THE JOURNAL OF THE WHISTLER SOCIETY NUMBER 4. 2022

'THE TEN O'CLOCK'

The Portraiture of James McNeill Whistler

The Whistler Society's 10th Anniversary Issue

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James McNeill Whistler
and his Art World

The Portraiture of Whistler

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The Whistler Society
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[*cover*]
Arrangement in Brown and Black: Portrait of Miss Rosa Corder, 1876/1878.
Oil on canvas, 192.4 x 92.4 cm.
The Frick Collection, New York.
Henry Clay Frick Bequest.

[*front endpaper*]
The Oval Room,
The Frick Collection, New York.
Photo: Michael Bodycomb.

[*title page*]
Whistler in Fulham Road studio,
London, c.1886.
Whistler PH1/120,
University of Glasgow
Archives & Special Collections.

[*rear endpaper*]
Filthy Lucre, 2013–14,
Mixed media installation with sound,
365.7 x 914.4 x 609.6 cm.
Photo by Luke Walker. Courtesy of the
Artist and DC Moore Gallery, New York.

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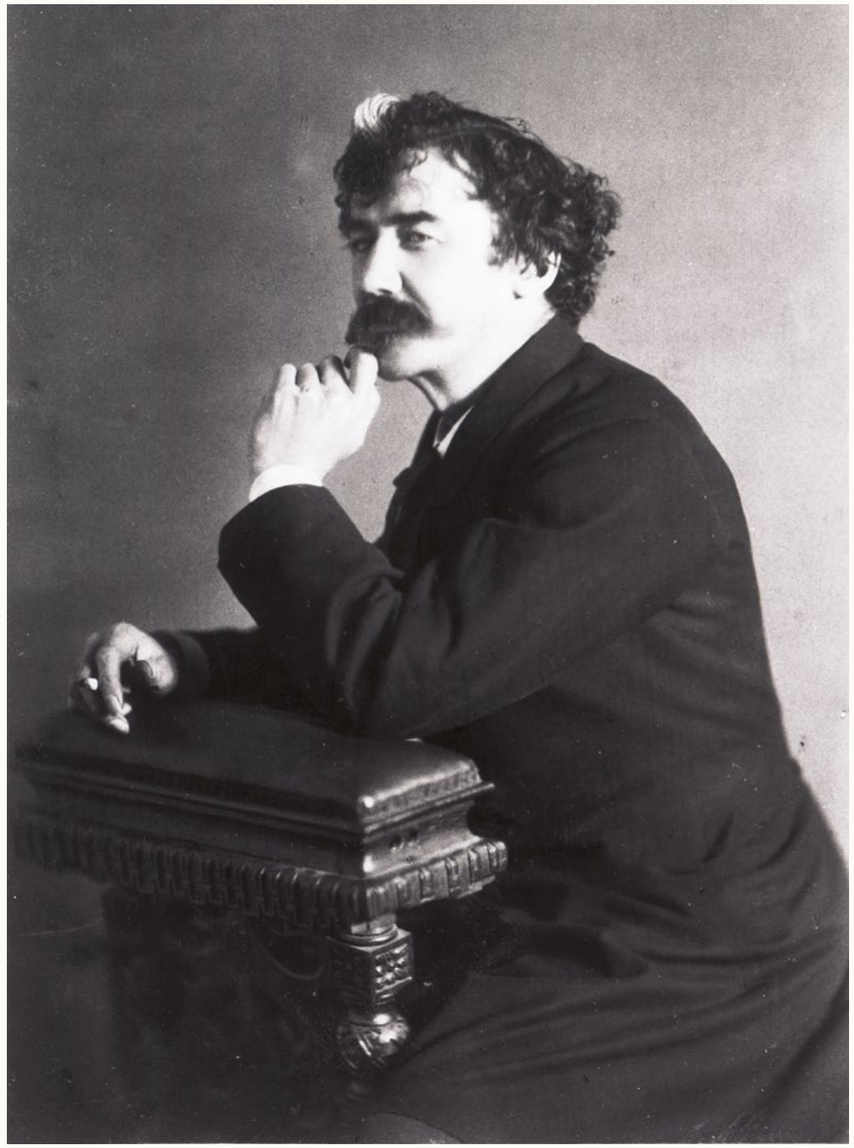


Whistler, 1878.
University of Glasgow,
Archives & Special Collections.

INTRODUCTION

Martin Riley
Chairman, Whistler Society

It is a privilege to write this Forward to the fourth issue of The Ten O'Clock. It celebrates the return to some sort of normality after the upheavals of the last two years and, more importantly, the burgeoning life and activity of The Whistler Society. Fortuitously, this issue also marks the 10th Anniversary of the founding of our Society.

The theme of this issue, The Portraiture of Whistler, *is outlined in the Editor's Introduction and reveals the remarkable breadth of Whistler's oeuvre in terms both of subject matter and media. It reinforces his position as one of the most innovative artists of his time whose influence endures to this day.*

The Editor, Dr Georgia Toutziari, has brought together a remarkable team of contributors. Working closely with the Assistant Editor, Emeritus Professor Daniel E. Sutherland, she has produced a Journal which is both scholarly and enlightening.

I would like to thank them for their dedication and academic rigour. I send them my congratulations and know that every reader will do the same.

Arrangement in Grey and Black: Portrait of the Artist's Mother, 1871.
Oil on canvas, 144.3 x 162.5 cm.
Musée d'Orsay, Paris, RF699 (YMSM 101).

EDITOR'S LETTER

GEORGIA TOUTZIARI

Hopefully most of us have had the opportunity to cast our eyes on, or even read, some of the previous issues of the *Ten O'Clock*. First published in Spring 2017, and dedicated to the founder of the Whistler Society, David Le Lay, Issue Number 1 celebrated the work and life of James McNeill Whistler. A shy but ambitious issue, it took us on a journey in Whistler's life and oeuvre from his nocturnal scenes to his masterly etchings. The subsequent issues followed a similar pattern, adding reviews of contemporary exhibitions that featured works of the American master.

Issue No. 4 of the *Ten O'Clock*, is a departure from the previous issues. There is a common thread in looking closely at *The Portraiture of Whistler,* unique in its diversity of forms and functions. Following on from the Renaissance cult of individuality and the grand tradition of British portraiture, Whistler portrayed a remarkable cross-section of society in a variety of media, including oils, watercolors, drawings, lithographs and etchings. Portraits of models, socialites, respectable women, patrons and famous men, numerous self-portraits, and of course the iconic painting of his mother, *Arrangement in Grey & Black: Portrait of the Artist's Mother* were all artistic statements achieved through this form.

But Whistler, although he knew how to use the publicity value of showing portraits in public exhibitions, went beyond executing portraits of people only worthy of note: he also captured the diverse tapestry of life in representations of working-class people. Whistler's "blue girls," explored in this issue by Margaret F. MacDonald, are significant examples of this. Whether taking advantage of formal sittings, copying a likeness, or relying on memory or impression, Whistler's portrait work was often closely connected with the presence and personality of the sitters.

We have been fortunate enough to attract in this issue established Whistler scholars, artists and museum and gallery professionals who have generously offered their insights and knowledge in relation to portraits they have either studied and/or handled. The dozen essays have been divided into four distinct categories:

Collections (Private and Public)

De Montfort, Galassi and Cooke all tackle subjects of female sitters that they worked with in galleries and art collections, public and private. De Montfort throws light on *Whistler's Late Portraits of Ethel Birnie Philip* (1861–1920), *the sibling of*

Whistler's heir, his sister-in-law, Rosalind Birnie Philip. By focussing on works at the Hunterian Gallery at the University of Glasgow, including *Red and Black: The Fan* (1889/1896) and *Rose et or: La Tulipe* (1892–1896), De Monfort asks what these works tell us about Whistler's late career and what ~~do~~ they say about Ethel herself.

Galassi and Cooke, on the other hand, unite in their approach by describing their journeys in dealing with Whistler masterpieces at first hand as gallery professionals. Galassi gives us a skilful account of her connection with Whistler through her time at the Frick Gallery and throws a dazzling light on the study of the Count's "gallery wife," as she liked to call her, the subject of *Arrangement in Brown and Black*: *Portrait of Miss Rosa Corder* (1876–78). Cooke, formerly of The Fine Art Society, acted as an agent in the sale of Whistler's *The Widow,* an oil painting whose sitter remains unknown, to a private collector in the United States. His essay takes us through his personal connection with the enigmatic picture, which held a prominent place in Whistler's Memorial Exhibition of 1905, organized in London by the International Society of Sculptors, Painters and Gravers, of which Whistler had been the first president.

Music and Fashion

Ribeiro celebrates Whistler's ability to clothe the sitters in his portraiture in ways that revealed identities without providing details of fashion that might signal the social class of the individuals yet showing technical mastery in depicting the fabrics used and the complexity of the dress. Henry James' fictional characters plot a dialogue with Whistler's portraits in this intriguing essay.

My own essay explores one of Whistler's early domestic genre group portraits, *At The Piano,* of 1859, an intimate family scene, that has fascinated me ever since I first looked at it in the beginning of my Whistler scholarship days. Whistler's connection with music is of particular interest to me; both painting and music were art forms that pre-occupied the Master pictorially throughout his career.

Sitters

Of course, we could not have an issue without the leading authority on Whistler, MacDonald, who explores a subject that obsessed Whistler for thirty years: the Blue Girl. Her detailed account of the models, the paintings and their history is underpinned by sadness, however, as Whistler's lengthy affair with the subject of "blue girl" ended up "littered with abandoned, unfinished, rubbed down, cut-up, over-worked and missing paintings," in MacDonald's words.

Sutherland, the assistant editor of this issue, paints a tender picture of Frances Leyland, the wife of Whistler's patron and Liverpool shipping magnate Frederick R. Leyland, in the *Symphony in Flesh Colour and Pink: Portrait of Mrs Frances Leyland* (1873*).* The portrait, according to Sutherland, may have held much "personal meaning for Whistler and suggests a complex relationship between sitter and artist." It is interesting that a portrait can be seen almost biographically for Sutherland, who sees such features as the placement of Frances's hands representing a "strange little something" for Whistler.

Artists on Artists: faults and disputes, a happy ending

But we could not have a Journal issue without exploring some of Whistler's eccentricities or character faults, and Burns does just that through the artist's almost life-size caricature of Frederick R. Leyland, *The Gold Scab: Eruption in Frilthy Lucre (The Creditor)* of 1879. Burns offers an ambitious interpretation of the critic's "Twylene Moyer's contention that however much *The Gold Scab* may be a sardonic attack on Leyland, it might also be seen as a projection of the inner Whistler.

This projection of the inner Whistler continues in Calloway's essay on Beardsley and Whistler. Their relationship was not an easy one, and for Calloway, this is reflected in Beardsley's "fancifully facetious portraits" of Whistler. However, his story of these two "uncompromising geniuses has a delightful, if unexpected ending" in that they recognised the artistic genius in each other!

Waterston, recounts his own personal journey as an artist and the prodigious influence Whistler has had on his work and which was embodied in his thrilling exhibit at the Victoria & Albert Museum in 2020, *Filthy Lucre, Whistler's Peacock Room Reimagined.* Both Waterston and Whistler share, not only their love for creating aesthetic tensions, but also the "benefit of being an extrovert, at ease in public and amused by all the personalities and egos of the art world."

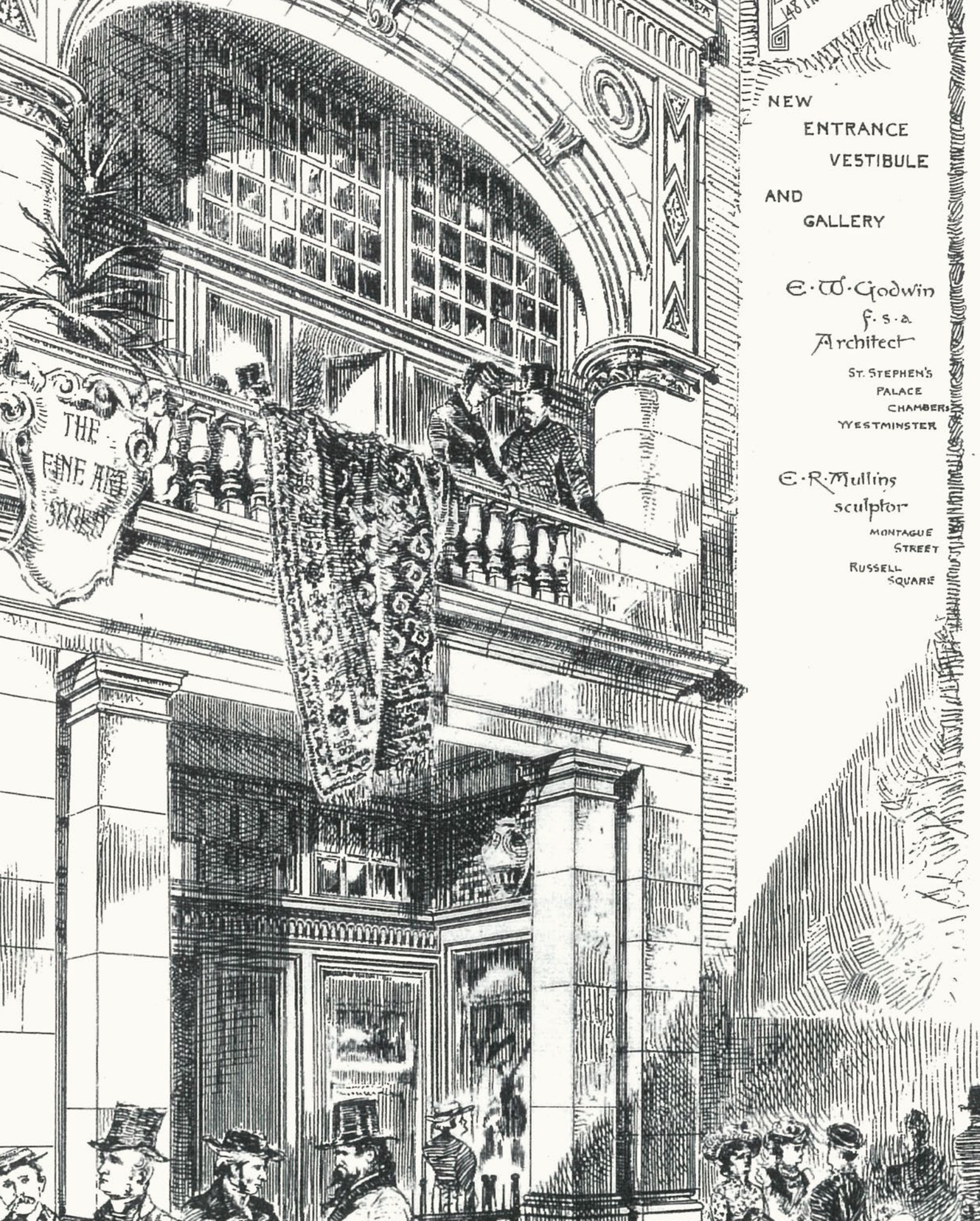
Petri's eye-opening essay on the unredacted diaries of the brothers Jules and Edmond de Goncourt reveals their impressions of Whistler, particularly in the "exhausting sessions" he required for his portraits of Comte Robert de Montesquiou-Fezensac. Whistler and the brothers never met, but they shared contacts and friends in the literary and artistic worlds, such as Montesquiou and Theodore Duret.

Goebel goes beyond the visual platform of presenting a portrait only in its pictorial form by comparing the published verbal and visual portraits of Whistler by illustrator and novelist George du Maurier. Through such comparisons, she maintains, we gain greater insight into the development of both the artist and his image.

I hope you enjoy the Issue No 4 of *The Ten O'Clock!*

Editorial note:

Authors have indicated their sources and suggestions for further reading at the conclusion of their essays. Even if not listed, virtually all of them have used three essential lnternet resources for researching Whistler's life and art: *The Correspondence of James McNeill Whistl*er at www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/correspondence, *James McNeill Whistler: The Paintings, a Catalogue Raisonn*é at www.whistlerpaintings.arts.gla.ac.uk, and *James McNeill Whistler: The Etchings, a Catalogue Raisonné* at www.etchings.arts.gla.ac.uk. Some contributors also used the equally valuable *The Lithographs of James McNeill Whistler: The Digital Edition* (www.publications.artic.edu).



Fine Art Society, London, (detail)
British Architect, 16 December, 1881.

COLLECTIONS

PRIVATE & PUBLIC

15 Whistler's Late Portraits of Ethel Birnie Philip in the Hunterian Collection
–Patricia De Montfort

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Red and Black: The Fan, 1889/1896.
Oil on canvas, 187.4 x 89.8 cm.
The Hunterian, University of Glasgow.

WHISTLER'S LATE PORTRAITS OF ETHEL BIRNIE IN THE HUNTERIAN COLLECTION

PATRICIA DE MONTFORT

The Hunterian Museum and Art Gallery at the University of Glasgow houses over 800 artworks by Whistler, making it an unrivalled centre for the study and enjoyment of his work. The collection is centred on the artist's estate and major gifts made by Whistler's heir, his sister-in-law, Rosalind Birnie Philip in 1935 and 1954 and a bequest upon her death in 1958. The youngest of a large artistic family, Whistler often painted her; she also kept house for him and her widowed mother, Frances, and helped manage his business affairs after the death of his wife Beatrix in 1896. But while Rosalind's role in establishing the eventual destination of the collection is well-known (and Whistler's portraits of her featured in our 2021 exhibition at the Hunterian, *Whistler: Art & Legacy)*, there is still much to be learned about her siblings as sitters for a unique body of Whistler's late work in portraiture.

An important sub-set of these works is represented by six full-length portraits of Rosalind's older sister Ethel Birnie Philip (1861-1920), most of which have been little seen beyond the University of Glasgow due to strict lending conditions attached to the 1935 gift. The group includes *Red and Black: The Fan* (1889/1896) and *Rose et or: La Tulipe* (1892-1896) in which Ethel strikes the aloof, semi-formal pose of a society lady in the manner of portraits of the period by Whistler's friend John Singer Sargent. A seventh portrait in this vein, *Mother of Pearl and Silver: The Andalusian* (1891-1900) is now in the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. What do these works tell us about Whistler's late career? What do the portraits say about Ethel herself?

According to Margaret F. MacDonald, compiler of the recently updated and digitised Whistler Paintings catalogue, Whistler most likely began work on these works shortly after his marriage to Beatrix in August 1888. Nicknamed "Bunnie" by the artist (Rosalind was known as "the Major," with Whistler the "General"), Ethel often visited the studio in the early 1890s and she also worked as Whistler's secretary and amanuensis for a short period leading up to her marriage to the English journalist and writer Charles Whibley in the summer of 1894. She seems to have posed regularly for Whistler during this time. Indeed, there are numerous references to his portraits of her – the "red

Bunnie," "the 'Spanish' lady"– in his correspondence both then and after her marriage. Yet despite their sizeable number and formidable visual presence, our knowledge of these portraits is constrained by the difficulty in dating them since none were exhibited in Whistler's lifetime and all remained in the studio upon his death in 1903.

However, close study of the costume offers clues about fashion trends of the period that make it possible to at least narrow down the range of dates. In *Red and Black: The Fan,* for example, the rich red of Ethel's dress is complimented by a long black feather boa and co-ordinating bonnet that corresponds with fashion plates commonly found in magazines of the period. In addition, photographic portraits of Ethel in the Whistler Archive Collection at the University of Glasgow suggest that she possessed a keen dress-sense – in one example by the London studio of W. & D. Downey, she reclines over a chair wearing a pale-coloured dress with a heavily frilled bodice in the manner of the period (a fashion detail that is also evident in Whistler's half-length portrait sketch of her, *The Rose Scarf* (1892/1896). The model-like elegance of her appearance is complemented by the accessories – the heavily beaded pendant around her neck and a fan which she holds aloft just above her right knee. At the same time, as middle-class women of modest means, couture house fashion would have been off-limits. Rather, Ethel and her sisters would have purchased off-the peg versions of contemporary fashions made by a local dressmaker albeit, in 1892, Whistler's friend and patron Comte Robert de Montesquiou-Fezensac seems to have organised an introduction to a fashionable Parisian dressmaker – perhaps on favourable terms.

