution.

³⁸ Balston, *John Martin*, 93, 269.

³⁹ C. R. Leslie to Washington Allston, August 30, 1821, in *Correspondence of Washington Allston*, 188.

⁴⁰ *Cabinet of Modern Art, and Literary Souvenir* (1836), 197. The description is of the steel-engraving.

Before *Belshazzar's Feast* was exhibited, Martin had explained to his friend, the American artist C. R. Leslie (whose account of Newton's picture is quoted above) that his reason for painting it was to attract maximum attention, predicting to Leslie that "the picture shall make more noise than any picture ever did before. Only don't tell anyone I said so."⁴¹ As discussed in Chapter 1, by all accounts Martin was right on the mark; Leslie wrote to their mutual friend, the American painter, Washington Allston, in the same letter in which he described Newton's painting, that Martin's picture had "made more noise among the *mass of people* than any picture that has been exhibited since I have been here."⁴² The crush of the crowd was so great, in fact, that the painting had to be railed off to protect it; indeed, as mentioned in Chapter 1, the Institution's annual exhibition stayed open almost a month longer than usual in order to meet the demand for admission.⁴³ Martin, thereafter, sold *Belshazzar's Feast* for 800 guineas (the highest sum he had received up to this time) to his former employer, William Collins, who within days put it on display at his glass shop on the Strand on the premise that:

the difficulty which most of the visiters at the crowded rooms of the British Institution have experienced to obtain a competent, or even a transitory, view of this great effort of genius, has induced the present proprietor to make a public exhibition of it, in order that its magnificent tout-ensemble may be surveyed without obstruction, and its details minutely examined at leisure and with ease.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Quoted in Pendered, *John Martin*, 103.

⁴² Leslie to Allston, August 30, 1821, in *Correspondence of Washington Allston*, 189. Leslie added, "The artists however & connoisseurs did not like it much." For Martin's account of how the painting grew out of a discussion with Allston about how to treat the subject and how Leslie tried to dissuade Martin from attempting the picture, see "Miscellanea: John Martin," *Athenaeum* (June 14, 1834), 459. Allston's own unfinished *Belshazzar's Feast* (begun 1817) is now at the Detroit Institute of Arts.

⁴³ *London Journal of Arts and Sciences* 2, no. 8 (1821), 134, "This picture arrests the attention of almost every visitor, and that which so strongly attracts the attention of all must have merit."

⁴⁴ [John Martin], *A Description of the Pictures, Belshazzar's Feast and Joshua*, 31st ed. (London: Printed for the proprietor of the pictures, by J. Robins and Co., 1824), 5. The painting went on to tour the country for several years; this is the reason for the later date of this pamphlet.

As Robin Hamlyn has argued, “One of the keys to the enormous success which ‘Belshazzar’s Feast’ seems to have immediately enjoyed [at the Institution] was . . . the narrative content and the wealth of detail in the work. It demanded close examination, so people stood close to it for some time; a crowd gathered round it and, situated prominently as it was in the gallery, this alone attracted even more people.”⁴⁵ For the exhibition, Martin published a four-page pamphlet that included an outline etching of the painting with explanatory text to help the viewer navigate these details (fig. 31). It was, of course, standard practice for a painter of the time to produce an explanatory pamphlet for a painting. For instance, as Oskar Bätschmann has noted, Academicians like Copley and West years before had set up private exhibitions of their paintings as commercial speculations and provided explanatory brochures at these shows to explain their works to the viewer (fig. 32).⁴⁶ But what was unusual in the case of *Belshazzar’s Feast*, was that Martin had made the explanatory etching himself that was contained inside the pamphlet to be sold outside the British Institution’s annual exhibition, not at a own one-man

⁴⁵ Hamlyn, *Belshazzar’s Feast*, [5-6]. Such close inspection by the viewer of the details was required of Martin’s other major exhibition paintings. The year before Robert Hunt, writing in the *Examiner* (February 7, 1819), 92, had said of the *Fall of Babylon* that “it would indeed be surprising if we did not see the spectators crowding, some with silent, others with exclamatory admiration; sometimes very near, to look at the numerous small objects that cannot be distinguished at a distance, sometimes farther off, to feast upon the grandeur of the whole.” *Sporting Magazine* 3 (March 1819), 268, also gave an account of “the constant crowd of visitors who, at various distances, view ‘the Fall of Babylon.’ Some choose to obtain, by retiring, a complete and indiscriminate intuition of the whole; others attempt to get nearer, in order to concentrate the different plans and objects within a proper focus; while some court a closer examination of the most minute and highly finished details of this astonishing spectacle: for indeed, at first sight, it is most grand and imposing.”

⁴⁶ See Bätschmann, *Artist in the Modern World*, 29-36. For instance, when Copley exhibited his *Death of Major Peirson* (1783, Tate) in a rented space at 28 Haymarket in 1784, it was accompanied by a *Description of the Picture of the Death of Major Peirson, and the Defeat of the French Troops in the Island of Jersey, Painted by Mr. Copley, for Mr. Boydell* (London: H. Reynell, 1784). The brochure included a proposal by John Boydell to publish by subscription an engraved print by James Heath after the painting. Page two included a description of the painting, as well as a woodcut detail that provided “the Names of the Officers whose Portraits compose the Centre Groupe.”

show.⁴⁷ Moreover, he had previously made a “request, unprecedented in the history of the British Institution,” to have his etching included inside the Institution’s catalogue.⁴⁸ Also unusual, as Hamlyn has said, was that, Martin had used in his etching “lines and numbers to take viewers through the points of interest in sequence,” beginning with the writing on the wall on the far left hand side and ending with the Tower of Babel in the distance.⁴⁹ The end result, “as Martin must have known,” according to Hamlyn, was that a crowd would form in front of his painting at the British Institution, shifting from pamphlet to painting and back again. This crowd in front of his painting, in turn, would attract even more viewers and draw attention away from other works at the exhibition.⁵⁰

In the process of taking in these details at eye level, Martin obliged the viewer of *Belshazzar’s Feast* to be just as aware of the surface of the painting – due to the crisscrossing network of directional arrows in the etching, steering one’s attention back and forth across the canvas – as he or she was of the perspective lines leading off to the horizon.⁵¹ This is because, by

⁴⁷ Hamlyn, *Belshazzar’s Feast*, [6].

⁴⁸ The request was turned down, so the etching was included in a pamphlet that was sold outside the exhibition. See Hamlyn, *Belshazzar’s Feast*, [6].

⁴⁹ Hamlyn, *Belshazzar’s Feast*, [6].

⁵⁰ Hamlyn, *Belshazzar’s Feast*, [6].

⁵¹ Martin in “Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1836), para. 819, stated that his paintings had to be hung at a certain height - roughly speaking, at eye level - “with due attention to the height of the horizontal line.” This was done with *Belshazzar’s Feast* at the British Institution. Hamlyn, *Belshazzar’s Feast*, [5], “Martin would have commenced work on this new canvas by establishing the horizon of his composition. This was drawn almost exactly halfway up the canvas and since the horizon line should be, nearly as possible, on the same level as the viewer’s eye, Martin was thus determined that the finished picture should be hung quite low on the walls of the exhibition room in order that it might be seen to greatest effect. The point of sight, toward which the horizontal lines of his buildings would converge, and opposite which would be the best place for a viewer to stand, was fixed on this horizon. It is just to the right of the capital of the left-hand column in the middle distance and to mark it, for it would be a constant reference point during the drawing out of the composition, the artist probably used a pin: there is a slight protrusion on the canvas where a pin-hole might have been filled. . . . The vanishing and distance points which were necessary to ascertain correct heights and lengths of the buildings (fixed by Martin at one mile long) and

beginning with the blazing letters on the left (no. 1 in the etching), the zigzagging arrows on the etched diagram resemble, and overlap with, the rays of light that burst forth “like arrows of flame” from the writing on the wall.⁵² These beams of light, in turn, dart across the hall “in zigzag lines like lightning,” like the lightning bolts in the upper left corner of the canvas.⁵³ All of these lines of light (and directional sight) travelling from left to right, and vice-versa, interfere with the perspective lines of the architecture receding into the distance on the left-hand side of the painting, in stark contrast to the crisp lines on the right, shattering the illusion that one is looking through a window onto another world. Amédée Pichot, a French translator of Byron, picked up on this tension between surface and depth when he saw the painting during a visit to England:

There is a certain trick of perspective, by means of which the whole of the splendid palace, with its luxuriant decorations, are included within the limits of the frame. The fire of the mysterious characters, unequally distributed, produces accidents of light which have an exceedingly grand effect. But after all, does this phantasmagoria belong to the lawful resources of art? If criticism answer [sic] in the negative, then I must candidly say I prefer the still more surprising, but at the same time more natural, effects of a transparent picture.⁵⁴

the objects in them in relation to the viewer all fell beyond the outer edges of the canvas and would have had to be fixed accordingly, also with a pin, on an adjacent firm surface. . . . With these elements established, Martin then carefully drew out the horizontal and vertical lines of the buildings: a few faint lines that are still visible beneath the paint suggest that these were drawn first with a pencil. They were subsequently strengthened with a pen, a ruler being used to ensure that the straight lines were true and a template or pair of compasses for the curved lines.”

⁵² [Martin], *Description of . . . Belshazzar's Feast*, 9-10, “The mysterious writing on the wall has just been completed – the hand therefore is withdrawn – the characters, in strokes of the most intense light, send forth an undescrivable effulgence, such as would be the blaze of lightnings, could they be fixed on the dark ground of the angry clouds from which they emanate – Their scintillating beams fill the whole of the Atrium with awful resplendency, and the whole assembly with horror and distress. Like arrows of flame they dart across the hall, and, as a shower of fire, alight upon every object.” This correspondence between letters of light, lightning bolts, and arrows was made explicit in the Collins pamphlet only.

⁵³ “Mr. Martin’s Belshazzar,” *Edinburgh Magazine, and Literary Miscellany* 11 (September 1822), 292.

⁵⁴ Amédée Pichot, *Historical and Literary Tour of a Foreigner in England and Scotland*, 2 vols. (London: Saunders and Otley, 1825), 1:123-124. In a letter, dated March 6, 1821, to the editor of *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 8 (March 1821), 686, “A Connoisseur,” wrote, “Perhaps the most striking errors of

The light from the letters, as Pichot had said, thus created a phantasmagoria that disrupts the lines of perspective that draw the eye into the picture: it represents the irruption of the irrational or supernatural into the box-like, rational space created by linear perspective. Regarding the disruption caused by the phantasmagoria of light from the blazing letters, Martin's friend, the poet and novelist Edwin Atherstone, had stated that Martin had attempted to "impart to the already written letters a character of mystery and terror, which would equally excite the sense of a supernatural presence."⁵⁵ Yet, according to Martin's text in the Collins pamphlet, the artist was the real *deus ex machina* within the picture, taking liberties with perspective by his use of light. Indeed, throughout the Collins pamphlet, Martin credited himself as the "genius" by which the painting's "supernatural" effects of light had been brought into existence. Under the glare of the light he has created, "inanimate objects seem to become animate," so that "the brazen statue of the old serpent seems to writhe under the first flashes of the portentous glare."⁵⁶ The blaze, one is told, fills "the whole assembly with horror and distress."⁵⁷ It causes the seven lamps of the menorah directly opposite the letters to "decrease in brightness as they are more opposed to the transcendency of the terrific blaze: so that the socket next to the eyes of the spectators, facing the nearest, and consequently brightest, character, seems to emit faintly a dying and sulphurous light."⁵⁸ This, Martin remarked in his pamphlet, was not an act of god but "a natural effect which

the picture arise from the colour, the omission of the hand writing the characters on the wall, and the mode of representing the characters themselves, which at present bear too great a resemblance to small windows, through which the rays of the sun are darting, and which, at first sight, greatly tend to obscure the subject."

⁵⁵ [Atherstone], "British Painters-Mr. Martin," 470-471.

⁵⁶ *New Monthly Magazine* 3 (March 1, 1821), 109; [Martin], *Description of . . . Belshazzar's Feast*, 10.

⁵⁷ [Martin], *Description of . . . Belshazzar's Feast*, 10.

⁵⁸ [Martin], *Description of . . . Belshazzar's Feast*, 10.

could not have been thought of, nor so finely executed, but by a genius of the first rate.”⁵⁹ Indeed, never one to hide his light under a bushel, Martin used this metaphor of light as a supernatural emanation and presence to promote his own genius in the marketplace “above contemporary rivals”:

Men of genius are not frequently thrown into our system by Providence; but, whenever they appear, they infallibly bestow an honour upon the country to which they belong, - create new epochas [sic] in the age they live in – and shine as additional stars to the constellated sphere of the art which they profess. Like supernatural beings, whose visits are ‘few and far between,’ they wheel their brilliant course above contemporary rivals, and, though being mortals, they soon disappoint the widowed sight of their admirers, their works, if well understood, still secure for them a sort of immortality upon earth, whilst they repose in the bosom of HIM who breathed life into their bodies and enthusiasm in their souls.⁶⁰

This led one reviewer to criticize Martin for his brash self-promotion and egotism, “It is hardly worth while to descend to quarrel with the puffing in the catalogue, but really we do not recollect to have met, for a long time, with such a beautiful specimen of mad prose.”⁶¹

⁵⁹ [Martin], *Description of . . . Belshazzar’s Feast*, 10.

⁶⁰ [Martin], *Description of . . . Belshazzar’s Feast*, 5-6. Martin also stated, “It was left for the painter to convey to our sight the effect of his [Daniel’s] interpretation.” After relating the effects of the prophet’s pronouncements on those around him, Martin continued, “These combinations constitute the *arcana* of the chromatic art, which the eye whispers to the mind in so secret and mysterious a manner that the artist himself is often unconscious of the means through which he produces a most striking and harmonious effect”; see [Martin], *Description of . . . Belshazzar’s Feast*, 12-13. Anne Hollander, *Moving Pictures* (New York: Knopf, 1989), 287, has argued, “One way Martin fostered the sense of himself as a wizard was by printing thick booklets to go with his paintings.”

⁶¹ *Edinburgh Magazine, and Literary Miscellany* 11 (September 1822), 294 n. At the time, the painting was on exhibition in Edinburgh.

