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William Holman Hunt's Portrait of Henry Wentworth Monk

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in
Art History at Virginia Commonwealth University.

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Introduction

This thesis will examine the connection between Jan van Eyck's (c. 1390-1441) *Portrait of a Man* ("Léal Souvenir") (1432) herein referenced as *Léal Souvenir*, and William Holman Hunt's portrait of *Henry Wentworth Monk* (1858). I will address the relationship between Monk and Hunt during a period of personal transformation for both men, and the circumstances under which the portrait was painted between the years 1854 and 1858. By extension, an examination of the biography of Monk and Hunt's memoir reveals conflicting accounts throughout the scholarly literature and calls into question the actual dating of Monk's portrait. Then, I will consider how the reception and rediscovery by the Victorian public of Jan van Eyck's *Arnolfini Portrait* (1434) and *Léal Souvenir*, acquired by the National Gallery prior to Monk's arrival in London, provided the inspiration for Hunt's portrait of Monk. In the process, this thesis will contribute new scholarship on the art of Holman Hunt.

Holman Hunt (1827-1910) was one of the founding members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in 1848, a group that included Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882) and John Everett Millais (1829-1896). They were young artists united in their goal to revitalize British art by returning to the artistic methodology and moral ideology of art in the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance. The Brotherhood advocated a return to truth to nature while depicting religious subjects in minute detail and with brilliant luminosity. By the 1850s, as members of the Brotherhood began to expand their horizons, Holman Hunt made his first journey to Palestine to experience firsthand the Holy Land that was central to his work. In the summer of 1854, while visiting London evangelist John Meshullam (1799-1878) at his farm located outside of Jerusalem, Holman Hunt met Henry Wentworth Monk (1827-1886). Monk is often described as

a journalist, social reformer and Christian Zionist. Born on a farm in March Township, Ontario, he was educated in England with an austere Protestant curriculum that he rejected in order to study for the Anglican Ministry, which he in due course also abandoned.¹ In 1853, Monk set forth for Jaffa from his home in March Township to continue his self-study of the Scriptures in the Holy Land, eventually finding work as a laborer on John Meshullam's farm.² Five years later, Monk traveled to London hoping to gain support for the publication of his manuscript based on the book of *Revelation* from the *New Testament*, lodging with Holman Hunt until 1862.³ Hunt painted Monk's portrait after his arrival and one year following the National Gallery's acquisition of van Eyck's *Léal Souvenir*—an event widely celebrated in London artistic circles.

The portrait of Monk was exhibited several times in the last half of the nineteenth century, but very little is published or known about the painting. The portrait remained in Hunt's personal collection until it was sold in 1911 from the artist's estate to the National Gallery of Canada. Hunt portrays Monk as a messianic Christ-like figure, an image type Hunt painted throughout his career. The impetus behind the portrait appears to be undocumented; however, there is a corpus of published and unpublished correspondence and manuscripts of the artist and sitter that this thesis will explore. Central to my argument is Hunt's use of forms and subjects drawn from artists he admired, in particular the works of Jan van Eyck. Hunt's admiration of the work of van Eyck is well documented. The *Arnolfini Portrait* (1434) and *Ghent Altarpiece* (1432) are frequently cited as foundational sources for numerous paintings, most notably

¹ Richard Stanton Lambert, *For the Time is at Hand, An Account of the Prophecies of Henry Wentworth Monk of Ottawa, Friend of Jews and Pioneer of World Peace* (London A. Melrose, 1947), 16-23, 35.

² Lambert, *For the Time is at Hand*, 39-40.

³ Lambert, *For the Time is at Hand*, 76.

Awakening Conscience (1853) and *The Lady of Shalott* (1905-1886). Like many of Hunt's paintings, Monk's portrait recalls van Eyck's brilliant color, secular interiors and treatment of objects with microscopic detail. The most compelling argument for Hunt's proclivity for borrowed stylistic elements and pose is that the portrait of *Henry Wentworth Monk* appears as *Léal Souvenir* in reverse.

This thesis will examine the specific timeline and events drawn from the period just prior to the journeys of Hunt and Monk to Palestine and their meeting in London several years later. Furthermore, I will demonstrate how the National Gallery's 1857 acquisition of *Léal Souvenir* played a key role in the conception of Monk's portrait. Hunt's appropriation of stylistic elements and themes from the Netherlandish Master is a subject that has been addressed by scholars in Hunt's major works throughout his artistic career. The little known portrait of Monk has, heretofore, been excluded from the current scholarship on this topic. A careful reading of Hunt's signs and symbols argues for its inclusion.

Chapter one examines Hunt's early training as a portrait artist, Monk's early Protestant education, and the life events leading up to their respective journeys to the Holy Land, culminating in their chance meeting. Chapter two focuses on the rediscovery of Jan van Eyck by the British public and the Pre-Raphaelite circle, and its effect on Hunt's oeuvre. Chapter three examines the symbolism, iconography, realism and literary references in Hunt's portrait of Monk in comparison with *Léal Souvenir*. In conclusion, this thesis will demonstrate how these two portraits are a reflection of one another not just in the details of color, dress, placement of the figure and associated objects, but also in how they portray intimate narratives about the sitters of which little is known in *Léal Souvenir*, or have been forgotten in the portrait of *Henry Wentworth Monk*.

Chapter I

Holman Hunt and Henry Monk: A Chance Meeting

This chapter examines the parallel life paths followed by Holman Hunt and Henry Monk, and seeks to separate fact from fiction. Lambert's biography of Monk is problematic in that it is drawn from Hunt's memoir as a means to establish their similar lived experiences as the foundation of friendship despite the lack of textual evidence. Both men were born of humble lineage, but knew from an early age that they each had a higher calling than working as a clerk in a London warehouse or laboring on the family farm in the wilderness of Upper Canada.⁴ Hunt recalls in his memoir that his earliest ambition to paint and draw was at the age of four, and that his artistic aspirations were flourishing by 1839 at the age of twelve years, much to his father's disapproval.⁵ In order to stem his son's ambition to become a professional artist, the elder Hunt removed him from school to work in the clerk's office of a London estate agent and appraiser. Despite disapproval of his son's inclination toward the fine arts, he encouraged him to consider

⁴ Cole Harris, *The Reluctant Land Society, Space, and Environment in Canada before Confederation* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008), 306-322. Geographically, Upper Canada is the predecessor of modern Ontario. Largely a wilderness society primarily settled by British loyalists and farmers moving north from the United States, it was a completely forested peninsula bound by the Ottawa River to the north and the St. Lawrence River to the south and west.

⁵ William Holman Hunt, *Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood*, Library of English Literature, (New York; London: Macmillan, 1905), I, 5. Hunt's recollection of his boyhood was written more than seven decades after the fact; Carol Jacobi, *William Holman Hunt: Painter, Painting, Paint* (Manchester University Press, 2006), 18, says of Hunt's two volume memoir, while it is "the most substantial and dominant voice in the chorus of commentaries" ... "It presents an ambitious, meticulous, rambling account of over seventy years of the artist's life and times—part anecdotal memoir, part Carlylean history—varying in tone from wry spectator to swashbuckler to sage."

decorative house painting.⁶ However, he permitted Hunt to use his salary to pay for evening classes at the Mechanic's Institute followed by weekly lessons with Henry Rogers (active 1835-1840), a London portrait painter.⁷ Hunt describes his early artistic training as one of self-study, drawing at home from casts and reproductive prints available for student artists. He was introduced to a few artists, who were acquaintances of his father, and together they visited their studios, but it was not until January of 1841 that Hunt was to visit the National Gallery for the first time:⁸

...I gratified my desire to visit the National Gallery, to see with my eyes the great masters of whose glory I had read with longing fancy...I went on a very cold day; the warmth of the galleries acted as a welcome.”⁹

Hunt explored the riches of the National Gallery, which was further enhanced by his reading of Sir Joshua Reynolds' *Discourses* and Percy's *Anecdotes of Artists*, both of which were available to him from his father's library.¹⁰ For the next two years Hunt maintained long hours working in the office of an estate agent along with visits to the National Gallery where he gained the confidence to launch his professional career as a portrait artist, thereby committing himself to

⁶ Hunt, *Pre-Raphaelitism*, I, 12.

⁷ Hunt, *Pre-Raphaelitism*, I, 7. Very little is known of Henry Rogers. Hunt describes Rogers as “a pupil of Sharpe, who was himself a pupil of Beechy, who, in turn, had been a pupil of Reynolds.”

⁸ Hunt, *Pre-Raphaelitism*, I, 5-8.

⁹ Hunt, *Pre-Raphaelitism*, I, 18-19.

¹⁰ Hunt, *Pre-Raphaelitism*, I, 24.

a course of full-time self-study.¹¹ Hunt convinced his father he was determined to become an artist and his small earnings from portraits and commissioned copies would sustain him without assistance from his family; thus began Hunt's professional career. He traded in his office hours for study at the National Gallery and the British Institution, followed shortly by permission to draw at the British Museum.¹²

The years 1843 and 1844 were a critical turning point in Hunt's artistic development. He made two attempts at entry into the Royal Academy Schools, finally succeeding upon his third application and was admitted as a Probationer.¹³ During this period Hunt confirms his engagement with the works of Jan van Eyck after studying prints in the Print Room of the British Museum:

In the Print Room we surveyed the pious uprising of art in Italy, her robust glory, her intermittent decline, and final corruption and we noted the national character in the intensity and humanity of German design. The works of the Van Eycks showed the first achievement of perfect realization of natural form and colour.¹⁴

Hunt's memoir recalls a visit to the British Museum Print Room more than sixty years after the fact.¹⁵ Hunt does not mention which works he viewed in the Print Room. He could not

¹¹ Hunt, *Pre-Raphaelitism*, I, 29-30.

¹² Hunt, *Pre-Raphaelitism*, I, 30-31. Even though Hunt's father was resistant to his son's chosen path, he wrote a letter of introduction to E. Hawkins of the British Museum Sculpture department requesting permission for Hunt to draw in the galleries.

¹³ Hunt, *Pre-Raphaelitism*, I, 33-35.

¹⁴ Hunt, *Pre-Raphaelitism*, I, 40.