The Rose Scarf, 1892/1896.
Oil on canvas, 25.5 x 18 cm.
The Hunterian, University of Glasgow.

It is difficult to assess what these portraits say about Ethel herself, in particular, the level of her collusion or involvement in each of the portraits and artistic decisions about such key elements as pose, dress and lighting. Certainly, family and studio photographs of Ethel from the 1890s hint at a performative side to her personality that may have led to some involvement in deciding the pose and setting of Whistler's portraits of her. In a series of related photographs of Whistler and Ethel taken in the garden of the Whistlers' Paris apartment at 110 rue du Bac, both strike distinctive, carefully arranged poses. Ethel appears in two of the photographs in full-length three-quarter pose, in the second against the plain background of the garden wall. The visual drama and self-conscious aloofness of her pose, together with the manner in which she gazes directly at the viewer, her body slightly tilted to the right, can be related both to *Red and Black* and to Whistler's never completed *Sketch for a Portrait of Miss Ethel Philip*. So too can the rich texture of the fabric of the dark-coloured dress. Moreover, while

[*above*]
Ethel Philip (Mrs Whibley), c.1895.
University of Glasgow,
Archives & Special Collections.

[*above right*]
Whistler in the garden of 110 rue du Bac, Paris, 1892/1901.
University of Glasgow,
Archives & Special Collections.

the sketch portrait is broadly and roughly painted, some fashion details are visible – the line of the dress and its modest bustle, the jaunty angle of the hat – betraying Ethel's fondness for dressing-up and dating the portrait to a time preceding the leg-of-mutton sleeves and narrower lines that became a dominant feature of 1890s and early 1900s fashion.

While Whistler, perhaps aided by Ethel's keen fashion sense and fondness for visual drama, succeeds in creating a series of striking colour harmonies in each of these paintings, his intentions otherwise remain unclear in the absence of sale records and associated documentation. The question also remains as to why the portraits were never exhibited in Whistler's lifetime. Certainly dealers and critics in his circle attempted to convince him to do so. In May 1891, his old friend, the French critic Theodore Duret, expressed his disappointment at not seeing "un des portraits de votre belle soeur" at the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts exhibition in Paris. Three years later, while Whistler seems to have made enough progress to contemplate sending *La Tulipe* to the Société's latest exhibition since it was included in the catalogue (no. 1184) as "Rose et rouge: la Tulipe," he was unable to complete it in time. As he told de Montesquiou, "The poor Pink Tulip… has not finished her toilette."

Whistler continued to work on the portraits in 1894. His first biographers Elizabeth and Joseph Pennell recorded him at work on *Mother of Pearl and Silver: The Andalusian* and *Rose et or: La Tulipe*, along with *Red and Black*, in his Paris

studio during the late autumn of that year. He also seems to have intended at least three of the paintings (the first two plus *Harmony in Black; Portrait of Miss Ethel Philip*) to be sold abroad to American collectors. Indeed, in November the American collector and critic Arthur Jerome Eddy wrote of his hopes that Whistler would soon send "the magnificent portraits of Miss Phillip" to America. Whistler seems to have planned this enterprise through his New York dealer, Edward G. Kennedy. As Kennedy later recalled, "Whistler had three full lengths of Mrs Whibley, one in black, one in grey and black and one in pink. I was to have the three when they were 'complete.'"

But progress on the portraits remained painfully slow, probably in the light of Beatrix's increasing illness. After her death from cancer in May 1896, Whistler resumed work but, distraught with grief, failed to complete them to his satisfaction. Indeed, at one point he seems to have employed Ethel herself to fend off the dealer's advances. She wrote to Kennedy on Whistler's behalf in January 1897: "As soon as the picture is finished you shall have it and that he will write soon to you himself." Kennedy, on the other hand, anticipating they would be available for collection once a finishing touch or two had been made, visited Whistler's London studio at Fitzroy Street to find "Mrs Whibley [posing] for the full length in pink, but Whistler, instead of finishing the hand only, had repainted the picture from top to bottom and the beautiful tone had, of course, disappeared. In my astonishment I said – 'Good Lord you've spoiled my picture.'" Fortunately for the dealer, Whistler took his response in good heart and went on to discharge him" from all further entanglement in that unfortunate work… were it by a miracle to turn out a masterpiece it would be immoral to let you have it." He also made a number of attempts to rework the portraits over the next few years. This is betrayed in *Red and Black* by close examination of the picture surface which reveals that the paint has been applied thinly and repeatedly rubbed down and reworked. Similarly, in *Harmony and Black,* Whistler has reworked several areas of the painting including the dress, which he made darker in colour.

Harmony in Black: Portrait of Miss Ethel Philip, 1894/1896.
Oil on canvas, 187.2 x 89.7 cm.
The Hunterian, University of Glasgow.

But while preliminary conservation assessments of the condition of the portraits, including *Red and Black* and *Harmony and Black* have yielded such clues, deeper insights into their making and context are only likely to be obtained through detailed technical analysis that has, been hampered by the large size of the portraits, including the weight of their frames (and their glazing) which makes

Rose et or: La Tulipe, 1892/1896.
Oil on canvas, 190.5 x 89.0 cm.
The Hunterian, University of Glasgow.

them potentially hazardous to move around. This we hope to address over the course of a future Hunterian research project on this striking but relatively little-known group of Whistler's late portrait work. We also hope, through closer examination of Rosalind Birnie Philip's correspondence, including letters written after his death, to better understand Whistler's artistic relationship with the family during this important final decade of his career.

Sources/Further Reading:

M. F. MacDonald, Grischka Petri, *James McNeill Whistler: The paintings, a catalogue raisonné*, University of Glasgow, 2020, at http://whistlerpaintings.gla.ac.uk (includes full list of works of and related to Ethel Whibley, née Birnie Philip). *The Correspondence of James McNeill Whistler, 1855-1903*, edited by M. F. MacDonald, P. de Montfort and N. Thorp; including *The Correspondence of Anna McNeill Whistler, 1855-1880*, edited by G. Toutziari, University of Glasgow, at http://www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/correspondence (Letter nos. 09761, 13594, 00986, 13616, 01018, 09761; also includes biographical information about the Birnie Philip family).

Dr Patricia de Montfort teaches art history the University of Glasgow, where she is also Research Curator for the Whistler Collection at the Hunterian. Her research interests focus on British and American art, especially the work of Whistler, exhibition culture and the London art market 1850-1914, and nineteenth-century women artists. Her most recent publications are Whistler and Nature *(2018), and* Whistler: Art & Legacy *(2021).*

[*opposite*]
Arrangement in Black and Gold: Comte Robert de Montesquiou-Fezensac, 1891/1892.
Oil on canvas, 208.6 x 91.8 cm.
The Frick Collection, New York.
Henry Clay Frick Bequest.

ON THE TRAIL OF WHISTLER AT THE FRICK COLLECTION

For Margaret MacDonald and in memory of Edgar Munhall and Bernice Davidson

SUSAN GRACE GALASSI

Standing in the Garden Court of The Frick Collection on my first visit as a college freshman, I glimpsed full-length portraits in the distance and was drawn towards them. Entering the oval space at the end of the courtyard, I discovered four paintings by James Abbott McNeill Whistler, two in black on black and two in tones of pink. Their understated grandeur and immediacy of expression struck me with force and rooted me in place.

I set out from there to explore the renowned house museum where European Old Master and nineteenth-century painting, sculpture, and decorative art collected by the Pittsburgh industrialist Henry Clay Frick, and later additions, were displayed in luxurious residential settings. Yet, on that first visit, it was in the largely unfurnished Oval Room that I felt most at home. The simplicity of the gallery focused attention on Whistler's daring minimalism, and the vivid personalities of the four sitters. Even to my uneducated eye, the connection was clear between this modern quartet and the more elaborately detailed portraits by earlier artists— Rembrandt, Velázquez, Van Dyck, and Ingres—Whistler paying homage to them and veering in another direction with emphasis on the formal abstract qualities of art. I understood on that first encounter the pivotal position of the Whistler paintings in the collection but could not have anticipated their central place in my life and career as well.

Many years later, in 1991, I was welcomed into the Frick on a three-year post-Ph.D. curatorial fellowship, which led to a permanent position. As Assistant Curator, I worked with two formidable longtime curators (and soon cherished mentors) Bernice Davidson and Edgar Munhall. My nearly thirty-year tenure was filled with steep learning curves and rewarding collaborations with Frick colleagues and outside experts on exhibitions on Spanish, British, and French artists, with Whistler as a continuous thread. Yet, while Whistler was closest to my background in modern art, I arrived with only a passing acquaintance with his work. My reeducation began at the door of the Frick, along with my introduction to curatorial work.

Bernice (Bunny) Davidson, the Research Curator and a Renaissance expert, schooled me in the fine art of writing entries as we worked together on the final installment of the complete catalogue of The Frick Collection, which included

pastels by Whistler. Her brilliant scholarship and concise style had set the standards in previous volumes in other areas of the collection. Responding to my drafts on the pastels, she counseled "think sonnets, not travelogues," noting Whistler's own economy of means. Throughout my years of working on catalogues, I aspired to her model, falling short of her poetry.

In contrast to Davidson's distillation was the ebullient curator Edgar Munhall's approach to another area of museum work—exhibitions. Although renowned for his knowledge of French eighteenth-century art, Munhall's love of French culture and Marcel Proust in particular, drew him to Whistler. At the time of my arrival, he was organizing a major exhibition around the Frick's sole male portrait, *Arrangement in Black and Gold: Comte Robert de Montesquiou-Fezensac*. This double-focus show, centering on the complex relationship of the painter and his sitter—the poet, critic, dandy and model for the Baron de Charlus in Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*—traced the portrait's "biography" from its creation in 1891-92 to the present, evoking "the grandest aristocratic world and the world of upper bohemia" in which artist and subject played principal roles. Entitled *Whistler and Montesquiou: The Butterfly and the Bat*, the show, held from 14 November 1995 to 28 January 1996, drew large crowds and critical acclaim. Munhall's approach was passionate, personal, and in his own words, delightfully obsessive. I recall him saying that when he would see a group of schoolboys on the street, he always looked for the little Montesquiou among them.

Munhall cleared the Oval Room of its three female full-lengths and installed male swagger portraits by the artist and his contemporaries to create a context for Montesquiou. He filled the lower-level galleries with prints and drawings by Whistler, volumes of poetry and art criticism by Montesquiou, memorabilia, photographs, and even the Empire bed, once owned by Napoleon and lent by the Victoria and Albert Museum, which the poet gave the painter in exchange for his portrait. In the Cabinet Gallery on the ground floor, he placed a mannequin clothed in the type of evening suit Montesquiou wore in his portrait. Draped over its arm was a re-creation from the Revillon fur salon of the chinchilla stole, similar to the one in the painting. Photographs of Montesquiou in formal dress, and caricatures of both artist and poet as fashion icons conveyed the obsession with dress of the rivaling dandies.

Over the exhibition's run, leading Whistler scholars, including Margaret F. MacDonald and Nigel Thorp from the Centre for Whistler Studies at the University of Glasgow, came for lectures and evening events. Munhall's rigorous, inclusive, and celebratory approach to an exhibition left an indelible impression on me, and I aspired to follow his lead with one of my own. A small project led me to it.

While assisting Munhall, I took on a parallel study of the Count's "gallery wife," as I liked to call her, the subject of the other black portrait at the Frick, *Arrangement in Brown and Black*: *Portrait of Miss Rosa Corder*. Although an unlikely couple in real life, their images had travelled together through various collections, notably that of the American gambler Richard A. Canfield, who sold them to Frick in 1914 to pay off his debts.

The Frick Collection, New York,
Fifth Avenue Garden and façade
with magnolias in bloom.
Photo: Michael Bodycomb.

Harmony in Grey and Green: Miss Cicely Alexander, 1872/1873.
Oil on canvas, 190 x 98 cm.
Tate Britain, London.

[*opposite*]
Arrangement in Brown and Black: Portrait of Miss Rosa Corder, 1876/1878.
Oil on canvas, 192.4 x 92.4 cm.
The Frick Collection, New York.
Henry Clay Frick Bequest.

Standing with her back to the viewer in a stylish black suit, her luminous face in profile, the figure and the dark atmospheric space appear as one. The sheer reticence of Corder's portrait provoked a desire in me to bring the "unarranged" subject— a female artist making her way in Whistler's clamorous world—out of the shadows. I set out to learn more about her life and work, and I sensed that she wanted to accompany me on my curatorial journey.

Corder's portrait painted between 1876 and 1878 (when she was in her early twenties), went on to acclaim, although the sitter's considerable accomplishments as a portraitist and painter of horses and dogs were largely forgotten after her brief life, cut short at forty by pneumonia. To begin my study, I traveled to the University of Glasgow to consult with Margaret MacDonald and her convivial colleagues, a memorable visit that proved to be the first of several. Despite impending deadlines of a major Whistler retrospective and the catalogue raisonné of Whistler's drawings, pastels and watercolors, MacDonald found time to advise me and set me on my path. In the course of my continuing research in London and Liverpool, and back in New York, I eventually encountered Timothy Cockerill, a retired solicitor and the husband of Corder's third cousin, Chloë, who was updating the Corder family genealogy. Together, we published our findings in an article on Rosa Corder in *Apollo* in 2001, drawing her a little more out of the shadows. By that time, however, she had led me to my first full-scale exhibition at the Frick, then well underway.

In 1999 MacDonald had proposed that we co-curate an exhibition at the Frick for the centenary of Whistler's death in 2003, building on the foundation of the Montesquiou show by turning the spotlight on the Frick's three female portraits. While fashion had been an important component of the previous exhibition, it would be the primary theme for the women, exploring dress as a major focus of Whistler's creative activity and placing it in the context of the tremendous change in fashion trends and the status of women in the late nineteenth century. The exhibition was also an occasion to delve deeper into the biographies of the significant figures in Whistler's life who posed for him in attire he selected, or, as in the case of the wife of his major patron represented in the Frick's *Symphony in Flesh Colour and Pink: Portrait of Frances Leyland*, designed himself.

We were most fortunate that Dr Aileen Ribeiro, Head of Department of Dress and of the History of Art at the Courtauld Institute at the University of London, came on board as costume consultant and co-author, bringing her essential expertise, boundless generosity, and humor to the collaboration. Patricia de Montfort, Whistler scholar at the Centre for Whistler Studies, joined us as a contributor to the accompanying book, which Gillian Malpass at Yale University Press agreed to publish. To collaborate with the leading experts on Whistler and in the in the history of dress, with the full support of Frick colleagues, was an unparalleled opportunity.

The Oval Room again served as center stage for the show. The three Frick female portraits were accompanied by another five full lengths lent from collections from London to Honolulu. Each represented another aspect of fashion trends of the time, from flowing Aesthetic (or artistic) gowns, to tightly-corseted high fashion dresses with bustles, to the new tailored garb in black for professional women

The Oval Room, The Frick Collection. New York. Photo: Michael Bodycomb.

based on riding habit, to Spanish-inflected attire, with the portrait of little Cecily Alexander in her Whistler-designed "infanta" dress in the center of the room.

The lower-level galleries and the Cabinet held some sixty prints and drawings demonstrating Whistler's sensitivity to codes of dress in informal studies, as well as fashion plates and three stunning examples of period costume, borrowed from nearby museums, related to the attire in three of the paintings. In an article on the show, the *New York Times* critic Cathy Horyrn noted, "The Frick show recognizes that Whistler's portraits offer the most original and illuminating way to look at fashion in the late nineteenth century." Held from April 22 through July 13, 2003, *Whistler, Women, and Fashion* and its accompanying book, lectures, symposium, and overflowing audience, represented for me one of the finest and liveliest group efforts of my career, and laid foundations for equally rewarding collaborations on other artists, with Whistler remaining an ongoing part of my Frick life in other forms.

Six years after the *Women,* a summer exhibition in 2009 instigated by Chief Curator Colin Bailey brought Whistler back to the forefront. I now took an advisory role to a new generation of Whistler scholars on staff, Joanna Sheers (Seidenstein) and Caitlin Henningsen, co-curators of the show. *Portraits, Pastels, Prints: Whistler in The Frick Collection* presented the full range of the Frick's holdings, greater in number than that of any other artist in the collection. They included in addition to the four portraits and one seascape, *Symphony in Grey and Green: The Ocean* (1866), three pastels and a set of twelve dazzling etchings from Whistler's Venetian sojourn of 1879-80, all acquired by Henry Clay Frick between 1914 and 1919. The exhibition demonstrated the central place that the American expatriate modernist's spare works on canvas and paper occupy in the collection of mainly European Old Master and nineteenth-century art, as bridges between past and present.

My decades at the Frick saw a transformation of the quiet museum I had first encountered into a highly dynamic, growing, outward-facing twenty-

first century institution with brilliant younger curators, fellows, and educators producing exhibitions, publications, and programs under the direction of chief curators Colin Bailey and his successor, Xavier Salomon, and senior staff. My final encounter with Whistler took place in this burgeoning atmosphere of growth and an unexpected development.

In 2018, a frequent visitor to the Frick contacted us to express his interest in leaving the museum a collection of the artist's prints that had been formed over five decades by his mother and late father. Most had been given to him, and he now wanted to place them in a museum as a promised gift in honor of his mother. The collection included twenty-seven etchings, fourteen lithographs, and one Venetian pastel, and would be a major enhancement of the Frick's small but outstanding group of works on paper: the aforementioned set of twelve Venetian etchings and three pastels. This moving and generous tribute, announced in a small exhibition co-curated with Margaret Iacono, Research Curator, *Whistler as Printmaker*: *Highlights from the Gertrude Kosovsky Collection*, (30 April to 1 September 2019), brought my journey with Whistler to a conclusion. Whistler's patron saint at the Frick and our steadfast friend of decades, Margaret MacDonald, returned to bestow her invaluable authority on the future additions in a brilliant lecture, placing them in the context of the artist's extraordinary printmaking and the museum's holdings.

The artist who had drawn me in now accompanied me through the threshold from Senior Curator to Curator Emerita. My longtime companion, Rosa Corder, came too. Our stories had been intertwined over time, and I had met several members of her family who had come to share information and to gaze at the image that had given her immortality in Whistler's oeuvre, if obscuring an oeuvre of her own. While I was archiving my files, another direct descendant of Corder, Denis Malsher, and his wife Margaret, arrived, bringing family photographs, memorabilia, and a thumb drive with scans from a scrapbook containing some three hundred items, now placed in the Frick's archives. With an eye to the future, I made copies to peruse in less hectic times. It was comforting to leave with a little bit of Rosa in my pocket, along with the immense gratitude I owed cherished colleagues and collaborators who had been my friends and guides on the trail of Whistler.

Sources/Further Reading:

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Dr Susan Grace Galassi is Curator Emerita of The Frick Collection, New York City. She has co-curated numerous exhibitions with various experts on French, British, and Spanish artists. Her study of Monet's painting Vétheuil in Winter*, co-authored with Olafur Eliasson as part of the Frick's diptych series, appeared in fall 2022.*

The Widow, 1895/1900.
Oil on canvas, oval, 58.4 x 44.5 cm.
Private collection.