In painting *Belshazzar's Feast*, Martin was not bound to historical accuracy.⁶² His conception was influenced more by Thomas Smart Hughes's Seatonian-prize poem "Belshazzar's Feast" (1818) than by any biblical or historical accounts.⁶³ In addition, Martin wrote in the Collins pamphlet that, "for this admirable performance, like a dramatic composition of the highest class," he had concentrated three acts (protasis/beginning, epitasis/unfolding, catastrophe) "under the same point of view."⁶⁴ It is, therefore, as we shall see in the case of Martin's next major painting, the *Destruction of Pompeii and Herculaneum*, a view of an event unfolding inside the artist's mind, projected onto the canvas, connecting his standpoint with that of the viewer (if only to short-circuit it through his use of paint, of which more later), and not an attempt at historical reconstruction as viewed through a window. Putting himself into the picture, and inviting the viewer to do the same and to experience Martin's genius, is, I would argue, what Martin meant when he wrote in the Collins pamphlet that he had constructed the painting "so that, besides the aerial and lineal perspective, executed according to the most rigorous accuracy of common rules, we find, also, a perspective of light, and (if the expression may be allowed) a perspective of feeling."⁶⁵ As the *Illustrated London News* said of the painting in its obituary of

⁶² *New Monthly Magazine* 3 (March 1, 1821), 109, "Besides giving the historical facts, he has enriched the work by imaginative addenda of his own." This review was republished in its entirety in a later edition of the Collins pamphlet with a note stating, "One of the best informed and entertaining journalists of the day makes the following remarks upon this sublime and beautiful picture." See Charles Lamb's withering critique of Martin's version of the story in Charles Lamb, *The Last Essays of Elia* (London: Edward Moxon, 1833), 171-176.

⁶³ Hamlyn, *Belshazzar's Feast*, [3]. Martin wrote in the *Athenaeum* (June 14, 1834), 459, that Allston "told me that there was a prize poem at Cambridge, written by T. S. Hughes, which exactly tallied with my own notions, and advised me to read it. I did so, and determined on painting the picture." Seaton's poem was included in the original four-page pamphlet but not in the sixteen-page expanded version.

⁶⁴ [Martin], *Description of . . . Belshazzar's Feast*, 8.

⁶⁵ [Martin], *Description of . . . Belshazzar's Feast*, 11. Over a century later, Matisse wrote in his "Notes of a Painter on Drawing (1939)," about his inhabiting the spaces of his drawings, "As regards perspective: my final line drawings always have their own luminous space, and the objects of which they are

the artist, “The ‘Handwriting on the wall’ has been painted by many great artists: but in what way? By three or four figures, and a blaze of light. How has Martin treated it? By carrying you into the very scene, by making you not only a spectator, but a living participator.”⁶⁶

The following year (1822) Martin exhibited his next major canvas, *The Destruction of Pompeii and Herculaneum*, at his one-man show at William Bullock’s Egyptian Hall in Piccadilly.⁶⁷ For the occasion, Martin arranged for the publishers Plummer and Brewis to print a thirty-page descriptive catalogue that included nearly twenty-five pages of text about the subject and an illustration (fig. 33) of the painting (this time, without directional arrows).⁶⁸ As with

composed are on their different planes; thus, in perspective, *but in a perspective of feeling*, in suggested perspective.” See Matisse, “Notes of a Painter on Drawing,” in Jack D. Flam, ed., *Matisse on Art*, rev. ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 131.

⁶⁶ “Obituary of Eminent Persons, John Martin, K. L.,” *Illustrated London News* 24 (February 25, 1854), 162-163. See also an account of Martin’s *Fall of Babylon* in the *Sporting Magazine* 3 (March 1819), 267-268, “The peculiar bent, if we are allowed, for want of a more appropriate word, so to call the ascending and ever-soaring mind of the artist, has been directed for several years, towards the delineation of what may have been, rather than what was, in the common course of sublunary constructions, and his ‘heaven-born’ talent, spurning the Lilliputian and paltry edifices of our age, delights in nothing less than Cyclopean architecture. The performance before our eyes (for this article was literally sketched in sight of the picture) justifies more than fully what we have so far written; and the best proof of it is the constant crowd of visitors who, at various distances, view ‘the Fall of Babylon.’ Some choose to obtain, by retiring, a complete and indiscriminate intuition of the whole; others attempt to get nearer, in order to concentrate the different plans and objects within a proper focus; while some court a closer examination of the most minute and highly finished details of this astonishing spectacle; for indeed, at first sight, it is most grand and imposing. The beholder forgets where he stands, and fancies himself an actual witness of the combined assault of earthly and heavenly powers upon a guilty and devoted city.” Although Martin had painted the *Fall of Babylon* a year before *Belshazzar’s Feast*, it depicts, of course, the downfall of Belshazzar, as predicted by Daniel in the later painting.

⁶⁷ On the Egyptian Hall, see Altick, *Shows of London*, 235-252; Susan Pearce, “William Bullock: Collections and Exhibitions at the Egyptian Hall, London, 1816-25,” *Journal of the History of Collections* 20, no. 1 (2008): 17-35. Pearce, however, does not discuss Martin’s exhibition. After failing to purchase *Belshazzar’s Feast*, the Duke of Buckingham had paid Martin 800 guineas for the *Destruction of Pompeii and Herculaneum*, which took approximately one year to complete. The *European Magazine* (1822): 197, however, did claim, “While this picture was in progress, the artist was three times offered the sum of one thousand guineas” by other interested buyers. Martin, as I mentioned, had also been paid 800 guineas in 1821 for *Belshazzar’s Feast*, which also took around one year to complete.

⁶⁸ The rest of the text consists of a catalogue of Martin’s other paintings on view.

Belshazzar's Feast, Martin outlined in the text the authorities that he had consulted, quoting in particular from William Gell's *Pompeiana: The Topography, Edifices, and Ornaments of Pompeii* (1819). However, despite his research on the subject, Martin made it unequivocally clear that this work was entirely a product of his imagination. He did this by mapping out the imaginary vantage point from which he had witnessed the event before he composed the picture, "The elevation of the foreground, on which the principal figures are seen, is three hundred and forty-eight feet above the level of the sea; an elevation, according to the statement of the most intelligent travelers, more than sufficient to enable the spectator to take into view every city, within the angle of vision represented in this picture."⁶⁹ In addition, he directed the viewer to look at the maps and plans (none of which survive) of the cities that he had set out on a table opposite the picture.⁷⁰ In the text, Martin also provided the scale of proportion, fusing his point of view with that of the viewer:

The scale of proportion may be observed by the figures on the beach, which is more than three hundred feet below the eye of the spectator; by tracing the figures along the Stabian way up to Pompeii, where the distance becomes so great that the figures are lost. The buildings of Pompeii will then supply the scale, the great Theatre (marked No. 14 in the engraving,) being two hundred feet in width. An idea of the magnitude of the more remote objects may be formed from the buildings, trees, &c. The height of the center is here represented four thousand feet above the level of the sea, allowance being made for the diminution it has sustained by the subsequent eruption. Its present height is computed to be from 3700 to 3900 feet.⁷¹

⁶⁹ [John Martin], *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Destruction of Pompeii & Herculaneum* (London: Plummer and Brewis, 1822), 24.

⁷⁰ [Martin], *Descriptive Catalogue of . . . Pompeii & Herculaneum*, 24, said these maps and plans "shew the attention that has been given to place every known object in its true situation, according to the best authorities."

⁷¹ [Martin], *Descriptive Catalogue of . . . Pompeii & Herculaneum*, 24-25. See also *New Monthly Magazine* 6 (1822), 207, "The time supposed to be represented in the picture is the early part of the eruption; and the spectator is placed on an elevation, several miles distant from the principal scene of destruction, and capable of overlooking the several cities of Pompeii, Retina, Opolontis, and Herculaneum, which lay contiguous to each other, on the shore of the Bay of Naples – or, as it was then called, the Bay of the Crater."

In other words, after reading up on the subject, Martin had composed *The Destruction of Pompeii and Herculaneum* as if he had been present at the scene, even though it had occurred hundreds of centuries earlier. He then attempted to communicate to the viewer, who stood, if the painting was hung roughly at eye level, what his own sensation of “being there” had been like “in the early part of the eruption, before the destruction of the cities was far advanced, although the stream of boiling liquid from Vesuvius had partly covered the city of Pompeii, and the shower of ashes (marked No. 3, in the engraving) has already commenced, and is approaching the foreground of the picture as is seen by the falling of burning stones, which the figures are preparing to ward off.”⁷²

Therefore, as in *Belshazzar’s Feast*, Martin did not attempt in this picture to depict a frozen moment as viewed through a window. Rather, Martin’s objective was to move the viewer from being a stationary spectator to an active participator in the event as he (Martin) envisioned it.⁷³ As “Z.” noted in the *Literary Gazette*, by providing “diagrams, carefully drawn, and laid

⁷² [Martin], *Descriptive Catalogue of . . . Pompeii & Herculaneum*, 24. The *Literary Gazette*, no. 276 (May 4, 1822), 281, said of the painting, “It must be granted that no one besides Martin, among our contemporary painters, would have so boldly, so fearlessly attempted a representation of the dreadful scene, and executed the astonishing theme with so much originality of effect and so imposing and awful an impression upon the mind of the beholder when placed at a proper, and judiciously selected, point of view.”

⁷³ Some, like Feaver, *Art of John Martin*, 92; Johnstone, *John Martin*, 14; Hamlyn, *Belshazzar’s Feast*, [5], and, more recently, Michael Liversidge and Catharine Edwards, eds., *Imagining Rome: British Artists and Rome in the Nineteenth Century*, exh. cat. (Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery, 1996), 91, have argued that Martin’s paintings of scenes from the Bible and ancient history were intended as accurate historical reconstructions. Martin’s words in the *Descriptive Catalogue of . . . Pompeii & Herculaneum*, 4, suggest otherwise, “Although he has sedulously consulted every source of information within his reach, which might enable him to complete his task with strict attention to historical truth; yet, with all his research, with all the valuable and interesting illustrations he has been enabled to collect from gentlemen of high intellectual attainments, who have made accurate observations on the spot, he is fully sensible that the attempt which he now submits to inspection must require the indulgence of a candid and liberal public.” For a similar example, see also [John Martin], *Descriptive Catalogue of the Picture of the Fall of Nineveh by John Martin* (London: George Woodfall, 1828), 5, “The mighty cities of Nineveh and Babylon have long since passed away, and, till lately, the traveler hath in vain sought for the spot where

down on the table, opposite to the picture” in order to explain from “a geographical point of view” his version of events that fateful summer day in A.D. 79, Martin “painted what (he thought) might have been seen” and invited the viewer to “have an inside view of the artist’s own mind.”⁷⁴

By blending historical fact in these pictures with you-are-there fantasy to create a docudrama, Martin shrewdly catered to several audiences at the same time: theatergoers, popular entertainment seekers, and art lovers. The melodramatic intensity of Martin’s large exhibition pictures, such as *Belshazzar* and the *Destruction of Pompeii and Herculaneum*, and their appeal to theatergoers and consumers of popular entertainments, like the panorama and diorama, has

their dust reposed. The accounts of their greatness and splendour, handed down to us by the historians, may have been exaggerated; but, where strict truth is not essential, the mind is content to find delight in the contemplation of the grand and the marvellous [sic]. Into the solemn obscurity of antiquity we look without demanding, or even expecting, the clear day-light of truth. Seen through the mist of ages, the *great* becomes *gigantic*, the *wonderful* swells into the *sublime*; and we do not start back in derision of the mighty shadows.”

⁷⁴ Z., “Martin’s Destruction of Herculaneum,” *Literary Gazette*, no. 276 (May 4, 1822), 281. Z. began his review with a quote from Racine’s *Athalie*, “J’ai voulu voir. – J’ai vu.” Z. further noted, “The cold, pedantic, and *would-be* witty description of this awful event, from the pen of that faint-hearted gentleman, Pliny the younger, who preferred (what our artist, I trust, would not have done) to stay at home *writing*, rather than to follow (as he had leave to do) his bold and venerable uncle to witness one of the most painful throes of agonizing nature in the *vesvevo*, could not help Mr. Martin in order to identify the dreadful scene, and left him to rely entirely and solely upon the wonderful strength of his imagination.”

This “Z.” may have been

John Wilson or John Gibson Lockhart. Both sent letters to the editor of *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* signed “Z.” in the late 1810s and early 1820s criticizing what they called the “Cockney School of Poetry,” consisting of Keats and Leigh Hunt. On Lockhart’s acquaintance with Martin, see Balston, *John Martin*, 51, 163, 169. On John Wilson, writing as “Christopher North,” about Martin in *Blackwood’s*, see Balston, *John Martin*, 69, 75, 89, 141-142. On Martin’s painting as Cockney, or a form of vulgar metropolitan art, see Gregory Dart, “On Great and Little Things: Cockney Art in the 1820s,” *Romanticism* 14, no. 2 (2008): 149-167. Two years after the *Destruction of Pompeii and Herculaneum*, W. H. Pyne, writing as Ephraim Hardcastle, *Somerset House Gazette* (February 7, 1824), 274, said of Martin’s *Pan and Syrinx* (1823, present location unknown) “that the imagination of the painter had carried him far beyond the boundary of truth, and that his object was to paint, not what really existed, but what might be supposed to exist, when poets gave to the world those delightful creations of their fancy, which made each wood, and grot, and stream the ever changing site of enchantment.”

been discussed before, most notably by R. D. Altick, Martin Meisel, and Ann Bermingham.⁷⁵ As Altick has said of the panorama, which both he and Bermingham have persuasively argued had an impact on Martin's approach to painting, Martin's large canvases (it can also be said) were "a commercial entertainment which appealed to both the playgoer and the art fancier, a unique blend of the spectacular and romantic impulses that characterized English theatrical and pictorial art during the first half of the nineteenth century."⁷⁶ In the case of *Belshazzar's Feast*, Meisel has also pointed out that Martin's combination of "three acts of the drama in a single scene, this rationalization that returns to the instantaneous, separates Martin from his many Renaissance predecessors who also painted the successive phases of a story under a single point of view."⁷⁷ To illustrate his argument, Meisel discussed Charles Lamb's well-known attack on Martin's *Belshazzar's Feast* in the essay "Barrenness of the Imaginative Faculty in the Productions of Modern Art," in which Lamb compared the picture with Titian's *Bacchus and Ariadne* (1520-23, National Gallery, London, fig. 34), "that wonderful bringing together of two times . . . two points miraculously co-uniting . . . the *present* Bacchus, with the *past* Ariadne; two stories, with double Time; separate, and harmonizing."⁷⁸ According to Meisel:

Lamb's point . . . is that Martin has failed to achieve [in *Belshazzar's Feast*] such imaginative integration. . . . Martin's manipulation of space, his creation of immense distances, permits the tight integration of contiguous moments to loosen visibly. The scale of the scene in Martin's painting is as much an illusion as the temporal unity he feels obliged to justify. Martin addresses the problem of narrative expansion and

⁷⁵ Altick, *Shows of London*, 414-415; Martin Meisel, *Realizations: Narrative, Pictorial, and Theatrical Arts in Nineteenth-Century England*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 21-23, 166-188; Bermingham, "Landscape-o-rama," 138-141.