¹⁵ Hunt, *Pre-Raphaelitism*, I, 5-38. While Hunt maintained diaries throughout his life, his memoirs are considered to tell a revisionist history of his artistic journey as a young man and his

have seen any prints by or after van Eyck, whose small oeuvre did not include prints. In 1844, it was possible that he viewed an engraving after a painting now lost, *Jacoba, Wilhelm VI. Filla, comes XXIX* (1650).¹⁶ The British Museum acquired more engravings after works by van Eyck, but not until years after the visit described in his memoir. Moreover, Hunt's commentary on the engraved portrait of Jacoba Wilhelm cannot accurately be described as a "perfect realization of natural form," nor is it in "colour." One can only speculate what other van Eyck works Hunt could have seen or at least been aware of by 1844. The attributes of natural form and color can be ascribed to the *Arnolfini Portrait* acquired by the National Gallery in 1841, which was available to the public by 1842. By 1844 Hunt was a weekly visitor to the National Gallery, a venue he considered his classroom, and surely he would have visited the gallery displaying the Netherlandish Master. Hunt's recollection of events that took place many decades past are often in conflict with published letters that offer definitive evidence, or lack thereof, in terms of time and place. Hunt's personal history is told at the end of his life where the effect of van Eyck on his oeuvre is indisputable leaving a body of work that reflects van Eyck's technique, color, borrowed compositions and symbols.

At the Royal Academy Schools, Hunt found camaraderie among the fledgling artists who were determined to forge a new English art by casting off the traditional teaching methods of the Royal Academy. Among his classmates, Hunt established friendships with men who by 1848

role in the formation of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.

¹⁶ "British Museum Collection Database 1839, 0413.364," British Museum, accessed August 1, 2016, www.britishmuseum.org/collection. The portrait of Jacoba of Bavaria, Countess of Holland and Hainault was engraved by Cornelius Visscher and published by Petrus Scrivenius in "Principes Hollandiae, Zeelandiae et Frisiae" (Haarlem, 1650). The portrait is based on a lost work by Jan van Eyck.

would make up the core of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood: James Collinson (1825-1881), John Everett Millais 1829-1896), Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882), William Michael Rossetti (1829-1919), Frederic George Stephens (1828-1907), and Thomas Woolner (1825-1892).¹⁷ They considered their ideas revolutionary and challenging to what then constituted a modern style of painting. They rallied under the standard of “truth to nature,” modeled from life, portraying real people who were not a stylized version of the modern world interpreted from continental ideas of the past. Hunt’s memoir recounts an afternoon studio conclave that included Dante Gabriel Rossetti among an unnamed group of persons who were members of the Brotherhood. Hunt credits Rossetti with writing out the manifesto of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood with a list of fifty-seven Immortals beginning with Jesus Christ and ending with Tennyson:

Some of us drew up a declaration that there was no immortality for humanity except that which was gained by man’s own genius or heroism. We were still under the influence of Voltaire, Gibbon, Byron, and Shelly, and we could leave not corners or spaces in our minds unsearched and unswept. Our determination to respect no authority that stood in the way of fresh research in art seemed to compel us to try what the result would be in matters metaphysical, denying all that could not be tangibly proved.¹⁸

The 1840’s were a period of political unrest as the industrial working class demanded political reforms that included changes to Parliamentary structure, voting rights for all men of

¹⁷ Judith Bronkhurst, *William Holman Hunt: A Catalogue Raisonné* (Published for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), I, 42. The author uses the date of early autumn of 1848 as the founding date of the Brotherhood (based on W. M. Rossetti, 1895, I. 126). The adoption of the inscription PRB would not surface until 1849 in Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s painting *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin* (1848–1849).

¹⁸ Hunt, *Pre-Raphaelitism*, I, 158-159.

every class and annual electoral process.¹⁹ Hunt and his circle were creating their own revolution reimagined for the art world.²⁰

The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was well established by the time Hunt and Rossetti embarked on their first tour of the continent in September of 1849 to experience the works of artists they proclaimed as the “Immortals.” Hunt’s recollection of their travels begins in Paris where they visited Notre Dame, the Church of St. Germaine des Prés, the Musée du Louvre, the Luxembourg and Hôtel de Cluny. The works of general interest in Paris were by the Italian Masters and a short list of Flemish artists. It was not until the pair arrived in Belgium in the middle of October that they were to experience the Northern School in depth.²¹ There are only a few letters from that period describing the paintings they had seen. In a letter to an unknown recipient, Hunt and Rossetti write on October 25:

This is the most stunning place, immeasurably the best we have come to...By far the best of all are the miraculous works of Memling and van Eyck. The former is here in a strength that quite stunned us.²²

¹⁹ Richard D. Altick, *Victorian People and Ideas: A Companion for the Modern Reader of Victorian Literature* (New York: Norton, 1973), 92-96.

²⁰ Jason Rosenfeld, *Pre-Raphaelites* (London: Tate, 2012), 9-17.

²¹ Béatrice Laurent, “An Inventory of the Pre-Raphaelite Mental Museum, October 1849,” in *Worldwide Pre-Raphaelitism*, ed. Thomas J. Tobin (SUNY Series, Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2005), 19-43. The author carefully cross-references the inventories of collections that were available to the public during Hunt and Rossetti’s journey to the continent.

²² Laurent, “An Inventory of the Pre-Raphaelite Mental Museum,” 27. I understand this to mean the two men wrote the letter jointly.

Hunt's memoir recalls the importance of their journey with descriptions of paintings. He admired, in particular, the work of Jan and Hubert van Eyck:

We studied attentively the works of John and Hubert Van Eyck; the exquisite delicacy of the workmanship and the unpretending character of the invention made us feel we could not overestimate the perfection of the painting, at least that of John van Eyck.²³

Hunt revisited the works of van Eyck throughout his lifetime, striving to achieve not only the technical accomplishments of the Flemish Master, but also the realism and essential truth in the depiction of a person or subject. Béatrice Laurent wrote that Diana Holman-Hunt, granddaughter of the artist, believed that Rossetti and Hunt took written and graphical notes of what they saw in order to publish a report on their return to England, one that would have constituted a valuable contribution to the Pre-Raphaelite journal, *The Germ*.²⁴ However, no such diaries have surfaced to date. Hunt developed his life-long habit of keeping journals and archiving his correspondence during his first journey to the Holy Land in 1854.

British artists were drawn to the East a generation before the notion captured Hunt's imagination. Hunt's friend and benefactor, Thomas Combe (1796-1872), suggested in October of 1851 that Hunt should go to Palestine in search of subjects in the tradition of David Roberts (1796-1864) and David Wilkie (1785-1841) in the preceding decades.²⁵ Taking Combe's suggestion to heart, in November of the same year Hunt applied for a draughtsman position for

²³ Hunt, *Pre-Raphaelitism*, I, 192-193.

²⁴ Laurent, "An Inventory of the Pre-Raphaelite Mental Museum," 25.

²⁵ Bronkhurst, *William Holman Hunt*, I, 41. Combe suggested that Hunt should travel to Palestine with John Everett Millais. While Millais did not join Hunt in his travels, it was Thomas Seddon (1821-1856) who was to travel throughout the Holy Land with Hunt; Hunt, *Pre-Raphaelitism*, I, 371.

an archeological expedition to Assyria led by Sir Austen Henry Layard (1818-1894). However, his application was received after the close of the application due date.²⁶ Layard returned to London in 1853 and was widely celebrated for his travels and discoveries of Nineveh and Babylon as one of the greatest sensations of the modern world.²⁷ The *Critic* and *Sharpe's London Magazine* serialized sections from Layard's book in great detail.²⁸ Hunt had an opportunity to meet Layard and he relayed the story of his unsuccessful application to join the Assyrian expedition, and explained that in spite of this disappointment, his passion for the East remained steadfast.²⁹ This may have been the impetus for Hunt's revived interest in traveling to the Holy Land. Hunt told his boyhood ambitions to August Egg (1816-1863) who was not entirely certain that Hunt should consider going abroad for an extended period at a time when his work was beginning to receive critical attention:³⁰

My project of going to Syria had originated when I was a boy at school when the lessons from the New Testament were read, I added, that although the revelations of science, and more transiently the conclusions drawn from these by theorists and commentators, had

²⁶ Bronkhurst, *William Holman Hunt*, I, 4; Hunt, *Pre-Raphaelitism*, I, 371.

²⁷ "The New Discoveries at Nineveh," *Sharpe's London Magazine of Entertainment and Instruction for General Reading*, 2 (01, 1853): 309-314, accessed September 13, 2016, <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.vcu.edu/docview/4792051/14780>.

²⁸ "Discoveries in the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon: with Travels in Armenia, Kurdistan, and the Desert: Being the Result of a Second Expedition Undertaken for the Trustees of the British Museum," *Critic* 12, no. 288 (Apr 01, 1853): 174-175, accessed August 1, 2016, <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.vcu.edu/docview/4861770>.

²⁹ Hunt, *Pre-Raphaelitism*, I, 346. According to Hunt, Layard provided him with letters of introduction to officials that he would encounter in his journey as well routes of safe travel.

³⁰ Hunt, *Pre-Raphaelitism*, I, 346.

often compelled me to reconsider my earlier understanding of the story, yet the doing of that Divine Master in Syria never ceased to claim my homage. The pursuit of painting only gave my childish Palestine project distincter purpose.³¹

The date of Hunt and Egg's conversation is unknown, though according to Hunt's memoir it took place mostly likely in 1853 as he was completing his painting *The Light of the World*.

The subject of *The Light of World* (1853) is drawn from the third chapter of *Revelation*, verse twenty, "Behold, I stand at the door, and know if any man may hear my voice, and open the door, I will come to him and will sup with him and he with me." The picture appealed to a Victorian culture that struggled with increasing secularization pervasive in the political and social mainstream. Religious identity and morality were foundational to the majority of Victorians in an age of scientific progress and discovery that undermined faith in the literal truth of the Bible.³² For Hunt, the painting had deeper personal meaning. In a letter to William Bell Scott (1811-1890) he writes:

I painted the picture with what I thought, unworthy, though I was, to be divine command, and not simply as a good subject. When I found I was reading the Bible, critically determined if I could to find out its flaws for myself, or its inspiration... I came upon the text, ' behold'... the figure of Christ standing at the door haunted me, gradually coming in more clearly defined meaning, with logical enrichments, waiting in the night-every night - near the dawn, with a light sheltered from chance of extinction, in a lantern

³¹ Hunt, *Pre-Raphaelitism*, I, 348-349.

³² Jeremy Maas, *Holman Hunt and The Light of the World* (London: Scholar Press 1984), 16-17.

necessarily therefore, with a crown on His head bearing that also of thorns; with body robed like a priest, not of Christian time only, and in a world with signs of neglect and blindness. You will say it was an emotional conversion...³³

The public embraced the painting not only for its spiritual content and object of meditation, but also its astonishing realism.³⁴ His picture completed, and with a private acknowledgment of conversion, Hunt embarked on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land to experience the Biblical landscape and its inhabitants to inform the religious subjects of his paintings. Several months earlier, from across the Atlantic, Henry Monk set sail for Jaffa. His purpose was to go to the source as prophesized in the *Revelation* in anticipation of the Second Coming of Christ.