THE WIDOW

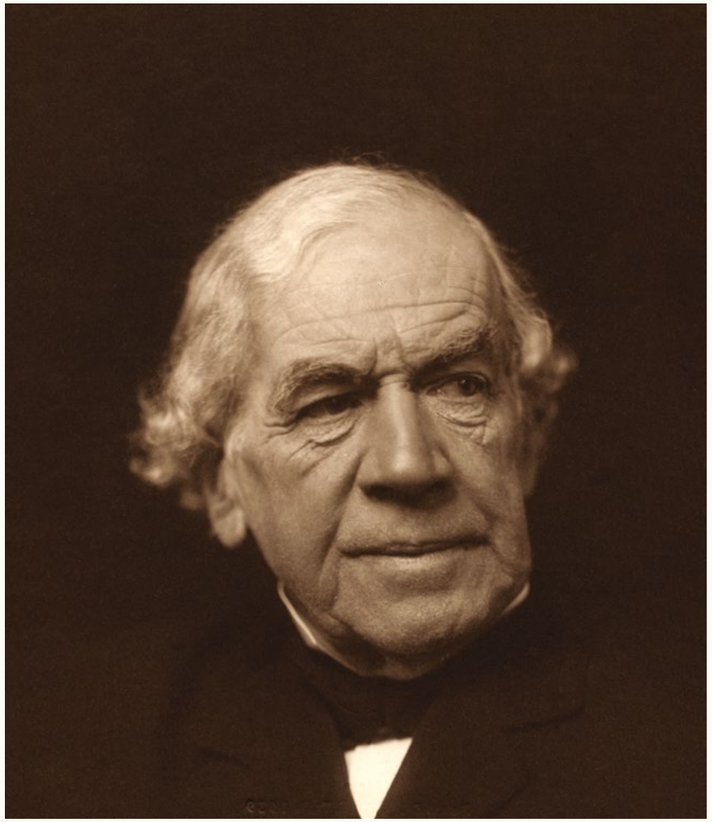
GORDON COOKE

A memorial exhibition for James Abbott McNeill Whistler was held at the New Gallery, 121 Regent Street, London by the International Society of Sculptors, Painters and Gravers (ISSPG), of which Whistler had been the first president. It opened on 22 February 1905, a year and a half after his death, and closed on 31st March. His successor as president was Auguste Rodin and the exhibition committee included Joseph Pennell, Albert Ludovici, Georg Sauter, D. Croal Thomson, Edward A. Walton and John Lavery, one of the pall-bearers at Whistler's funeral. The Honorary Committee of forty-one included the great and the good from Britain, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands and the United States of America. Besides members of the aristocracy, diplomats, fellow artists and museum curators and directors, the list included Sir Henry Irving, Théodore Duret and John Singer Sargent.

There were loans from King Edward VII and the Duchess of Argyle, among many others to the exhibition, which consisted of some 400 etchings, over 200 lithographs and drawings, and over 100 oils, watercolours and pastels: some 750 works in all. Many were lent by private collectors and a number of works had crossed the Atlantic. Despite Whistler's fame and importance, few were yet in museum collections. However, it was a remarkable feat of organisation to assemble a show on such a scale. For comparison the catalogue of the major exhibition mounted by Richard Dorment and Margaret F. MacDonald in 1994 which travelled from the Tate to the Musée d'Orsay and the National Gallery of Art, lists 205 works.

In this monumental survey and tribute to Whistler, the first oil painting listed in the catalogue was one titled *The Widow*, lent by the Executors of the late James Staats Forbes. Forbes had died in 1904, and he had owned seven Whistler paintings, four of which were later bought by Charles Freer and are now in the collection of the Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. (*Blue and Silver: Trouville* (1865), *Grey and Brown: The Sad Sea Shore* (1885), *Grey and Gold: High Tide at Pourville*(1899/1900), *Blue and Silver: Boat Entering Pourville* (1899); a fifth is in the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard (*Violet and Blue: The Red Feather* (1896/1900).

Forbes was a railway manager who specialised in rescuing failing railway companies, and was depicted in a 'Spy' cartoon of 1900 published in *Vanity Fair*. He built a vast and important art collection of over 4,000 paintings and drawings that included paintings by John Constable, Richard Parks Bonington, J. M. W.



James S. Forbes (1923–1904).
Photo by George C. Beresford.

Leslie Ward (Spy) (1851–1922).
James S. Forbes in *Vanity Fair*,
22 February 1900.

Turner, Jean Baptiste Camille Corot, Jean-François Millet and Charles-François Daubigny as well as Whistler. Many of these pictures are now to be found in public collections all over the world. He started collecting in the 1850s while running the Dutch and Rhineland Railway. Encouraged by Dutch artist Josef Israels, he first bought works by Dutch and German artists. He eventually owned 160 pictures by Corot, and his collection of drawings by Millet was described in an essay by Julia Cartwright in *The Burlington Magazine* in 1904: the Leicester Galleries exhibited 100 of the drawings in 1906.

Forbes' collection was divided between his house at Garden Corner, 13 Chelsea Embankment and his extensive offices at Victoria Station, which were "crammed with masterpieces," according to his obituary in the *Athenaeum*.

The entry in the catalogue of Whistler's ISSPG Memorial Exhibition is the first record of this painting. The origin of the title and indeed the identity of the sitter remain a mystery. Andrew McLaren Young suggested that it was a portrait of the artist's wife Beatrice, which might explain its prominent position in the exhibition. However, comparison with *Harmony in Red: Lamplight* (1884-1886) would seem to suggest that the subjects were not the same woman. It is possible that it was a commissioned portrait. The artist's butterfly signature would indicate that the artist considered it completed. It is possible that it was given the title under which it is now known by Joseph Pennell, who perhaps knew the identity of the sitter. The title is decidedly un-Whistlerian and indeed it was not the artist's custom to dwell on the name of his subjects. He called his portrait of his mother *Arrangement in Grey and Black: Portrait of the Painter's Mother*, although in the catalogue of the Memorial Exhibition it has the shorter title *Portrait of My Mother*.

It would appear that Elizabeth and Joseph Pennell had a high opinion of *The Widow,* since they chose to illustrate it in their 1908 biography of Whistler. In the Memorial Exhibition, it was hung among the portraits of Thomas Carlyle and Theodore Duret, *Whistler in his Studio,* and a group of Nocturnes and major seascapes. *The Widow* is also the only full-page illustration used to illustrate Mary Augusta Mullikin "*Reminiscences of the Whistler Academy by an American Student*," published in *The Studio*, April 1905. Her piece follows a review of the Memorial Exhibition.

Towards the end of his life Whistler was increasingly restricted to his studio, owing first to his wife's illness and then to his own failing health. He turned increasingly to portraiture and these paintings included a number of other ovals from the 1890s. Some depict young girls, models he found on the streets of London, but *The Widow* clearly presents a well-dressed woman. She wears a dark cloak and there is the suggestion of lace at her throat. The same olive green background is seen in several of the late portraits, including ones which remained in the artist's estate. Some of these were worked on in Paris in the late 1890s and are similar in technique. The thin paint and the roughly sketched technique suggesting the cloak are typical of this period.

MacDonald has suggested in the catalogue raisonné of Whistler's paintings that the portrait shows a sitter in Whistler's Paris studio, or that it was painted in

Paris and London. In the 1890s his paintings crossed the channel frequently. She has also suggested some possibilities for the sitter, such as Marion Peck (later Mrs William R. Farquhar), the dancer Teresa Cerutti (later Mrs William Simmons) and Marion Draughan. None of these portraits has been located. MacDonald's article on *The Missing Whistlers* was published in *The Ten O'Clock* No 3.

In many years of dealing in Whistler's work, I have only sold three oil paintings, two watercolours and four pastels. This is not only a reflection of the rarity of works in these media on the market, but also the presence of single determined collector. By way of comparison, in twenty years at The Fine Art Society I sold over 350 etchings and lithographs, and more while a private dealer and a partner in Garton & Cooke.

The Widow is now in a private collection in America. I first saw it in another American collection, and while I worked at The Fine Art Society, I acted as agent in its sale from one party to the other. The original owners had visited the Fine Art Society early in my time working there. I visited them in America and admired their collection. This also gave me the opportunity to spend time enjoying the painting that had appealed so strongly to Joseph Pennell and the hanging committee of the artist's ISSPG Memorial Exhibition. Some years later, they contacted me about selling the painting, and once we had agreed a price and terms, the painting was shipped to London.

The asking price was in a different bracket from the most expensive prints, so most of the collectors I knew would not be in a position to buy it. Through a private dealer, I was put in contact with a passionate collector of Whistler prints who also wanted a painting. Discussions and negotiations were completed during my summer holiday, and the painting was shipped back to America. A few months later, I first met the collector and his wife, who was equally entranced by the portrait. It now hangs in their drawing room, where I have been able to admire it anew.

Sources/Further Reading

Sarah Herring, "The National Gallery and the collecting of Barbizon paintings in the early twentieth century," *Journal of the History of Collections,* 13 (2001), pp 77-89.

Gordon Cooke is the chairman of the London Original Print Fair and an art consultant. He was formerly a partner in Garton & Cooke, a private dealer, and long-time director of The Fine Art Society, London. He represents the estates of John Copley and Ethel Gabain and has put on several Whistler exhibitions.

[*above*]
Lillie: An Oval, 1900/1901.
Oil on canvas, oval, 60.5 x 48.8 cm.
The Hunterian, University of Glasgow.

[*right*]
Harmony in Red: Lamplight, 1884/1886.
Oil on canvas, 190.5 x 89.7 cm.
The Hunterian, University of Glasgow.

Harmony in Green and Rose: The Music Room, 1860/1861.
Oil on canvas, 95.5 x 70.8 cm.
Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.
Gift of Charles Lang Freer.

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– *Georgia Toutziari*

Harmony in Pink and Grey: Portrait of Lady Meux, 1881/1882.
Oil on canvas, 193.7 x 93 cm.
The Frick Collection, New York.
Henry Clay Frick Bequest.

WHISTLER'S FEELING FOR FASHION

AILEEN RIBEIRO

In Henry James's novel *The Portrait of a Lady* Madame Merle claims in a conversation with Isabel Archer that the sense of self "overflows into everything that belongs to us," a large part of which is "the dresses I choose to wear." Archer refutes the idea that clothes are expressions of self, stating that "they may express the dressmaker, but they don't express me"; in a somewhat specious argument, she says that the clothes she wears were not worn by her own choice, but were "imposed on me by society." She is the heroine of the novel so we are, supposedly, intended to agree with her; but what *would* she wear if she chose? James rarely provides full information about what his female characters wear, except for small, revealing, details in the way they were worn. There is a finesse and subtlety in the way James uses clothing in his work, as Whistler does, although the artist would, I think, have agreed with Madame Merle that clothes played a more important role in art and in life.

An essay by novelist and critic A. S. Byatt argues for the primacy of literature over art in the description and depiction of character. Portraits, she declares, are one-dimensional, "physical presence… on a flat surface," whereas a novel "may be a portrait of invisible things." Whistler asserted that art could be more perceptive and imaginative than literature; writers might discuss ideas but artists were able to reveal reality.

A major discussion in nineteenth-century art was to work out how portraiture could cope with what was seen as the tyrannical and distracting detail of fashion, of the kind seen in, say, *Franz* Winterhalter or James Tissot. Those painters were scathingly described as mere 'costume artists', in whose work clothing often overwhelms the sitter – where "it is clothes that wear us, and not we them," as Virginia Woolf remarks (in a slightly different context) in *Orlando*. Like contemporary Impressionist artists, Whistler loved fashion and was not afraid to engage with it – not in the sense of his friend Stéphane Mallarmé, who wrote prose poems to fashion in the guise of the editor of the magazine *La Dernière Mode*, but in a way that was nuanced and intelligent. He took a great deal of trouble to get the clothes in his portraits right; endless sittings and repaintings enabled him to "see" his sitters in more depth and determine how what they wore added to his interpretation of their character. His own imprint was crucial; "Every portrait that is painted with feeling is a portrait of the artist, not of the sitter," says Oscar Wilde in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

Whistler himself was fastidious in his appearance, a stylish dresser, although with occasional eccentric lapses. He does not quite qualify as a dandy, lacking the world-weary nonchalance and understated elegance, which was necessary, although the *fin-de-siècle* dandy Max Beerbohm noted that his silk hat was "a real *nocturne*, his linen a symphony *en blanc majeur.*" Whistler was unusual among his fellow artists in challenging the widespread perception that menswear was "detestable… so sombre, so depressing" (Wilde again). Black, as Charles Baudelaire admitted, was funereal but also a badge of equality, although an elite man could be distinguished from a man of lower social standing by the quality of his suit, the skill of his tailor, and his deportment. A dense and deep black was essential for correct evening wear, which was not always easy to obtain, until an aniline dye, created in 1859, provided an intense and long-lasting colour. Even so, when painting a man in evening dress, Whistler realised that unrelieved black needed some striking contrast. His portrait of Théodore Duret (*Arrangement in Flesh Colour and Black*) has a slightly blurred, unfinished look, perhaps because it was repainted so many times. Here we see Duret in a black woollen dress suit, starched white linen shirt, and one white kid glove; the hand that holds his top hat is bare. Whistler decided that he needed 'a precious note of colour' (in fashion journalist-speak, a pop of colour) to enliven the portrait. So, on the artist's suggestion, Duret is shown with a dark pink cheap wooden fan (we do not know where this came from), and a pale pink domino (originally an eighteenth-century masquerade costume, but revived in the nineteenth century as a woman's evening mantle) hired from a theatrical costumier's in Covent Garden. It is rather strange to add women's accessories to a man's portrait, as the sitter was not in the habit of taking women to balls or to the theatre, but Whistler said this was how he "saw" Duret.

Black clothes, far less formal, are the leitmotiv of Whistler's impressive Thomas Carlyle (*Arrangement in Grey and Black, No. 2*), one of the greatest portraits of all time. The artist creates a timeless, almost abstract effect with the massive black shapes of Carlyle's clothes – the heavy black coat, the cloak over his knees on which is placed one of his famous wide-brimmed black beaver hats, made by a fashionable hatter in Hyde Park. Again, this is a man wearing only one glove on the hand that holds the cane. Did Whistler like this asymmetry in dress? Was this a twist on the practice by artists such as Titian and van Dyck, who often depicted sitters with one gloved hand holding the other glove? Although Carlyle complained of the endless sittings

Arrangement in Flesh Colour and Black: Portrait of Théodore Duret, 1883/1885.
Oil on canvas, 193.4 x 90.8 cm.
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Arrangement in Grey and Black, No. 2: Portrait of Thomas Carlyle, 1872/1873.
Oil on canvas, 171.1 x 143.5 cm.
Kelvingrove Art Gallery
and Museum, Glasgow.

[*above*]
Arrangement in Black: La Dame au brodequin jaune - Portrait of Lady Archibald Campbell, 1882/1885.
Oil on canvas, 218.4 x 110.5 cm.
Philadelphia Museum of Art.

[*opposite*]
Arrangement in Black, Lady Meux, 1881/1882.
Oil on canvas, 194.3 x 130.2 cm.
Honolulu Academy of Arts.

(as many of Whistler's sitters did), and the fact that the artist seemed only concerned "to get the *coat* painted to perfection, the face went for little," Whistler captures the personality and gravitas of the man of letters, along with a slight touch of melancholy.

Portraiture, according to Whistler, was dependent on the work of the tailor and the dressmaker. Apropos the latter, he notes how the great couturier Charles Frederick Worth "has made more portraits than any one painter in Paris." A good portrait is akin to a creation by a dressmaker, in that 'attention is paid to the keynote of colour which runs through the composition." The details of the dress become less important than its *lines* and overall effect, interpreted through the genius of his imagination. This may explain why the majority of Whistler's sitters are painted standing. With regard to fashion, he disliked extremes that distorted the body, such as the crinoline. He did not like the new harsh aniline-dyed colours in dress, nor did he care for the reform dress of the 1880s and 1890s, or to overt antiquarianism in costume. The nearest he comes to aesthetic dress is the robe he designed for Frances Leyland (*Symphony in Flesh Colour and Pink*). Inspired by Jean Antoine Watteau's love of the flowing back of the *robe à la française* (in *L'Enseigne de Gersaint*), it is a wonderful confection of pink and white silk, with appliqué dark red rosettes, and dark red ribbons twining around the arms. Not very practical perhaps. If she were to turn round, there would be no front to this garment, which she would have probably worn over a white camisole and petticoat. It is a poetic fantasy dress, an illusion. Otherwise, the clothes in his portraits are recognisably in fashion as actually worn.

Women had a far greater range of dress than men had, and Whistler painted everyday wear as well as more formal clothing. The last quarter of the nineteenth century saw a growth in more functional styles of dress in woollen fabrics and sombre colours, such as the black jacket and skirt worn by Rosa Corder (*Arrangement in Brown and Black*), and Lady Archibald Campbell (*Arrangement in Black: La Dame au brodequin jaune*). These suits, along with the riding habit, evolved into the streamlined tailor-mades of the late 1880s, as adopted by the New Woman – a mode perhaps rather too masculine for Whistler. The artist liked to depict fashion in art, whether in everyday wear or more formal attire, in a number of ways. Like all great artists, he *selects* what he sees in his sitters' clothes, a kind of fine-tuning that creates the essence of the dress. At its most pared-down, dress becomes almost abstract, as in the unfinished portrait of the artist Louise Jopling (*Harmony in Flesh Colour and Black*), the tied-back skirt very

much simplified. There is some ambiguity in what she wears, which creates a problem for the historian of dress (as do a number of Whistler's portraits). Is the dress worn over a black skirt, or is there a cloak or a small pool of black drapery at her feet? A similar piece of black silk, perhaps a studio prop, is placed over the knees of Madge O'Donoghue (*Study in Black and Gold).* I think that Whistler was the kind of artist (like John Singer Sargent) who enjoyed acting as a fashion stylist.

He also liked a challenge when painting clothes. He asked Lady Campbell if he could paint her in court dress (black velvet with a train of silver satin embroidered with the Argyll arms). She declined, saying it was too heavy, a shame as it would have been unique in Whistler's work, and the colours very much suited to his taste. In this case he failed, but when he was asked to paint Lady Meux (*Harmony in Pink and Grey*) he must have had a hand in choosing to depict her in *haute couture*, a very elegant formal afternoon dress in pink satin and silvery silk chiffon. Was he determined to show he could depict high fashion as well any of his contemporaries? Or was this portrait a comment on the sitter's empty-headed obsession with fashion – "when in Paris I spend all my time at the dressmakers," she said. Whistler refines and mutes any sense of what Henry James calls "aggressively Parisian dress" by slightly generalizing it, notably the complex back drapery, but still retaining the elegance of the ensemble. I wonder who suggested the fetching English straw hat, which slightly subverts the formality of the dress and reminds one a little of Thomas Gainsborough's Lady Howe, dressed in pink.

I end, as I started, with Henry James, and with black, which is the ultimate challenge for any artist. It is a colour that can signal mourning, official and professional status, or practicality in everyday clothing. It can also be flattering for female evening dress, as every woman knows. So – on an ultra-fashionable note we have the astonishing portrait of Lady Meux (*Arrangement in Black*), in black velvet, with a flirtatious glimpse of white petticoat visible beneath the train of the skirt, and a vast stole of swansdown (any fur would have been too heavy), which she pushes off her right shoulder to reveal her arm with its black silk glove and diamond bracelet. A woman with a shady past, but having married a rich man, heir to a baronetcy, she needed to reinvent herself as a Society lady. Black velvet was only allowable for married women, presumably because it was sensual to the touch. When Isabel Archer becomes the unhappy wife of Gilbert Osmond and holds fashionable "evenings" in Rome, she dresses in black velvet and looks "brilliant and noble"; apropos her marriage, there may also be a suggestion of mourning here. James does not describe the dress, but it

Arrangement in Black, No. 2: Portrait of Mrs Louis Huth, 1872/1873.
Oil on canvas, 190.5 x 99 cm.
Private collection.

would have been more in tune with Isabel's character than the long-sleeved, high-necked dress with seventeenth-century inspired collar and cuffs worn by Mrs Louis Huth (*Arrangement in Black, No. 2*); her husband was, like Whistler, an admirer of Velásquez. Isabel Osmond's dress would certainly not have been like that worn by Lady Meux, whose slightly risqué sleeveless dress and ostentatious parure of diamonds suggest a *femme fatale* rather than a truly respectable woman.

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Dr Aileen Ribeiro is a historian of dress and taught for many years at the Courtauld Institute of Art, where she is now Professor Emeritus in the History of Art.

At the Piano, 1858/1859.
Oil on canvas, 67 x 90.5 cm.
Taft Museum, Cincinnati, Ohio.

A Musical Group Portrait Re-Examined

GEORGIA TOUTZIARI

By definition, music and painting are branches of creative activity that can evoke emotion and express skill and imagination. In the history of art, musicians and painters alike have created famous works that are inspired by a love for music and/or by the appreciation of the artist experiencing the music in some way. Music certainly played a big part in Whistler's life and was an art form that pre-occupied him pictorially throughout his career. From his *Symphony in White, No 3*, of the mid 1860s, where visual rhythms and music making were shared with such fellow artists as Albert Moore and Frederic Leighton, to his *Thoughts at Sunrise*, in the early 1880s, illustrating a composition by Mrs Lynedoch Moncrieff, Whistler's art often underscored that dualism.