⁷⁶ Altick, *Shows of London*, 184. See Martin's obituary in the *Athenaeum*, no. 1374 (February 25, 1854), 246, "No doubt his art was theatrical. He addressed the eye rather than the mind. He produced his grand effects by illusion – perhaps, by imposition; - but it was also new. If easy, the style was his own."

⁷⁷ Meisel, *Realizations*, 22.

⁷⁸ Lamb, "Barrenness of the Imaginative Faculty," 167-168.

temporal integration by pressing the limits of what the mind takes in at a glance, the perceptual limits associated with subjective human scale.

Thus, despite Martin's borrowing from the theater, his inclusion of fragmentary episodes and scenes that do not cohere within the painting is the opposite of the Renaissance ideal of the classical dramatic unities of time, place, and action; it is, as was noted at the time, more akin for the viewer to watching a melodrama or a pantomime.⁷⁹ By challenging these classical unities, as well as Renaissance concepts of order, harmony, and balance, in order to give the paying public what it wanted, the impresario Martin, like P. T. Barnum later, "provided a total theatrical experience which lacked none of the component aspects."⁸⁰

I want to shift gears for a moment, from Martin's melodramatic pictorial simulations of biblical and historical scenes to a painting depicting England in 1838, in order to demonstrate how Martin treated a modern event in a similar way - as if he had been there.⁸¹ According to Atherstone, who once owned the painting of the *Coronation of Queen Victoria* (1839, Tate, London, fig. 35), Martin depicted an episode from the coronation service as he would have seen it if he had been standing in the south transept of the Abbey looking towards the north rose window so that "the transept extends before the eye."⁸² Other painters, who are known to have

⁷⁹ See Constable's reference to Martin's *Belshazzar's Feast* as a pantomime in Leslie, *Memoirs*, 86. Leslie added that "the '*pantomime*' here alluded to was an extravagant and melo-dramatic conception of historical art, at that time popular." See also Lamb, "Barrenness of the Imaginative Faculty," 172, where he describes Martin's *Belshazzar* as similar to a "pantomime *hoax*." *New Monthly Magazine* (March 1, 1832), 112, "We know that artists object, and probably with some justice, to Mr. Martin's style, as being formed more upon the principle of melodrama than in accordance with the settled and established rules of what is called true art."

⁸⁰ Mainardi, in correspondence.

⁸¹ I have not seen any evidence that proves Martin attended the service at Westminster Abbey. Leopold Martin, "Reminiscences," *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* (March 9, 1889), front page, said that at some point John Ireland, Dean of Westminster, did allow Martin to make sketches of the Abbey.

⁸² Quoted in Balston, *John Martin*, 201. Atherstone's letter discussing the painting is in the Somerset County Museum.

attended the ceremony, such as E. T. Parris, George Hayter, and C. R. Leslie, depicted solemn, dignified, and most importantly, actual planned events from the coronation service: respectively, Victoria preparing to receive the crown; the Archbishop of Canterbury pronouncing the exhortation to Victoria, “Be strong and of good courage”; and, Victoria receiving the sacrament of communion.⁸³ Martin, however, decided to depict a mishap that had occurred when the dukes and peers of the realm had approached the throne to touch the new queen’s crown and kiss her hand during the ceremony of homage. This accident took place when the eighty-two-year-old peer, Lord Rolle, attempted to ascend the stairs to the throne to render homage, but got to the top, stumbled, and fell backwards down the stairs, literally rolling as he went. When he reached the bottom, according to the writer Harriet Martineau, who was in the Abbey when the accident took place, Rolle “was instantly lifted up; and he tried again and again, amidst shouts of admiration of his valour. The Queen at length spoke to Lord Melbourne, who stood at her shoulder, and he bowed approval; on which she rose, leaned forward, and held out her hand to the old man, dispensing with his touching the crown.”⁸⁴

Yet, Martin has presented the viewer with an altogether different version of the events. Martin depicts Victoria standing at the edge of the dais, bending over with her arms outstretched and palms upturned as if to see if Rolle, who is still on the ground at the bottom of the stairs and being lifted up by another peer, is unhurt. As Martineau’s, and also Victoria’s, account of the

⁸³ For more on the different coronation pictures, see John Plunkett, *Queen Victoria: First Media Monarch* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), esp. 70-78.

⁸⁴ Harriet Martineau, *Harriet Martineau’s Autobiography, with Memorials by Maria Weston Chapman*, 3 vols. (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1877), 2:126.

incident makes it clear, she did not rush to assist Rolle right after he tumbled.⁸⁵ Therefore, as in his biblically themed *Belshazzar's Feast* and classically inspired *The Destruction of Pompeii and Herculaneum*, Martin here has made fiction out of fact from a modern event that he, too, did not witness, and has depicted it on canvas from a purely imaginary point of view, asking the viewer to participate theatrically in this fanciful retelling of the event.⁸⁶ The painting's melodramatic mixture of fact and fiction was commented upon in the *Art-Union*, which called it "a gorgeous and in some respects a happy mingling of fact with fancy - being rich in all the peculiarities of the painter. . . . The picture is a very interesting one . . . and will be very acceptable to those whose imaginations figure forth a subject far more grand, exciting, and imposing than the cold copies of 'bits' of the ceremony by Leslie, Parris, and Hayter."⁸⁷

Thus, in these three examples of major paintings from a period of eighteen years, we see that Martin tried to collapse time and space in his art by attempting to give the viewer "an inside view of the artist's own mind."⁸⁸ Martin's attempt to establish an almost telepathic, long-

⁸⁵ Victoria recorded in her journal entry for the day of the coronation, "Poor old Lord Rolle, who is 82, and dreadfully infirm, in attempting to ascend the steps fell and rolled quite down, but was not the least hurt; when he attempted to re-ascend them I got up and advanced to the end of the steps, in order to prevent another fall." See *The Letters of Queen Victoria: A Selection from Her Majesty's Correspondence between the Years 1837 and 1861*, ed. Arthur Christopher Benson and Reginald Baliol Brett Esher, 3 vols. (London: John Murray, 1907), 1:122.

⁸⁶ This may be why the queen declined to buy it. Balston, *John Martin*, 222, noted that the *Coronation* was "sent to Buckingham Palace for inspection. It was not bought, and in 1844 was exhibited at Atherstone's gallery, 70 [sic] Haymarket, along with *The Fall of Nineveh* and five or six of his other works." Atherstone's gallery was at No. 7, Haymarket. See the advertisement for the exhibition in *Literary Gazette*, no. 1423 (April 27, 1844), 276.

⁸⁷ *Art-Union* (June 1, 1844), 148.

⁸⁸ Z., "Martin's Destruction of Herculaneum," 281. Martin did this in other paintings, as well, but space does not permit me to discuss them all. Briefly however, I will mention that in 1840, Martin exhibited two paintings at the Royal Academy as companions to his 1834 *Deluge: The Eve of the Deluge* (1840, Royal Collection) and *The Assuaging of the Waters* (1840, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco). He also produced a pamphlet explaining the three paintings as a cycle, even though only two were on view at the same time. In the pamphlet, Martin cited the biblical and historical sources he consulted but said, "I have endeavoured to portray my imaginings of the Antediluvian World." Of the *Assuaging*, he said, "In this

distance connection with his viewer through his paintings is not as far-fetched a notion as it may sound if one remembers that Martin was obsessed with advances in technology that changed perceptions of spatial and temporal relations. For instance, he held demonstrations at his home of Wheatstone's electric telegraph, which as Richard Menke has put it, "redefined communication as the essential means of overcoming geographic space."⁸⁹ Indeed, Martin himself put it to Wheatstone about his invention, "You propose to lay on time through the streets of London as we now lay on water."⁹⁰ Martin was also involved in spiritualism, and his physician, John Elliotson, who was one of the most controversial mesmerists in London at the time, also

picture I have chosen that period after the Deluge, when I suppose the sun to have burst forth over the broad expanse of waters gently rippled by the breeze, which is blowing the storm clouds seaward." I have not been able to locate a copy of the original 1840 pamphlet, but extracts from it were quoted in Pendered, *John Martin*, 135-138.

⁸⁹ Richard Menke, *Telegraphic Realism: Victorian Fiction and Other Information Systems* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), 73. Menke added, "Wheatstone himself began experimenting with mesmerism, or 'animal magnetism,' soon after he patented the telegraph . . . In a larger sense, telegraphy . . . allowed Victorians to explore the issues of influence at a distance, consensus, and control." See Menke, *Telegraphic Realism*, 80-81. S. C. Hall in his *A Book of Memories of Great Men and Women of the Age, from Personal Acquaintance* (London: Virtue & Co., 1871), 470, recalled that Martin held "'Evenings' weekly, when he brought together many of the more distinguished men and women of his time in Literature, Art, and Science. They were not mere *conversazioni*; each of his guests sought to give intellectual character to the occasion. There I first saw Professor Wheatstone's earliest inspiration, which subsequently became the Electric Telegraph – more wonderful than Ariel's wand, for it 'puts a girdle round about the earth in forty' seconds; there I first stared in wonder at Elliotson's mesmeric revelations; there, indeed, many marvellous matters that have since startled the world were in embryo, waiting the call of Time." Leopold Martin, "Reminiscences" *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* (March 20, 1889), front page, recalled that he had joined his father "to witness some of the professor's experiments with the first electric telegraph wire . . . Mr. Wheatstone at this period was seldom seen at my father's without some novel or ingenious model or invention, such as an instrument for measuring the velocity of light, or for electric currents, or for improved construction in harmoniums or in mouth or finger instruments of more or less importance." Martin and Wheatstone also exhibited their respective "experiments" at the Adelaide Gallery, otherwise known as the National Gallery of Practical Science. Morus, *Frankenstein's Children*, 200, noted in his chapter, "To Annihilate Time and Space: The Invention of the Telegraph," that Wheatstone's experiments at the Adelaide "proved that electricity could indeed be used to provide practically instantaneous communication between distant points."

⁹⁰ Quoted in William T. Jeans, *Lives of the Electricians: Professors Tyndall, Wheatstone, and Morse* (London: Whittaker & Co., George Bell & Sons, 1887), 161. See also Bowers, *Wheatstone*, 154. To "lay on water" means to distribute water using a network of pipes, which of course brings to mind Martin's own plans for improving the metropolis' water supply and sewage systems.

demonstrated his telepathic powers at Martin's famous weekly "Evenings."⁹¹ Martin himself was known to have attempted to communicate with the spirit world during electrical storms and at séances he held at his home.⁹² Moreover, Martin's interest in civil engineering, discussed in the last chapter, attempted to open up unheard of possibilities for communication (and commerce) between the interior of the country and the metropolis, as well as between Britain and the rest of the world.⁹³ As Meisel has said when discussing Martin's paintings as a form of technological melodrama, "In this the painter, with his technological interests and alert social vision, brings the

⁹¹ Martin's "Evenings," which were salons held at his home at 30, Allsop's Terrace, had their origin in private chess matches between Martin, John Hunt, the editor of the *Examiner*, and their wives. On these "Evenings," see Balston, *John Martin*, 85-86. On Elliotson as a frequent visitor to the Martin home, see Leopold Martin, "Reminiscences" *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* (April 20, 1889), front page. On the connections between telegraphy and mesmerism, see Menke, *Telegraphic Realism*, 80-81, and Alison Winter, *Mesmerized: Powers of Mind in Victorian Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 54, 317-319.

⁹² Pendered, *John Martin*, 233-234, said of Martin, "Nevertheless, like the skeptics of our own day, he speculated in spiritualistic theories, and Serjeant Thomas tell us of a walk he had with Martin during which the latter told him of an arrangement he had made with Boniface Musso whereby the one who died first should communicate with the other. After Musso's death Martin invoked his shade to arise and manifest itself by some sign, such as the candle burning blue or the door opening and shutting three times; but no such sign was vouchsafed him, though he repeated the invocation often in solitude, at midnight, in his closet, in the fields, and on a foggy, misty moor. He told Thomas that he always put out his left hand in these invocations, 'wishing to save the one he painted with, lest the foul spirit might wither the one he put forth to take his departed friend's hand.'" Similarly, Beamish was allowed to trace Martin's left hand, but not the one that Martin used to paint, even though the chapter in which it appears is entitled "The Artistic Hand."

⁹³ See *Martin's Thames and Metropolis Improvement Plan* (1842), 33, 37. Regarding Martin's interest in railway engineering, Balston, *John Martin*, 205, has also noted, "Ever since 1830, when the Manchester and Liverpool Railway was opened, he [Martin] had been convinced, contrary to Stephenson's opinion, that the speed of trains could very much exceed fifteen miles per hour, and in 1841 he was invited by Isambard Brunel . . . to accompany him on a test, undertaken, according to Leopold, at Martin's suggestion, of the maximum speed of a broad-gauge engine." According to Leopold, "To the great satisfaction of Mr. Brunel, and the astonishment of all, it was discovered that the distance of nine miles to the station at Slough had been run in six minutes, or at the rate of ninety miles an hour, a very different result from that which Mr. Stephenson's early calculations would have led one to expect." Geoffrey Hubbard, *Cooke and Wheatstone and the Invention of the Electric Telegraph* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965), 99, has remarked, "This particular episode reveals that Brunel, Wheatstone and John Martin, the painter probably held the World's Land Speed Record for a number of years." It should be remembered that early telegraphic lines often followed rail tracks. On this, see Morus, *Frankenstein's Children*.

inherited structures of the sublime and the apocalyptic into touch with the life of his own century. For as the public was simultaneously discovering in other departments such as transportation and communication, great success in the organization of space necessarily entailed adjustments in the organization and experience of time.”⁹⁴ Martin thus seemed intent in his pictures on exploring new ways of communicating to the viewer his personal standpoint of events in his paintings and, as we shall see, via the mezzotint printmaking process.