In many ways Henry Wentworth Monk's personal history follows a path not unlike that of Holman Hunt. The following biographical details are drawn from Katherine Lochnan's essay, "The Canadian Diaspora: Last Rights," one of the few reliable sources on Monk's life and work.³⁵ Monk was born on his family's farm along the Ottawa River in 1827 in March Township, Ontario. At the age of seven he was sent to Christ's Hospital School in London. Chapel and prayer were central to his austere Protestant education and laid the groundwork for Monk's life-long study of the Scriptures. In 1842 he returned to March Township, working on the farm while continuing to study the Scriptures of the *Old Testament*. Determined to avoid the

³³ Michaela Giebelhausen, *Painting the Bible: Representation and Belief in Mid-Victorian Britain* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Ashgate, 2006), 148-149. The author notes that Hunt's memoir does not include his religious conversion.

³⁴ Landow, George P. Landow, *William Holman Hunt and Typological Symbolism*. Studies in British Art (New Haven: Published for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art by Yale University Press, 1979), 34-35.

³⁵ Katharine A. Lochnan, "The Canadian Diaspora" in *Holman Hunt and The Pre-Raphaelite Vision*, Katharine Aileen Lochnan and Carol Jacobi, eds. (Art Gallery of Ontario, 2008), 191-206.

hardscrabble life of farming in the wilderness of Upper Canada, he studied for the Anglican ministry but soon became disenchanted with organized religion. He continued his religious self-study, concentrating on the *New Testament* and book of *Revelation* and the prophecies concerning the return of Jews to Palestine and the Second Coming of Christ.³⁶ Monk made his life one of piety and poverty following a serious illness as a young man. In his delirium he experienced visions that induced a spiritual conversion, a story he shared with Hunt many years later. In a letter to Ford Maddox Brown (1821-1893) in August of 1855, Hunt wrote of Monk's experience:

Monk was trained for the church but rejected conventional religious teaching when he fell desperately ill. During his delirium he experienced a revelatory vision of God. When he got better he became an infidel, reading the Scriptures to find that they must have been written in the sort of supernatural revelation which he had in his trance...when he completed his work [studying of the Bible] he professes to have had instructions to leave his worldly affairs and begin preaching.³⁷

Monk had begun writing his manuscript *A Simple Interpretation of the Revelation* as a literal interpretation connecting Biblical text to modern life and to the future of world peace as found in the prophecies. Sacred passages were linked to world events associated with the state of the human condition and suffering as experienced by a persecuted Jewish culture around the world. His manuscript was a manifesto to restore the Jewish Homeland in the Land of Israel and only upon that restoration only would there be everlasting peace in the world. Monk traveled to

³⁶ Lochnan, "The Canadian Diaspora," 191-192.

³⁷ Bronkhurst, *William Holman Hunt*, I, 186.

Palestine to continue his research by working his way aboard a merchant ship as a seaman, reaching the city of Jaffa on New Year's Day 1854.³⁸ Settling in the village of Artas, outside of Bethlehem, he found a millenarist community, earnest in their belief in the Second Coming of Christ and immersed in the preparation of the return of persecuted Jews to Palestine.³⁹ Founded by John Meshullam in 1850, it was the first millenarist settlement in Palestine and had a profound effect in realizing a safe haven for persecuted Jews in the nineteenth century.⁴⁰ A wealthy Londoner, Meshullam was an Anglican convert to Judaism. His settlement brought together North Americans and Europeans in an effort to tame the desolate landscape by introducing agriculture and establishing the first school of manual labor in the Holy Land. The goal was to transform the Artaz Valley into a Garden of Eden in preparation for the millennium, the advent of the Second Coming of Christ, and one thousand years of peace in the Kingdom of Heaven.⁴¹ Monk's biographer, Richard Lambert, writes that it was at the home of Meshullam in midsummer 1854 where Monk and Hunt met in the pre-dawn hours:

He [Monk] had gone out as usual, just before dawn to work among the fruit trees, when he saw two Englishmen ride up, alight at the house, and order breakfast, which was served to them in an open chamber overlooking the orchard.⁴²

³⁸ Lambert, *For the Time is at Hand*, 39-41.

³⁹ The geographical area is spelled in a number of ways that include: Artaz, Artas and Ourtass.

⁴⁰ Falestin Naili, "The Millenarist Settlement in Artas and its Support Network in Britain and North America, 1845-1878." no. 45, *Jerusalem Quarterly*. (Spring 2011): 43, accessed August 1, 2016, <http://www.jerusalemquarterly.org/LastEditions.aspx>.

⁴¹ Naili, "The Millenarist Settlement in Artas" 44.

⁴² Lambert, *For the Time is at Hand*, 50.

Lambert describes Hunt's recollection of an encounter that does not appear to be based on factual evidence:

...[Hunt] at once recognized in him a startling resemblance to the Christ figure he had just painted... This was more than coincidence. Never, throughout the rest of his long life, did the artist forget that moment when, in the twilight of dawn at Ourtass, he had first sight of Monk stepping through a gateway in Meshullam's garden, carrying a light, and wrapped in profound meditation. That slender figure, was it not a living image of his own inspiration in England a year ago?⁴³

Lambert's biography of Monk, written in 1947, sixty-one years after the death of Monk, pieces together a history that is based upon Monk's writings, Hunt's memoir, contemporary literature as well as unpublished papers and letters in the collection of the Monk family and in Canadian archives and libraries. The text does not provide citations; rather it offers a list of sources for the unpublished material in the introduction and a list of the main sources for his text:

...the paintings of Holman Hunt, the writings of Wentworth Monk, and the letters addressed to him by numerous correspondents, including such famous names as Millais, Arnold, Tyndall, Crookes, Owen, Collins, Sir John A. Macdonald, etc.⁴⁴

Lambert's biography of Monk sentimentalizes the moment of the encounter and attaches significance that Hunt hints at in his memoir, but with much less romance:

⁴³ Lambert, *For the Time is at Hand*, 52.

⁴⁴ Lambert, *For the Time is at Hand*, 13. The author left out John Ruskin from his list of famous names, though Ruskin's name is peppered throughout his text. Ruskin was a keen supporter of Monk's, both financially and intellectually.

Under the shade of a roof in an open chamber looking on to the bird-haunted orchard we had breakfast. Among the dwellers there was one Henry Wentworth Monk, who was regarded by Jerusalem church folks as an impious babbler, his efforts, forsooth, furthering nothing less than the actual realisation of Hebrew prophecies for the establishment of the kingdom of peace on earth...His knowledge of the history, and his enthusiasm for the progressive thought, stored in the Bible, made him of special interest to me...⁴⁵

Their common interests and ideas are essential to understanding the story behind the painting. The literature dedicated to Hunt is as vast as the literature on Monk is scarce. Hunt's memoir devotes four chapters, encompassing one hundred and twenty-four pages to 1854, the year he met Monk. The chapter describes his daily rituals, travels and the people he encountered along the way throughout Egypt, Palestine and Syria as he followed the footsteps of Christ. His encounter with Monk is relegated to a mere few pages citing Monk's preoccupation with *Revelation* and the prophecies of the Second Coming. Hunt describes their chance meeting as a morning event that took place as his traveling party made a morning stop in the Artaz Valley on the way to Solomon's Pools. Furthermore, the portrait of Monk is reproduced on the recto of chapter XVI, which describes Hunt's period in Jerusalem, though the picture was not painted until four years later.⁴⁶ Conversely, the following chapters detailing events of the years 1856 through 1858 are absent of any mention of Monk despite his arrival in London at the end of 1858

⁴⁵ Hunt, *Pre-Raphaelitism*, I, 434-435.

⁴⁶ Hunt, *Pre-Raphaelitism*, I, 433. The painting is reproduced on the facing page of the chapter undated and titled *H. Wentworth Monk* under the image.

for an extended stay with Hunt that lasted until 1862.⁴⁷ This is the period when Hunt began to keep meticulous diaries of his paintings, financial woes, and letters received and written. A careful reading of the published literature about the portrait and the sitter reveal a significant gap in the timeline leading up to and following the making of Monk's portrait.

On balance, Hunt's memoir was the prime vehicle for writing what he considered the corrected history of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. His gilded version of his own accomplishments is intended to enrich his place in history in what Carol Jacobi describes as a means to "perpetuate a long-standing preoccupation with Hunt's persona which originates in his own self-histories."⁴⁸ Monk's brief inclusion in the text is not chosen to be a central focus, though clearly it was an event that had a profound effect on Hunt and his spiritual self.

Lambert constructs the mythology of the encounter of the two men around *The Light of the World*, completed by Hunt before he departed London for the Holy Land. Arguably, the sight of a bearded Monk carrying a lantern through an orchard path at twilight is a provocative image worthy of comparison to Hunt's painting, if only it could be substantiated as fact. Counter to Lambert's dating of the first meeting, Judith Bronkhurst cites the date of Monk and Hunt's first meeting as September 23, 1854, as well as a second meeting in Jerusalem at the home of

⁴⁷ Bronkhurst, *William Holman Hunt*, I, 185. The date of September 23 is cited in a letter from Hunt to Edward Lear (1852-1857) in the Rylands Library, University of Manchester. The second meeting is referenced in Hunt's diary entries of February 23, 1855, Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford; Lambert, *For the Time is at Hand*, 76, gives the date of February 1862 for Monk's leave of London.

⁴⁸ Carol Jacobi, *William Holman Hunt: Painter, Painting, Paint*. The author tackles the problem of autobiography, in this case a revisionist history, as a means by Hunt to discredit previous accounts of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.

Reverend William Beaumont in February of 1855.⁴⁹ Hunt's diary entry of 1855 corroborates the meeting, noting his interest in Monk's ideas, a detail that would not have been available at the time of Lambert's publication.⁵⁰

Monk returned to Canada in 1855 upon the death of his father.⁵¹ Hunt returned to London in 1856 only to face the dissolution of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood along with his declining finances. There is no evidence to indicate that Monk and Hunt maintained contact once they left Palestine and returned to their respective homes. At the end of 1858 Hunt received word that Monk was coming to London. He wrote with enthusiasm to Thomas Combe in November of 1858: "Only think of the Prophet turning up! I shall be very glad to see him because I believe him to be a thoroughly good fellow, and with talent that makes him able to make one think."⁵² Hunt told Combe that he was willing to have Monk stay with him a few days in his rented studio, *Tor Villa*, in Kensington.⁵³ Monk arrived in London without any means of financial support and with few possessions other than the clothes on his back and his completed manuscript.⁵⁴ His purpose was to find a publisher for his manuscript because the wilderness of Upper Canada

⁴⁹ Bronkhurst, *William Holman Hunt*, I, 185. The date of September 23 is cited in a letter from Hunt to Edward Lear (1852-1857) in the Rylands Library, University of Manchester. The second meeting according to Bronkhurst is referenced in Hunt's diary entries of February 23, 1855, Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford.

⁵⁰ Bronkhurst, *William Holman Hunt*, I, 185.

⁵¹ Lochnan, "The Canadian Diaspora," 192.

