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Thomas Jeckyll, James McNeill Whistler, and the Harmony in Blue and Gold: The Peacock Room: A Re- Examination

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Thomas Jeckyll, James McNeill Whistler, and the
Harmony in Blue and Gold: The Peacock Room: A Re-Examination

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

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# Table of Contents

List of Figures......................................................................................................................................iv
Abstract ..................................................................................................................................................xv
Introduction...........................................................................................................................................1
Chapter 1: The Tale of a Dining Room, Two Patrons, and Two Designers........................................12
Chapter 2: Thomas Jeckyll’s Sunflowers: Out of the Shadows.................................................................29
Chapter 3: Thomas Jeckyll and the Porcelain Room Tradition: A Decisive Break............................41
Chapter 4: An Introduction to Decor in the Dining Room.................................................................66
Chapter 5: The Principle of Decor in the Peacock Room...............................................................99
Conclusion.............................................................................................................................................154
Bibliography.........................................................................................................................................157
Appendix A: Decor Quotations from Architectural Books: The “Do’s”............................................193
 Appendix B: Decor Quotations from Architectural Books: The “Don’ts”........................................220
Appendix C: Peacocks in Secular Interiors.........................................................................................230
Appendix D: Decorous Designs by E.W. Godwin.............................................................................239
List of Figures

Figure Intro-1. Thomas Jeckyll and James McNeill Whistler, *Harmony in Blue and Gold: The Peacock Room*, 1876/77, Freer Gallery of Art
Figure Intro-2. Thomas Jeckyll, Sunflower Andirons, 1876, Freer Gallery of Art
Figure Intro-3. Thomas Jeckyll and James McNeill Whistler, Walnut Shelving by Jeckyll (gilded by Whistler) in the *Harmony in Blue and Gold: The Peacock Room*, 1876/77, Freer Gallery of Art
Figure Intro-5. Thomas Jeckyll and James McNeill Whistler, *Harmony in Blue and Gold: The Peacock Room*, Detail of shelving brackets, 1876/77, Freer Gallery of Art
Figure Intro-6. Mosaic Pavement, House of the Drinking Contest, Roman, Antioch, third century A.D., Princeton University Art Museum, gift of the Committee for the Excavation of Antioch to Princeton University
Figure Intro-7. Raphael and Workshop, *Feast of the Gods*, 1518/19, Villa Farnesina, Rome, Alinari
Figure Intro-8. Robert Adam, Dining Room, Osterley Park House, ca. 1766, Isleworth, England, National Trust
Figure Intro-9. Peter R. Nelson, the Peacock Room as it may have appeared, April 1876, published in Linda Merrill, *The Peacock Room: A Cultural Biography* (1998)

Figure 1-1. James McNeill Whistler, *Symphony in White, No. 1: The White Girl*, 1862, National Gallery of Art, Harris Whittemore Collection, 1943.6.2
Figure 1-2. James McNeill Whistler, *Girl with Cherry Blossom* (surviving fragment of *The Three Girls*), ca. 1876, Private Collection; on extended loan to the Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London
Figure 1-3. James McNeill Whistler, *The Princess from the Land of Porcelain (La Princesse du pays de la porcelaine)*, 1863-1865, Freer Gallery of Art, F1903.91a-b
Figure 1-4. James McNeill Whistler, *Arrangement in Black: Portrait of F.R. Leyland*, 1870/3, Freer Gallery of Art, F1905.100a-b
Figure 1-5. James McNeill Whistler, *Symphony in Flesh Colour and Pink: Portrait of Mrs Frances Leyland*, 1871-1874, The Frick Collection, 1916.1.133
Figure 1-6. Speke Hall, Liverpool, 1867, photographed by M.W.H. Wilson, Liverpool Record Office and Local Studies Division
Figure 1-7. No. 49 Princes Gate (corner house at far left), Knightsbridge, London, ca. 1868-1869, photograph taken of Exhibition Road front, 1968, London Metropolitan Archives
Figure 1-8. Thomas Jeckyll, Norwich Gates, 1859/62, Photographed in 2002 at Dersingham Avenue, Sandringham, Norfolk, James Austin
Figure 1-9. Thomas Jeckyll, Stovefront with central fan, ca. 1878, Private Collection
Figure 1-10. Thomas Jeckyll, Pavilion, 1876, Photographed at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition, 1876, Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service: Bridewell Museum, NWHCM 1959: 118.35:B
Figure 1-11. Thomas Jeckyll, Addition to No. 1 Holland Park, London, 1870, photographed in 1893 by H. Bedford Lemere, National Monuments Record; Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England, London.