Martin turned to printmaking in the 1820s for financial reasons.⁹⁵ One of them, as discussed earlier, was the fact that the amount of work he put into his historical landscape paintings had the consequence of making them so costly that few were willing, or even able, to buy them.⁹⁶ In addition, sometime after the exhibition of his *Belshazzar's Feast* in 1821, Martin began to feel that his paintings could not be seen to his advantage (or from the proper eye-level vantage point) at either the Royal Academy or the British Institution.⁹⁷ As a result, Martin helped

⁹⁴ Meisel, *Realizations*, 23.

⁹⁵ See “Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1836), para. 858-859, “I have been obliged to become so, in order that the public might see and judge of my works . . . Finding that after I had been a long time engaged in painting a picture, I had no opportunity of showing it to the same advantage as many others; and as I could not afford to execute works merely to hang against my own wall, I was obliged to resort to some means which would enable the public to see my productions, and give me a chance of being remunerated for my labour.” B. R. Haydon, *Lectures on Painting and Design* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1844), 110, “Because nobody now steps forward to foster Martin, Martin has ceased to paint at one time, and has taken to engrave his own previous paintings, simply because his engravings are more fostered than his pictures.” Haydon began delivering these lectures to industrial workers around the country in 1835, just after the first session of the Select Committee on Arts and Manufactures concluded.

⁹⁶ See [Eagles], “Exhibitions-The Royal Academy,” 340. Speaking of Martin’s the *Fall of Nineveh*, [Nathaniel Ogle], “Works of Art and Artists in England,” *British and Foreign Review* 9 (July 1839), 41, commented, “There are but few individuals in this country wealthy enough to purchase such elaborate works.”

⁹⁷ “Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1836), paras. 858-859, “[858.] You are an engraver as well as a painter? – Yes; I have been obliged to become so, in order that the public might see and judge of my works; since I had no opportunity of showing my paintings to advantage. [859.] What was the cause of your beginning to engrave? – From the cause I have stated; finding that after I had been a long time engaged in painting a picture, I had no opportunity of showing it to the same advantage as many others;

found the SBA in 1823 as an alternative exhibiting society. In addition, he turned to engraving as a major source of income from 1824 until 1840 and continued to rely on engraving as “that branch of the profession by which I live” until, as he told the *Illustrated London News*, at the end of the 1830s “I was eventually obliged to abandon [it], owing to the imperfect laws of copyright, my property being so constantly and variously infringed, that it became ruinous to contend with those who robbed me; I was, therefore, driven from the market by inferior copies of my own works, to the manifest injury to my credit and my pecuniary resources.”⁹⁸ However, between 1824 and 1840, when his account book of print sales was closed, Martin had earned over £20,000 from the sale of his prints alone.⁹⁹

The majority of prints that Martin engraved were mezzotints, including a work that I want to discuss now in some detail, the *Crucifixion* (1834, fig. 36). In doing so, I will offer a new interpretation of the print in keeping with my discussion of the three paintings previously considered: that Martin did not view his work as one of historical reconstruction viewed through a transparent window, but as a means of imaginatively collapsing time and space between himself and the spectator.

Martin dedicated his print of the *Crucifixion* to the “Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge” (actually known as the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge) and its president William Howley, the Archbishop of Canterbury. Founded in 1698 and still in

and as I could not afford to execute works merely to hang against my own walls, I was obliged to resort to some means which would enable the public to see my productions, and give me a chance of being remunerated for my labour.”

⁹⁸ “Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1835), para. 943. He continued, “While I may, without vanity affirm, that even art itself suffers by the non-circulation of the engravings, for, of course, neither my own plates nor the pirated copies will sell without the impulse of novelty.” Campbell, *Visionary Printmaker*, 3, has stated that “by 1838 Martin was beginning to reduce his activities as a printmaker.”

⁹⁹ Feaver, *Art of John Martin*, 85. The account book is in the Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington.

existence today, the SPCK is a voluntary society that was established to inculcate in (especially poor) children the principles of Christianity. A powerful force in the 1830s, one of the textbooks it produced the year before Martin's print was published was the enormously popular *Easy Lessons on Money Matters for the Use of Young People* (1833) by Richard Whatley. In Chapter 8, "Capital," Whatley taught children a lesson in money that Martin almost certainly would have endorsed, "It is curious to observe, how, through the wise and beneficent arrangement of Providence, men thus do the greatest service to the public when they are thinking of nothing but their own gain. . . . When men are left quite free to employ their capital as each thinks best for his own advantage, he will almost always benefit the public, though he may have no such design or thought."¹⁰⁰

Before getting to work on the mezzotint, Martin consulted Flavius Josephus's *Antiquities of the Jews* and *The Wars of the Jews* for information about the layout and buildings of Jerusalem in the time of Christ, as well as the Gospels for descriptions of the moment of Christ's death. He then imagined himself as having been present at the exact moment that Christ died and as having witnessed the phenomena that accompanied it. He then attempted to recreate this simulated experience on the mezzotint plate. We know this to have been the case because the antiquarian John Britton announced during a lecture in Bristol on October 2, 1833, that:

he had lately seen this gentleman [Martin], with whom he had the pleasure of being acquainted, engaged on the subject of the *Crucifixion*, for which purpose he had formed a ground plan of the city of Jerusalem; - by conceiving himself placed on a commanding elevation, he from thence arranges his subjects according to geometrical proportion, and

¹⁰⁰ Richard Whatley, *Easy Lessons on Money Matters for the Use of Young People*, 3rd ed. (London: John W. Parker, 1836): 62. The title page indicates the book was "published under the direction of the Committee of General Literature and Education, appointed by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge."

by such means he will, no doubt, produce one of those pictures which will gratify and astonish the world.¹⁰¹

In the pamphlet accompanying the print, Martin connected his viewing position of Christ's crucifixion with that of the viewer of the print by providing him or her with a key (fig. 37), numbered 1 to 46, which identifies the figures and incidents depicted. In addition, he supplied a corresponding aerial plan of Jerusalem (fig. 38), likewise numbered 1 to 46, featuring the same items. Item no. 25 is identified in the pamphlet as "Mount Goreb, from whence the view is taken."¹⁰² Its location on the plan, as has been noted elsewhere, "is of special interest because it shows the angle of view marked by two lines subtended from the artist's (and therefore the spectator's) viewpoint and is a reminder of how Martin originally set up the perspective and scale of his print."¹⁰³ No. 46, meanwhile, is identified as "Outer Walls of the City, crowded with the Spectators of the Crucifixion," so that "supposing the figures each to be six feet high the proportionate scale of the buildings of the city will be found to be historically correct; and by reference to the map the exact situation of each object will be seen to be equally correct."¹⁰⁴ A catalogue of engravings published by the printseller also told the potential customer that "in this magnificent Engraving, the ground plan . . . is taken from unquestionable authority, and may be relied on as historically correct, the Artist has realized the description given us by Josephus of

¹⁰¹ "Lectures on Architecture, Delivered at the Bristol Institution," *Arnold's Magazine of the Fine Arts* 3 (November 1833), 57. Britton had also stated that Martin's 1819 painting of the *Fall of Nineveh* had similarly been "formed as far as possible on the plan of scriptural and historic records."

¹⁰² [John Martin], *Description of Mr. Martin's Plate of the Crucifixion* (London?: [s.n.], 1834), 4.

¹⁰³ *Tate Gallery: Illustrated Catalogue of Acquisitions 1986-88* (London: Tate Publishing, 1996), 48. Highlighting Martin's Janus-faced activities, Feaver, *Art of John Martin*, 136, also has noted that the *Crucifixion* pamphlet "is dated 1 June 1834, and the following day he [Martin] signed a perspective view of his embankment scheme."

¹⁰⁴ [Martin], *Description of Mr. Martin's Plate of the Crucifixion*, 6.

this Metropolis of Judea.”¹⁰⁵ Yet, despite this emphasis on topographical accuracy, the catalogue also mentioned that Martin “has created a sublime interest in the scene by seizing that awful moment when ‘a pall of darkness veils the land of Palestine.’”¹⁰⁶ An advertisement printed in the *Court Journal* also publicized, “The moment on which the Painter has seized is that, when ‘a pall of darkness veils the land of Palestine’ -- OUR SAVIOUR DIES. The result, it may fearlessly be said, is one of the most splendid specimens of that class of pictures, which, while they captivate the eye, and entrance the fancy, convey a solemn, rarely unregarded lesson to the human art.”¹⁰⁷ Thus, Martin has again taken all the factual and historical information he could gather on his chosen subject and used these raw materials as an *ad captandum* appeal to connect with and draw in his audience to impart a lesson in Christianity, as I will now explain.¹⁰⁸

Martin’s pamphlet, with its text, plan and key, clearly indicates that he had wanted the viewer to believe that what he or she was seeing and sharing was what he had “witnessed” from Mount Goreb. This collapsing of time and space is further emphasized by the subject matter of the print: according to the quotations from the Gospels of Mark, Luke, and Matthew given in item no. 14 in the pamphlet, at the moment of Christ’s death an eclipse was said to have occurred, darkness fell, an earthquake struck, the saints rose from their graves, and the veil of the temple of Jerusalem, which had shut out access to the holiest of holies, was torn from top to bottom, signifying that the mysteries of the universe were now available to all. This tearing of the veil is

¹⁰⁵ *A Catalogue of Fine and Important Engravings. F.G. Moon, Printseller to the King, 20, Threadneedle Street* (London: F. G. Moon, c.1834), [1].

¹⁰⁶ *Catalogue of Fine and Important Engravings*, [1].

¹⁰⁷ *Court Journal*, no. 297 (January 3, 1835), 16.

¹⁰⁸ In its review of the mezzotint, the *Athenaeum*, no. 379 (January 31, 1835), 39, noted that “the artist has rebuilt the towers of Jerusalem, raised its walls anew, and restored the temple with a magnificence all his own: . . . the painter says he has authority for his splendid architecture; we like it neither the better nor the worse for it – the imagination is satisfied.”

indicated by the beam of lightning that tears across the sky and strikes the temple in the far left distance. This event is visually connected to Christ's death by Martin's use of two-point perspective from the vantage point of the artist/spectator who is standing on Mount Goreb: the vanishing point on the left leads to the temple and the vanishing point on the right leads the eye to Calvary on the right, where Christ has just perished. The vanishing point to the left, in point of fact, goes beyond the temple of Jerusalem and stops at the Mount of Olives (no. 26) where, according to Acts 1:11, Christ will ascend to heaven forty days after the Resurrection. However, Martin obfuscates the vanishing point to the right by burnishing out most of that part of the plate so that the upper right corner of the print appears to have been flooded with light to the point of indistinctness. This portion of the design contains the Strong House (no. 34), where the Torah scrolls were kept, and the Palace of Agrippa (no. 35), who was the king of the Jews at the time of Christ's death. Thus, the lesson we are experiencing, from the artist's/viewer's perspective, is the literal obliteration by the artist of the Old Law and the transition to the New Law through Martin's "supernatural" use of light, as in *Belshazzar's Feast*. This obliteration is represented visually by the burnishing out of the plate, where the Strong House and Palace of Agrippa are depicted, to the point of their fading away into the distance, and by depicting the temple of Jerusalem as a burnished-out speck in front of, and towered over by, the Mount of Olives. In addition, the temple is struck, as I noted, by a beam of lighting that extends from the heavens, like the leg of a pair of dividers, towards it (the vanishing point on the left), while the other leg is the border of the light streaming towards the Strong House and Palace of Agrippa (the vanishing point on the right). The point where these two legs meet in the heavens is obscured by the roiling clouds, but it is directly above the artist's/viewer's vantage point on Mount Goreb so that the viewer is not just a spectator located outside of the composition but functions as an integral

participant by means of perspective in the divinely ordained transition of power from the Old Law to the New Law.

According to Ralph Thomas, Martin was “a thorough Deist and believes that anything not good, merciful, or great can come from such a source. . . . He railed at the Jews for imputing atrocious acts to Him.”¹⁰⁹ Thomas, for his part, “could hardly sit quiet as he listened.”¹¹⁰ He indeed “found it very amazing that Martin could believe in an Omnipotent Power and yet deny the divine authority of the Old Testament.”¹¹¹ When Thomas expressed his discomfort to Martin about his friend’s belief in evolution and his lack of belief in the Old Testament account in the book of Genesis that humanity had been put on earth by a divine creator, Martin replied, “Why? Man is endowed with a power of reason and everything is placed before him to reason by and with, as facts and arguments. Should veneration for his early education make him fear to approach his beliefs or religious tenets? Why should man use one kind of logic for religion and a different kind for general affairs?”¹¹² As we have seen in the case of the *Crucifixion*, nothing was too sacred for Martin to uplift – or, in this case, tear – the veil in pursuit of his career as an artist. If what Thomas said about Martin’s opinion of the Old Testament is true, then in this mezzotint Martin had found a way of turning bigoted religious opinions into a means of profit, by making,

¹⁰⁹ Diaries of Ralph Thomas, quoted in Pendered, *John Martin*, 231. Pendered was the last person to have possession of Thomas’s manuscript diaries. The diaries have been lost since the publication of her book in 1923, and so must be cited from Pendered, *John Martin*, which provides often incomplete references. Despite Thomas’s pronouncement, Martin was friends with Sir Isaac Lyon Goldsmid and Aaron Asher Goldsmid, who, according to Timothy S. Davis, *Ricardo’s Macroeconomics: Money, Trade Cycles, and Growth* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 107, were “partners in the house of Mocatta and Goldsmid, bullion brokers for the Bank of England.” The Goldsmids also supported Martin’s call for government support of his Thames and metropolis improvement plans, with A. A. Goldsmid sitting on the 1836 committee appointed to take into consideration Martin’s plans.