It is intriguing that *At the Piano,* his family portrait of 1859, was Whistler's first portrait that brought comparisons to works by the Old Masters. This painting at first glance appears to be a rather austere portrayal of respectable femininity in a bourgeois setting, the London home of Whistler's half-sister Debo(rah) Haden and her husband Francis Seymour Haden at 62 Sloane Street. Here, Debo's elegant figure, in profile to right, is playing the old family piano, looking down at the keys, enthralled at a private moment of meditation, watched on the other side of the piano, by her ten-year-old daughter, Annie. The wall behind them is decorated with the lower edges of the two gold frames in parallel with the wall dado that runs across the picture plane.

But why did Whistler paint his half-sister and niece around a piano? It is possible that it could be the trend and the popularity the piano had gained by the middle of the nineteenth century. By 1860, Paris counted some 20,000 piano teachers, and French composer Henri-Louis Blanchard reported that "cultivating the piano was something that had become as essential, as necessary, to social harmony as the cultivation of the potato was to the existence of people… . The piano provokes meetings between people, hospitality, gentle contacts, of all kinds, even matrimonial ones." Whistler did, after all, love 'society' and convivial gatherings of people.

Or, it could be possible that Whistler wanted to create a group portrait where the possibilities of representation are more complex yet can liberate artists from the pictorial limitations posed by the way they represent single sitters. The piano might after all have been just a fashionable element and at the same time a structural incentive for his composition.

Following on from the grand tradition of British portraiture, most of Whistler's famous portraits are of single sitters – standing or sitting – underlined by the tension between their status and function, arrangements of colour and form and expressions of character. His group portraits are more complex, encompassing pictorial elements that distinguish them from portraits of individuals. In *At the Piano*, while still using current conventions of posed formality, he multiplied the possibilities of representing the figures of mother and daughter.

Looking carefully at the scene, we experience an intense level of intimacy, familiarity, and comfort, illuminated by emphasis on strong areas of light and dark. These are joined by a deep mahogany coloured piano, which acts compositionally as a link between the two central figures, symbolising perhaps not only the trend for piano music but also the union of a mother and a daughter. The painting, which was innovative in Victorian London in its use of thick and sketchy brushwork, the heavily applied impasto, painted almost in blocks of colour, was influenced by contemporary French pictorial conventions (Whistler had recently returned from Paris). Reviews varied. The Athenaeum of 19 May 1860 labelled Whistler's oil a "sketch." In contrast, the president of the Royal Academy, Sir Charles Eastlake, called it "the finest piece of painting in the Royal Academy."

The composition, whilst influenced by Whistler's close friends Alphonse Legros and Henri Fantin-Latour in the statuesque profile of the sitters and its religious tone, deploys a structural grid, with the entire scene cropped in the manner of seventeenth-century Dutch painting. See, for example, the woman playing the piano under a picture frame in Johannes Vermeer's *The Concert* of 1664. The painting also echoes Gabriël Metsu's *A Man and a Woman Seated by a Virginal*, c. 1664 –1666.

Gabriel Metsu (1629-1667),
A Man and a Woman Seated by a Virginal, c.1665.
Oil on oak, 38.4 x 32.2 cm. ©The National Gallery, London.

Both Vermeer and Metsu used strong horizontal and vertical pictorial elements as compositional devices, knitting webs of geometrical shapes that included all the other elements of the composition, including people, musical instruments, and furniture. Furthermore, what Metsu and Whistler have in common, other than their affinity for music and gatherings of people, is that they position their protagonists close to the picture plane, thereby directly engaging the viewer in the sitters' activities.

In *At the Piano,* Whistler experimented with composition and the physical relationship between the figures, showing perhaps an affinity with theatrical performance, as the mother and daughter are engaged with each other as well as posing for the artist. In contrast to his individual portraits, and especially those commissioned in the 1870s, where likeness, personality or social status would form an essential part of the composition, *At the Piano* includes the additional elements of human interaction and relationship. Here, it is intriguing how the relationship

between mother and daughter is shown spatially on the canvas. X-ray analysis has shown that the daughter could be a later addition. If so, it could be that in Whistler's eyes, the composition did not work with just one sitter. This, then, also raises questions about how Whistler understood the connection of mother and daughter. Debo, being the maternal figure, has the most prominent place in the portrait. The vast area covered by the black of her gown, alludes to an almost abstract yet very important place in Whistler's family and his life. The complete blackness is equally interesting as the figure is not defined by the clear lines of a fashionable style but is instead just a triangular abstracted shape, devoid of detail style, defined by blackness which could be associated with grief. Indeed, it has been suggested that the painting was intended, with the family piano from St. Petersburg as its centrepiece, to commemorate the memory of their father, who had died in that city ten years earlier.

Edouard Manet (1832–1938),
Madame Manet au piano, 1867/1868.
Oil on canvas, 38 x 46.5 cm, RF 1994.
Musée d'Orsay, Paris.
Photo by Patrice Schmidt. ©2022. RMN-Grand Palais/Dist. Photo SCALA, Florence.

Margaret F. McDonald and Richard Dorment, in addition to the latter suggestion, offer an interesting interpretation of its composition in their 1994 analysis of the painting. They note how the two centres of visual interest (Debo and Annie), balanced by contrasted areas of darkness and light, imitates the principle of the stereoscope, in which two images (left and right) are viewed through two lenses. This produces the illusion of a three-dimensional perspective, creating in this way a space that curves inwards at the edges. Furthermore, the placement of the figures separated by the piano within a structural grid holds the two "stereoscopic" figures of Debo and Annie together. Consequently the intense eye to eye engagement is almost "painted" in parallel with the dado and the picture frames. The result creates an intentional flatness, a characteristic of French contemporary painting as reflected in the art of Eduard Manet in the 1860s. Interestingly enough, Manet's *Madame Manet au Piano* of 1868 resembles Whistler's musical picture in its structural network of lines, within which the composition is arranged, and the placement of the sitter in profile. Manet certainly knew of Whistler's painting. In 1867, before the execution of the portrait of his wife, Susanne, Manet had received a letter from the French critic Théophile Thoré-Bürger praising it. Could it be that Manet borrowed Whistler's compositional structure because he, too, was driven by musical and/or family pre-occupations? Or did Manet's painting of his pioneer composer wife simply express her love of music?

Whistler's pre-occupation with music was further evidenced in the 1860s when Debo and Annie sat again in the same London music room for the etching *Music Room* and another painting, *Harmony in Green and Rose: The Music Room.* Both pieces are masterly in their treatment of space. The etching is also a brilliant example of Whistler's use of light and shadow to structure the image. Dating from the same time as *At the Piano*, it shows Debo, her husband, and his business partner James Traer reading by lamplight. In *Harmony in Green and Rose: The Music*

Room, three female figures, including Debo, Annie, and Debo's American cousin, are depicted. According to Whistler's original biographers, Elizabeth and Joseph Pennell, Annie is wearing the same dress in the latter painting as seen in *At the Piano*.

Johannes Vermeer (1632 – 1675),
The Concert, 1663/1866.
Oil on canvas, 72.5 x 64.7 cm.
Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston.

Whistler returned to the theme of music in intimate settings a few more times in his career, but none show a similarly sophisticated pre-occupation with the treatment of space and colour. The closest exceptions are his watercolour, *Bravura in Brown* (1883/1884), depicting a woman playing a piano (possibly Maud Franklin, Whistler's model and mistress at the time), and a lithograph, *The Duet* (1894). In the former work, a small beautiful and aethereal composition, whilst treating space differently from *At the Piano*, does rely on the same compositional elements of Whistler's early works, in which the use of architectural structures and cropped scenes help frame his central figures.

Here, Whistler captures a woman playing the piano with her back turned to the viewer, enclosed by a structural frame. The opening of what seems to be a door invites the viewer to enter her space but only to contemplate a few material possessions and the sitter's private moment. Still, it is the piano that dramatically cuts across this sensitively treated watercolour.

In *The Duet,* on the other hand, one of Whistler's most elaborate interiors in lithography and yet another intimate family scene, the structure and interior details of the room are suggested by use of dark and light and the faint but strong lines that hold the composition together. The two ladies giving depth to the scene are his wife Beatrice Whistler and her sister Ethel Whibley seated at the piano in the Whistler's home in Paris on the Rue du Bac. Both *Bravura in Brown* and *The Duet* are small works where space is deftly handled, and depth is achieved by framing the figures in distinct structural lines and stronger or fainter shades of colour or light.

In all of these works, the piano either provides a focus for the scene or holds the composition together. It allows the viewer to wander gently into a private moment, an intimate space where music, art and family become one.

To me, *At the Piano* is much more than Whistler's first masterly group composition in oil. It also set the path for his journey in capturing life, music, art, and all branches of creative activity. He had learned not only to frame people's lives through the use of musical instruments, but also to convey the importance of music in human existence.

Whistler claimed that he had no emotional ties to the painting and offered it for sale. However, his young sitter Annie came to think of it fondly. In July 1934, some thirty years after Whistler's death she wrote to the Editor of *The Times*: "I little knew when standing for the picture that I should live so long as to read all that his memory now means to the public. Yet even now I can distinctly feel the

[*above*]
Bravura in Brown, 1883/1884.
Watercolour, 21.8 x 17.6 cm.
Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.
Gift of Charles Lang Freer.

[*above right*]
The Duet, 1894.
Transfer lithograph, 24.6 x 16.5 cm.
Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.
Gift of Charles Lang Freer.

position in which I stood for hours, and could put myself into it again, for we were true artists in our feeling one for the other."

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Arrangement in Grey:
Portrait of the Artist, 1872.
Oil on canvas, 74.9 x 53.3 cm.
Detroit Institute of Arts.
©Detroit Institute of Arts.
Bequest of Henry Glover Stevens in memory
of Ellen P. Stevens and Mary M. Stevens.

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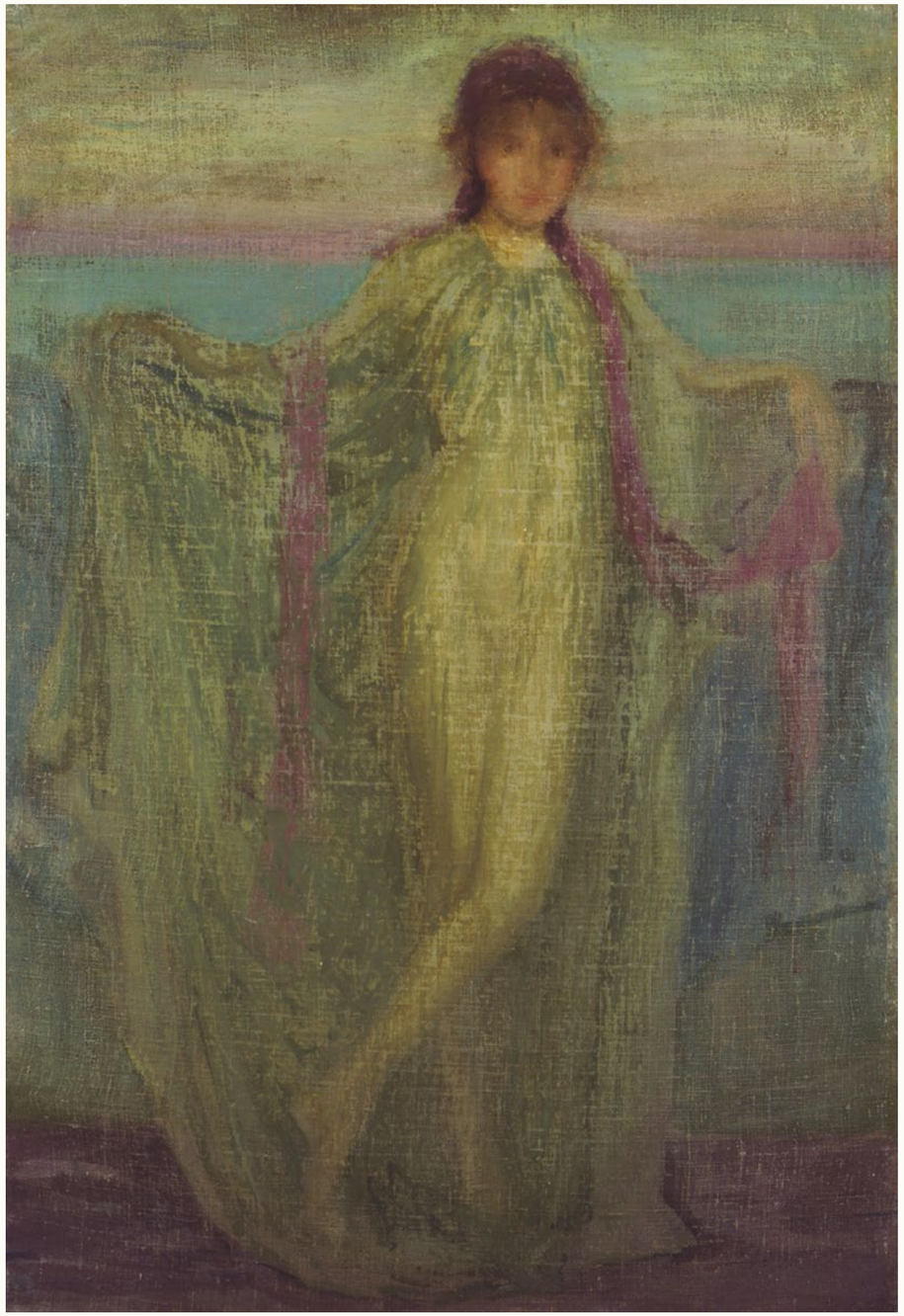

Annabel Lee, 1869/1877.
Oil on canvas, 74 x 50.7 cm.
The Hunterian, University of Glasgow.

THE BLUE GIRL

MARGARET F. MACDONALD

The "blue girl" was a recurring theme in Whistler's work for thirty years. His "blue girls" – the models, the paintings, and their elusive history – are the subject of this essay.

The first "blue girl," a child called "Maggie," fell ill in 1871, halting progress on a commission from William Graham MP. It was called "the little Blue Girl" by Whistler, "girl in blue on the sea shore" by his mother, and "the charming little Annabel Lee" by Graham (after Edgar Allan Poe's last poem, "Annabel Lee"). By 1877 Whistler had abandoned it.

The picture now known as *Annabel Lee* was rubbed down around 1900 and given to the University of Glasgow by Whistler's sister-in-law Rosalind Birnie Philip. A haunting image, predecessor of many studies of nudes in semi-transparent draperies, it is not very blue, and may not really have been the first "blue girl".

"Maggie" was succeeded by a succession of young women aged from 13 to 20, from varying social backgrounds, including Elinor ("Babs") Leyland (1861–1952), daughter of Frances and Frederick R. Leyland, the Liverpool shipping magnate; Mary ("Maud") Franklin (1857–1941), Whistler's mistress; Constance ("Connie") MacDonald Gilchrist (1865–1946), a popular skipping rope artiste and dancer, later Countess of Orkney; Maud Mary Waller (1862–1942), daughter of Major Charles Bullen and Emma Waller; Milly Finch (possibly Millicent J. Finch, born in 1869); Muriel Ransom Smith (1883–1923), an art student who married Major Harry Jacob Smith and emigrated to Australia and South Africa; and Evelyn ("Eva") Victoria Ann Carrington (1887–1979), a successful actress, thrice married, lastly to the grandson of the founder of the Tate Gallery.

F. R. Leyland commissioned portraits of his family. Whistler planned to paint "little Miss Leyland in blue cashmire [sic] and velvet… the arrangement in blue… I shall paint it directly I have time", he told Walter Greaves. Elinor stood for a colourful pastel, *The Blue Girl*, facing front, arms akimbo and feet apart, in an assertive pose. She wore a blue knee-length dress with a ruff under a paler blue jacket or surcoat with dark blue cuffs, clasped at the waist. She held a dark blue hat with a feather.

Whistler's entrepreneurial assistant Charles A. Howell acquired a drawing that he labelled "Miss Eleanor Leyland. 'Babs'. original sketch for a picture never completed, and destroyed by Whistler in the early part of 1879." She is wearing

the hat and a surcoat with curving hem edged with a frill. The painting developed slowly. Chinese blue and white porcelain was added by her feet. Progress ceased after Whistler's quarrel with Leyland over the "Peacock Room," and the unfinished canvas was caught in the maelstrom of destruction after Whistler's bankruptcy in 1879.

James Waddell, Receiver for the London Bankruptcy Court, agreed that no incomplete or partially destroyed paintings would be auctioned during the bankruptcy. Nonetheless, the chief creditors quarrelled. "Unfinished portraits of two of [Leyland's] daughters" that were "more or less destroyed" by Whistler, were rejected by Leyland but acquired by the lithographer Thomas Way. Two panels showing porcelain were cut by Whistler from the corners of Elinor's portrait, and Way's son, Thomas R. Way, later sold them to the collector, Charles L. Freer of Detroit. This proves that the painting was destroyed!

Maud Franklin posed for an *Arrangement in Blue and Green,* shown at the Grosvenor Gallery in 1878 (cat. no. 24). Critics described her as wearing a long blue coat over a green dress; the *Magazine of Art* mentioned a "blue velvet dress… imitatively treated," and the *British Architect* specified the colour as "peacock blue." This may have been the "blue girl (Miss Franklin)" Whistler described to his sister-in-law as among works "scratched and destroyed."

The Blue Girl: Portrait of Connie Gilchrist was one of two Whistler portraits of the dancer. In design, but not colour, her costume resembled Elinor's: a dress and surcoat in pale blue, the long surcoat trimmed with dark blue, with puffs at the shoulders, a grey ruff. The face, framed by thick dark blond shoulder-length hair, is lovely, her arms are by her side, hands and feet lost in shadows. When the unfinished painting became caught up in his bankruptcy, Whistler, writing from Venice, asked his sister-in-law Nellie Whistler to clarify its fate:

> I don't quite know what to say about the Waddell matter… First – you say which of the three pictures are the two to be shown - and then you only speak of "the 3 girls, and the Boy or Girl in blue" - does this mean 3 pictures, or are you uncertain as to the sex of my arrangement in Blue. If 3 - then by all means show the Three Girls - and the Blue Girl - and not the Boy.

This implies that there was yet another lost painting, a "Blue Boy"! Whistler feared that "the Blue Girl (Connie)" was missing, but in the house of Whistler's brother, Dr William M. Whistler, Waddell discovered two pictures. He reported, "In their present unfinished state I am unable to estimate them to be of any value." Eventually, this "Blue Girl" was returned either to the artist (in which case it could have been reworked after Whistler's return from Venice), or, after 1903, to his executor Miss R. Birnie Philip.

[*above*]
The Blue Girl, 1873/1876.
Chalk and pastel on paper, 24.6 x 14.3 cm.
Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.
Gift of Charles Lang Freer.

[*opposite*]
Study for 'The Blue Girl: Portrait of Elinor Leyland,' 1879.
Pen and brown ink on paper, 17.9 x 11.2 cm.
Bryan Lathrop Collection, Art Institute of Chicago. ©2022 Art Institute of Chicago/ Art Resource, N.Y./SCALA.
Photo SCALA, Florence.

[*opposite left*]
The Blue Girl: Portrait of Connie Gilchrist, 1879.
Oil on canvas, 188.9 x 88.6 cm.
The Hunterian, University of Glasgow.

[*opposite right*]
Scherzo in Blue: The Blue Girl, 1882/1884.
Oil on canvas, 191 x 99 cm.
Whereabouts unknown.

Back in London, Whistler's friend Alan S. Cole recorded in his diary: "[Whistler] painting his 'Blue Girl' on 2 May 1882." Edith Emma Marzetti confirmed that her sister, Maud Waller, began posing in the spring:

> We went two or three times, and then Whistler painted the face out, as it was not to his liking, although most people thought it excellent. In those days Maud was very beautiful. The painting was started on a canvas that already had a figure on it, and it was turned upside down, and the Blue Girl's head painted in between the legs.