⁵² Bronkhurst, *William Holman Hunt*, I, 186.

⁵³ Bronkhurst, *William Holman Hunt*, I, 186.

⁵⁴ Bronkhurst, *William Holman Hunt*, I, 186. Monk took a vow of poverty in his youth and determined to live the life of Christ.

offered little exposure to publishers, printers or booksellers.⁵⁵ Initially it was Hunt's intent to introduce Monk to members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, however, the decline of the Brotherhood had begun to unfold.⁵⁶ Instead, he introduced Monk to his circle of influential writers and thinkers as possible financial supporters for his manuscript. Monk found a kindred spirit in Ruskin (1819-1900) who was in the throes of questioning prevailing attitudes of church doctrine and trying to reconcile science with *Revelation*, as were many Victorians.⁵⁷ Ruskin provided a letter of introduction to his publisher, John Constable, in Edinburgh. Constable was hesitant to publish Monk's manuscript until Ruskin, in an effort to bolster the project, offered financial support for the publication though he wished to remain anonymous. Ruskin writes to Monk January 12, 1859:

I shall have much pleasure in helping you in this matter, only my name not be seriously connected with it—not that I care about bearing any quantity of abuse when needed; but I haven't examined your pamphlet thoroughly and can't be responsible for its contents, I think you right in your main views, and a friend who ought to be helped, because you mean what you say; so I'll help you...⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Lambert, *For the Time is at Hand*, 65; Lochnan, "The Canadian Diaspora," 193.

⁵⁶ Hunt, *Pre-Raphaelitism*, I, 86.

⁵⁷ Lochnan, "The Canadian Diaspora," 193.

⁵⁸ Lambert, *For the Time is at Hand*, 70. This is perhaps one of the only published letters to Monk in the 1850's. London bookseller Tallant and Company published Monk's manuscript in 1858 in a small edition of one thousand.

According to Lambert, Ruskin's support for Monk's manuscript was a cause for celebration that resulted in Monk sitting for his portrait.⁵⁹ While there is no evidence to support this notion, it becomes plausible when considering the financial state of Monk and Hunt during this period. Monk had long eschewed trappings of the material world, working as seaman to earn his passage and traveling by foot. Hunt returned from Palestine only to find, as Thomas Combe warned before his departure to Palestine, that his absence for an extended period of time would limit his ability to retain artistic recognition and financial momentum in the art world. It is noteworthy that between 1857 and 1859, Hunt's finances were compromised by a lack of commissions that prevented him from securing materials and models for new work. Feeling further isolation from his artist brethren, Hunt recalls this difficult time in his memoir:

Continual non-appearance at Exhibitions was seriously diminishing my prestige; friends also were expostulating, for I had been unable to contribute any subject picture to the Exhibition of 1857, so it was in 1858 and 1859...⁶⁰

As evidenced by Hunt's own writings, he filled his days writing in his journal and visiting museums and galleries, and attending to social obligations of the art world in London and the countryside. His primary source of income, much to his discontent, came in the form of commissions for book illustrations and engravings.⁶¹ By all accounts Hunt welcomed Monk's arrival for a visit that stretched into three years.⁶² Without commissions or financial resources to

⁵⁹ Lambert, *For the Time is at Hand*, 68.

⁶⁰ Hunt, *Pre-Raphaelitism*, II, 148, 170.

⁶¹ Hunt, *Pre-Raphaelitism*, II, 163-170.

⁶² Lambert, *For the Time is at Hand*, 66; Lochnan, "The Canadian Diaspora," 193.

begin new work, the portrait of Monk appears to be the result of what Lambert calls a “communion of brother mystics.”⁶³ It is not difficult to imagine that the two men spent many hours together discussing Monk’s manuscript and Hunt’s pictures—the literary and the visual and the common threads of *Revelation* and Prophecy. Lambert creates a sentimental version of Hunt and Monk’s relationship, describing Hunt as Monk’s “life long friend and confidant.”⁶⁴ While this may be true, Monk never garnered a mention in Hunt’s memoir for the years after their first meeting in 1854 up until Monk’s return to Upper Canada in 1862.⁶⁵ Moreover, Lambert’s biography is the main source for a great deal of the literature on the portrait, however inaccurate, including the timeline of Monk’s arrival in London and when the portrait was painted. Lambert’s main source for dates and events while Monk was in residence in London is taken from Hunt’s memoir. His claim that Monk arrived in London in 1857 is not possible in consideration of Hunt’s letter to Combe in November of 1858 in anticipation of Monk’s arrival. It is more likely that Monk arrived in London before the close of 1858 which aligns with Ruskin’s letter to Monk in January of 1859 after the two men met and Monk embarked on his travel to visit Ruskin’s publisher in Edinburgh. Bronkhurst questions the date by placing a parenthetical question mark after the date of 1858. It is doubtful that Hunt could have completed the painting between the middle of November and the close of 1858, given his working habits of

⁶³ Lambert, *For the Time is at Hand*, 12. Lambert uses this phrase to describe their intellectual and philosophical connection.

⁶⁴ Lambert, *For the Time is at Hand*, 9. Monk was certainly a life-long friend to Hunt and perhaps even his confidant, if indeed Monk lodged with Hunt for three years.

⁶⁵ Lambert, *For the Time is at Hand*, 68. The author’s accuracy in describing the details of Hunt’s daily activities while Monk was in residence at his Kensington studio directly corresponds to Hunt’s own writings.

laboring over his pictures for a period that could stretch into one or two years and sometimes more.

Monk's portrait was exhibited on six occasions from 1860 to 1866 and again in 1883 to mixed reviews.⁶⁶ Monk was an unknown entity in England and his image earned little attention though reviewers from the *Art-Journal* and *The New Quarterly Review* commented on the microscopic detail of the painted surface.⁶⁷ The notion that Monk was a madman was circulating in the London art world and apparently known to the anonymous critic of *The New Quarterly Review*:

...Henry Wentworth Monk, said to be a fanatic, who the artist met at Jerusalem, and whose eccentric fanaticism is indicated by the New Testament and the copy of the *Times* that he holds in his hands...The face is full of a certain character not easily read, and the large staring eyes (like all the eyes Mr. Holman Hunt ever painted) are represented with wonderful power. The head is larger than life, and this gives something of the appearance of a sign-board to a picture which nevertheless testifies to an astonishing minuteness of touch...To be appreciated, Mr. Monk's portrait must be viewed at close quarters, as Mr. Holman Hunt doubtless viewed Mr. Monk.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Bronkurst, *William Holman Hunt*, I, 185. See a complete known exhibition history of the portrait in Hunt's lifetime, beginning 1860 through 1907.

⁶⁷ "The Royal Academy Exhibition," *Art Journal*, 66 (June 1860): 171, accessed September 23, 2016, <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.vcu.edu/docview/6771001/14780>.

⁶⁸ "Exhibitions of Pictures," *The New Quarterly Review and Digest of Current Literature, British, American, French, and German* 9, no. 34 (May, 1860): 249, accessed August 1, 2016, <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.vcu.edu/docview/6086926/14780>.

Unknowingly, the author comes very close to understanding not only the mystique of the portrait but also the relationship shared by Monk and Hunt. The written history of their friendship remains a fragmented chronicle, rife with inaccuracies. Still, this intimate portrait stands as a testament to a friendship that spanned more than forty years.

As artists, Holman Hunt and Jan van Eyck were celebrated in their lifetimes for the aesthetic and religious qualities of their paintings as well as innovators of style and technique. The portrait of *Henry Wentworth Monk* and *Léal Souvenir* are not portraits of famous men, but rather intimate narratives that speak to the relationship between the artist and the subject. The remaining chapters will demonstrate how the celebrity of van Eyck and the modest *Léal Souvenir* became the inspiration for Hunt's portrait of *Henry Wentworth Monk*.

Chapter 2

Jan van Eyck: Rediscovery and Celebrity

The acquisition of the *Arnolfini Portrait* is frequently cited as an event that had an enormous impact on British art of the nineteenth century. Malcolm Warner writes of its significance to the Pre-Raphaelites:

The greatest pre-Raphael painting the Pre-Raphaelites knew, Van Eyck's *Arnolfini Marriage Portrait*, was one of the beacons by which they took their stylistic bearings. It would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of this work to their very northern belief in the painter as eyewitness rather than creator of beauty, to their ideas about draughtsmanship and color, and to the tendency of their figures to express themselves in a simple sign-language.⁶⁹

The picture, as well as its artist, rose to fame not only because of its arresting splendor of color and technique, but also because it was the first fifteenth-century painting to enter the National Gallery collection. Adding to its celebrity was the myth of Jan van Eyck as the inventor of oil painting, as told by Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574) in *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors and Architects*. Vasari's myth describes in great detail that van Eyck's invention was the result of experiments to prevent his panel paintings from splitting when set out to dry in the sun.⁷⁰ Vasari was discredited first by Horace Walpole, followed by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing

⁶⁹ Malcolm Warner, "The Pre-Raphaelites and the National Gallery." *Huntington Library Quarterly*. Vol.55. No.1 (Winter, 1993), 8.

⁷⁰ Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*, trans. Mrs. Jonathan Foster (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1850), II, 57-61.

and again a few years later in 1762 by Rudolph Erich Raspe. Despite the evidence produced by Raspe that the recipes for oil paint from medieval manuscripts date to as early as the twelfth century and likely extended back to the ancient Greeks, the myth was repeated throughout the eighteenth century including by historians in the Netherlands.⁷¹

The first English translation by Mrs. Jonathan Foster of *Lives* was published in 1850, perpetuating a new era of the myth with a new audience:

...after having given extreme labor to the completion of a certain picture, and with great diligence brought it to a successful issue, he gave it the varnish and set it to dry in the sun, as is the custom. But, whether because the heat was too violent, or that the wood was badly joined, or insufficiently seasoned, the picture gave way at the joinings, opening in a very deplorable manner. Thereupon, Giovanni, perceiving the mischief done to his work by the heat of the sun, determined to proceed in such a manner that the same thing should never again injure his work in the like...he turned his thoughts to the discovery of some sort of varnish that would dry in the shadow, to the end that he need not expose his pictures to the sun. Accordingly, after having made many experiments on substances, pure and mixed, he finally discovered that linseed oil and oil of nuts dried more readily than any others of all that he had tried. Having boiled these oils therefore with other

⁷¹ Jenny Graham, *Inventing Van Eyck: The Remaking of an Artist for the Modern Age* (Oxford; New York: Berg, 2007), 41; Rudolf Erich Raspe, *A Critical Essay on Oil-painting Proving That the Art of Painting in Oil Was Known before the Pretended Discovery of John and Hubert Van Eyck; to Which Are Added, Theophilus De Arte Pingendi Eraclius De Artibus Romanorum. And a Review of Farinator's Lumen Animæ*, by R.E. Raspe. Eighteenth Century Collections Online. (London: Sold by T. Cadell: Printed for the Author, by H. Goldney:1781), iii-v. The table of contents provides an abbreviated history of oil painting.

mixtures, he thus obtained the varnish which he, or rather all the painters of the world, had so long desired.⁷²

The text is taken from the first English translation of Vasari's *Lives*. Foster added a disclaimer at the bottom of each page stating that scholars disproved Vasari's claim in the eighteenth century. Though Vasari's myth was widely understood to be false, it was part of van Eyck's mystique when Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792) traveled to the Continent. In France, Jean-Baptiste Descamps (1714-1791) wrote of van Eyck's artistic prowess in his *Voyage Pittoresque des Peintres* prompting Sir Joshua Reynolds to seek out the Netherlandish Masters on his visit to Bruges and Ghent in 1781.⁷³ In Bruges, Reynolds visited the Cathedral and writes of van Eyck's *The Virgin and Child with Canon van der Paele* (1434-1436):⁷⁴

In the sacristy is a picture, painted by John Van Eyck, of the Virgin and Child, with St. George and other Saints; one of those figures which is dressed in white, and which undoubtedly was taken from life, according to the custom of the painters of those times, has great character of nature, and it very minutely finished...The picture claims more attention from its being painted by a man who has been said to be the first inventor of the art of painting with oil, than from any intrisick merit in the work itself. However, his claim to this invention, which was first attributed to him by Vasari, and from his

⁷² Vasari, *Lives*, II, 57-58.