¹¹⁰ Diaries of Ralph Thomas, quoted in Pendered, *John Martin*, 232.

¹¹¹ Pendered, *John Martin*, 232.

¹¹² Diaries of Ralph Thomas, quoted in Pendered, *John Martin*, 233.

as Edward Bulwer-Lytton noted, “the *Old Testament*, with its stern traditional grandeur – its solemn shadows and ancestral terrors – his own element and appanage.”¹¹³

According to Martin’s accounts of his life, financial necessity was always the mother of invention. By 1838, four years after the *Crucifixion*, he had found himself in dire economic straits due to the fact that he could no longer rely on printmaking for his livelihood due to piracy of his prints and as a result of the money he had put into his Thames and metropolis improvement plans.¹¹⁴ Therefore, the following year, he embarked on his first attempt at incorporating portraits of notable personages in his *Coronation*, which I discussed earlier.

As William Feaver has noted, beginning in 1839, Martin also produced a number of elaborate landscape watercolors, which he showed at the Society of British Artists and the New Watercolour Society, that served, primarily, as a means of “trying to recover from the losses sustained in his planning ventures.”¹¹⁵ Martin approached these in the same way that he would subjects from sacred and profane history in his paintings and prints: as ways to illustrate his

¹¹³ Bulwer-Lytton, *England and the English*, 383. See *OED* appanage 1, “The provision made for the maintenance of the younger children of kings, princes, etc.; it was originally a province, jurisdiction, or lucrative office, but the grant has also been made in money.”

¹¹⁴ Regarding Martin’s profits from the mezzotint, Campbell, *Visionary Printmaker*, 119, noted that Martin sold the plate to the publisher F. G. Moon for £1000, and since “Martin was not the publisher of the plate himself, we have no figures relating to the sales of the engraving. However, its scarcity compared with Martin’s earlier large plates would indicate that sales were comparatively few.” On the dating of this print and the prices Martin charged, see *Tate Gallery: Illustrated Catalogue*, 48. Kidd’s *Own Journal* 5, no. 10 (1854): 159, noted in its obituary of the artist, “For some years subsequently [after 1828], Mr. Martin’s time and industry were chiefly employed in engraving from his pictures; and the ingenuity with which he applied new modes of varying the texture and perspective effects of large mezzotinto plates led to the progressive improvement so conspicuous in that department of art. But whilst thus engaged, he was almost forgotten as a painter, and it was only when he produced his picture of the ‘Coronation of Queen Victoria’ that the world renewed its acquaintance with him [as a painter].”

¹¹⁵ Feaver, *Art of John Martin*, 154; *John Martin, 1789-1854*, exh. cat. (London: Hazlitt, Gooden & Fox, 1975), 12. After arriving in London in 1806, Martin eked out a living by selling, in addition to his glass and china painting, monochrome wash drawings, that is until the success of his *Belshazzar’s Feast* in 1821. Martin was still churning out these wash drawings even after the exhibition of his *Joshua* at the RA in 1816 and the BI in 1817.

particular point of view (in this case, however, often of places he had actually seen) and to communicate this view to the viewer. If one glances through the list of those exhibited at the Royal Academy, for instance, one finds the standard “view” in the title and the direction Martin was facing, such as the pair exhibited in 1843, *View from Leith Hill, Surrey, Looking towards the South* (present location unknown) and *View from Leith Hill, Surrey, from towards the West* (present location unknown). Some also included personally meaningful poetry added to the titles, such as *Valley of the Tyne, My Native Country, from near Henshaw* (1842, Cleveland Museum of Art, fig. 39), which had the lines “Still as I view each well-known scene, etc.” from Sir Walter Scott’s *Lay of the Last Minstrel* appended to the title in the RA catalogue.¹¹⁶ In a few cases, Martin was more explicit about his intention to collapse time and space in his exhibition watercolor views, as in *Runnymede, View towards Cooper Hill and Egham* (1844, present location unknown), in which, Martin noted that his/our view is of a person who “stands upon the spot where it was said King John and the Barons met to sign Magna Charta.” The addition of direction to the titles of topographical watercolors was a long-established tradition in English landscape painting because it placed an emphasis on the accuracy and specificity of the scene depicted. Yet Martin’s landscape watercolors, like Turner’s and Thomas Girtin’s, were not intended as works of topographical reportage, but departed from the straightforward

¹¹⁶ Scott was writing about the Scottish Borders, while Martin depicted a view near the town of Henshaw in Northumberland, which is an adjacent region of England to the southeast. Although Martin dated the painting 1842, the CMA regards it as the work exhibited at the Academy in 1841. Diane DeGrazia has said of this particular example, “Martin broke the rules of classical landscape in which the view is enclosed at either side and the eye must criss cross the scene and make expected stops from foreground to background. Instead, the eye, takes on the whole at once and we thus understand that the untamed landscape exceeds beyond what is drawn – at right, left, and past the distant mountains.” Regarding Martin’s technique, DeGrazia also said, “The graphic underdrawing suggests that the artist first drew the scene in the open, either on this sheet or another from which he took the basic outlines of the composition. Here, as elsewhere, Martin employed a glazing of gum arabic to enhance the color and atmosphere and give a highly finished, painterly feeling to the sheet.” See Dianne DeGrazia and Carter C. Foster, eds., *Master Drawings from the Cleveland Museum of Art*, exh. cat. (Cleveland Museum of Art, 2000), 190.

topographical views of earlier artists, such as Girtin's teacher, Edward Dayes.¹¹⁷ Instead, they were to be seen, due to their technical virtuosity, as signs of the artist's individuality and the particular bent of Martin's artistic genius.¹¹⁸ But unlike Turner and Girtin, Martin did not deploy genius "as an alibi – as a claim to be somewhere other than where it was: not in the marketplace, vying for profit and fame, but in the purified and disembodied realm of the artistic imagination."¹¹⁹ Rather these watercolors became his "stock-in-trade in the 1840s" and, as with his historical landscape paintings, their prices (according to Martin) could be adjusted "by the amount of work" he put into them in order to meet the demands of the consumer.¹²⁰

As Kriz has shown, Girtin and Turner sought to distinguish their landscape watercolors from traditional topographical practice by emphasizing the transformative powers of their respective artistic geniuses, which could convert the most mundane landscape elements into platforms for virtuosic displays of bravura handling.¹²¹ Similarly, as Celina Fox has pointed out with regards to one of Martin's earliest experimental watercolors, *London from Primrose Hill* (1833, Fogg Art Museum, fig. 40), "Martin was often willing to compromise topographical accuracy in exchange for aesthetic effect," so that in this drawing, "stippling combined with a resist technique in the cloudlike trees and undergrowth heightens the soft, delicate effect,

¹¹⁷ On Dayes's distaste for "manner" and painterly effects, see Kriz, *Idea*, 23-32.

¹¹⁸ On Martin's technical skill in watercolor, see Wilcox, *Triumph of Watercolour*, 116.

¹¹⁹ Kriz, *Idea*, 8.

¹²⁰ Feaver, *Art of John Martin*, 154; Martin to J. Fairey, February 25, 1853, Archives, Queen Mary, University of London, WFD/JM/15. Martin also informed Fairey that his watercolors ranged in price from £15 to £50.

¹²¹ Kriz, *Idea*, 90. See also Kriz, *Idea*, 96, where she discusses Turner's *Battle Abbey – the Spot Where Harold Fell* (1819, untraced), which is similar in associative possibilities to Martin's *Runnymede*.

offering a pastoral relief from the apocalyptic clutter of Martin's paintings."¹²² Douglas Schoenherr has similarly noted of Martin's "widescreen" *View on the River Wye, near Chepstow* (1844, National Gallery of Canada, fig. 41) that "the present bird's-eye view in an effective panoramic format is an outstanding example of how he transformed topography into Romantic dream."¹²³ For this exhibition watercolor, Martin had stood at a lookout point on the Wyndcliff overlooking the River Wye in Wales that is known today as the Eagle's Nest and, in 1848, called to mind for at least one traveler associations with the panorama.¹²⁴ However, he has apparently imaginatively, and theatrically, added a towering cliff and band of trees on the right to balance the cliff and trees on the left so that, as Schoenherr has pointed out, "the dark vertical bands of trees at either side act as theatrical flats or *repoussoirs* to set off the luminous distance."¹²⁵ In order to create an eye-catching effect for this panoramic exhibition piece painted on speculation and exhibited at the SBA in 1848, Martin certainly completed this work in the studio and executed it "pointilistically" not only in watercolor but also gouache, graphite, and possibly oil,

¹²² Celina Fox to Miriam Stewart, correspondence paraphrased in Konrad Oberhuber and William W. Robinson, eds., *Master Drawings and Watercolors: The Hofer Collection*, exh. cat. (Cambridge, Mass.: Fogg Art Museum, 1984), 52 no. 43. Stewart also notes that it is not entirely clear whether the church spire in the distance is supposed to be St. Paul's Cathedral.

¹²³ Douglas E. Schoenherr, *British Drawings from the National Gallery of Canada*, exh. cat. (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 2005), 110 no. 42.

¹²⁴ Catherine Sinclair, *Hill and Valley, or Wales and the Welsh* (Edinburgh: William Whyte and Co; London: Longman and Co., 1848), 306, "We returned from Chepstow, and mounted to the summit of 'stupendous Wyndcliff,' which rises a thousand feet high, exhibiting one of the most varied and extensive panoramas that can be fancied."

¹²⁵ Schoenherr, *British Drawings*, 110 no. 42. Martin did the same in a nearly identical version (1844) now in the Whitworth Art Gallery, but in the Whitworth version he has lightened the foreground and eliminated the two birds (eagles? Schoenherr says they are ravens) in the lower left. Schoenherr added, "The melodramatic contrasts of chiaroscuro [in the Ottawa drawing] were learned from the mezzotint process, Martin being one of the few artists to use the medium for original rather the reproductive prints."

with scraping out and heightened with varnish and/or gum arabic.¹²⁶ As a reviewer for the *Athenaeum* put it in a piece covering the posthumous sale of nearly sixty of Martin's watercolors, including the Wyndcliff series, unlike standard topographical views, these drawings "give a new view of the artist's character" and have "an almost morbid delicacy" in their execution, "finished with all the dainty minuteness of even a woman's hand . . . as if in these drawings a reaction from the wildness of his imagination had led Mr. Martin to display his tenderest feelings."¹²⁷

It should be clear by now from the discussion up to this point that Martin's attempt to communicate his imaginative genius to the viewer in his elaborately executed works is not to say that he simply attempted to simulate the optical illusions of a panorama or diorama.¹²⁸ As discussed earlier, in terms of the theatricality of his large exhibition paintings, Martin surely was in competition with and took his cue from the stage, as well as panoramic and dioramic exhibitions. However, as also stated before, his aim from the beginning of his career was to make a fortune as a painter. In a metropolis glutted with such illusionistic entertainments, the only way to achieve his objective of wealth and material prosperity was to carve out a niche for himself in "Martinesque" spectacle, to offer something novel, "to make more noise" than ever before. Indeed as a critic for the *Athenaeum* suggested in a review of Martin's *Coronation*, if what one

¹²⁶ Schoenherr, *British Drawings*, 110 no. 42, "Martin applied gouache, and perhaps even oil, pointilistically, all heightened with liberal applications of varnish or gum to produce the highly saturated hues of an 'exhibition' watercolour." Martin exhibited two other Wyndcliff views at the 1848 SBA exhibition. One, as noted earlier, is in the Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester; the other is in the National Gallery of Art, Washington.

¹²⁷ *Athenaeum*, no. 1387 (May 27, 1854), 657. The reviewer added, "The best of the whole collection for finish and tone were the views from the 'Wynd Cliff,' the autumnal foliage being composed of a depth of transparent and glowing colours we never saw so richly heaped together, or so finely contrasted with the faint purple of the retreating distance, with the cliffs of Chepstow and the waves of the Severn white in the horizon."

¹²⁸ See Matthew Craske, *Art in Europe, 1700-1830* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 214-215; Dart, "On Great and Little Things," 153, 155, 163, 164.

wanted was “literal fidelity” and “monotony” rather than “spectacle,” then instead of viewing Martin’s picture, he or she instead go see “the more exact picture [of Victoria’s coronation] at the Diorama” in Regent’s Park.¹²⁹ In order to make a splash, I will argue, Martin smashed the old system of illusionism through his virtuoso handling of paint and, in particular, his use of heavy impasto and his inversion of solid and void. I now want to discuss how Martin did this by destroying the notion of a painting as a window through which a three-dimensional world is made visible.

First of all, as discussed earlier, Martin began by calling attention to the fact that what the viewer sees in his paintings is depicted from his point of view, as if he was standing in front of the canvas in the same place as the spectator.¹³⁰ He accomplished this, as in *Belshazzar’s Feast*, by setting up the linear perspective “according to the most rigorous accuracy of common rules.”¹³¹ However, Martin then barred the viewer entry into all areas of the painting by shutting down the lines of communication between himself and the viewer that had been established by his use of linear perspective. For instance, as mentioned, Martin shattered the illusion of distance in his *Belshazzar’s Feast* by short-circuiting the network of lines, which he had so carefully drawn that gave the painting an impression of depth and recession, by overloading the canvas with a profusion of thickly painted details so that the viewer is forced to scramble back and forth

¹²⁹ *Athenaeum*, no. 613 (July 27, 1839), 565.

¹³⁰ David Michael Levin, *Modernity and the Hegemony of Vision* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 349, “When Alberti described his procedures for making a perspective drawing, that is, a drawing in which things become smaller as they recede from the viewer, he invited his readers to imagine the canvas on which one would paint to be a window. In other words, Alberti began his perspective drawing by becoming a spectator on one side of a window looking at the world on the other side.”

¹³¹ [Martin], *Description of . . . Belshazzar’s Feast*, 11.

across the surface of the picture according to the pamphlet's directions.¹³² He also denied the viewer entry into the painting by means of the phantasmagoria of light, as discussed earlier by Pichot and others.