One wonders which portrait was thus repurposed – possibly one of Maud Franklin. Marzetti added: "The dress was made by Mme. Alias, the theatrical costumier, to Whistler's design, and I believe cost a good deal." Sarah Alias and her husband Charles, theatrical costumiers, were among Whistler's creditors in 1879, being owed £1.8.0! Presumably they had forgiven Whistler, who designed the dress. Though similar to earlier costumes, this dress was darker than the surcoat, which had a more elaborate trim.

Maud Waller endured long sessions, posing for hours. Whistler apologised to her mother for postponing one sitting: "[I] have to put off the delight of painting the pretty Maud - for it is a delight." Walter Sickert said he too "painted a sketch of the blue girl, actually taking the mixtures off Whistler's palette," and Sickert certainly painted a watercolour, *Whistler's studio*, showing Maud dressed in blue, hands on hips, on a dais before a blue curtain, with, to her right, the full-length framed painting, tilted forward. Whistler's table palette (similar to one in the Tate Gallery Archive) is in the left foreground: thus the artist could judge the effect of the painting when framed, and touch it up if necessary.*Scherzo in Blue – "The Blue Girl*, was hung at the Grosvenor in 1882 (cat. no. 67). The sitter's uncle, Pickford Robert Waller, remembered: "When the portrait was halfway through it was put aside, but it was sent to the Grosvenor Gallery for the private view and taken away directly after". In 1884, it was among Whistler's '*Notes' - 'Harmonies' - 'Nocturnes'* at Dowdeswell's (cat. no. 31). According to Mortimer L. Menpes, at the press view, "Whistler was still attempting to repaint the mouth."

In 1882, reviews were unfavourable. On 5 May, *The Era* enquired if Whistler painted "with a sponge and a scrubbing brush", and the *Pall Mall Gazette* on 6 June described it as "a sketch of a scarecrow in a blue dress." Reviews varied in 1884, some critical of the gangly figure's pose, face, and tatty dress, others enthusiastic. The *Liverpool Mercury* commented on 3 July:

> The piece de résistance of the Whistler exhibition is a full length portrait of a young girl dressed in blue… a dignified canvas, fine in execution, and marked by a more thoughtful insight into the problem of portraiture than has characterised some of his pictures of this class. It might make a pendant for Gainsborough's "Blue Boy".

Waller said that about two years later, "Whistler wanted to resume work on it, but my niece had in the meantime grown so rapidly that she could not get into the costume… The portrait was never finished and a new model and a fresh canvas was started for the blue girl now known. What became of the original I

never knew." What he meant by "the blue girl now known" is unknown! Milly Finch, for instance, posed for a *Harmony in Blue and Violet* and a *Harmony in Coral and Blue,* both now in the Hunterian, which, since they differ in dress and colour schemes, hardly qualify as "blue girls."

In the 1890s, Whistler developed a new composition featuring a nude with blue draperies and also revived a portrait featuring a version of the Gilchrist costume. In August 1897, when Rosalind Birnie Philip was involved in cleaning, altering, or repairing this costume, Whistler apologised, "I do hope the dress came out all right - pity I hurried you - for find the abominable girl Muriel can›t come until Saturday."

The model was Muriel Smith, who posed for an oval half-length portrait, *Blue and Coral: The Little Blue Bonnet*, wearing a blueish-white dress and jacket/surcoat with a grey ruff or ruffled collar. The surcoat, possibly laced at the front, is trimmed in dark blue with shoulder puffs or epaulettes. Her jaunty pale blue hat has a high crown and narrow brim with dark greenish-blue feathers or ribbons, setting off her dark curly hair and elfin face.

The painting hung in the inaugural exhibition of the International Society of Sculptors, Painters and Gravers, of which Whistler was president. On 16 May 1898, *The Times* said of his exhibits: "none of them new," to which Whistler promptly replied, "The painting has never been out of the studio, but comes fresh from the easel to its first exhibition." Afterwards, he modified the face, emphasized the curve of her bodice and darkened the hat. The most travelled of the "blue girls," she starred in the *1st World of Art Exhibition* in Saint Petersburg in 1898, the Armory Show in 1913, and the New York World's Fair in 1940. She is now in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

The last "blue girl," arguably, was Eva Carrington, who posed nude during final sittings for *Harmony in Blue and Gold: The Little Blue Girl.* This, started in 1893/1894, was revised repeatedly, unavoidably delayed by the illness and death of Whistler's wife Beatrice in 1896. C. L. Freer bought this "Blue Girl" in 1894 and finally received it after Whistler's death by which time it had suffered from years of reworking.

Thus ended a thirty-year saga, littered with abandoned, unfinished, rubbed down, cut-up, over-worked and missing paintings – a sad end to Whistler's obsessive quest for the perfect "Blue Girl." And yet, it seems to me that there are two unexpected gems, which make the quest worthwhile: the lovely "Connie" in Glasgow and the "abominable girl Muriel" in Los Angeles!

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Blue and Coral: The Little Blue Bonnet,1897/1898.
Oil on canvas, oval, 81.2 x 68.5 cm.
Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

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[*opposite*]
Symphony in Flesh Colour and Pink: Portrait of Mrs Frances Leyland, 1871/1874.
Oil on canvas, 195.9 x 102.2 cm.
The Frick Collection, New York.
Henry Clay Frick Bequest.

Symphony in Flesh Colour and Pink: Portrait of Mrs Frances Leyland

DANIEL E. SUTHERLAND

One of the most fateful days of James Whistler's life came in the autumn of 1867, when Dante Gabriel Rossetti introduced him to Frederick R. Leyland. Whistler would become an intimate of the entire Leyland family over the next dozen years. He socialized with them in London and stayed at their home near Liverpool, Speke Hall. He was commissioned to paint their portraits, which promised to bring him hundreds of guineas, and another commission, to decorate the dining room of their London home, was worth thousands. However, as invested as Whistler became in the resulting Peacock Room, his portrait of Leyland's wife Frances may have held more personal meaning for him and suggests a complex relationship between sitter and artist.

Whistler failed to complete Leighton's first commission, a painting of some scantily clad young women in "classical" dress. After struggling with the project for two years, he offered to return Leyland's £400 advance. To the artist's astonishment, the thirty-six-year-old shipping magnate simply gave him a new assignment: portraits of his entire family, six pictures in all. They were Whistler's first commissioned portraits since 1860.

The paintings, which he began in the summer of 1870, required several visits to Speke Hall, and it was soon clear that Whistler relished his time there. As he later admitted, being part of "the set" at Speke Hall had "spoiled" him. Not least of the attractions were the women. He was immediately taken with Frances Leyland, his patron's lovely and vivacious wife, but so, too, with her younger sister, Elizabeth "Baby" Dawson. Whistler began wooing the twenty-one-year-old charmer, sixteen years his junior, and by February 1872, they were engaged to be married.

[*above*]
Speke Hall, The Avenue, 1870/1878.
Etching and drypoint, 22.8 x 15.2 cm.
Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.
Gift of Charles Langer Freer.

However, when Lizzie decided nineteen months later not to marry Whistler, no one seemed surprised. The flirtatious Lizzie had broken the engagement more than once, and Whistler had invested more passion in his work than in courtship. Being told of her decision, he seemed more perplexed by a recent summons to jury

Unknown artist,
Whistler and the Leyland Family in the Billiard Room, Speke Hall, c.1873.
42.8 x 63.5 cm.
Walker Art Gallery, National Museums of Liverpool.

duty, which leads one to wonder if Whistler was less enamoured of Lizzie than of the social and financial advantages of joining the Leyland clan.

Those advantages would have included spending more time in the company of Frances Leyland. She began posing for her portrait during the months that had resulted in Whistler's engagement to Lizzie. While he and Frances had been "great friends" from the very start, their relationship blossomed during the many hours she stood for her portrait, both at Speke Hall and at Whistler's home in Lindsey Row. Being the same age, they spoke freely to each other, with Whistler seeking her sympathy in whatever difficulties he currently found himself. Their correspondence, though outwardly formal, reveals the same openness. Of course, Whistler was notorious for romantic attachments to his models. Joanna Hiffernan and Maud Franklin quite aside, he would fall completely under the spell of Beatrice Godwin, and his relationship with Lady Archibald Campbell was not strictly one of artist and patron. Still, Frances clearly enchanted him.

Susan Grace Galassi published a masterful technical analysis of the portrait in 2003 (cited below), but she may have underplayed a personal dimension of the work.

Whistler grew increasingly frustrated as he laboured on the painting, which would take him more than two years to complete. That "strange little something" needed to make it a "masterpiece," he told Frances, eluded him. Whether he ever achieved his inner vision, I judge the painting to be his most elegant portrait, and as Galassi maintains, it demonstrates his "mastery as a complete artist," both as painter and designer. The picture also radiates a tenderness found in few other Whistler portraits, and certainly not in any of his commissioned pictures. It is, as Galassi says, an "homage" to Frances.

The Velvet Dress, Mrs Leyland 1873/1874.
Drypoint, 23.2 x 15.7 cm.
Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.
Gift of Charles Lang Freer.

Frances had wished to be painted in a black velvet evening gown, to match the picture of her husband, who had posed in formal attire; but Whistler thought that all wrong for her. So had Rossetti when, four years earlier, he painted her as a Pre-Raphaelite woman. Whistler subsequently made a drypoint of her in black velvet, but for the painting, he wanted to set off her auburn hair against more muted colors. He also envisioned her not in restrictive, formal attire, but in a flowing "tea gown" of his own design, all silk and chiffon, intimate in its informality, very Greek, very Japanese, very Aesthetic. Elsewhere in this issue of *The Ten O'Clock,* Aileen Ribeiro describes it as "a poetic fantasy dress, an illusion." Interesting enough, the gown resembles the filmy "classical" attire Whistler had used in his unfinished painting of young women for Frederick Leyland. As worn by Frances, the casual dress evidences a trust she and Whistler shared.

Just as her husband's portrait expresses self-assured masculine power, so hers reveals a woman above worldly concerns. Whistler made numerous preparatory studies of Frances in a variety of poses and different styles of dress before deciding to paint her full length, back to the viewer, hands placed behind her, one upon the other. He had seen her standing just so many times. It was a "natural" pose for her, one she assumed "unconsciously" when speaking with people. Like the gown, it conveyed a deep personal association. Whistler then turned her head and long, graceful neck in profile, but the painting's crowning achievement was the expression on Frances's face. Her cool, slightly bored look, with eyes half closed, at once demure and aristocratic, was magical. Whistler knew and understood this woman.

The placement of her hands bears further mention. Of the dozens of portraits Whistler painted, in only two others, also of women, did he place the subject's hands behind her (*Harmony in Black and Red* and *Rose et or*), and only with Frances are the hands visible. Whistler sometimes struggled to paint hands, but in this case, he arranged them as purposefully and delicately as he had those of his mother in her famous portrait, which he had all but completed only days before starting on Frances. As with Anna, this precise placement again speaks to the naturalness of the pose, one that meant something to him, and which one sees in none of Whistler's

[*opposite*]
Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828–1882),
Monna Rosa, 1867.
Oil on canvas, 68.58 x 53.34 cm.
Private collection.

other commissioned portraits. Their placement also contained, almost in defiance of her aristocratic bearing, a hint of vulnerability, as though this daughter of an iron-molder was not, after all, entirely certain of her place.

Rossetti did not think the painting a very good “likeness” when Whistler exhibited it at his first one-man show, in 1874, although Rossetti could not dispute its “graceful design.” Even so, Whistler remained unsatisfied, and refused to relinquish the picture to Leyland. He kept Leyland’s own portrait for similar reasons, but it is clearly the painting of Frances that caused him anxiety.

Then, in 1877, came Whistler's break with Leyland over payment for the Peacock Room, a quarrel further enflamed by rumours of a liaison between Whistler and Frances. Despite the now unbridgeable gap between the two men, Whistler had remained on intimate terms with his patron’s wife. How far Frances encouraged his attentions is hard to say, but her recklessness may have been inspired by knowledge of Leyland’s several mistresses. In March 1877, she had a strained conversation with Whistler, seemingly to caution him against so openly disparaging her husband, which could only make their situation more awkward.

Whatever the tensions, they passed, and Whistler continued to visit 49 Prince’s Gate. The couple strolled openly together at Lord’s Cricket Grounds, and Whistler escorted both Frances and her daughters in public. Frances also paid at least one visit with Whistler to see his son Charles, although that may have been before the current tempest. Rumors spread that she intended to run away with Whistler. Of course, this intense sort of courtship may well have been just a way for Whistler to embarrass her husband, but when Leyland commissioned another artist to paint Frances’s portrait, Whistler was furious. He upbraided the man, whom he had always regarded as a “chosen companion,” for daring “to paint another mans picture.” Or did he mean another man’s woman?

Suddenly, though, Frances, calculating her social and financial position, submitted to her husband. Their twenty-year-old son Frederick, who had come to think of Whistler as a favoured uncle or older brother, intervened with a sobering letter. “[Y]ou will not again approach my mother in any way,” he told his friend. The entire family had rallied to his father, Freddie insisted, and hoped that the artist would “not force matters further.” Even Whistler, full of righteous indignation against the father, had to feel the sting of that rebuke. He and the senior Leyland would quarrel further over unfinished pictures and promised payments, with some vindictive moments yet to come, but the danger of scandal had passed.

Not, however, Whistler’s fascination with Frances. When he learned in June 1879 that she, no longer able to tolerate her husband’s infidelities, had left him and the children, Whistler did not try to contact her, but then the timing could not have been worse for him. He was in the midst of his bankruptcy, and within a few more months would find himself in Venice with Maud Franklin. Even so, speculation about his connection to Frances persisted when the *World* newspaper published a satirical story about a lover’s spat and separation of an artist—a thinly veiled Whistler—and his muse. A few weeks later, Whistler expressed alarm upon learning that Frances had moved from Liverpool to an unsuitable part of London.

Of course, by then, Whistler was firmly committed to Maud, who had already borne one child by him, and with the arrival of Beatrice on the scene a few years later, Frances became a distant, however cherished, memory. Whistler finally surrendered her portrait to Leyland around 1880. It remained in the family until sold to Henry Clay Frick in 1916 and may now be enjoyed by all in New York's Frick Collection.

We know very little about Frances' subsequent life. She may well have attended Whistler's funeral, and three years later, in 1906, she granted a series of suggestive interviews to Elizabeth Pennell. In the published version of *The Whistler Journal,* Pennell described the still vibrant Frances, then aged seventy-two, as "an old, much-wrinkled woman, short, slight, still pretty with a becoming white wig, in a tight-fitting, black lace gown and many pearls and diamonds, her figure as slight and trim as a young girl's." Frances, who was "keen to talk of Whistler," admitted to having gone about London with him whenever her husband had been conducting business in Liverpool but called the gossip about them potentially eloping "absurd." She even went so far as to say that Whistler had "behaved badly" toward Leyland in their quarrel over the Peacock Room. Yet Frances had also been relieved that he had not married Lizzie, who "was not the wife for him."

However, despite efforts to minimize their relationship, Frances had clearly felt more than friendship for Whistler. Pennell observed that his paintings and etchings adorned every room of her house. Frances claimed not to have seen Whistler "for some time before his marriage," which was in 1888, and Beatrice apparently made sure she kept her distance thereafter. When Frances once invited the couple to visit her through a third party, Beatrice refused the offer and asked the person who had conveyed it "how she could want to break up the peace of a happy home." Ultimately, Frances confessed to Pennell that she "regretted that Whistler could not have married her," as "it would have been much better for him." Frances died in 1910.

It is always dangerous to attribute unstated motives to an artist's actions or to contort biographical facts to fit extravagant interpretations of their work. Still, there are unique features to Whistler's portrait of Frances Leyland, which did, in the end, radiate that "strange little something" he had hoped to capture.

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Study for 'Symphony in Flesh-colour and Pink: Mrs F. R. Leyland', 1871/1874.
Chalk and pastel on brown paper,
28.8 x 18.2 cm.
Amon Carter Museum of American Art,
Fort Worth, Texas

Study of Mrs Leland, 1871/74.
Chalk and pastel on brown paper,
26.5 x 17.4 cm.
Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.
Gift of Charles Lang Freer.

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La Princesse du pays de la porcelain, 1863/1865.
Oil on canvas, 201.5 x 116.1 cm.
Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution,
Washington, D.C.
Gift of Charles Lang Freer.

[*opposite*]
The Gold Scab: Eruption in Frilthy Lucre (The Creditor), 1879.
Oil on canvas, 186.7 x 139.7 cm.
De Young Museum, San Francisco.

PEACOCKS ON PARADE

SARAH BURNS

Like so many other facets of his career, James McNeill Whistler's Peacock Room—its creation and its disastrous personal and professional consequences for the artist—has been so exhaustively studied that it would seem there can be little left to say about it. Likewise, what more can be gleaned from Whistler's *The Gold Scab*: *Eruption in Frilthy Lucre (The Creditor)* of 1879—that ferocious, near-life-size caricature of Liverpool shipping magnate and erstwhile patron Frederick Richards Leyland as a diabolical human peacock, hammering away at a piano loaded with money bags while sitting on the Chelsea house that Whistler, bankrupt after the 1878 *Whistler v. Ruskin* lawsuit, had been forced to surrender to his creditors, Leyland chief among them?

Nonetheless, there *is* more to say. Here I want to embroider on critic Twylene Moyer's contention that however much *The Gold Scab* may be a sardonic attack on Leyland, it might also be seen as a projection of the inner Whistler: "For the 'mere man of money,' is not just the artist's foe, a Jekyll who devolves into Hyde; he represents the artist's own Hyde, a frightening manifestation of the philistine lurking within the maker—a dissolute pimp who prostitutes his muse." Aside from the rather delicious irony that there was a *real* Jekyll involved in the creation of the Peacock Room—the unfortunate architect whose own commissioned decorations Whistler obliterated with his gorgeous blue-and-gold extravaganza—Moyer's statement, excessively harsh though it may strike us, prompts consideration of the artist and the despised patron as not so much polar opposites (Artist vs Mammon) as mirror images.

Socially as well as artistically involved with the Leyland family from the mid-1860s, Whistler had produced formal portraits of Leyland and of his wife, Frances, with whom the artist was particularly close. While his relationship with Leyland seems to have been on a somewhat more formal footing, the two men saw a great deal of each other over the years, certainly often and long enough for each to take the measure of the other. Even though one was a man of business and the other a devotee of beauty, they shared certain traits and characteristics: both were volatile personalities, quick to anger and lash out against real or imagined offenses. One chronicler described the saturnine Leyland as a man with few friends, "disliked by a very large circle of acquaintances." Whistler, who certainly had a very large circle of acquaintances that may or may not have disliked him, was a fickle friend who habitually subjected others to merciless scorn and mockery and had a

bellicose streak that occasionally resulted in actual physical violence, as when he famously landed a punch on his brother-in-law Seymour Haden, sending him through the plate-glass window of a Paris cafe. Less pugilistic, Leyland nonetheless had a terrible temper and after the Peacock Room debacle threatened to "publicly horsewhip" Whistler should the latter ever again be found in Mrs. Leyland's proximity. Both men, it bears mentioning, took multiple mistresses and had reputations for caddish behavior toward women.

Leyland and Whistler also shared an obsession with sartorial matters: both were noted dandies. Described by novelist Hall Caine as "tall and stylish, almost showy, very clever and keen," Leyland in his dandyism was understated, wearing well-tailored dark suits accentuated by his iconic accordion-pleated white cambric shirt frill, an affectation as well as an archaism, such frills having long since gone out of fashion. As the entry in *Modern English Biography* (1921) put it, Leyland was "the last man in Liverpool (probably in England) who wore frills habitually." Whistler was a more performative dandy. Tales of his flaunted fastidiousness abound, particularly in the worshipful chronicles of admirers like Mortimer Menpes or Joseph and Elizabeth Pennell, who lauded the artist's speckless, faultless, irreproachably tailored clothes and even found dandyism in the master's "delicate handwriting."