⁷³ Graham, *Inventing Van Eyck*, 16. Jean-Baptiste Deschamps flamed the fires of curiosity in France with his publication so much so that it aroused the interest of Napoleon who used it as a source for stocking French museums with art from the Low Countries.

⁷⁴ Sir Joshua Reynolds, *A Journey to Flanders and Holland: An Annotated Edition*, ed. Harry Mount ed., (Art, Patrons, and Public. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 250. Refers to the Cathedral of Saint Donation, leveled during the Napoleonic wars in 1790's. *The Virgin and Child* was looted and is in the collection of the Louvre.

authority propagated in the world, has been justly disputed by the learned antiquarian Mr. Raspe, who has proved beyond all contradiction, that this art was invented and practiced many ages before Van Eyck was born.⁷⁵

Sir Joshua Reynolds' theories on painting, portraits in particular, embraced the notion that the character of the person should be depicted in a manner that represents the ideal rather than the ordinary world created by van Eyck. Reynolds' encounter with van Eyck's Altarpiece at St. Bavo, Ghent was equally disappointing:

In a chapel is a work of the brothers Humbert and Jean Van Eyck, representing the Adoration of the Lamb, a story from the Apocalypse: it contains a great number of figures in a hard manner, but there is great character of truth and nature in the heads; and the landskip [sic] is well coloured.⁷⁶

While Reynolds' assessment of van Eyck's work was lukewarm, he was significantly more displeased with the works of Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640) and Gerit van Honthorst (1592-1656) in St. Bavo chapels:

This picture is mentioned, not for any great excellence that it possesses, but from its being much talked of here: people fancy they see great expression of tenderness in the woman which is drawing the arrows from the Saint's body; but she appeared to me perfectly insipid, and totally without expression of any kind...⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Reynolds, *A Journey to Flanders and Holland*, 250-251.

⁷⁶ Reynolds, *A Journey to Flanders and Holland* 254. Historically the Ghent Altarpiece, as it is commonly known, is referenced in many ways over a period of several hundred years: *Adam and Eve*; *The Holy Lamb*; *The Adoration of the Lamb*. Brockwell, *The Van Eyck Problem*, 9.

⁷⁷ Reynolds, *A Journey to Flanders and Holland* 253-254. This painting is more precisely associated with a painting by Jacob van Oost (1603-1701) *Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian*,

In contrast, Reynolds' acknowledgment of van Eyck's technique in the *Ghent Altarpiece* in St. Bavo is considerably more favorable: "in its infancy; but still having the appearance of a faithful representation of individual nature it does not fail to please."⁷⁸ Reynolds was all together unimpressed and found most everything he viewed on the continent to be inferior. In a letter to Edmund Burke on August 2, 1781, Reynolds writes:

We arrived at Brussels, the thirtieth, and shall probably set out this Evening for Antwerp. Nothing hitherto has happened worth mentioning, nor have we seen any pictures better than we have at home, Ghent and Alost have two or three pictures of Rubens and Brussels perhaps a dozen, the people seem to make so much of his works...The Pictures hitherto have not answered, our expectation...⁷⁹

At the time of his journey, Reynolds was the President of the Royal Academy. His *Discourses* encouraged student artists to draw ideas and images from painting and literature of the past. For Reynolds, this meant the Old Masters of the Italian Renaissance, pictures of historical relevance that elevated the subjects to classical ideals of virtue that did not rely on faithful representations.⁸⁰ Reynolds' terms did not include the keen view of reality exhibited in the work of van Eyck and the school of Netherlandish painting. However, ultimately Reynolds makes an exception for Rubens upon seeing his pictures in Rotterdam toward the end of his

presently located at Saint John Hospital in Bruges.

⁷⁸ Reynolds, *A Journey to Flanders and Holland*, 253.

⁷⁹ Reynolds, Joshua. *The Letters of Sir Joshua Reynolds*. Edited by John Ingamells and John Edgcumbe (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 95-96.

⁸⁰ Joshua C. Taylor. *Nineteenth-Century Theories of Art*, California Studies in the History of Art (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 11-26.

journey, “it has raised my Idea of Rubens upon the whole.”⁸¹ Reynolds had to go to the continent to see Flemish pictures, perhaps unaware that the works of van Eyck had a presence in English collections as early as the seventeenth century starting with the Royal Collection during the reign of Charles I.

Triptych with the Virgin and Child with Saints Catherine and Michael and a Donor (1437) is recorded to have been purchased by Charles I in 1628 from the collection of Vincenzo I Gonzaga, Duke of Mantua (1562-1612).⁸² It remained in the Royal Collection at least until 1696, when it was inventoried in the Paris collection of Everhard Jabach (1618-1695).⁸³ By 1754 the triptych was recorded in Dresden and attributed to Albrecht Dürer until its reattribution to van Eyck in 1830.⁸⁴ It appears that the triptych passed through the collection of Charles I without particular note.⁸⁵ While the triptych made its way to the continent, three more works attributed to van Eyck remained in England in the collection of the Earl of Arundel.

⁸¹ Reynolds, *The Letters of Sir Joshua Reynolds*. 98.

⁸² Noëlle L.W. Streeton, "Jan van Eyck's Dresden Triptych: New Evidence for the Giustiniani of Genoa in the Borromei Ledger for Bruges, 1438," *Journal of Historians of Netherlandish Art*, Volume 3, Issue 1 (Winter 2011): 3, accessed August 1, 2016, DOI: 10.5092/jhna.2011.3.1.1. 3. The title and attribution of the triptych have undergone numerous revisions in its storied lifetime. Streeton cites the earliest recorded inventory of the painting as 1597 while in the possession of Lodovico Cremasco, the Roman agent for Vincenzo I Gonzaga and the sale “thirty years later” to Charles I.

⁸³ Streeton, “Jan van Eyck's Dresden Triptych,” 3.

⁸⁴ Graham, *Inventing Van Eyck*, 37-38; Streeton, “Jan van Eyck's Dresden Triptych,” 3.

⁸⁵ Abraham Van der Doort and George Vertue. *A catalogue and description of King Charles the First's Capital Collection of Pictures, Limnings, Statues, Bronzes, Medals, and Other Curiosities: Now First Published from an Original Manuscript in the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford. The Whole Transcribed and Prepared for the Press, and a Great Part of it Printed, by the Late Ingenious Mr. Vertue, and Now Finished from His Papers* (London: Printed for W. Bathoe, 1759), 10, 183-197, accessed June 1, 2016, <http://catalog.hathitrust.org/api/volumes/>

Thomas Howard, fourteenth Earl of Arundel, fourth Earl of Surrey, First Earl of Norfolk (1585-1646) established one of the great art collections of England. During the years he served in the court of King Charles I, he traveled across Europe on behalf of the king as well as seizing every opportunity to indulge his taste for art objects of every description. A memoir by William Crowne (c.1617-1683) published in 1637, describes the Earl's travels and the art objects he acquired through purchase or gifts presented to him in his official capacity as the king's emissary.⁸⁶ The earl made the most of his travels to establish relationships with agents across the continent to find "desirable works of art" for his collection.⁸⁷ Weale asserts that at the time of the Earl's death in 1646, there were three works in his collection attributed to Jan van Eyck:

The first of these is the Enthronement of St. Thomas of Canterbury...the second is the bust portrait of a man which came later in the possession of Viscount Middleton of Peper-Harow, after whose death in November, 1848, it was purchased by Mr. H. Farrer, of Bond Street, who sold it to the National Gallery in 1851. This is all but universally looked on as one of the finest of John van Eyck's portraits...The third painting, unfortunately only a fragment of a large Altarpiece, eventually came into the possession

oclc/79434335. The inventory of works in the collection of Charles I lists only works described as "A Mantua Piece", a reference to Vincenzo I Gonzaga, Duke of Mantua.

⁸⁶ William H. James Weal, "Paintings by John van Eyck and Albrecht Dürer formerly in the Arundel Collection," *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, Vol. 6. No.21 (December 1904): 244-249. William Crowne was a member of the earl's traveling party. In his 1637 memoir "A true relation of all the remarkable places and passages observed in the travels of the right honourable Thomas lord Howard Earl of Arundell and Surrey" he writes with exacting detail the dates and places visited, objects seen and acquired as well as the devastation of lands and the starvation of people across the continent.

⁸⁷ Weale, "Paintings by John van Eyck", 244. As emissary of the king, the earl traveled to The Hague, Prague, Brussels, Madrid and the great cities of France and Italy as well as Germany and Flanders.

of Lord Henry Thomas Howard Molyneux Howard, brother of Bernard Edward, the twelfth Duke of Norfolk, and has remained until now in the possession of his descendants at Greystoke Castle, Penrith.⁸⁸

However, of the three works listed above, only the portrait of a man retains its van Eyck attribution. The so-called *Enthronement of St. Thomas of Canterbury* is attributed to the Master of the Youth of St. Romold, and now titled *The Enthronement of Saint Romold as Bishop of Dublin*.⁸⁹ The third painting, described as a fragment, was acquired by John Pierpont Morgan and given to the Metropolitan Museum of Art by bequest in 1917.⁹⁰ *Portrait of a Man with a Red Turban* of 1433 was sold to the MP Thomas Broderick (1704-1769) in 1720.⁹¹ The documentation of van Eyck in British collections, starting with Charles I, rests on the provenance from one collection to another by tracing the sale transactions. While the pictures may have been desirable and valuable, these are qualities that were exclusive to the owner and their inner circle. Public or national museums were rare and did not flourish until the end of the eighteenth century.