However, there were two other ways he achieved this destructive effect in all of his paintings that have not been discussed before in Martin scholarship. First of all, he made the negative space surrounding some objects tangible, more so than the objects themselves. Second, he painted selected objects in the distance around the outlines of other objects directly in front of them, so that the objects in front, which are supposed to be nearer to the viewer's eye, appear to be pockets of negative space being swallowed up by the distance as it pushes forward over their outlines.¹³³ In Martin's paintings, all that is solid melts into air but air can also become solid and be turned into a tangible object.

In the case of *Belshazzar's Feast*, Martin depicted the lightning-filled sky in the upper left distance in the center of a vortex of storm clouds by applying pinkish-white paint on top, and in the center, of a flat area of gray-blue paint. The remaining exposed area of gray-blue paint is supposed to be the outer ring of the vortex and, therefore, closer to the viewer. Yet it is depicted in lower relief than the lightning-filled sky in the distance so that it recedes while the center of

¹³² Hamlyn, *Belshazzar's Feast*, [5], has noted that Martin "carefully drew out the horizontal and vertical lines of the buildings: a few faint lines that are still visible beneath the paint suggest that these were drawn first with a pencil. They were subsequently strengthened with a pen, a ruler being used to ensure that the straight lines were true and a template or pair of compasses for the curved lines." Leopold, "Reminiscences" (January 26, 1889), front page, recounted that when his father was at work on what he called his great experiment in architectural perspective, *Belshazzar's Feast*, Martin "was inundated with letters from many persons distinguished in the world of science, all expressing opinions and anxiety as to the novel experiment he was about to make." Hamlyn, *Belshazzar's Feast*, [5], however, judged Leopold's story to be apocryphal

¹³³ This is also the effect that the dark shape of the Mount of Olives in Martin's *Crucifixion* mezzotint has on the white speck representing the Temple of Jerusalem in front of it. In my future research, I will explore how Martin used contrasts of light and dark to produce disorienting spatial effects in his prints akin to those in his paintings.

the vortex (the lightning-filled sky) pushes forward. Martin also painted the visible upper portion of the Tower of Babel in semi-relief, as if it is sitting on top of the storm clouds, which, visually speaking, should be behind it, so that the tower appears to hang suspended in space in an act of levitation. Martin then created further spatial confusion by painting a long diagonal streak of cloud across the front of the upper portion of tower, effectively cutting the tower into further pieces.

In all of the paintings that I have seen, from one of his earliest public successes, *Joshua Commanding the Sun to Stand Still upon Gibeon* (1816, fig. 4) to the last large oil painting, *The Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah* (1852, Laing Art Gallery, fig. 42), that Martin exhibited at the Royal Academy, Martin exploded the illusion of depth on the two-dimensional surface by doing as he did in *Belshazzar's Feast*: by making negative space tangible and by depicting objects that are further away in greater relief than those that should be closer in perspective to the viewer's position.

For instance, in *Joshua Commanding the Sun to Stand Still upon Gibeon*, Martin painted the bright interstices between the columns of the dark temple on the right (directly behind the largest pyramid) as if they were more substantial in volume than the temple itself by applying thick white paint to represent the intervals, so that they are in greater relief than the temple.¹³⁴ In the upper left corner of the canvas, in a manner very similar to *Belshazzar's Feast* four years later, Martin depicted moonlight breaking through the swirling storm clouds by applying white and pink paint in a thick impasto over the flat, gray area used to represent the storm clouds, so that the distant moonlight appears to be closer to the viewer than the clouds. In addition, Martin added what would become his trademark lightning bolt over a patch of impasted pigment used to

¹³⁴ This playing or experimenting with positive and negative space occurs repeatedly throughout Martin's depiction of the city of Gibeon.

represent the moonlight.¹³⁵ This bolt of lightning then disappears behind a sliver of gray cloud (which, as mentioned, looks flatter and smoother than the moonlight, because in lower relief), only to reappear again as it makes its way to earth on the other side of the cloud on top of more impasted pigment used to represent the distant moonlight. Moreover, the illusion of distance on the left half of the composition is even more difficult to comprehend than on the right because Martin has painted the hail destroying the Amorite armies as pink and black lines that remain straight as arrows as they fall so that they lay on the surface of the canvas like long pieces of thin thread.¹³⁶ In addition, the two war elephants in the lower left distance are not dark silhouettes against a backdrop of brightly accoutered armies. Rather, they are represented in lower relief than the battling armies, which are painted in high relief around the contours of the beasts.

In *The Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah*, Martin painted the central section of the canvas, depicting the annihilation of the cities of the plain by fire and brimstone, in a thick impasto of red, orange, and yellow, like a molten lava flow. Directly above the collapsing cities, he smeared even more red, orange, and yellow paint in layers down the canvas that form an arc to suggest the raining fire and brimstone. Combined together, the collapsing cities and raining fire form a gigantic flaming eye that peers back at the viewer. In contrast to the tumult further away, Martin painted the (for the moment) unscathed buildings and palm trees in the shaded middleground in such a way that they can only be recognized as such by virtue of their crimson red contours, which are painted on a huge flat area of dark reddish-brown paint. Thus, most of

¹³⁵ [George Gilfillan], "Painting: Part I: Its Origin and History," *Hogg's Weekly Instructor* 1 (March 29, 1845), 68, "In his every picture there is a flash of lightning, now illumining some scene of desolation, now garlanding the head of a fiend, and now guiding the invaders through the breach of a city. We have sometimes called it 'John Martin, his mark.'"

¹³⁶ My thanks to Carol Christensen, Senior Painting Conservator at the National Gallery of Art, for pointing this out to me.

the foreground and middleground appears as smooth as a tea tray, compared with the tactile background.¹³⁷ Again, as in *Joshua*, the intervals between the columns and arches of the buildings in the center of the canvas have a thick infill – this time, of bright red, yellow, and orange pigment – that causes the buildings to look, when inspected up close, as if they have been impressed or stamped into the volcanic colors behind them. As a result, this bright color seems to push over the crumbling buildings’ contours and to squeeze through the interstices between the columns.¹³⁸

In every other painting I have seen, Martin inverted solid and void repeatedly in these two ways. Thus, it seems that, before he launched his career as an oil painter, Martin had stayed up until two and three o’clock in the morning studying perspective only to make a career out of destroying it.¹³⁹ Space does not permit a discussion of all of Martin’s canvases, but I will provide some other examples in chronological order of works in public collections where this breakdown of positive and negative space can be clearly seen. In the first painting he submitted to the Royal Academy after leaving Collins’s glassworks, *Sadak in Search of the Waters of Oblivion* (fig. 3), Martin painted the magma-filled cracks in the rocks in the background of the picture on top of the rocks, so that these light-filled gaps are closer to the viewer’s eye than the rocks themselves.

¹³⁷ The exception to this is in the lower right foreground where Lot and his daughters can be seen exiting the picture. Martin has placed them upon a rocky outcropping, which is richly and heavily painted.

¹³⁸ For a contemporaneous response, see “A Glance at the Exhibition of the Royal Academy,” *Tait’s Edinburgh Magazine* 19 (June 1852), 357, “At a little distance the sky appears one ocean of vermilion, and it is only on a near view that the effects of the painter’s imagination are discernible. The hell of flame and ruin from which the exiles are hastening is finely conceived, and terrible to look at; but the preponderating masses of hot colour ruin the picture as a whole, and repel the eye of the spectator, which seeks repose elsewhere.” Martin appended lines from Genesis to the title in the RA catalogue, “But his wife looked back, and she became a pillar of salt, etc.” Another painting exhibited that year, *Scene in a Forest – Twilight*, was most likely the Fitzwilliam’s *Twilight in the Woods* (1850), which shows a figure in the foreground who, like Lot’s wife, has turned around and is looking back at ruins in the distance.

¹³⁹ See Martin’s accounts of his early years in London in *Athenaeum* (June 14, 1834), 459, and *Illustrated London News* (March 17, 1849), 176.

Solid and void are confounded in *The Bard* (1817, Laing Art Gallery, fig. 43), in which Martin painted the spaces between the rows of columns of the castle as visually equivalent in size, shape, and color to the bright stones supporting the upper portions of the castle turrets nearby. In addition, Martin used thicker paint for the white foam of the waterfall as it crashes onto the rocks than he did for the rocks themselves, which are thinly painted and in lower relief (this can also be seen in *Sadak*). He also depicted the snow on the summit of the mountain in the upper left corner as thicker and more substantial than the mountain directly in front of it. In *Adam and Eve Entertaining the Angel Raphael* (1823, fig. 28), the dark bushes in front of and behind the first couple and archangel appear to be as smooth, flat, and dark as the void of the cave behind where they are sitting, while the hollyhocks and roses, which are supposed to be situated behind these bushes, are encrusted around the contours of these dark, flat bushes. In his 1834 *Deluge* (fig. 8), the white wall of water bearing down on the rocks is painted using thick paint, similar to the storm clouds above, on a dark ground while the darkest portions of the rocks adjacent to the sea foam, are simply represented by this same flat, dark ground outlined by a few other colors. If one looks behind the two large toppling towers in *The Destruction of Tyre* (1840, Toledo Museum of Art, fig. 44), one can see that the light-filled spaces between the arcades and columns of the buildings stand out in relief from the surface of the painting so that, as in *Joshua* and *Sodom and Gomorrah*, while the interstices push forward, the architecture recedes. For his 1841 *Pandemonium* (Louvre, fig. 45), Martin made it appear as if “the veins of liquid fire” that stretch into the distance, and the reflections they cast, are more solid than the rocks in the foreground and middleground and are even more substantial than the palace of Pandemonium in the distance. Martin also signed and dated the picture “J. Martin 1841” on the thinly painted rocks at lower right in block letters using the same, thick, flaming orange paint, that he had used for the

reflections from the fire on the rocks, so that his name and date look like reflections on the ground behind Satan. In one of his most spectacular paintings, *The Great Day of His Wrath* (1851-53, Tate, London, fig. 46) from his *Last Judgement* series, Martin not only inverted the order of things by toppling whole cities into a gaping abyss, but also by making the lava and flames in the distance appear more substantial than the enormous rocks and boulders in front and to the left of them.

Martin's reliance on heavy impasto for effect was hardly uncommon in the history of English painting.¹⁴⁰ Reynolds, of course, used it in the eighteenth century extensively in his later portraits and, more contemporaneously with Martin, Constable in his six-footers. But no other early nineteenth-century British painter used it as a way to rethink spatial and temporal relations within a painting and to violate spatial illusionism and the picture plane by inverting solid and void.

Descriptions in reviews of Martin's untraced or damaged paintings also suggest that viewers would have encountered confusing spatial relationships in these works due to the way in which Martin dissolved the distinctions between foreground and background, space and object.

For instance, the *Sporting Magazine* said of his *Macbeth* (1820) at the British Institution:

From a certain distance, we stand astonished at the evanescent vapour which floats over the back ground; at the violently tortured elements in the skies; at the progressive disappearance of the weird sisters – at the (perhaps too) numerous army which, led by drummers, winds in the vales adjoining the haunted heath, and melts into indistinctly marked operations of the pencil – but when we approach nearer, the spell positively breaks with that of the witches – the *broomish* scumbling of yellow, red, and blue in the skies; the *opaque* glazing of the distances; the dots and small lumps of paint, scattered on

¹⁴⁰ "Government Patronage of Art," *Art-Union* 3 (November 1, 1841), 189, "Take away from the majority of our English painters the power of s[c]rambling and glazing, pummicing [sic] and scraping, with all the peculiar aid of the strongest *impasto* here and there, and their productions would, we fear, be far from exhibiting, at once, a gratifying result." See also Kriz, 46; Sam Smiles, "'Splashers,' 'Scrawlers' and 'Plasters'": British Landscape Painting and the Language of Criticism, 1800-40," *Turner Studies* 10 (Summer 1990): 5-11.

the canvas to appear something more than what they really are; and, particularly, that tailor's-thread-like lightning, which, of all the lightnings we ever saw attempted in sea or land storms, is by far the worst.¹⁴¹

Speaking of Martin's *Revenge* (1821), which depicted the burning of Troy, Thomas Griffiths Wainwright admonished the painter, "Mr. M. if you value your own fame, brush out the whole of your frittered, shingly, gaudy foreground, together with those execrably executed figures – put it in again in a broad massy severe style, so as to set off the sublime distance, and you will have achieved a work to live in the recollections of our posterity, when not a thread of your canvas remains."¹⁴² The *General Weekly Register* said of the now damaged *Destruction of Pompeii and Herculaneum* (1822, fig. 27), "The clouds are so black and firm, they could stand as well for rocks as clouds – and then the fire that fringes them and issues from them, could not be expressed by any thing but vermilion and carmine, and consequently, perhaps, it looks more like streaks and gouts of blood than any thing else."¹⁴³ Four years later, the *New Monthly Magazine* stated of his first version of the *Deluge* (1826) at the British Institution:

In the first place it attempts to combine two things which are absolutely incompatible with each other; namely, extreme minuteness of detail with extreme grandeur of general effect. . . . And all these combined produce no general effect whatever, in their place in the picture. We cannot but think, too, that these minutiae are united with others to which they are perfectly contradictory. For example, a multitude of figures are depicted on a rock in the middle distance, so minute as to be absolutely invisible till you come close to the canvass [sic]; and yet the rock on which they are collected exhibits the various minutiae of its formation.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ *Sporting Magazine* 6 (April 1820), 37. A smaller version, attributed to Martin, is in the National Gallery of Scotland, but there have been questions raised about its being by Martin because it is unsigned.

¹⁴² [T. G. Wainwright], "Exhibition of the Royal Academy," *London Magazine* 4 (July 1821), 75.

¹⁴³ "Mr. Martin's Gallery," 136; Z., "Martin's Destruction of Herculaneum," 281, also remarked, "This very 'canopy of ignited matter' looks like a the remains of a fringed and festooned curtain; or like raw and unmixed colours uncautiously laid upon a smooth surface, and fantastically dropping down on the panel or canvas." The painting was partially destroyed during the Tate Gallery flood of 1928. It is presently rolled up in storage at Tate stores in South London.