Artist and patron alike self-consciously underscored their dandified images by the judicious use of distinctive embellishments. If Leyland had his white frill, Whistler, of course, had his white lock, that signature plume (caused by an inherited genetic anomaly), which the artist devotedly groomed and fluffed and sometimes tied with a perky ribbon to accentuate its contrast with his mop of black curls. But a closer counterpart to Leyland's frill was Whistler's monocle, which he adopted about 1860. The monocle was useful in compensating for the artist's myopia, but he also learned to deploy the eyepiece for dramatic effect, dangling it from the cord, clanging it to accompany his conversation in cafés, and screwing it back into his eye to fixate on any object or person of interest. Developed in Germany in the early eighteenth century, the monocle was originally intended for the nearsighted but later became a fashionable upper-class affectation until its popularity waned in the 1830s—just about the same decade the shirt frill fell out of favor with almost everyone except the Liverpudlian magnate.

Whistler's preening self-regard was on full display when he called on his long-suffering tailor, whom he would habitually berate for failing to live up to the artist's exacting specifications. In *Whistler as I Knew Him* (1904), the artist's loyal fan Mortimer Menpes detailed a typical visit: once the requisitioned garment

Leslie Ward (Spy),
A Symphony, in Vanity Fair,
12 January 1878.

Harmony in Blue and Gold: The Peacock Room, south wall, 1877.
Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

had finally been perfected according to Whistler's dictates, he would spend up to a quarter of an hour striding before the glass, "hand on hip, his cane balanced between his fingers, and his hat cocked well over one eye." While there seems to be no record of Leyland admiring his elegance in the mirror, he surely must have, given the great pains he took to craft his impeccable yet distinctively idiosyncratic style. Only, unlike Whistler, he probably did not make a habit of strutting.

Strutting, however, is what peacocks do, and here we should consider what it meant to be a peacock, or act like one, in Victorian England. Before Whistler left the Peacock Room for good, he painted a flamboyant faceoff of two peacocks on the end wall opposite *The Princess from the Land of Porcelain*. The bird on the right is clearly intended to represent Leyland: tail erect and bristling, he sports an incongruous white frill on his neck and stands on a scattering of silver shillings (with more of them, like armor, on his breast) as he aggressively spreads his golden wings. Disdaining to engage, the white-plumed peacock on the left shoots a reproachful glare at his antagonist as he turns away, tail trailing heavily behind. Leyland had committed an unforgivable double offense, not only by condescending to pay just half the amount Whistler demanded for the decoration of the room but also by rendering said payment in tradesmen's pounds rather than the gentlemanly guinea, worth one shilling more than the pound. That pictorial flourish was the first installment of Whistler's revenge, the next being, of course, T*he Gold Scab* (along with two other painted mockeries of Leyland, all three left in Whistler's studio for Leyland-the-creditor's delectation; only *The Gold Scab* survived, with the other two presumably destroyed).

It would seem quite logical that the peacock should be the ornithological equivalent of the dandy, given its longstanding (and insistently anthropomorphic) association with vanity and pride. In Victorian eyes, there were other negative connotations as well. In the view of the Reverend Thomas Dick—author of the improving 1836 tome, *On the Mental Illumination and Moral Improvement of Mankind*—the peacock, an ill-natured fowl, was "so wicked that it will scarcely live with any other bird, except the pigeon, and it tears and spoils everything it gets a hold of with its bill." As if that were not bad enough, the peacock also assaulted the ear with its loud, inharmonious scream, a cry characterized by the Reverend Dick as harsh, disgusting, and hideous. Having the voice of the devil but the plumage of an angel, as an old Italian saying had it, the peacock was a gorgeous creature with a very nasty disposition. It almost goes without saying that Victorian moralists, holding up the peacock as a bad example, cautioned little boys and girls to be good and humble always, should they be ever so pretty or adorned in the finest raiment.

It is not difficult to discern the parallels between the peacock—as characterized by Victorian naturalists and moralists—and the dandy, or, more to the point, the dandy as embodied by Leyland and, more particularly, Whistler. For starters, there was the artist's voice. The worshipful Menpes recounted a visit to the artist's Regent Street hairdresser's, where Whistler dunked his head into a basin of water and undertook the exacting ritual of grooming his curls until they fell into "decorative waves." But then, suddenly, a "loud scream… rent the air" when Whistler demanded a comb to coax the famous white lock into a "feathery plume." The artist's laugh was as grating as his scream. According to Whistler's chroniclers Joseph and Elizabeth Pennell, when the Royal Academy rejected Whistler's paintings, and critics sneered at his pictures in other galleries, "he laughed the louder, and felt the more. English ears shrank from his laugh—'his strident peacock laugh,'" as one contemporary styled it. And certainly there were extensive grounds for comparison between the belligerent peacock, tearing and spoiling everything it could get hold of, and the pugnacious painter, for whom the attack mode was second nature.

Not surprisingly, caricaturists pressed the peacock into service when they savaged politicians, celebrities, and other prominent or notorious contemporary figures. In August 1870, soon after the start of the Franco-Prussian War, *L'Eclipse*, the scorchingly satirical Parisian paper, published an André Gill cartoon of a Prussian general—most likely chief archenemy Otto von Bismarck—as "Le Nouveau Paon," or "The New Peacock." In Gill's transparently scatological rendering, Bismarck, in full military dress, is seen from behind; strutting an exaggerated goose-step, he sports five peacock tail-feathers protruding from his rear. The reference is probably to the popular Aesop fable of the vain jackdaw, who—despite appropriating the peacock's plumage—fools nobody: fine feathers can never make a fine bird. Other caricatures of Bismarck showed him with a sneering human head on a peacock body. Similarly, the *Journal Amusant* in 1876 lampooned the composer Richard Wagner—himself a renowned dandy—standing haughtily in evening dress, complete with an extravagant shirt frill; from his jacket sprout peacock feathers extending into a stiffly outspread peacock tail.

[*opposite above*]
André Gill (1840–1885),
Le nouveau paon
L'Eclipse, 21 August 1870.

[*opposite*]
Maurice Charles Mathieul (1849–1912),
Caricature of Richard Wagner.
Journal amusant, 9 September 1876.

With reference to such contemporary cartoons, *The Gold Scab* might be seen as Whistler's own variation on a popular meme equating celebrity with avian vanity and pomposity. But it was also a self-portrait. Scholar Linda Merrill reads *The Gold Scab* as "less a caricature of Leyland than an expression of Whistler's paranoid perceptions" and argues, further, that in creating this visual canard the artist remained blind to "how much he was satirizing himself" through the musical motif as well as the colours, taken straight from the Peacock Room itself. Whistler's caricature of Leyland is also a self-caricature in another sense: in the figure of the peacock, we have Whistler, complete. Recall that one of the fighting fowls in the Leyland dining room is a stand-in for Whistler himself: he and Leyland are birds of a feather. In *The Gold Scab* we do not, of course, *see* the artist, although he did include his signature butterfly, poised to sting the creditor's neck. But he and his Hyde are there, in the beauty of the design and the ugly hostility of its intent.

In his art and in the aesthetics of his lifestyle, Whistler was all about the creation of exquisitely beautiful surfaces. In his dealings with the rest of the world, the artist was often quick to anger and quick to attack. Like the peacock—and very much unlike the butterfly, even with a stinger—Whistler aggressively savaged anything and anyone that aroused his ire. Presumably, those who remained steadfast and reverent, like Menpes, were his pigeons. Hardly a man chronically divided between artistic devotion to beauty and violently bellicose behavior, Whistler, like the peacock, was all of a piece: you could not have one without the other.

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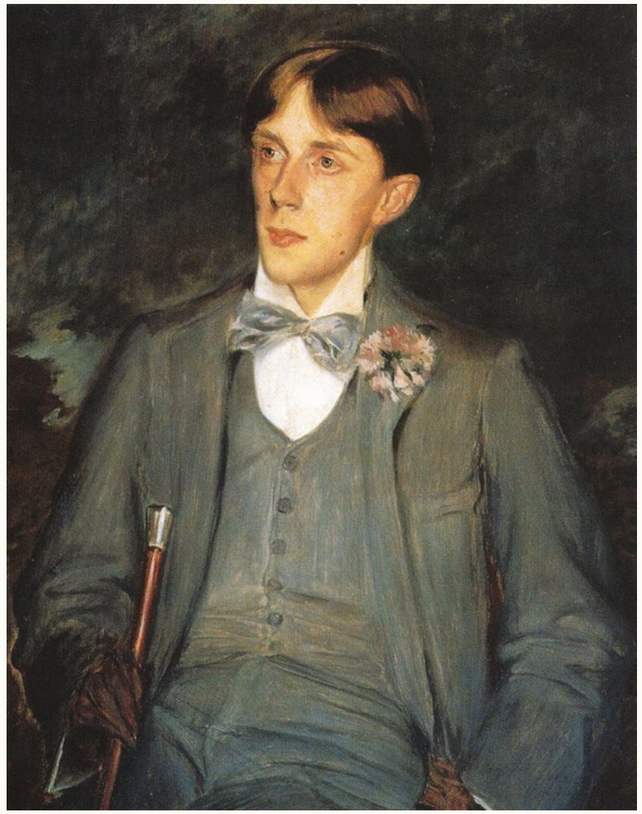


Jacques-Emile Blanche (1861–1942),
Aubrey Beardsley (1872–98), 1895.
Oil on canvas, 92.6 x 73.7 cm.
National Portrait Gallery, London (NPG
1991). ©National Portrait Gallery.

A Scherzo in Black & White

STEPHEN CALLOWAY

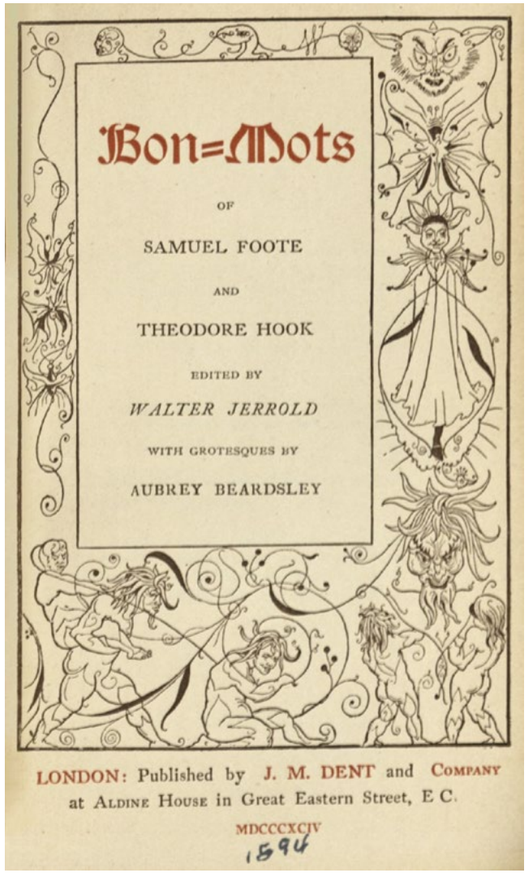
By the early 1890s, Whistler, mercurial, sharp-witted and famously combative, had long been established in artistic circles as one of the leading figures of the Aesthetic Movement; Aubrey Beardsley, born in 1872 and belonging to a rising generation of young artists and writers anxious to make their mark, was on the cusp of fame. Publication of his illustrations to Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* and the yet more startling set for Oscar Wilde's *Salome* in 1894 would bring him notice and notoriety. Just four years later, Beardsley, still only twenty-five years of age but for many the cynosure of 'Nineties decadence, was dead. Max Beerbohm, catching the general mood, declared - no doubt much to the chagrin of Whistler, Oscar Wilde and others, "I belong to the Beardsley period." Beardsley's relationship with Whistler had not been easy - indeed, whose was? - but one lasting outcome of their association was a handful of fancifully facetious "portraits" of Whistler.

In the summer of 1891, Aubrey Beardsley, then aged just eighteen, and his sister Mabel had visited the Prince's Gate mansion of Frederick R. Leyland. Leyland, whose fortune was founded on his operations as one of the greatest shipping magnates of the day, had amassed an extraordinary collection of works by the Old Masters and contemporary painters, including Whistler. Magnanimously, on certain Sundays in the year (when he himself was doubtless away at his country house, Speke Hall outside Liverpool), Leyland allowed the public access to view his treasures. There, in addition to paintings ranging from Sandro Botticelli and Fillipo Lippi to Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Albert Moore and Edward Burne-Jones, the wide-eyed Beardsley first saw the Peacock Room, still - more than fifteen years after the famous *fracas* between Whistler and his erstwhile patron - one of the celebrated artistic sights of London. Hugely excited by what he saw, Beardsley wrote to his old schoolfriend George Scotson-Clark, rapturously describing his visit and including in a second letter a sketch from memory of himself and his sister "going thro' the rooms." To this he added a sketch of Whistler's *La Princesse du Pays de la Porcelaine*, the focus of the decorative scheme of the Peacock Room.

At the time, Beardsley's great artistic hero was Burne-Jones. Yet, the visit to Leyland's house confirmed his suspicion that Whistler might in fact be the most interesting figure in the London art-world. It was the beginning of an

obsession. Rashly, Beardsley splurged a week's salary from his dull clerk's job on an impression of *Billingsgate*, one of Whistler's "Thames Set" etchings. However, it was Whistler's sophisticated and decorative *japonisme* that directly inspired some of Beardsley's best early efforts as he found his feet as a draughtsman. Over the next few months, his recollection of details from the Peacock Room became a crucial influence as he developed what he called his own "Jap Manner," the phase of his short career that culminated in the famous *Salome* drawings. Increasingly, too, the still provincial aspiring young artist became intrigued by Whistler's reputation as a waspish wit, his studied appearance and carefully cultivated pose.

The first encounter between the two was in May 1893 in Paris, where they were introduced by Whistler's friends and first biographers Elizabeth and Joseph Pennell. The meeting was not a success. Joseph Pennell, then widely regarded as an expert on pen-drawing, was an important early champion of Beardsley. Just a month before he had written the first appreciation of his work in an article, "A New Illustrator," for the initial number of the *Studio Magazine*. Whistler, who had probably seen only the poor reproductions of Beardsley's drawing in the *Studio* piece, was cool or even dismissive. Afterwards he chided the Pennells for having taken up this gauche youth. No doubt thinking of Beardsley's drawings with their obsessive "hairline" flourishes, rather than the draughstman himself, Whistler complained, "He has hairs on his hands, hairs on his finger ends, hairs in his ears, hairs on his toes, hairs all over him!" Nevertheless, he invited the Pennells and Beardsley to meet for dinner in a few days' time. When Whistler failed to turn up, Aubrey, entirely understandably, felt snubbed. According to the Pennells, he vented his disappointment and anger by making the first of several unflattering "portraits" of the great man whom he had so hoped to impress.



Aubrey Beardsley (1872–1898), Illustrated title page of Walter Jerrold, *Bon Mots of Samuel Foote and Theodore Hook* (London, 1894).

Joseph Pennell later claimed that he had been present when Beardsley dashed off his drawing. This makes it unlikely that the beautiful, carefully composed and exquisitely drawn image now in the Lessing J. Rosenwald Collection at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., is the original outcome of the young artist's spleen. More likely, that first, intemperate scrawl was lost or destroyed. The Washington drawing, by contrast, is one of Beardsley best early works, audacious in its Japanese-inspired, asymmetrical arrangement and a little masterpiece of characterisation. Whistler is seen seated on an elaborate trellis-work bench that suggests the fashionable Aesthetic furniture designs of the Master's friend and collaborator Edward W. Godwin. Dressed in tight trousers and tiny pointed pumps and a small, rather girlish little hat (actually, quite like Whistler's own preferred

Aubrey Beardsley, *Caricature of Whistler,* for cover and title page of Florence Farr, *The Dancing Faun* (London, 1894).

low-crowned headgear) perched on a froth of luxuriant curls, he gestures effetely to a passing butterfly that is obviously based on his famous signature.

Other teasing caricatures such as this would follow. When Beardsley began making hundreds of tiny grotesque illustrations ("I am nothing if I am not grotesque," he claimed) for *Bon Mots*, a set of little volumes of quotations from famous wits, he included an image of a figure, again with Whistler's unmistakable features, his monocle, extravagant moustaches and white lock of hair. This time, instead of contemporary Bohemian clothes, he is dressed in seventeenth-century costume, with dark doublet and immaculate ruff. Beardsley's allusion to the self-portrait by Velasquez in *Las Meninas* cannot but have flattered Whistler, whose vanity supposedly led him to compare himself on more than one occasion with the great Spanish painter.

By contrast, two further drawings that Beardsley made in 1894 were by all accounts the source of real irritation. For the title page of a clever satire of present-day fashionable life, *The Dancing Faun* by the actress Florence Farr, published in John Lane's "Keynotes" series of modern novels, Beardsley drew another caricature "portrait" depicting Whistler with the hairy lower limbs of a faun, but with, again, beribboned dancing pumps rather than hooves. This curious figure reclines on an elegant, attenuated neo-classical sofa placed in what appears to be a sparse, Aesthetic room; a setting that hints clearly at the master's own preferences in interior furnishings and decoration. Whistler was not amused, but his most serious indignation was sparked by another drawing, which Beardsley intended for inclusion in the first number of *The Yellow Book*, the illustrated magazine which, as art editor, he had conceived as a showcase for the best in avant-garde art and writing, and which under his influence (and that of its literary editor Henry Harland) rapidly came to epitomise the daring and decadence of the decade.

Beardsley's drawing showed a large female figure seated, we are to presume, in a restaurant, a wine glass grasped in her pudgy, black-gloved fingers and a bottle placed on the otherwise empty table before her. The original title Beardsley gave to his drawing was *The Fat Woman*. When Whistler learned that the features of the woman were unmistakably those of his wife Beatrix, a tortuous brouhaha ensued. Lane, as publisher of *The Yellow Book,* panicked and informed Beardsley that he would not allow publication of the illustration. Beardsley in a mock-serious letter replying to Lane's ultimatum drew a caricature of himself gesturing at a gallows and threatening suicide if his work was censored. In a further calculated tease, he then provocatively proposed that he re-name the drawing "a Study in Major Lines", a title which he surely intended to have a recognisably Whistlerian ring. In any event, the drawing did not appear in the magazine, but Whistler must have been left with a sense of a somewhat hollow victory.

Happily, this story of spats between two uncompromising geniuses has a delightful, if unexpected ending. When Whistler and Beardsley met in 1896, again in Paris, Beardsley had just published his remarkable set of illustrations to Alexander Pope's "comic-heroic" poem *The Rape of the Lock*. Drawn in an entirely

[*left*]
Aubrey Beardsley,
Caricature of Whistler, for Walter Jerrold, *Bon Mots of Samuel Foote and Theodore Hooke* (London, 1894).

[*below*]
Aubrey Beardsley,
The Fat Woman, 1894.
Pen and ink, 17.8 x 16.2 cm.
Tate Britain, London.

[*opposite*]
Aubrey Beardsley,
Caricature of Whistler, 1894.
Pen and ink, 21.1 x 11.7 cm.
Rosenwald Collection, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

new, almost filigree style based on old engravings, Beardsley had aptly termed his designs "embroideries". Whistler looked at them, as Pennell recounts, "first indifferently, then with interest, then with delight." He then astonished Beardsley by saying, "Aubrey, I have made a great mistake; you are a very great artist," at which Beardsley burst into tears. Uncharacteristically lost for words, Whistler could only splutter, "I mean it, I mean it, I mean it."