⁸⁸ Weale, "Paintings by John van Eyck," 249. *Portrait of a Man with Red Turban*, now in the National Gallery, London.

⁸⁹ Acquired by the National Gallery of Ireland. The provenance lists the painting as originally part of a series comprising twenty-nine pictures or more, originally in St. Rombout's Cathedral at Malines located in the province of present day Antwerp. The painting remained in the Arundel family and thence by descent through the Duke of Norfolk. Purchased by Mr. Sykes who sold it to the Duke of Devonshire in 1722, thence by descent in the family of the Dukes of Devonshire, Chatsworth; purchased, Christies, London, Chatsworth sale, 27 June 1958. See also Graham, *Inventing Van Eyck*, 37-38.

⁹⁰ Acquired by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Retitled *Head of a Donor*, the fragment remained in the Howard family by descent until it was purchased by John Pierpoint Morgan in 1909 as a work by van Eyck. The attribution was debunked by Friedlander in 1925 when he attributed the fragment to Albert van Ouwater (Netherlandish, active mid-fifteenth century).

⁹¹ Graham, *Inventing Van Eyck*, 38.

Graham notes that van Eyck's oeuvre "was brought to light by a chain of correlating events—dramatic, even—historical events and cultural exchanges which began in the last decades of the eighteenth century and spanned Europe."⁹² The fortunes of the British Monarchy and wealthy noble class rose and fell with the English Civil Wars of the seventeenth century. The French Revolution and the looting of art from the Low Countries by Bonaparte and the aftermath of the French Revolution created a marketplace that brought the works of the Flemish Masters across Europe, and in particular to England. Jan van Eyck's known works are few in number, approximately seventeen. His mystique is elevated by the lack of textual material related to his life and work, as well as the fifteenth-century history of Bruges as a result of Napoleonic destruction in the 1790's.⁹³ Maurice Brockwell writes on the enormous loss of the cultural history of Bruges at the hands of the Napoleonic forces and resonates with a reflection of the effects of war and political strife through the ages:

Much more of the biographical history of fifteenth century Bruges would have been available for filling in *lacunae*, but for the destruction and desecration of the Collegiate Church of St. Donation in Bruges, together with the Cloisters where book illustrators had their stalls. The French were responsible for this in 1797. What a heavy loss to the city and to Western Europe was the destruction therein of the tomb of Jan van Eyck, inscribed, as we believe, with the words: *Hic jacet eximia clarus virtute Johannes*. We

⁹² Graham, *Inventing Van Eyck*, 5. The author draws together the writings of multi-national historians and connects them to private and public collections within the context of the political turmoil in England and across the continent.

⁹³ Maurice Walter Brockwell, *The Van Eyck Problem*, 2nd ed. (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing, 1971), 11.

might have learnt the date of his birth and also that of his wife Margaret, whose maiden name and exact marriage date are unknown to us.⁹⁴

In the first decades of the nineteenth century, the aftermath of war provided a gateway for van Eyck's works into private collections, and his name entered the lexicon of great artists. The celebrity status of the *Ghent Altarpiece* was spread through engravings widely available through print sellers and reproduced in contemporary journals and newspapers. In 1815, a full-scale replica copy of the Ghent Altarpiece arrived in London in the collection of German businessmen Carl Aders.⁹⁵

Aders was a partner in a counting house in Germany along with an Englishman, William Jameson. He moved with his art collection of Early Flemish Art to London in 1815. News of his collection spread throughout the London artistic and literary circle. His place among London's artistic elite was reinforced by his marriage in 1820 to Eliza Smith, the daughter of the painter John Raphael Smith.⁹⁶ Between 1820 and 1831, the Aders hosted house parties once a week for the London art and literary world that included such storied figures as artists John Linnell (1792-1882), Samuel Palmer (1805-1810), William Blake (1757-1827) and the writers Mary (1764-1847) and Charles Lamb (1775-1834).⁹⁷ The names of the Flemish painters were relatively unknown in British circles where all attributions of Memling or van Eyck constituted the whole of Flemish painting until the arrival of Carl Aders. With his collection of Memling and van Eyck

⁹⁴ Brockwell, *The Van Eyck Problem*, 11.

⁹⁵ Graham, *Inventing Van Eyck*, 65.

⁹⁶ Graham, *Inventing Van Eyck*, 62-64.

⁹⁷ Graham, *Inventing Van Eyck*, 66.

pictures, since attributed to Dirk Bouts and Rogier van der Weyden, he introduced a segment of London's elite to cultural tastes not present in English society.⁹⁸ The replica of the *Ghent Altarpiece* (1626) made for the Ghent Town Hall caused the most excitement as it provided an opportunity to see the whole of the *Altarpiece* intact, at a time when it was divided up between Ghent and Berlin, and celebrated as work by Jan van Eyck, the inventor of oil painting.⁹⁹

By 1835, Aders was bankrupt and one hundred and twelve works from his collection were listed for sale at the London gallery of Foster and Son.¹⁰⁰ An anonymous author in the *Literary Gazette* lists two works attributed to Memling, *The Adoration of the Magi* and *Descent from the Cross*, two Canalettos and a full-scale copy of the *Ghent Altarpiece*. The author encouraged the government to intercede and acquire the works for the nation to no avail.¹⁰¹ The Aders collection raised interest in the early Flemish painters. Conversely, the opportunity for the general public to see a work by van Eyck did not arise until 1841 when the *Arnolfini Portrait* was first exhibited at the British Institution exhibition of Old Masters.¹⁰² The Pre-Raphaelites

⁹⁸ Graham, *Inventing Van Eyck*, 62-69

⁹⁹ "Mr. Aders's Pictures" *The Literary Gazette: A Weekly Journal of Literature, Science, and the Fine Arts*, 967, (August 1, 1835): 490, accessed July 11, 2016 <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.vcu.edu/docview/5077950>.

¹⁰⁰ Graham, *Inventing Van Eyck*, 62-76. Aders opened his home to the London elite to view his collection, among them Charles Eastlake, John Constable, Samuel Palmer, Thomas Lawrence and John Linnell, who made engravings after so-called van Eyck works in the collection. Many of the works from the Aders collection would eventually find homes in collections both public and private around the world including the National Gallery, London and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York and the Louvre.

¹⁰¹ "Mr. Aders's Pictures", 490. There were 129 pictures for sale at the Gallery of Messrs. Foster and Son, 490.

¹⁰² Jenny Graham, *Inventing Van Eyck*, 95.

had yet to form their alliance. Holman Hunt was sixteen years old and working as a clerk in a muslin-printing factory, while saving his salary to pay for evening drawing classes at the Mechanics Institute. There is no evidence that suggests Hunt would have seen the portrait at the British Institution. However, George Darley's review treats the painting with reverence.¹⁰³

It has never been our luck to see throughout all England so many Van Eyck's as every other dilettante we meet with, who would seem to have put them up like partridges, in coveys: we believe they are no more abundant here than golden eagles. The picture before us cannot be doubted; its brilliant coloring flashes conviction...its clear, keen style resembles that of the great Ghent "Adoration."

Graham remarks that the *Arnolfini Portrait* was destined for celebrity status, not simply because of its unusual subject, technique and brilliant color, but because it was signed and dated by an artist whose name had been circulating in the English art world for decades.¹⁰⁴ The news of the painting's state of extraordinary preservation, startling color and exacting technique gained momentum over the next few months and culminated in its purchase by the National Gallery in 1842, though it would not be exhibited until 1843. Contemporary periodicals and newspapers like *The Athenaeum*, *Art-Journal*, *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* and the *London Times* charted the rediscovery and reception of Jan van Eyck. Engravings, replica carpets and mirrors after the *Ghent Altarpiece* and the *Arnolfini Portrait* became widely available for the consumer marketplace.¹⁰⁵ If Hunt was not aware of the painting in 1841, by 1843 the legend of the painting

¹⁰³ "Fine Arts." *The Athenaeum* no. 714 (Jul 03, 1841): 508-510, accessed October 11, 2015, <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.vcu.edu/docview/9190286>.

¹⁰⁴ Jenny Graham, *Inventing Van Eyck*, 96.

¹⁰⁵ Jenny Graham, *Inventing Van Eyck*, 163.

was celebrated by the viewing public that waited in line to see the picture.¹⁰⁶ Hunt would have had ample opportunity to visit the picture many times in 1844 when he was issued a copyist's ticket, which allowed him to paint in oils in the gallery.¹⁰⁷

Béatrice Laurent verifies the reverence afforded the Netherlandish master by reprinting the list of *Immortals* that included painters, sculptors, writers and philosophers identified by Hunt, Rossetti and Millais in their early student years at the Royal Academy.¹⁰⁸ Hunt's essay of 1886 "The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood: A Fight for Art" was written to state for the record the corrected history of the evolution of the Pre-Raphaelites and the artist and writers that figured prominently in their developing talent, including Jan van Eyck's profound effect on his work.¹⁰⁹ Despite this fact, van Eyck is mentioned no more than three times in all of Hunt's writings and no specific works are named.

The National Gallery acquired a second portrait by van Eyck in 1851. The acquisition of *Portrait of a Man with a Red Turban* was met with slightly less enthusiasm, but it prolonged the discussion surrounding the cult of van Eyck. Both *The Athenaeum* and the *Art Journal* made note of the purchase along with two works by Rembrandt:

The little portrait of an Old Man by Van Eyck, one of the recent additions, exhibits a character of Art which it has been too much habit among us to ignore. The picture has all

¹⁰⁶ "Fine Arts." *The Athenaeum* no. 714, 508-510.

¹⁰⁷ Bronkhurst, *William Holman Hunt*, I, 41.

¹⁰⁸ Laurent, "An Inventory of the Pre-Raphaelite Mental Museum," 21-23.

¹⁰⁹ William Holman Hunt, "The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood: A Fight for Art." *The Contemporary Review*, 49, (April 1886): 479, accessed October 9, 2015, <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.vcu.edu/docview/6549017>.

the beauty of detail in the drawing of the several parts of the features—interfering in no way with a thoughtfulness of expression that breathes life; while the delicacy of the execution bespeaks of the employment of materials of which the present schools of Europe appear to have lost the knowledge.¹¹⁰

This description written by an unknown author could not have spoken more directly to the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, in particular, Holman Hunt.

During the year Hunt was working on *Claudio and Isabella* and just beginning the *Light of the World*, *Valentine Rescuing Sylvia from Proteus* was awarded a prize at the Liverpool Academy.¹¹¹ Hunt's memoir for 1851 indicates that he is working with new materials, and attending to the daily routine of his social life, all without a mention of the National Gallery and the recent acquisition of a work by van Eyck.