¹⁴⁴ "Fine Arts: British Institution," *New Monthly Magazine* 18 (March 1, 1826), 108. See also *Literary Gazette*, no. 473 (February 11, 1826), 92, "The power of representing multitudes near and distant has

Martin's attempts to toy with viewers' perceptions and expectations regarding foreground and background, surface and depth, and to create a total theatrical experience led to his designing frames for his pictures in the late 1830s and early 1840s. Rather than mark the limits of the painting's surface, these frames extend it into the viewer's space by echoing shapes within the painting on its own surface.¹⁴⁵ For example, a frame, decorated with sea shells and runs of water (fig. 47), mimicking those depicted in the painting, can still be seen today surrounding Martin's *The Assuaging of the Waters* (1840, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, fig. 48).¹⁴⁶ Twisting dragons and serpents, similar to the statues in the painting, appear in the corners and at the top and bottom centers of the frame (fig. 49) that surrounds *Pandemonium*. Martin also produced a sketch (fig. 50) for an unrealized frame for *Pandemonium*'s companion, *The Celestial City and River of Bliss* (1841, private collection, fig. 51) and told the purchaser of the picture that "in the centre of the frame at the top should be a dove surrounded by rays."¹⁴⁷ If this design had been carried out, these rays would have extended downward from the dove toward the heavenly rays of light in the top of the picture.

never been better displayed, even by Mr. Martin; and the detail of the remote groups shew the work of destruction equally with those on the fore-ground."

¹⁴⁵ Martin also may have designed the present frame for the *Coronation of Queen Victoria*.; however, when it was sold by Christie's, London (May 17, 1861), no. 371, at the Charles Scarisbrick sale to Atherstone, it was lacking a frame. Martin explained why he had stopped designing elaborate picture frames in a letter to Benjamin Hick, August 5, 1842, quoted in Richard James, "Two Paintings by John Martin," *Burlington Magazine* 94 (August 1952): 234, "I have purposely departed but little from ordinary frames as the makers generally fail in representing my intentions."

¹⁴⁶ As noted in the catalogue when the painting was sold at Sotheby's, London (March 9, 1988), no. 90.

¹⁴⁷ Martin to Benjamin Hick, August 5, 1842, quoted in James, "Two Paintings by John Martin," 234-237.

Martin also created internal frames for some of his prints so that the frame becomes part of the composition.¹⁴⁸ He also took proofs of his prints, or prints by others after his work, cut them into pieces of varying sizes, and then pasted these fragments into an album (figs. 52 and 53).¹⁴⁹ Some of these he retouched with wash and/or used to create collages (figs. 54, 55 and 56). Therefore, in a constant process of breaking and remaking, Martin created new compositions from shards of his older ones. A possible reason he did this may have been that it was remarked upon in his own day that what made Martin's works look so different from those of his competitors was that, due to the amount of effort he put into them, they "contained many in one; whereas the pictures of other artists could hardly be curtailed of their proportions; and it was gravely proposed, as Juliet said of her lover, to cut them into little stars, each one in itself a world of invention."¹⁵⁰

I have argued that Martin's paintings contain a superabundance of compositionally fragmented parts that do not cohere visually for the reason that he crammed them with details primarily (although not exclusively) in order to raise their market value. However, I also would

¹⁴⁸ See for example the large plate illustrating *Heaven – The Rivers of Bliss* (1824/25) for Milton's *Paradise Lost*; illustrated in Campbell, *Visionary Printmaker*, 63, no. 47.

¹⁴⁹ Victoria & Albert Museum, Prints and Drawings, 92.C.24. It appears that Martin may also have drawn frames in pencil around some of the fragments directly on the album sheet; but, it is not entirely certain that these are by Martin's hand, as the text in pencil identifying some of the fragments is not by Martin.

¹⁵⁰ [Horne?], "Martin's *Illustrations of the Bible*," 453. See also comments on Martin's 1826 *Deluge* in *New Monthly Magazine* 18 (March 1, 1826), 108, "Here are many groups, &c. that might be cut out and set in a finger ring, and would even then require to be looked at with a magnifying glass." "On the Genius of John Martin," 101, "No one can look upon and admire the pictures of this artist, without being struck with the true and apparent fact, that in painting one picture he paints a thousand, and that the faults, with which he has been charged by some, of minuteness of detail, and of heightening up every part of a picture to such an exquisite degree of finish as almost to dazzle the spectator, may rather be considered as errors on the right side. Every column, every temple, and every vase of gold, is a separate study in itself; and, if one large picture were to be cut up and divided into several smaller ones, they would each form a most exquisite and beautiful bit of art; - and, if our memory serves us aright upon this subject, such an idea as this was at one time contemplated."

suggest that another reason is because Martin did not subscribe to the Vitruvian principle, as Richard Sennett has described it in *Flesh and Stone: The Body and the City in Western Civilization*, that “the architect must derive scale and proportion in a building from the scale and proportion of the body’s parts.”¹⁵¹ This can be inferred by looking at leaf 7 verso in Martin’s sketchbook (c. 1818, fig. 57), which is housed in the Ashmolean Museum.¹⁵² On this sheet, he has twice drawn a square within a circle, which itself is bounded by another square, as in Cesare Cesariano’s illustration of Vitruvian man (fig. 58) in the 1521 Como edition of Vitruvius’ *De architectura*.¹⁵³ The significant difference between them, however, is that unlike Cesariano, Martin has omitted the spread-eagled figure of man, whose navel would have been at the center of the circle and whose arms and legs would have approximated the diagonal lines, so that, clearly, ideal man was not the measure of all things for Martin. The top design is significantly smaller than the one directly below it, but, still, Martin has placed them edge-to-edge, one above the other, and extended the diagrammatic lines of each into the other and beyond their proper limits on all sides, trailing off into infinity, so that there is no organic relation between parts and whole as space expands. The end result of this piecemeal approach to building up a picture architectonically is that in his paintings, as was remarked in his time, “Martin piles up gorgeous palaces with a magician’s art, but cannot draw man or woman.”¹⁵⁴

¹⁵¹ Richard Sennett, *Flesh and Stone: The Body and the City in Western Civilization* (New York: Norton, 1994), 106.

¹⁵² WA1863.1475.

¹⁵³ Vitruvius, *Di Lucio Vitruvio Pollione de architectura libri dece*, trans. Cesare Cesariano (Como: Gottardo de Ponte, 1521).

¹⁵⁴ *Literary Chit-Chat* (1848), 97. See also *Literary Chit-Chat* (1848), 95-96, “There is something too like trickery in Martin’s vast architectural perspective. Perhaps it was only a lucky first hit; almost any one can repeat it. He has no other resource. If he has sublimity, it is what Coleridge would call the *material* sublime. His enormous buildings make pigmies of men and angels. The Almighty himself is insignificant in Martin’s illustrations of Milton.”

As in Martin's illustrations for his proposed metropolitan improvements, the human being is by and large simply a scale marker in his paintings. For instance, in *Belshazzar's Feast* a figure (no. 17) provides the scale of proportion but is so miniscule that one has to refer to the accompanying pamphlet to find out that "its" (the sex is unidentified and indeterminate) height is six feet (the same height used in all of Martin's paintings where a human serves as a scale marker). This tidbit of information only functions to inform the viewer that "the length of the halls is found to be one mile," not to display the harmonious relation of parts to whole.¹⁵⁵

In other works, the human figure as a scale of measurement becomes disposed of altogether, as in the *Destruction of Pompeii and Herculaneum* "where the distance becomes so great that the figures are lost. The buildings of Pompeii will then supply the scale, the great Theatre (marked No. 14 in the engraving,) being two hundred feet in width. An idea of the magnitude of the more remote objects may be formed from the buildings, trees, &c."¹⁵⁶ In the *Descriptive Catalogue of the Engraving of the Fall of Babylon* (fig. 59), the scales of reference

¹⁵⁵ [Martin], *Description of . . . Belshazzar's Feast*, 3. Similarly, see [Martin], *Descriptive Catalogue of . . . the Fall of Nineveh*, 5, "No. 5. A gateway, crowned with towers, 200 feet in height. At the entrance of the gate stands a human figure, which, estimated at the height of six feet, gives the scale of measurement by which every object in the picture is worked." On the lack of relation of parts to whole in Martin's paintings, see [William Hazlitt], "On the Elgin Marbles," *London Magazine* 5 (May 1822): 448, where he compares the perfection of the Parthenon and its sculptures with the architecture and figures in *Belshazzar's Feast*, "His [Martin's] figures are like rows of shiny pins; his mountains are piled up one upon the back of the other, like the stories of houses. He has no notion of the moral principle in all art, that a part may be greater than the whole. He reckons that if one range of lofty square hills is good, another range above that with clouds between must be better. He thus wearies the imagination, instead of exciting it. We see no end of the journey, and turn back in disgust. We are tired of the effort, we are tired of the monotony of this sort of reduplication of the same object. . . . This craving after quantity is a morbid affection. . . . Mr. Martin might make Arthur's Seat sublime, if he chose to take the thing as it is; but he would be for squaring it according to the mould of his own imagination, and for clapping another Arthur's Seat on the top of it, to make the Calton Hill stare! Again, with respect to the human figure. This has an internal structure, muscles, bones, blood-vessels, &c. by means of which the external surface is operated according to certain laws. Does the artist, with all his generalizations, understand these, as well as nature does?"

¹⁵⁶ [Martin], *Descriptive Catalogue of . . . Pompeii & Herculaneum*, 24-25.

are not human at all but the (no. 4) “squares at the back of the house, two miles in circumference” and (no. 7) “The Palace of Nebuchadnezzar, eight miles in circumference,” both of which are barely visible in the far right distance¹⁵⁷

Yet, there was, as in all his actions, an economic reason that Martin neglected the body as a significant object of study, according to William Bewick and David Wilkie:

[Bewick] Mr. Martin told me that he never had a model in his life for any picture. Consequently that was an expense he was saved in the execution of his works. Haydon was, so to speak, reckless in this part of the business, and would pay exorbitant sums for some of the models for his heads. For instance, the Jews screwed out of him whatever they demanded; and even then he was obliged to cover up the figure of Christ, otherwise they refused to sit to him at any price. He would pick up a beggar in the street, and for fear of losing him would bring him home in a coach. Of course his own man, Salmon, sat for the figure; then there were draperies, armour, &c. The female figure - hands, feet, and so forth - all costly, for he did not paint without both drawing and studying every part of his picture first. Every nostril, every finger-nail, will be found to be a complete study.

[Wilkie] Ah! yes, models are expensive, and I am surprised Martin can do without them. It is so much saved in the expense, to be sure, but his figures are wanting in nature and variety; and his works are a kind of scenic painting only; for if one's imagination is surprised by perspective infinity, by repeated objects fading away, as it were, to distant nothingness, by mountain upon mountain, and sky and mountain again, and lo! a fainter bit of sky, and fainter bit of mountain above those again, why, it becomes the romance of painting, and needs no models. It is totally imaginary, and has nothing in common with natural objects. Give Martin a thousand pounds, and he could not paint a great toe the size of life.

[Bewick] Haydon was six years in bringing out his picture of “Christ Riding into Jerusalem,” and he had accumulated such a weight of debt upon him, that although he cleared £3000 by the exhibition, yet its not being sold left him still in debt, and by the time he brought out his next picture, his “Lazarus,”- the cost of that work, and the precipitate conduct of one of his creditors, and he a pupil of his own, completely ruined him. The works are not sold, and have been seized for debt, while he himself is thrown into the Bench—a loss and a disgrace he will never be able to recover.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁷ [John Martin], *Descriptive Catalogue of the Engraving of the Fall of Babylon* (London: published by the author, 1832), 1.

¹⁵⁸ Landseer, *Life and Letters of William Bewick*, 1:267-268.

Haydon, whose diary entries about Martin's love of accumulation I used as epigraphs to this chapter, found himself in the King's Bench more than once due to his unprofitable commitment to the civic humanist discourse and heroic historical painting, which, as Kriz has explained, simply did not and could not sell in England where government patronage was all but nonexistent.¹⁵⁹ As Wilkie told Bewick, "large historical pictures, such as Haydon's, have this disadvantage, - that they are beyond the scale of private purchase; those of the size of Martin's are more readily disposed of. You see Mr. Martin has always contrived to make his pictures profitable, either by sale, by exhibition, or by engraving them."¹⁶⁰ Haydon, too, had lectured to students during a whistlestop tour of the country "to implant sound principles of High Art in the public mind" that "the success of Martin, amongst the middle classes" was "indisputable evidence of the feeling of the British people for subjects of the highest poetry of art."¹⁶¹ Yet he added that Martin's popularity with the bourgeoisie in depicting lofty subjects appropriate to historical painting in a landscape format was only because "he is not an historical painter, he cannot paint, but he is a great epic scenist, who burst the cerements with which he was encumbered, and made his way to the light, putting forth his sublime conceptions like an inspired child, who has never learned to draw, to paint, or to compose."¹⁶²

Two years after the "imaginative genius" Thomas Girtin died, his teacher Edward Dayes, who did not accept his pupil's flashy style, committed suicide under the strain of debt in 1804. In *The Idea of the English Landscape Painter*, Kriz quoted Dayes's "On the Principles of

¹⁵⁹ Kriz, *Idea*, 21.

¹⁶⁰ Landseer, *Life and Letters of William Bewick*, 1:267.

¹⁶¹ Haydon, *Lectures on Painting and Design*, ix.

¹⁶² Haydon, *Lectures on Painting and Design*, 319.