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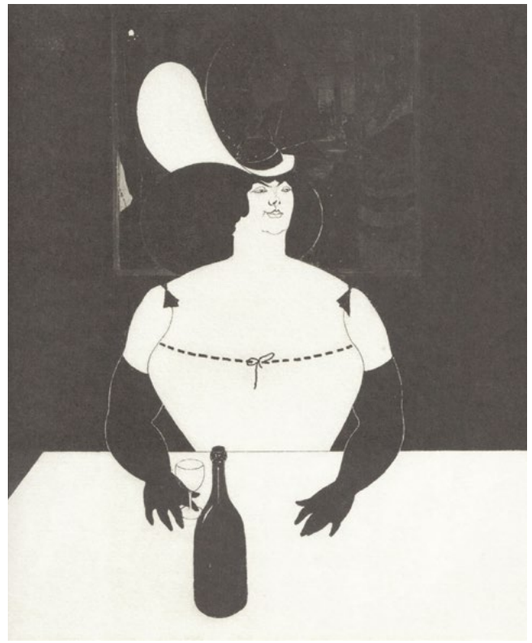
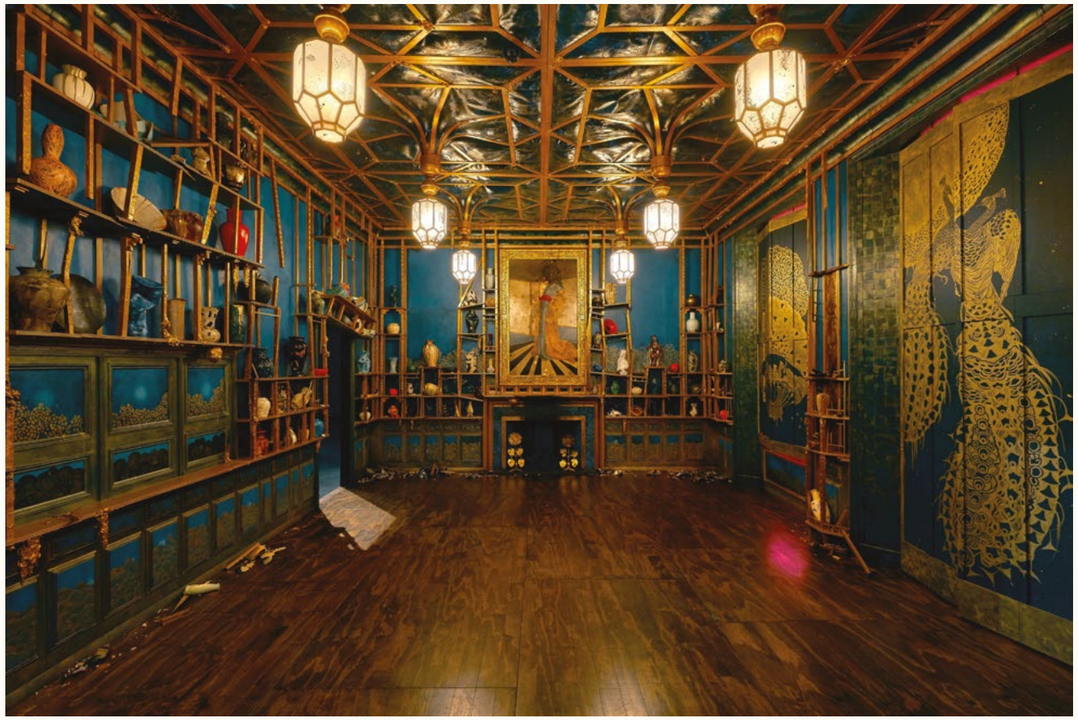
Matthew Sturgis, *Aubrey Beardsley: A Biography* (1998); Stephen Calloway, *Aubrey Beardsley* (1998); Stephen Calloway and Caroline Corbeau-Parsons, *Aubrey Beardsley* (2000).

Stephen Calloway is an aesthete, exhibition curator, and collector. A former curator at the Victoria and Albert Museum (1974–2013), he has continued to write and lecture on English art and the history of taste. In addition to the books cited above, he is the author of Twentieth Century Decoration *(1988) and* Baroque Baroque: The Culture of Excess *(1994).*





Filthy Lucre, 2013–14.
Mixed media installation with sound,
365.7 x 914.4 x 609.6 cm.
Photo by Luke Walker. Courtesy of the
artist and DC Moore Gallery, New York.

My Life with Whistler

DARREN WATERSTON

Sometimes there can be that one poem, that one symphony, that one painting that you quest throughout your life, familiar and yet wholly new with every encounter. It confounds you as to why it still holds such reverence, a rush of blood every time you see that color again, feel that discorded note.

"It should be like breath on the surface of a pane of glass."

My first encounter with James Abbott McNeil Whistler was in the darkened room of an art history slide show presentation. I was an eighteen-year-old burgeoning artist with a proclivity for all things gloomy and tenebrous, reading Baudelaire and smoking clove cigarettes. We came to the segment of the presentation that our professor called l'art pour l'art, and I remember him stirring us to attention as he introduced Whistler with *Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket.* I was awe-struck. At first, I didn't understand what I was looking at, this indeterminant landscape of luminous smoke and spattering fireworks, but I remember clearly having this visceral, in my gut emotional response and thought: this painting is everything. I must pursue the life of an artist. That singular painting put me on course as a young painter and it was not until thirty years later that I saw it in person at The Detroit Institute of Arts. The experience was like an encounter after many years with your first love, a rush of youthful memories and aspirations. I stood there in wonderment, thinking of how this one painting lifted me forward, guided me to so many unknowable places. I always held this reverence for Whistler but for much of the years following art school, he was in the periphery, though always present.

I was still quite young, maybe twenty-four or so, when I had my first exhibition in an important gallery in Los Angeles and soon to follow in New York. I had to learn very quickly how to navigate the unruly art world; how to represent my work, cultivate relationships with patrons and curators, and figure out how to create a livelihood as an artist. I had strong mentors and exceptional gallerists to help me along, but it was always a hustle. I quickly learned that it was a benefit that I was a bit of an extrovert, at ease in public, enjoyed art openings, public speaking and, for the most part, amused by all the personalities and egos of the art world.

I considered Whistler and his own hustle to sell his prints, paint his watercolors and create an allure around his work. He was the first artist to cultivate a public persona and did so with such flair and charming cattiness. He knew the gentle art of creating a culture of desire around him and of course "the gentle art of making enemies". He was in so many ways the Andy Warhol of his time.

On one visit to New York for the opening of my first exhibition there, I came across Whistler's deft, apparition-like portrait *Arrangement in Black and Gold: Comte Robert de Montesquiou* at the Frick Collection. He must have been a patron of Whistler's, I thought to myself; how elegant he was, and I wondered if the artist knew him well. The next evening at my opening a very striking young collector came in with a waxed moustache, cravat and a slung overcoat his arm and I thought to myself, oh Whistler would have really liked this guy.

[*above*]
Darren Waterston, 2014, working in MASS MoCA studio on *Filthy Lucre*.
Courtesy the Artist and DC Moore Gallery.

[*opposite*]
Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket, 1875.
Oil on panel, 60.3 x 46.6 cm.
Detroit Institute of Arts.
©Detroit Institute of Arts/Gift of Dexter M. Ferry Jr/Bridgeman Images

For much of my life in California, I saw very few Whistler paintings in person as there just were not many of them around on the West Coast. On a visit to The Legion of Honor in San Francisco, completely by chance, I stumbled onto a painting that I did not know at the time would be so consequential to me as an artist. Displayed in not any particular place of importance in the museum was Whistler's *The Gold Scab: Eruption in Frilthy Lucre.* I was completely caught off guard, astonished to see that it was Whistler who painted it. How could the artist I thought I knew so well, painter of elegant portraits and twilight landscapes, create this monstrous portrayal? I realized I knew very little about the man James Whistler and decided I would explore further. This was also the first time that I even knew Whistler's fabled *Peacock Room* existed. It was this hideous portrait of his patron Frederick Leyland that made me aware of his great masterpiece and a very rudimentary understanding of the story behind it.

Some years later, after I moved from San Francisco to New York City, I had the good fortune to have a studio visit with the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (MASS MoCA) curator Susan Cross. She was disarmingly warm and very pregnant. Soon after, she invited me to create a mural for the museum that I was so excited about. MASS MoCA is one of the great contemporary museums in the United States, known for creating ambitious projects with artists that would otherwise never be realized. It was a great honor to have this invitation, but as Susan later jested, I had a "Whistlerian moment" and proposed creating a work of art far more ambitious than the museum had the time, space or money to support. I wanted to create an immersive painterly space and started to think of all the great painted rooms in art history. Whistler's *Harmony in Blue and Gold: The Peacock Room* was buried deep in my memory, and I thought I better go back and study it more carefully. As I understood more deeply it's tumultuous history, I realized this was the story of Art and Money for the millennium. It could have been the New York art world I knew. I came back to Susan and presented my proposal to take

Whistler's masterpiece and reimagine it as a contemporary work of art. This could not be parody or pastiche, but I had to find a way to claim it entirely as my own while given my homage to an artist I held in the utmost respect. I knew this would be a very delicate operation. Susan was the champion of many an artist and known for taking curatorial risks. She believed in the idea from its conception and said we had to find a way to make it possible, which included quickly finding funding for fabrication. She would do what she could at her end, and I would have to do the same. I had never asked for money before for a project and was feeling somewhat uncomfortable soliciting close friends, my galleries, and patrons for their support. There I was making an installation about art and money and found myself having to confront the precise questions the piece was about. How does a work of art get realized? Who makes it possible and what do those relationships look like? How does it get funded, and what is the artist's role in that? Friends and patrons were generous and enthusiastic, and within a week I had secured over $100,000 in donations for the museum, and we were able to move forward with assurance.

Once the project was solidified, I knew I had to take a really deep dive in learning all things Whistler, and I had yet to see the Peacock Room in person. I read Linda Merrill's definitive book on the subject and then got up enough nerve to contact Lee Glazer, Smithsonian curator of American Art at The Freer/Sackler Gallery, Whistler scholar and gatekeeper of the Peacock Room. She kindly invited me to come to Washington. We would meet in the room in the morning before the museum

[*above & opposite*]
Filthy Lucre, 2013–14.
Mixed media installation
with sound, 365.7 x 914.4 x 609.6 cm.
Photo by Luke Walker. Courtesy of the
artist and DC Moore Gallery, New York.

opened. My partner Jason and I took the train the night before and got ourselves to the museum early. We walked into *The Peacock Room* to be greeted by Lee and *The Princess from the Land of Porcelain* starring at us. The room initially felt like I was inside a huge, magnificent musical instrument, like a harpsicord. After I settled into the space, Lee opened the three sets of shutters to the morning light which revealed a painted room full of strokes and textures, every surface covered by the artist's brush. The gold gilt was almost too much to behold in natural light, and I understood then why the Japanese always say the best light to view a lacquer box is moonlight. It was an unforgettable day, and Lee quickly became my friend and Whistler mentor.

Jason and I had a few months to pack up our contented lives in Manhattan and move to North Adams, Massachusetts, at the Vermont border where the massive, sprawling, art complex MASS MoCA resides. I was given a generous studio on campus and began at once working on construction with Derek Parker; artist, art fabricator and magic maker. One gloomy fall afternoon, I went on a short drive to Lowell, Massachusetts to seek out where Whistler was born. It was all a bit underwhelming, and I realized why Whistler claimed St Petersburg, Russia (among other places) as his birthplace.

After eight months of frenzied work, from painting 250 ceramic vessels to collaborations building stained glass lanterns, to an immersive soundscape, *Filthy Lucre* was completed and opened at MASS MoCA 8 March 2014, to be exhibited there for over a year. Lee and Susan had been working to bring *Filthy Lucre* to The

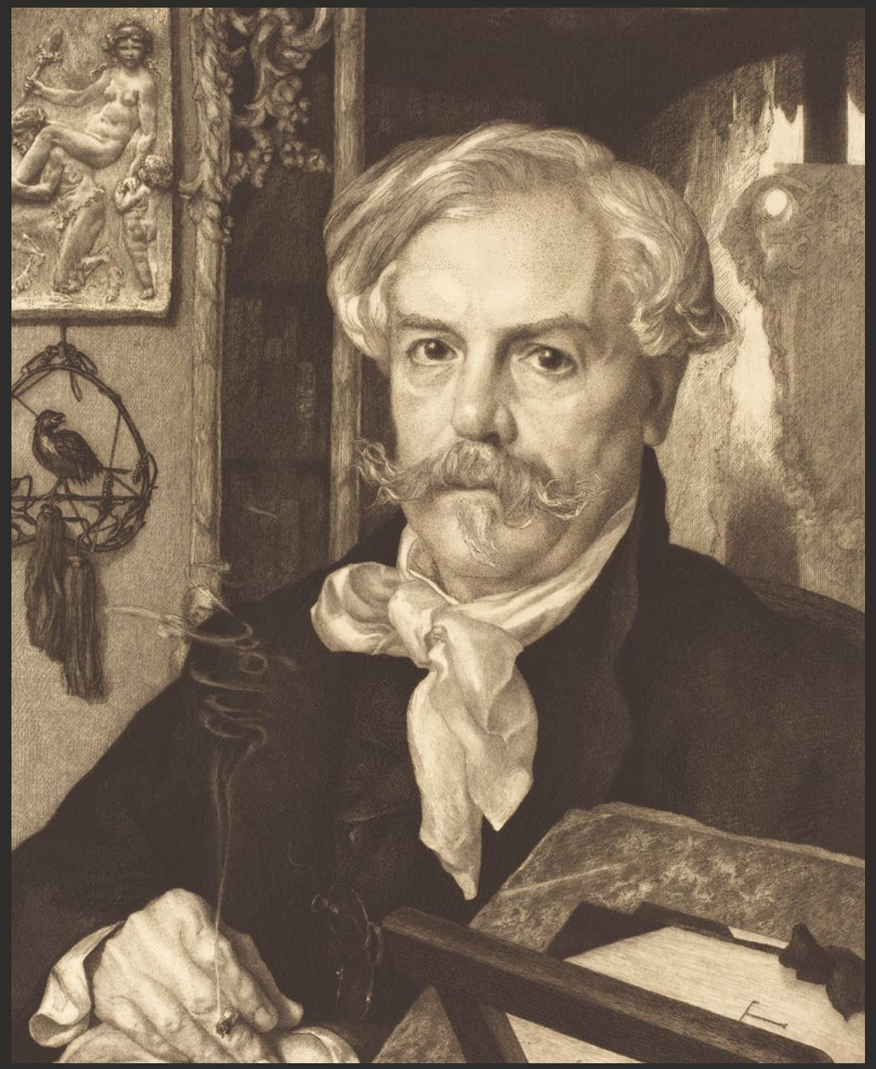
Freer/Sacker and install it in a gallery a short walk from the Peacock Room. This all seems unimaginable to me. At some point, I asked Lee what she thought about trying to bring *The Gold Scab*, so insightfully discussed by Sarah Burns elsewhere in this issue of *The Ten O'Clock,* to Washington. It was a long shot, as the painting had never been lent before and it might be a complicated loan. It happened to be that an old friend from San Francisco, Tim Burgard, was the curator of American Art at the DeYoung Museum, and the painting was under his care. After much institutional negotiating, it was decided that the painting would come to DC and hang in the exhibition alongside Whistler's preliminary sketches for the fighting peacocks and the magnificent *Arrangement in Black: Portrait of F.R. Leland.* To walk into the Freer/Sackler Gallery for the first time and see *The Gold Scab* installed in the same room as *Filthy Lucre* was astonishing and emotional, indeed. I could never have imagined that my work would be seen in the same context as Whistler.

I set out to create a sumptuous, unsettling ruin that would also expose the tensions and emotional upheaval lurking beneath the dazzling surfaces of the Peacock Room. Its story is operatic but heartbreaking: that of art, egos, and friendship lost. Whistler defaced – intentionally and simply without permission – the room's eighteenth- century leather wall panels and other valuable elements of the room's existing decor, thus altering earlier artistic accomplishments in order to make way for his own vision. At the same time Whistler made this bold assertion of his own virtuosic grandiosity, he struggled with the ostentatious wealth and privilege of his patrons, to whom he was so inextricably tied. Filthy Lucre is certainly a tribute to James Abbott McNeill Whistler's decorative masterpiece, *Harmony in Blue and Gold: The Peacock Room*, but more than that, I set out to create a work of art that would invite reflection on the subjective nature of beauty, excess and the grotesque. My paintings and installations often create aesthetic tensions by striking a discordant note between beauty and disfiguration. In making Filthy Lucre, I brought my own painterly and sculptural sensibilities to bear on Whistler's fabled room, rendering it in a state of decadent demolition, as if it had rotted in on itself, heavy with its own tumultuous history and splendor.

We are living in our own frenzied Gilded Age. The global art market supplies an unprecedented consumption of contemporary art as a consolidation of wealth, played out against the radical inequalities of our time. Artists are made inescapably aware that our creative efforts require the support of an international class of patrons, whose aesthetic and political priorities can be markedly different from our own. *Filthy Lucre* seeks to illuminate the contradiction between how art is made, financed, collected and valued. It has been one of the great joys of my life to find myself so intimately connected to Whistler, maybe even as a kind of contemporary, despite the distance of time.

Darren Waterston is a New York based artist known for his ethereal paintings and immersive installations, notably Filthy Lucre: Whistler's Peacock Room Reimagined *at Victoria and Albert Museum, 2020.*

Filthy Lucre, 2013–14, (detail).
Photo by Luke Walker. Courtesy of the
Artist and DC Moore Gallery, New York.



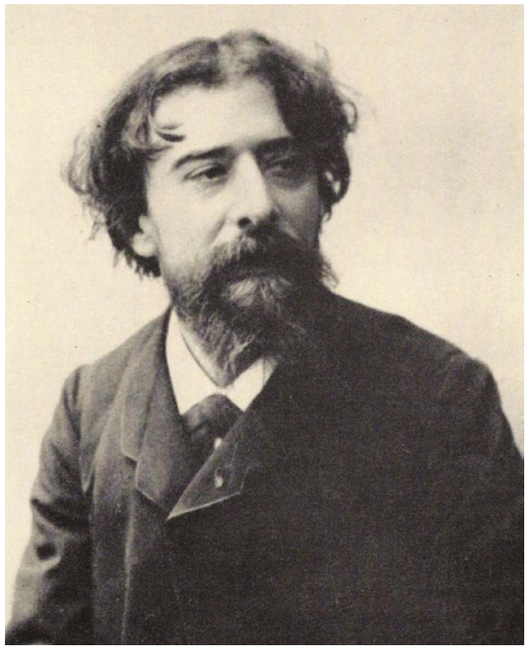
[*opposite*]
Felix Bracquemond (1833–1914),
Edmond de Goncourt, 1882.
Etching print and engraving, 50.9 x 33.9 cm.
Ailsa Mellon Bruce Fund, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

WHISTLER IN THE JOURNAL OF JULES AND EDMOND DE GONCOURT

GRISCHKA PETRI

In the 1850s, the brothers Jules and Edmond de Goncourt started a "Diary of the Literary World." They recorded what they had seen, with whom they had spoken, their literary and other ideas. The diaries reveal a treasure of information, some first-hand, some overheard gossip. They also reveal the staunch antisemitism and misogynism of their authors and their cultural network. From today's perspective, the diaries therefore make an often unsettling and unpleasant read. However, the brothers' powers of observation remain unrivalled. When Jules died of syphilis in 1870, aged forty, his forty-eight-year-old brother Edmond recorded unsettling details of his symptoms and final moments. After a mourning pause, he continued the diary with observations during the Franco-Prussian War and the Commune. He found a new brother in literary spirits in the writer Alphonse Daudet and, in a Naturalistic move, decided to publish edited parts of their work. The first volume of six published during his lifetime appeared in 1887. *Mémoires de la vie littéraire* made an immediate impact, provoked the odd éclat, and was the talk of literary Paris, which again fed the pages of Edmond's ongoing project in a kind of literary loop. William Heinemann, the publisher who had successfully brought out Whistler's *Gentle Art of Making Enemies* in 1890 (and its second edition of 1892) must have thought that the Goncourt's collection of literary and artistic gossip had a British market. After all, Edmond de Goncourt was about to make his own enemies with his Journal. Heinemann published a two-volume-collection of letters and excerpts from the Journal in 1895. They cover the years until 1887, and Whistler is not mentioned in them.

[*below*]
Alphonse Daudet.
Radio Times Holton Picture Library.



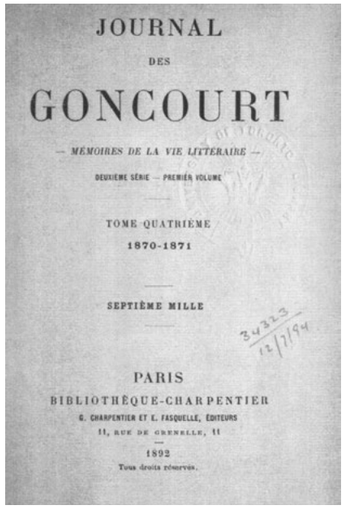
After the death of Edmond, who passed away shortly after Beatrice Whistler in 1896 while visiting his friend Daudet in Champrosay, the unredacted diaries became part of the Goncourts' literary estate. The heirs of Alphonse Daudet

thwarted efforts to publish them unabridged until 1956–58, when the 22-volume edition came out in Monaco, just outside French jurisdiction. Since 2005, a critical edition of the *Journal* is being published, with five volumes covering the years 1851–71. While the text of the *Journal* has never been fully translated into English, a selection was edited and translated by Robert Baldick in 1962 as *Pages from the Goncourt Journal*, and another one by George J. Becker and Edith Philips in 1971 under the title *Paris and the Arts, 1851–1896: From the Goncourt Journal*. (Extracts from this edition are here marked with an asterisk, passages taken from Baldick's edition are here marked with a dagger, and other quotes are my translation.)