The next occasion in Britain to see early Netherlandish painting was the Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition of 1857. Organized as an event to share the wealth of great art collections and culture in Britain, it was an “an opportunity to evaluate the trends in British collecting, popular taste, and scholarly opinion.”¹¹² The exhibition was comprised of 16,000 works from private collections across Britain, with the greatest number of works from the collection of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert.¹¹³ The Gallery of Modern pictures was a vehicle to promote

¹¹⁰ “The National Gallery” *The Athenaeum* no. 1247 (Sep 20, 1851): 1003, accessed July 11, 2016, <http://proxy.library.vcu.edu/docview/926919154/14780>.

¹¹¹ Bronkhurst, *William Holman Hunt*, I, 41.

¹¹² Elizabeth A. Pergam, *The Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition of 1857: Entrepreneurs, Connoisseurs and the Public* (Surrey, UK, England: Ashgate, 2011) 51.

¹¹³ Pergam, *The Manchester Art Treasures*, 20.

British painters; their placement was such that it made it possible for the viewer to compare the Old and Modern Masters.¹¹⁴ The Netherlands were represented by the works of Rogier van der Weyden, Hans Memling and Jan van Eyck, however, a number of works have since been reattributed, with many of them considered canonical works in their own right.¹¹⁵ Holman Hunt was represented in the Modern Masters section by five works drawn from private collections.¹¹⁶ Eighty-six of the works exhibited in Manchester are now in the collection of the National Gallery; eighty-one are from the Old Master section with the vast majority of the works comprising the Netherlandish School.¹¹⁷ Holman Hunt visited the exhibition in the company of Thomas Fairbairn, who served on the Manchester Exhibition Council. Hunt writes in his memoir that he accompanied Fairbairn to the gallery every morning and discussed art and artists. One would have to assume that Hunt visited the gallery of the Netherlandish School, though he makes no mention of this in his memoir.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ Pergam, *The Manchester Art Treasures*, 70.

¹¹⁵ Pergam, *The Manchester Art Treasures*, 273. The exhibition checklist records John van Eyck, A priest officiating “The Mass of St. Gregory” from the collection of Lord Ward: later reattributed to the Master of Saint Giles, The Mass of Saint Giles. “Rogier van der Weyden, Ecco Homo” from the collection of J.H. Green and later attributed to Dirk Bouts, Christ Crowed with Thorns. Both works are in the collection of the National Gallery of London.

¹¹⁶ Pergam, *The Manchester Art Treasures*, 70.

¹¹⁷ Pergam, *The Manchester Art Treasures*. 270-276.

¹¹⁸ Hunt, *Pre-Raphaelitism*, II, 158-159. Hunt’ was invited to stay at the Fairbairn home while in Manchester for an undesignated period of time. Hunt writes that they walked to the gallery everyday without any indication of how many days his visit lasted.

While the press took little notice of the 1851 acquisition of *Portrait of a Man with Red Turban*, the press and public alike heralded the National Gallery's acquisition of twenty works including *Léal Souvenir*. An unidentified author in October of 1857 writes:

The exhibition of seven new pictures in the National gallery, including the celebrated Veronese, of which so much has been said, filled the rooms during the past week with a continuous stream of critics and spectators. The result is no doubt highly satisfactory, though it is impossible not to be struck with the great variety in the merits of the recent additions... John Van Eyck. - A man's portrait in dark red dress, with green head covering, holding a paper in this hands. On the stone parapet below is written "Leal Souvenir." And underneath the inscription, "Facto ano Dm. 1432, 10 die Octobris a Joh. de Eyck," This was purchased of Herr Carl Ross, at Munich, during the present year...The work, though excellent and characteristic, will be found inferior in execution to the two undoubted specimens of John van Eyck which are adjoin. The shading of the features is not so delicate, and traces of the painter's pencil are visible, which are wholly imperceptible in the companion picture and in the larger work. It is nevertheless a masterly and striking performance.¹¹⁹

Two months later *Léal Souvenir* was scrutinized in the *Art Journal*, raising the question of authenticity:

The features are dark in tone and by no means agreeable in character. It is painted with exceeding care, yet it is inferior to the other two works by the same hand which hang near

¹¹⁹ "Articles and Communications." *The Literary Gazette: A weekly Journal of Literature, Science, and the Fine Arts*, no. 2128 (Oct 31, 1857): 1048-1049, accessed September 2, 2016, <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.vcu.edu/docview/5163421>.

it. Nothing further of its history of the picture is known; but of course, the Commissioners have been satisfied as to the authenticity of their purchase.¹²⁰

The name of the sitter for *Léal Souvenir* was unknown at the time of its acquisition and remains a mystery into the twenty-first century.

Hunt was a frequent visitor to all of the galleries and museums in London. These were the hallowed halls that he walked to find the inspiration for his work. Hunt, like all of the artists of his generation, admired the works of the Old Masters, borrowing the pose of a figure, the placement of an object or the scale of an interior. While the inclusion of van Eyck's name among Hunt's prodigious writings is rare, his paintings stand as verification of Hunt's careful reading of the Flemish Master.

Monk's arrival in London in 1858, approximately one year after the National Gallery's acquisition of *Léal Souvenir*, provided a new visual resource for Hunt's portrait of Monk. Monk was a man unto himself, unlike anyone in Hunt's circle. Van Eyck's singular portrait of a solitary man of ambiguous title and modest bearing may have served as a model in both subject and form that is worthy of emulation.

¹²⁰ "The Additions To The National Gallery" *Art Journal*, no. 36 (Dec 1857):381-382, accessed July 11, 2016. <http://proxy.library.vcu.edu/docview/672773>.

Chapter 3

Signs, Symbols and Text

The portrait of Monk is perhaps the least known of all of Hunt's paintings, possibly because the subject, Henry Wentworth Monk, is a person who remains largely unknown. However, for Hunt, their meeting in Palestine in 1854 was an event that he regarded as significant enough to mark with a portrait two years later, when Monk arrived in London for a lengthy visit. The portrait of Monk was likely executed at the close of 1858, approximately one year after the National Gallery acquired *Léal Souvenir* — the third van Eyck to enter the collection.

Very little is known about the relationship Hunt and van Eyck had with their respective sitters. More is known about Monk, but it is a one-sided tale created by Monk's biographer and a brief mention in Hunt's memoir. The identity of van Eyck's sitter is unknown, though Erwin Panofsky proposed two possibilities, neither of which is conclusive.¹²¹ Panofsky dissected the pictorial elements of *Léal Souvenir* as a means to arrive at identification. At the time the portrait was made, van Eyck was newly appointed to the Court of Phillip the Good, Duke of Burgundy.¹²² Panofsky, since supported by a great many scholars, asserted that the sitter is wearing typical Burgundian clothing of a green woolen hat and a red woolen coat lined with

¹²¹ Erwin Panofsky, "Who is Jan van Eyck's 'Tymotheos'?" *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. 12 (1949):80-90, accessed October 17, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/750257>

¹²² Craig Harbison, *Jan Van Eyck: The Play of Realism*. 2nd Updated and Expanded ed. (London: Reaktion Books, 2012) 22-49.

sable at the collar and cuffs.¹²³ Though modest in comparison, the clothing recalls the color and style of clothing of another portrait of Burgundian provenance in the *Arnolfini Portrait*.

Monk's arrival in London was a period of financial difficulty for Hunt, with a lack of commissions he was unable to complete work or begin new work. Painting Monk's portrait, gave the artist a ready model at no cost and of significant interest to Hunt personally. There certainly was not an audience for the portrait nor was it saleable. Monk was an unknown person, lacking fame and notoriety and was considered a little bit of a madman.

Hunt's choice of pictorial sources for his pictures is a subject closely examined by Hunt scholars. Malcolm Warner draws a comparison of the *Arnolfini Portrait* to Hunt's *The Awakening Conscience* (1853) and suggests that Hunt's picture "becomes a pendant after the fact" based on the almost exact scale of the two works and the deliberate inclusion of van Eyck's motifs are read as a "sobering inversion" of the subject.¹²⁴ Warner's description also draws a comparison of the notion of marriage in both pictures in the form of marital devotion and fidelity as a contrast to Hunt's sordid tale of two lovers. Indeed, these visual elements named by Warner are present as early as 1850 in *Claudio and Isabella*.

Drawn from the first act of Shakespeare's play *Measure for Measure*, *Claudio and Isabella* describes the moment when Isabella tells her brother, shackled and imprisoned for sexual misconduct, that the price for commutation of his sentence is her virginity. The compositional format is closely related to the *Arnolfini Portrait*. The objects read as carefully placed symbols that embellish the pictorial narrative in order to reinforce the Shakespearean

¹²³ Panofsky, "Who is Jan van Eyck's 'Tymotheos'?", 80.

¹²⁴ Warner, "The Pre-Raphaelites and the National Gallery", 9.

theme. Though the rustic prison interior lacks the formality of van Eyck's richly layered and jeweled surface, the deep vermillion of Claudio's fur-trimmed tunic refers to the elegant bed draperies and fur trim of Arnolfini's outer garment.¹²⁵ The air of intimacy between husband and wife, and sister and brother, become clearly legible as contrasts stated with a purpose of Warner's notion of an inversion of the pictorial narrative. This is a device that appears in many of Hunt's pictures that are most closely associated with van Eyck.

By examining the objects in Monk's portrait one can determine that Hunt uses the clothing of his sitter to establish a specific place and time. Monk's attire represents the beginning of the narrative that places Monk in the Artaz Valley and the context in which the artist and sitter met in 1854 where they discovered their mutual interest in *Revelation of the New Testament*. Monk is wearing an aba, a typical over garment worn generally by men throughout the Middle East. The aba is counter-balanced by the round collared jacket of dark brown worn beneath. Monk may be wearing the only clothes he owns, a suit made in all probability on the family farm in March Township. It is unlikely that Monk wore his only suit of clothes to work among the orchards of Meshullam's farm, so it is plausible he would have adopted the typical garb worn in the desert of Palestine. Lambert's description of Monk making his way along the garden path as the image of Hunt's robed Christ figure in *The Light of the World*, draws from what he only imagines that moment to have been, based on a picture before the event and the portrait that followed many years later.¹²⁶ However, Lambert draws from what he only imagines that moment to have been based on a picture before the event and the portrait that followed many years later.

¹²⁵ Hunt, *Pre-Raphaelitism*, II, 214 – 215. Hunt gained permission to paint inside Lollard Prison at Lamberth Place where he painted the most important parts of the interior.

¹²⁶ Lambert, *For the Time is at Hand*, 435.

Lambert appropriates the depiction of Monk's attire as a means to connect the two men to a shared belief in *Revelation*.