Composition as Connected with Landscape Painting” (1801) in which he had said, “To paint for what is termed effect, may answer the purpose of the idle, the ignorant, and those who make a trade of the art, but such a practice will not satisfy the discerning. The only apology the artist can offer is, that he must fish with such baits as will take: unfortunately he does not live to paint, but paints to live.”¹⁶³ Regarding this passage, Kriz has stated:

This was the central dilemma facing artists [like Dayes] who attempted to fashion their practice on the basis of academic rules and precepts. Such principles ignored the private functions of works which adorned the walls and occupied the portfolios of private homes, and discounted the needs of artists who had to compete in a commercial market for luxury goods in order to survive. For within the academic paradigm, the subject position of the liberal artist and that of the artist as economic participant in the market were mutually exclusive. It was this unwillingness to recognize how untenable a [civic humanist] theory of art had become that failed to engage with the inextricable links between cultural production and a capitalized economy, which doomed at the outset both Dayes’s attempts at history painting and his attempts to regulate and elevate the practice of landscape painting via the precepts of academic discourse. The inability or unwillingness to accommodate the needs and desires of contemporary viewers had consequences which were far from ‘academic’ for individuals whose living depended upon the sale of their work. Becoming despondent about his straitened finances, Dayes neither live to paint nor painted to live, but committed suicide in 1804.¹⁶⁴

Two years after Haydon’s lectures were published describing Martin as “not an historical painter . . . but . . . a great epic scenist”, Haydon, oppressed by the weight of his own debts, brought on by his single-minded devotion to historical painting, slit his throat - “the inevitable consequence of a life devoted to glorious martyrdom,” as Matthew Craske has put it.¹⁶⁵ The day before he committed suicide, he had appealed “in dire distress and need” to Martin for an emergency loan and was refused.¹⁶⁶ Having bailed out Haydon several times before and now

¹⁶³ Edward Dayes, *The Works of the Late Edward Dayes* (London: Mrs. Dayes et al., 1805), 206.

¹⁶⁴ Kriz, *Idea*, 32.

¹⁶⁵ Craske, *Art in Europe*, 58. Craske added, “Indeed, as a young man he was prone to making melodramatic predictions of his own premature death.”

¹⁶⁶ Leopold Martin, “Reminiscences” *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* (March 16, 1889), front page.

preoccupied with the affairs of his Metropolitan Sewage Manure Company, which had just received approval from Parliament to begin transporting sewage out of London for sale in the English countryside (at its own expense, of course), Martin had to get on with the business of living. Unlike Dayes and Haydon, he had understood long ago, as he told the Select Committee on Arts and Manufactures, that historical painting was “dead as an art, for artists paint to live and it is too much to expect any one to die a martyr to his love of any peculiar branch.”¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁷ “Report on Arts and Manufactures” (1836), para. 837.

CONCLUSION

England is strictly commercial, and Art, of course, takes its colour from the habits of the country. He who loves his high calling for its own sake; who wishes to adorn the halls, the churches, the public buildings of his country, without reference to profit and loss; who has no wish for bank-stock or consols, and whose only passion is to raise the reputation of his country in Art as others have in arms, is looked upon as a lunatic more fit for Bedlam than the world; is left without employment; and if he cannot pay his current debts, is regarded as a man ignorant of moral duties, and set upon as a monster who deserves to be hunted from the light.¹

Benjamin Robert Haydon, *Correspondence and Table-Talk*, July 17, 1845

As noted in my Introduction, Kay Dian Kriz drew a sharp distinction between history and landscape painting in her examination of the rise of the domestic landscape painter as “native genius” in early nineteenth-century England. As a result, Martin fell out of her discussion because he had established himself early on as a painter of historical landscapes. However, as Andrew Hemingway has argued in *Landscape Imagery and Urban Culture in Early Nineteenth-Century Britain*, in the absence of state patronage of the arts:

landscape painting became a major field for artistic ambitions. In effect, we may interpret both the large scale adopted by artists such as Callcott, Constable, Hofland, and [George] Vincent; and the dramatic treatment of historical and poetical themes by [Francis] Danby, Martin, and Turner; as equally representing a displacement of history painting as a public art into the lesser genre [of landscape]. . . . In historical landscapes, the very format of the genre meant that the example of virtue inevitably became reduced to a detail. Even when the narrative informed the whole structure of the work, . . . human emotions could only be signified in a displaced form, which did not produce the same effects of empathy with individual agents.²

If this is true of historical landscape painting in Britain in general, then Martin’s historical landscapes went to the extreme end of the spectrum in that they denigrated those remnants of heroic historical painting left in the landscape by splintering them into even smaller fragments.

¹ Haydon, *Correspondence and Table-Talk*, 478.

² Hemingway, *Landscape Imagery*, 292-293.

Specifically, in Martin's historical landscapes, individual agents became reduced not only to details, but even to mere specks, as were the examples of virtue they had once long ago embodied. Indeed, when Charles Lamb saw Martin's *Joshua*, he found, "Just such a confused piece . . . frittered into a thousand fragments, little armies here, little armies there . . . but for Joshua, I was ten minutes a finding him out."³ Of Martin's *Belshazzar's Feast*, the *Magazine of the Fine Arts* said:

While we admire the artist's ingenuity, we must nevertheless disapprove of this style of painting; or, at least, protest against its allowance, as appropriate to *history*. In such pictures as Martin has produced, the architecture and landscape are made the principal. But it is human expression that constitutes the interest of history; and this expression should, therefore, be the principal feature and attraction in every work. But in these magnificent views of ideal buildings, and immeasurable palaces, the beings which inhabit them appear like a few ants in a field.⁴

If the civic humanist theory of art vaunted heroic history painting as the highest genre and if the rise of landscape painting is linked with the rise of the urban bourgeoisie, then in Martin's historical landscapes, history painting can be seen, as it were, in the process of breaking down to fit within the constraints of the domestic scale of landscape painting for private purchase, eliminating in the process the example of virtue previously inherent in the category and replacing it with technically virtuosic spectacle.

As a final case in point of Martin's annihilation of the individual agent in the landscape, compare his and Haydon's respective portrayals of the ancient Roman hero Marcus Curtius on his horse leaping into the chasm that had opened in the Forum. In Haydon's gigantic (305 x 218 cm) *exemplum virtutis*, *Curtius Leaping into the Gulf* (1842, Royal Albert Memorial Museum and Art Gallery, Exeter, fig. 60), the neglected and impoverished historical painter has glorified

³ Charles Lamb to Bernard Barton, June 11, 1827, in Bernard Barton, *Selections from the Poems and Letters of Bernard Barton*, ed. Lucy Barton (London: Hall, Virtue and Co., 1849), 133.

⁴ "The British Institution," *Magazine of the Fine Arts* 1, no. 1 (1821), 49.

himself monumentally as Rome's most precious possession by giving his features to Curtius so that he becomes the painter-hero sacrificing himself for the good of the republic. Although there is no record of Martin's having exhibited an oil painting of the subject, he did produce a sepia drawing (Laing Art Gallery, fig. 61) in 1827 as a study for a small steel engraving (fig. 62) by Henry Le Keux published in 1828 in a popular literary annual, the *Forget Me Not* for 1829.⁵ Although many reviews of the steel engraving were positive, even these noted that due to "the multitudinous details . . . a magnifying glass of high power" was required to find the hero in the picture.⁶ If, as John Barrell has stated, "in various ways [Haydon's] *Curtius* seems to announce the end" of the civic-painter-as-hero, Martin's - by dissolving the hero into the landscape setting - announces a double sacrifice: that of the anachronistic civic hero whose sacrifice amounts to nothing, as well as the capitulation of historical painting to landscape and its further commodification in the form of a steel engraving.⁷ Thus, while Haydon clung to the attenuated - and, at this point, irrelevant - civic humanist theory of heroic history painting until his own solitary self-sacrifice in front of his easel four years after painting his *Curtius*, Martin embraced the counter-discourse of political economy and traded the Latin *exemplum* in exchange for its diminished English derivative "sample," as in a "*pattern of a piece of work, or commodity.*"⁸

⁵ Martin exhibited a watercolor of *Marcus Curtius* at the SBA in 1831 and executed a mezzotint in 1837. Two oil sketches of the subject have been attributed to him. On these and other versions, see Balston, *John Martin*, 189-190, 277; Campbell, *Visionary Printmaker*, 165. The *Forget Me Not* was published by Rudolph Ackermann and edited by Frederic Shoberl. Reviews for the 1829 volume began to appear as early as September 1828.

⁶ "The Annuals for 1829," *La Belle Assemblée* 8 (November 1828), 186. See also "Fine Arts: New Publications," *Literary Gazette*, no. 610 (September 27, 1828), 619; "The Forget-Me-Not," *Mirror of Literature, Amusement, and Instruction* 12, no. 340 (1828), 309.

⁷ Barrell, "Benjamin Robert Haydon," 284.

⁸ See Robert Ainsworth, *An Abridgement of Ainsworth's Dictionary, English and Latin*, new ed., ed. Thomas Morell (Edinburgh: Stirling, Kenney, & Co., 1840), 304, "*A sample, or sampler [an example] Exemplar, exemplum, modulus. Or pattern of a piece of work, or commodity.*"

Hemingway, however, in his article on “Benthamism and the Arts in the 1820s” has also pejoratively characterized Martin’s historical landscapes as depending “on a kind of spectacular display of apocalyptic fantasies, designed to appeal to the lowest common denominator of popular middle-class taste at a time when such fantasies were much in vogue.”⁹ For this reason, he saw a kind of “mysticism” in Martin’s paintings that was inimical to the utilitarian views espoused by Jeremy “Bentham’s followers, the Philosophic Radicals, [who] were something like the vanguard of bourgeois ideology in early nineteenth-century Britain,” for the reason that the Radicals “viewed the vogue for supernatural effects in the arts . . . as obscurantist and potentially dangerous.”¹⁰ Yet as I have tried to show in Chapter 5, Martin’s religious works, as in his *Crucifixion*, were not obscurantist, but “tear the veil” (literally and metaphorically) that barred access to the holiest of holies. These works represented his attempts to use research and reason to question scriptural and historical authority and travel back into deep time in order to reach his own conclusions about events rather than rely on inherited wisdom. For instance, Martin told Thomas that the earth was millions of years older than the Bible allowed, and that it was “peopled with inferior animals, then a grade superior, and finally with man. This I [Thomas] thought ridiculous enough but he [Martin] said he got it all from geology; for there were no bones to be found of man, though there were the bones of all sorts of other animals. . . . If he does not think that man was created and placed upon earth by a Creator, then I pity him.”¹¹

⁹ Andrew Hemingway, “Genius, Gender and Progress: Benthamism and the Arts in the 1820s,” *Art History* 16 (December 1992): 637.

¹⁰ Hemingway, “Genius, Gender and Progress,” 619, 638.

¹¹ Diaries of Ralph Thomas, quoted in Pendered, *John Martin*, 232. Pendered was the last person to have possession of Thomas’s manuscript diaries. The diaries have been lost since the publication of her book in 1923, and so must be cited from Pendered, *John Martin*, which provides often incomplete references.

Martin's approach, I would argue, was in fact perfectly in line with what Hemingway called "the Benthamites' commitment to the rational dissection of traditional culture" and is also in line with evolutionary theory.¹² As Martin explained to Thomas, "Man is endowed with a power of reason and everything is placed before him to reason by and with, as facts and arguments. Should veneration for his early education make him fear to approach his beliefs or religious tenets? Why should man use one kind of logic for religion and a different kind for general affairs?"¹³ I also argued in this chapter that in the same way that he looked back into deep history in order to question received wisdom and to paint "what (he thought) might have been seen" had he been there in historical time, he also created a constant shuttling between here and there, surface and depth, in his canvases by attacking the Renaissance conception of a painting as a window.¹⁴

As I argued in Chapter 2, Martin also was in line with Parliamentary Radicals in his advocacy of "free trade in art, as in commerce" and the Radicals' demand for reform with respect to established institutions, like the Royal Academy. Like the Radicals associated with Bentham, such as Ewart, Bowring, and O'Connell, who (as we saw in Chapter 3) supported Martin's Thames and metropolis improvement plans, Martin advocated laissez-faire economics and encouraged Poor Rate reform to lower taxes. We have also seen that, like them, he advocated the diffusion of useful knowledge, or popular, practical education, such as the classes

¹² Hemingway, "Genius, Gender and Progress," 620.

¹³ Diaries of Ralph Thomas, quoted in Pendered, *John Martin*, 233. See also Charles Macfarlane's description of Martin arguing politics with the anarchist William Godwin at the height of agitation over the Reform Act (1832), when he described Martin telling Godwin, "We have had march of intellect, progress of education, intellectual development, throwing off of prejudices, and now the Nation, the People, thinks." Charles Macfarlane, *Reminiscences of a Literary Life* (London: John Murray, 1917), 99. For a recent book that proposes Martin was part of a generation of "Promethean" reformers, see Max Adams, *The Firebringers: Art, Science, and the Struggle for Liberty in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London: Quercus, 2009). Adams, however, views Martin as having "natural apocalyptic sensibilities" like his brothers.

¹⁴ Z., "Martin's Destruction of Herculaneum," *Literary Gazette* 6 (May 4, 1822), 281.

given at the National Gallery of Practical Science. Indeed, in the same year (1833) that he was exhibiting his historical landscapes at this industrial exhibition, he also could be found participating in the inaugural “*converzatione*” given by the professors of the University of London, of which Bentham is considered to be the “spiritual father,” discussing fossil flora in the university anatomy theater.¹⁵

By discussing Martin as an almost unique champion of political economy and free competition among major early nineteenth-century British artists, I have tried in this dissertation to demonstrate that he commended, rather than condemned, Britain’s status as a modern commercial nation. Competition, Ruskin argued, may have pitted person against person, but that was perfectly fine with Martin. His creed, Thomas tells us, was not, like Ruskin’s, mutual aid, but self-help, and was summed up by Martin later in life as “the best antidote to small wages is self-improvement. Improve your power of action and you improve your condition.”¹⁶ Martin was in constant competition, with other landscape painters, like Turner and Danby, for preeminence in art and with the art market itself, in an attempt to anticipate and meet changes in his own markets. Yet if there was one thing John Martin was convinced of by age fifty-nine, it was that his success had come about only “by my own independant [sic] means” and “if I had enemies amongst the artists, their aspersion[s] did not retard my progress.”¹⁷

¹⁵ *Derby Mercury* (December 4, 1833).

¹⁶ Diaries of Ralph Thomas, quoted in Pendered, *John Martin*, 57.

¹⁷ *Illustrated London News* (March 17, 1849), 177.

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 MSL/1979/7461/31A: Letter from JM to G. Linnecar
 MSL/1982/7/14A-14B: Letter from JM to W. H. Simmons and an unidentified recipient

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Edinburgh Literary Journal

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Gardener's Magazine

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The Gorgon

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