The first mention of Whistler occurs in the entry for 23 April 1881. Whistler was not yet exhibiting anything in Paris. Edmond described "the American etcher" as a "strange creature… with his bare neck, his wooden laugh, his white lock in the middle of his black hair, his manner of a fantastic and macabre homosexual."* The next entry again takes note of him as an etcher. On 23 December 1882, Edmond saw Whistler's formerly close friend Alphonse Legros, who commented that the etchings of Francis Seymour Haden and Whistler were "not bad" and "nice amateur etchings." The Goncourt brothers were collectors of contemporary etchings. They were friends with French illustrator Paul Gavarni, about whom they wrote a book. Jules himself produced some etchings, mostly copies after eighteenth-century prints but also some originals. For the rest of the 1880s, the *Journal* remains silent on Whistler.

When Edmond befriended the Comte Robert de Montesquiou-Fezensac, Whistler returned to the pages of the diary. On 7 July 1891, Edmond visited the count in his Parisian residence on the Rue Franklin. The diary reports a "medley of heterogeneous objects"† including etchings by Whistler. The count tells Edmond that Whistler was preparing two portraits of him,

> one in evening dress with a fur-coat over his arm, and the other in a long grey coat with the collar turned up and, at the neck, a tie of a colour, a colour… which he did not specify but which the expression in his eyes indicated was the ideal hue.
>
> Montesquiou was very interesting on the subject of the painting technique used by Whistler, to whom he gave seventeen sittings during a month's stay in London. The preliminary sketch, with Whistler, is apparently "a mad rush at the canvas", one or two hours of feverish frenzy, from which the thing emerges all wrapped up in its covering. Then there are long, long sittings during which, most of the time, the painter brings his brush up to the canvas, does not touch it, throws the brush away, and takes another — with the result that in three hours he will add about fifty touches to the painting, each touch, in his words, removing one veil from the sketch's covering. Sittings in which it seemed to Montesquiou that Whistler, with his fixed attention, was emptying him of life, was "pumping away" something of his individuality; and afterwards he used to feel so exhausted that his whole body was unutterably tense, and he felt thankful to have discovered a certain *coca* wine which restored his energy after those dreadful sittings" †.


JOURNAL
DES
GONCOURT
— MÉMOIRES DE LA VIE LITTÉRAIRE —
DEUXIÈME SÉRIE — PREMIER VOLUME
TOME QUATRIÈME
1870-1871
SEPTIÈME MILLE
PARIS
BIBLIOTHÈQUE-CHARPENTIER
G. CHARPENTIER ET E. FASQUELLE, ÉDITEURS
11, RUE DE GRENELLE, 11
1892
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Title page of Journal des Goncourt.
Paris, 1892.

[*above*]
Robert de Montesquiou-Fezensac, c.1910.
Photo by C. Gerschel.
Private collection, Paris.

[*right*]
Whistler's Paris studio, rue
Notre-Dame-des-Champs.
Photo by F. Morellec, from Edgar Munhall, *Whistler and Montesquiou: The Bat and the Butterfly* (New York, 1995).

Whistler's exhausting portrait sessions were notorious. Montesquiou's portrait in the large grey coat, *Impressions de gris perle* was destroyed unfinished, whereas the *Arrangement in Black and Gold* is today a prominent painting of the Frick Collection in New York. This entry was not the only passage with information about Whistler's technique. On 15 May 1892, French artist James Tissot told Edmond of his conversations with Whistler in London: "He explained his procedure to him; it was to take a large canvas, like the one on which he painted Lady Meux, and flat brushes, with which he went down from top to bottom. 'Only,' Tissot said, and here I think it is Tissot who is speaking, 'he complained that he could only do women, and not men with their legs apart, because the colour would leak between their legs!'" The somewhat vulgar comment hints at Whistler's use of diluted colours. Many of his oil paintings display dripping effects.

On 11 August 1892, Belgian artist Alfred Stevens related a Whistler anecdote most probably dating back to the 1850s or early 1860s. French artist, poet, and critic Zacharie Astruc had ordered a Chinese fan at Madame Desoye's shop of *chinoiseries* but never picked it up. Later she sold it to Whistler, who brought it with him to a dinner party. Astruc became furious and, in the words of Edmond de Goncourt "hurls this romantic imprecation at the buyer of the fan: 'I will whip up the whole forest of Fontainebleau, which I will throw at your head! — And I'll give you a good punch in the eye!'"

On 5 April 1893, Edmond again saw Montesquiou. He reports of that meeting:

> [The count] drops in to see how I am and at the same time to pick up his copy of *Les Chauves-Souris* in order to have it illustrated by Whistler's portrait of him. And we talk about Whistler, whose genius he says is one of contradiction, of petty bickering. He asserts that he is sure that if he asked him to show his portrait, the artist would oppose it, and if he asked him the contrary, if he showed a desire to keep it hidden away from everybody, Whistler would insist on his showing it. Montesquiou tells me that he has gathered a great many notes and bits of information about Whistler and that someday he wants to write a study of him. He shows his admiration for this man who, he says, has ordered his life in such a way as to obtain in his lifetime victories which for others are usually posthumous, and he cites the painter's suit against the English journalist who had written of the "impertinence" of asking a thousand guineas for "throwing a pot of colour at the public's face." Whistler's reply was really fine when someone asked him how much time he had spent on painting a picture and he tossed out scornfully: "One or two sittings!" and in response to the outbursts of "Oh!" added: "Yes, I only took a couple of mornings to execute it, but the canvas was painted with a lifetime's experience!"

On 24 April 1894, Edmond went to the opening of the Salon du Champ-de-Mars, where Montesquiou showed him his portrait by Whistler. Edmond was underwhelmed by the "portrait in which I find a marvellous dexterity in the clothes, but a very inferior craftsmanship in the hurriedly drawn figure with sad, dirty, messy complexions." The diarist remained critical, telling the writer and dandy Francis Poictevin on 27 November 1894 that Whistler's "talent is above all to give a pair of trousers, an overcoat thrown over an arm a dramatic effect, but that he has never known how to paint the complexion of a figure, of a hand." Whistler's lithographic success during the centennial celebrations of the medium provoked comment on their inferiority compared with Gavarni (26 July 1895).

A few months before Edmond's death, French journalist and critic Théodore Duret visited – his fellow writer on 31 May 1896. Montesquiou-was also present:

> [B]oth talk about the loss of his wife that Whistler has just gone through and the pain he must be feeling, pain all the greater because he will take great care to hide it, finding that pain is not a very decorative thing, and that he is above all a man of attitude. And Duret gives this singular detail about this strange individual, that at the hour of dusk, at nightfall, he has visions of ghosts, that he is afraid to be alone and that he has asked him not to leave several times.
>
> And Duret speaks like of a misfortune of Whistler's marriage to the widow of an architect, who had no fortune and who pushed him into a life of spending beyond his means, and that he felt genuine remorse for Whistler because of his relationship with this Irishwoman he had known and who, having led a life of misery with him, would have stopped him in his taste for sumptuousness.

Count Robert de Montesquiou-Fezensac, 1894. Transfer lithograph, 23.3 x 11.2 cm. Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

Duret's continuing appreciation of Joanna Hiffernan is noteworthy. In the catalogue for the current exhibition at the Royal Academy of Arts, which highlights Jo's contribution to Whistler's art, Margaret F. MacDonald has unearthed many forgotten facts about Joanna. She died young in 1886. Elizabeth and Joseph Pennell report in the *Whistler Journal* that several people had seen Jo at Whistler's deathbed or funeral, but their witnesses must have mistaken her sister Agnes for the "White Girl".

In the *Journal* of Edmond de Goncourt, Whistler is presented as part of overlapping networks. While writer and artist never seem to have met, they shared contacts and friends in the literary and artistic worlds, such as Montesquiou and Duret. Obviously, Edmond disliked Whistler's art. At first sight, this is surprising, as he and brother Jules were able to appreciate Japanese art and a certain kind of literary aestheticism, which puts them in a related position within the field. Notwithstanding potential aesthetic alliances, Edmond's personal artistic taste prevailed over politics. Initially sympathetic towards Edgar Degas's art, he despised it after getting to know the irascible artist. Much in line with conservative art critics, he condemned the Impressionists for their perceived lack of technique. Ultimately, he saw Whistler as another one of those modernist painters who had abandoned traditional craftsmanship.

Sources/Further Reading:

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Dr Grischka Petri is an art historian and legal scholar. He has taught art history at the universities of Basel, Bonn, Cologne, and Regensburg, and as an Honorary Research Fellow at the University of Glasgow, contributed to the catalogues raisonnés of Whistler's etchings and paintings. He is the author of Arrangement in Business: The Art Markets and the Career of James McNeill Whistler *(2011).*

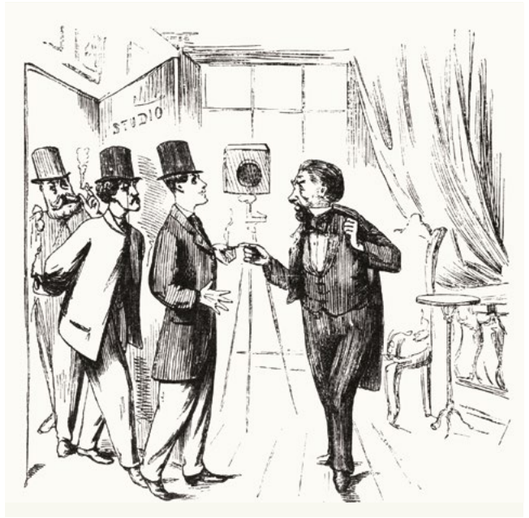
[*opposite*]
George du Maurier, c.1860s
Self-portrait in watercolour.
Private collection.

WHISTLER AND DU MAURIER

Penned Portraits and the Gentle Art of Advertising Oneself

CATHERINE CARTER GOEBEL

When we discuss the portraits of James McNeill Whistler, we might consider defining them as those—both verbal and visual—done in pen. Whistler clearly inspired many in various media. Like his butterfly emblem, he attracted attention with sweeping entrances and proclamations often too elusive to pin down. "Whistler was a diamond with many facets, and being also a *poseur*, he presented himself at different angles to different people," declared a critic in 1912. One may explore these facets, or faces, as they evolved over the years through the pen of illustrator and novelist George du Maurier.



George du Maurier (1834–1896),
Punch, 6 October 1860.

Du Maurier's drawings and words are particularly pertinent to the study of penned portraits of Whistler. In terms of *Whistleriana*, they date, as chronologically published in the popular journal, *Punch, or the London Charivari,* from Whistler's initial 1860 move from Paris to London through his well-established reputation by the 1890s. However, other "portraits" stem from du Maurier's recollections of their Parisian school days together, framed within his popular novel, *Trilby.* Du Maurier thus portrayed Whistler's personal and professional growth in both drawings and words for broad popular consumption.

In his own right, du Maurier, like Whistler, became a London celebrity. A common guest at many of the same society dinner parties as Whistler, he honed his illustrative skill, despite the loss of sight in one eye, under the brilliant tutelage of *Punch* illustrator, Charles Keene, whom Whistler described as "the greatest English artist since [William] Hogarth." With his failing eyesight, however, du Maurier turned to lecturing and writing, which seemed promising alternatives to the eyestrain from drawing detailed illustrations. Du Maurier later recalled the "curious" circumstances that led to his becoming a novelist:

> Nobody more than myself was surprised at the great success of my novels. I never expected anything of the sort. I did not know that I could write… I was walking one day with Henry James, and James said he had great difficulty in finding plots for his stories. "Plots!" I exclaimed. "I am full

of plots;" and I went on to tell him the plot for *Trilby*. "But you ought to write that story," said James.

And he did. Ultimately, *Trilby* became an indisputable success, increasing the sale of *Harper's Magazine*, where it was first published serially, by 100,000, and surpassing all preceding records for bestsellers. It clearly demonstrated that du Maurier's years of careful observation of nature and personalities for his drawings had given him the keen understanding of people that yielded the intriguing "plots" and images of *Trilby.*

One of the most recognizable aspects of Whistler's pose was his attire. As his artist friend Thomas Armstrong recalled from their first meeting, "[He was] at all times remarkable… clothed in white duck (quite clean too!), and on his head he wore a straw hat of the American shape not yet well known in Europe, very low in the crown and stiff in the brim, bound with a black ribbon with long ends hanging behind." Whistler perfected this ensemble when he moved from Paris to London in 1860, even rooming for a time with du Maurier. In only his second contribution to *Punch,* in October 1860, du Maurier portrayed Whistler in this Bohemian attire, even adding a monocle. Sitting him in a letter "Q", in imitation of initial pages from medieval illuminated manuscripts, it was the first comedic depiction of Whistler in the press. Interestingly, though, just a week earlier, also in *Punch,* du Maurier had drawn Whistler in a very different costume, that of a middle-class gentleman. This suggests why, in seeing these two sides of his friend, du Maurier so admired Whistler's social finesse at the time, declaring him to be "the most irresistible friend in the world… the grandest genius I ever met, a giant."

Yet in later years, while recollecting these early days, du Maurier portrayed a less sympathetic, thinly veiled portrait of Whistler through the character of Joe Sibley in *Trilby.* Whistler appeared as the *Idle Apprentice* in *Harper's* March 1894 issue of the serialized novel, published over eight monthly installments. Du Maurier's defining drawing of Sibley, intended to introduce the character, conflated the two images of Whistler he had known in 1860. Sibley wears a well-tailored suit but also sports the old Bohemian hat atop the same mass of curly hair.

To reinforce the visual, he was described by du Maurier as:

> [T]he king of bohemia, *le roi des truands*, to whom everything was forgiven…Always in debt… vain, witty, and a most exquisite and original artist; and also eccentric in his attire (though clean) so that people would stare at him as he walked along—which he adored… he was genial, caressing, sympathetic, charming; the most irresistible friend in the world as long as his friendship lasted… but that was not for-ever!… The moment his friendship ended his enmity began at once.

Du Maurier elaborated:

> Sometimes this enmity would take the simple and straightforward form of trying to punch his ex- friend's head; and when the ex-friend was too big, he would get some new friend to help him. And much bad blood would be caused in this way—though very little was spilt. And all this bad blood was not made better by the funny things he went on saying

[above]
George du Maurier, *Punch*,
27 October 1860.

[right]
George du Maurier, *The Two Apprentices,*
from "Trilby," *Harper's Monthly, 88 (March 1894).*

through life about the unlucky one who had managed to offend him—things that stuck forever! His bark was worse than his bite—he was better with his tongue than with his fists—a dangerous joker! But when he met another joker face to face—with a rougher wit, a coarser thrust, a louder laugh, a tougher hide—he would just collapse, like a pricked bladder! He is now perched on such a topping pinnacle (of fame and notoriety combined) that people can stare at him from two hemispheres at once.

Du Maurier concluded:

> He was a monotheist, and had but one god… and his god is still the same—no stodgy old master this divinity, but a modern of the moderns! For forty years the cosmopolite Joe has been singing his own god's praise in every tongue he knows and every country—and also his contempt for all rivals to this godhead—whether quite sincerely or not, who can say? Men's motives are so mixed! But so eloquently, so wittily, so prettily, that he almost persuades you to be a fellow worshipper—*almost*, only!—for if he did *quite*, you (being a capitalist) would buy nothing but "Sibleys" (which you don't). For Sibley was the god of Joe's worship, and none other! And he would hear of no other genius in the world! Let us hope

George du Maurier, *All As It Used To Be,* from *Trilby* (New York, 1894).

that he sometimes laughed at himself in his sleeve—or winked at himself in his looking-glass, with his tongue in his cheek.

What a different portrait three decades reflected! Still "the most irresistible friend in the world," but the conclusion was clearly less positive. Yet enough of Whistler remained to make this later characterization recognizable. Consequently, when Whistler, well-known for his litigious nature because of the Ruskin libel trial of 1878, threatened legal action, du Maurier and his publisher, Harper's, took him seriously in preparing a forthcoming book version of the story. Writing to the editor, Whistler stated: "Now that my back is turned, the old *marmite* of our *pot-au-feu* he fills with the picric acid of 30 years› spite, and, in an American magazine, fires off his bomb of mendacious recollection and poisoned rancour. The lie with which it is loaded *à mon intention* he proposes for my possible 'future biographer.'" Consequently, while du Maurier's narrative remained unchanged, Joe disappeared, replaced by a safer character, Antony. Du Maurier retained Whistler's milder, visual images in a pair of group sketches, included in both magazine and book, but removed the portrait of the smug, strutting Idle Apprentice.

Whistler later described this triumph as the result of his "West Point kind of fighting" and urged others to reinforce his success with the London papers. In response, *Lounger* quipped in *The Critic*: "Mr. Whistler has mastered two arts besides painting and sketching. One he has immortalized in that unique brochure, 'The Gentle Art of Making Enemies'; the other is the Gentle Art of Advertising Oneself." Ironically, perhaps, Whistler thereby confirmed to all that this was indeed his own portrait depicted in Joe Sibley.

Beyond these graphic bookends of 1860 and 1894, however, one can trace qualities of the later *Trilby* characterization of Whistler through du Maurier's intervening illustrations in the pages of *Punch*. For example, Whistler's pose and most famous work, *Arrangement in Grey and Black No. 1: Portrait of the Painter's Mother*, are lampooned in du Maurier's *A Vocation,* published in *Punch* in November 1876, four years after Whistler's mother's portrait was exhibited at the Royal Academy. The caption reads:

Young genius (gazing with complacency at his Mother's Portrait, to which he has just added the last finishing touch). "What we really want, Mother, to regenerate Art and restore it to its former high position, is that a man should arise amongst us who could combine the *Loftiest Aims* with absolute *Unlimited Power*!—and I must say, Mother, I can't see why *I* should not be that man!" Fond and Foolish Mama. "I'm *sure* you might, Algernon, if you *tried*!"

Thus we see not only the focus on a mother's encouragement and portrait, similarly posed as Whistler's mother was in her portrait, but also Whistler's aim to be considered the modern genius of his time, modern of the moderns, who would raise art to its rightful and elevated position. Du Maurier clearly lampoons here not only the artist's profound modernist ego and belief in innate Romantic genius but also his ability to pin his mother's likeness to the canvas.

We can thus trace the importance of journals in general, and writers and illustrators in particular, in framing public portrayals of Whistler. Du Maurier was well regarded for his images reflecting both Whistlerian and Ruskinian models for artists. The fact that Whistler employed a press clipping agency to keep him abreast of any mention of his name or portrait in periodicals demonstrates his own preoccupation with such representations. Yet, when a companion suggested to him that it was "a good thing we can't see ourselves as others see us," Whistler responded, seemingly casually and likely with a twinkle in his eye, "I know in my case I should grow intolerably conceited." Clearly du Maurier's conclusion regarding Joe Sibley, à la Whistler, was correct: "Let us hope that he sometimes laughed at himself in his sleeve—or winked at himself in his looking-glass, with his tongue in his cheek."

So, as we follow the Whistlerian timeline, via published verbal and visual penned portraits by contemporaries such as du Maurier, we gain greater insight into the development of both the artist and his image. At the same time, we may also note Whistler's pervasive and pugnacious obsession with, and involvement in, his own celebrity *branding*, forged far ahead of his time via the new modern age of mass communication.

Sources/Further Reading:

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George du Maurier, *A Vocation, Punch,* 11 September 1876.

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"The imitator is a poor kind of creature. … It is for the artist to do something beyond this: in portrait painting to put on canvas something more than the face the model wears for that one day; to paint the man, in short, as well as his features; in arrangement of colours to treat a flower as his key, not as his model."

James McNeill Whistler