The aba worn by Monk is most likely one of the many props Hunt acquired during his first journey to the Holy Land and figures prominently in two late portraits of Hunt by Sir William Blake Richmond (1842-1921) and John Ballantyne (1815-1897). Richmond's portrait of 1900 treats the horizontal stripes of the textile with abstracted brushstrokes. The Ballantyne portrait depicts a red textile in the foreground draped across a model's platform. The construction of the red textile is barely discernible, but closer inspection shows evidence of fleeting white stripes. A turban and unfurled scroll are placed across the textile while Hunt looks over from his easel garbed in a striking turquoise aba. In both portraits the stripes of the aba are painted abstractly while Hunt carefully paints a series of stitches, perhaps invented, and vertical stripes with such precise strokes that meaning, though not explicit, is implied and draws the viewer into the picture for closer examination of all of the visual clues. The aba and woolen jacket depicted become more than tools of geographical identity.

The overall appearance of the figures is a study in contrasts. Figure placement is perhaps the single most important element to define a composition, and in both pictures a sitting figure is placed in three quarter profile and turned ever so slightly to look off to the side of the picture plane. The effect of looking at the images side by side is that they appear to be speaking to one another. Hunt uses the vertical wood panel along the right edge to counter the horizontal stone parapet of the van Eyck portrait. The palettes of both portraits are very close in value. The single exception is the bright red garment of van Eyck's figure. A bearded Monk with his flowing locks counters the clean-shaven figure whose head is covered in a green woolen cap. Monk's eyes are bright and animated while van Eyck's figure is composed and serene as demonstrated by his

heavy lids. The microscopic details that Hunt derived from van Eyck's works are in evidence in Monk's portrait. The hair is painted with precise strokes of deep glazes of brown with madder and carmine defining the rivulets falling across his shoulders. Wisps of fine hair visible beneath the cap in the van Eyck portrait are more subtle but no less precisely described and equally matched to the sitter's composure. Monk's portrait seems as a dissection of van Eyck's picture, in that each visual element is countered with a contradiction. Monk's visage conveys with a sense of urgency where van Eyck's sitter embodies a calming spirit. The beardless and almost hairless sitter in *Léal Souvenir* serves as a foil to Monk's full head of hair and beard.

A comparison of the two portraits shows Hunt's adroitness at employing signs and symbols to establish his visual narrative. Monk holds in his left hand a copy of the *Illustrated Times*, rolled with twine and sealed with wax. The seal and twine are described with such precision that there is no doubt as to their importance. The wax seal is virtually liquid as if it is still warm from application. Like the seal, the twine appears as if freshly cut, the rounded surface catches the light and shadow and the cut end of the twine falls into the path of light where the artist has described the slightest of a frayed tip. In *Léal Souvenir*, the figure's proper right hand rests on the stone pulpit clasping a scroll with Latin script that is barely discernible. Viewed in oppositional terms, Monk's rolled newspaper grasped with purpose is held aloft in the direction of the light, as if it is a source of psychological illumination and perhaps a nod to modernity. In his right hand, which is unmistakably painted with a ruddy and aged texture, he holds the *New Testament* open to what can only be the book of *Revelation*, a reference to the biblical past. Hunt's purpose is two-fold. In the most basic sense, he begins to fill in the biographical details of Monk's life-work, his study and contemplation of *Revelation* and the fulfillment of its prophecies. At the same time, Monk's hands painted with traces of the earth's

soil evince a life of labor, recalling his work on his family farm and his work among the Meshullam orchards.

The position of the scrolls in each of the portraits reveals two different narratives. In the Monk portrait, the scroll is held up as device of declamation, the script is in English, though the subject is unknown. In *Léal Souvenir*, the scroll is held as if it is an intimate object to be shared. The literal translation of *Léal Souvenir* is Loyal Remembrance. Van Eyck spoke Dutch, but he likely knew French, as he was the Court Painter to the Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy.¹²⁷ Jacques Paviot argues that “Leal Sovvenir” implies two meanings: “it is both a description of the sitter, and part of the painter’s record, for posterity, of his likeness ” and “the break in stone is a further indication of the second point: the portrait will outlive the sitter.”¹²⁸ Additional similarities are found in the way that both artists use written language in their pictures. Van Eyck inscribes the parapet wall in French and Dutch, while the scroll is written in Latin. Hunt employs written text on the newspaper in English and the gold lettered spine of the *New Testament* is written in Koine Greek.¹²⁹ The obvious implied meaning is that both of the sitters are men of letters. The simplest of details are elevated to subjects worthy of studied observation where signs, symbols and text are employed in the service of biography.

References to *Revelation* might be found among the signs and symbols within Monk’s portrait. *Revelations* 4:6: “And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in

¹²⁷ Harbison, *Jan Van Eyck*, 22-28, 72. Van Eyck worked in the service of Philip the Good from 1425 until his death in 1441.

¹²⁸ Jacques Paviot, “The Sitter for Jan van Eyck’s “Leal Sovvenir,” 214.

¹²⁹ The volume shown is a 1534 edition of the *New Testament* published in Paris by Simon de Colines and is noteworthy as it is the first attempt at a critical Greek text of the New Testament.

the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind.” It is not difficult to see this passage as manifest in the swirling blue-green centers of the glass window behind Monk as the four eyes of the beast. In his manuscript, Monk brings together the notion of the sea and fire together as a moment of enlightenment, “those who had thus ‘gotten the victory’ are represented as ‘upon a sea of glass and mingled with fire,’ to signify that they will now be enabled to see many heavenly truths clearly.”¹³⁰

Hunt’s nod to the Netherlandish Master was not only a matter of borrowed motifs, but also the minuteness of the natural world and implied meaning. The realism of *Our English Coasts (Strayed Sheep)* (1852) expresses the visible world in the most extraordinary detail.¹³¹ Hunt’s depiction of each blade of grass and plants found in nature interwoven with light and shadow are described with the same clarity and microscopic details that can be seen in van Eyck’s iteration of landscape in the Ghent Altarpiece. The literal meaning of Hunt’s painting is debatable and has been the topic of scholars as early as 1856 in an essay written by F. J. Stephens for *The Crayon*. Stephens proposes that Hunt may have intended the sheep to represent an English coastline defenseless against foreign invasions, while the lost sheep serve as a metaphor for “volunteers manning the boarders without direction—the blind leading the blind.”¹³² Hunt’s images are a commentary on political, social and cultural mores, as he

¹³⁰ Henry W Monk, *A Simple Interpretation of the Revelation*. (London: Tallant and Company, 1859), 84, CIHMI/ICMH Microfiche series no. 94766. <http://openlibrary.org>.

¹³¹ Bronkhurst, *William Holman Hunt*, I, 157. Initially titled *Strayed Sheep*, it was first exhibited as *Our English Coasts*. The author asserts that the pictorial source for Hunt’s picture is Thomas Lewsi Atkinson and Frederick Stacpoole’s 1850 engraving after Sir Edwin Landseer, *Time of Peace*.

¹³² F.J. Stephens, “The Two Pre-Raphaelites. Third Article (concluded),” *The Crayon* no.12 (1856) L 353-356, accessed October 1, 2016,

perceived them in the world around him. The commentary or intended meaning does not always have a direct literary association.

The notion of what Warner describes as an “inversion” of van Eyck’s motifs is implicit in Hunt’s portrait of *Henry Wentworth Monk*. The inversion of motifs and compositional format are fully demonstrated in Monk’s portrait when placed side by side with *Léal Souvenir*. The complexity in Hunt’s pictures is indisputable. Fundamentally, Hunt’s appropriation of ideas embedded in literature or the artistic works of his forerunners and contemporaries served as a pictorial source for motifs, symbols, composition and color. If moral and religious meaning were attached, it was all the more compelling in service to a greater purpose.

Conclusion

Holman Hunt was among the most successful artists of the nineteenth century in Britain. A vast amount of scholarship has been dedicated to his work, in addition to the artists' own memoir. The limit of autobiography means that it often clouds our perceptions of the artist, their works, and their place in history. Hunt was very concerned with his place in history and sought to align himself with one of the most celebrated artists of his lifetime, an artist who lived four hundred years in the past.

Scholars have long connected Hunt's most iconic works with Jan van Eyck, in particular the *Arnolfini Portrait*. In this thesis I have expanded the discussion to include *Léal Souvenir* by analyzing form, color and technique in both of the portraits, much the same way that scholars have compared other works by Hunt and van Eyck. By virtue of its non-celebrity status, Monk's portrait has eluded the scholarly attention generally afforded Hunt's work.

Monk's portrait spent most of its existence sequestered in Hunt's home, with brief periods of exhibition in 1860, 1861, 1865, 1866, 1883, and then more than twenty years later in 1906 and 1907, until it was purchased from the artist's estate in 1910 by the National Gallery of Canada.¹³³ The portrait garnered little scholarly interest in much the same way that *Léal Souvenir* is more likely to be reproduced in black and white rather than color and receives only a cursory mention in texts devoted to the artist. It is precisely this lack of celebrity that unites these two pictures in their obscurity within each artist's oeuvre and absence from scholarly debate. The sitters are not famous men, men of letters yes, but their lifetime achievements have been

¹³³ Bronkhurst, *William Holman Hunt*, I, 185.

overlooked by history. Very little was known about Jan van Eyck in nineteenth-century London, but the three works on view at the National Gallery had a lasting effect on Hunt's oeuvre.

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VII. Select List of Images

Jan van Eyck (active 1422-1441), *Portrait of a Man* (“Léal Souvenir”)
1432, oil on oak panel, National Gallery London

Jan van Eyck (active 1422-1441), *Man with a Red Turban* (Self-Portrait?)
1433, oil on panel, National Gallery London

Jan van Eyck (active 1422-1441), *Arnolfini Portrait*
1434, oil on oak panel, National Gallery London

Hubert van Eyck (1320-1426) and Jan van Eyck (active 1422-1441), *Ghent Altarpiece*
1432, oil on wood, St. Bavo, Ghent

(after)Jan van Eyck, Jacoba, Wilhelm VI. Filia, comes XXIX
1650, engraving and etching on laid paper, British Museum, London

William Holman Hunt (1827-1910), *Claudio and Isabella*
1850, 1851, 1852-53, retouched 1879, oil on canvas, Tate, London

William Holman Hunt (1827-1910), *Our English Coasts (Strayed Sheep)*
1852, oil on canvas, Tate, London

William Holman Hunt (1827-1910), *The Light of the World*
1851 – 1853, oil on canvas, Keble College, Oxford

William Holman Hunt (1827-1910), *The Awakening Conscience*
1853-54, retouched 1856, 1857, 1864, 1879-80, 1886, oil on canvas, Tate, London

William Holman Hunt (1827-1910), *Henry Wentworth Monk*
1858, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

Sir William Blake Richmond (1842-1921), *William Holman Hunt*
1900, oil on canvas, National Portrait Gallery, London

John Ballantyne (1815-1897), *William Holman Hunt*
1865, oil on canvas, National Portrait Gallery, London