Figure 1-12. Thomas Jeckyll and James McNeill Whistler, Entrance Hall at No. 49 Princes Gate, 1875/76, photographed by Henry Dixon and Son, ca. 1890, Private Collection.

Figure 1-13. The dining room at Whistler’s house at No. 2 Lindsey Row, London, 1867/78, Library of Congress, Washington, DC, Prints and Photographs Division, Pennell Whistler Collection.

Figure 1-14. James McNeill Whistler, Harmony in Grey and Green: Miss Cicely Alexander, 1872-74, Tate Britain, N04622.

Figure 1-15. James McNeill Whistler, One of the Six Projects, ca. 1868, Freer Gallery of Art, F1903.177a-b.

Figure 1-16. James McNeill Whistler, Design for Wall Decoration for Aubrey House, 1873/74, Hunterian Art Gallery, University of Glasgow.

Figure 1-17. James McNeill Whistler, Entrance hall panel for No. 49 Princes Gate, 1876, Freer Gallery of Art, 04.472.

Figure 1-18. Peter R. Nelson, the Peacock Room as it may have appeared, October 1876, published in Linda Merrill, The Peacock Room: A Cultural Biography (1998).

Figure 1-19. James McNeill Whistler, Window Shutters in the Peacock Room, 1876/77, Freer Gallery of Art.

Figure 1-20. James McNeill Whistler, Peacock mural in the Peacock Room, 1876/77, Freer Gallery of Art.

Figure 1-21. James McNeill Whistler, Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket, 1875, Detroit Institute of Arts, 46.309.


Figure 1-23. E.W. Godwin, The White House (lost), 1877/78, drawing: Victoria and Albert Museum, E.544-1963.

Figure 1-24. ca. 1890 photograph of the Peacock Room by Henry Dixon and Son, London, Private Collection, Great Britain.

Figure 1-25. Richard Norman Shaw, Design for Ceiling of Drawing Room for 49 Princes Gate, 1879, Royal Academy of Arts, London, on loan from the Royal Institute of British Architects.

Figure 1-26. Richard Norman Shaw, 1892 photograph of enfilade through drawing rooms looking west, 49 Princes Gate, Photograph: Bedford Lemere, National Monuments Record.

Figure 1-27. Richard Norman Shaw, Morning Room (Tapestry Room) looking south-east, 49 Princes Gate, photograph 1892, Photograph: Bedford Lemere, National Monuments Record.

Figure 1-28. James McNeill Whistler, Portrait of Charles Lang Freer, 1902/3, Freer Gallery of Art, F1903.301a-b.

Figure 1-29. Wilson Eyre, Freer House at 71 East Ferry Avenue, Detroit, photographed in 1890, Charles Lang Freer Papers, Archives of the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, today the house is owned by Wayne State University.

Figure 1-30. Footprint showing various additions made to Freer’s home on Ferry Avenue during his lifetime, 1999, Brunk Architectural Archive, Detroit, Michigan.

Figure 1-31. The Peacock Room as it appeared in Detroit in 1908 with the pottery collection of Charles Lang Freer (recreated exactly by the Freer Gallery of Art, 2012).
Figure 1-32. Charles A. Platt, Plan of first floor, Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, ca. 1915, Avery Architectural Library, Columbia University, Charles A. Platt Collection
Figure 1-33. Charles A. Platt, Freer Gallery of Art, 1913-1923, Photographed in 1923, Platt Office Papers, Kenneth Clark Photographs

Figure 2-1. Thomas Jeckyll, Sunflower Andirons, 1876, Freer Gallery of Art
Figure 2-2. Thomas Jeckyll, Pavilion, 1876, Photographed at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition, 1876, Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service: Bridewell Museum, NWHCM 1959: 118.35:B
Figure 2-3. John Miller, Helianthus annus, from Illustratio Systematis Sexualis Linnaei, 1777, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew
Figure 2-4. Gherado Cibo, Heliotropo Magiore, 1565, British Library, London
Figure 2-5. Anthony Van Dyck, Sir Kenelm Digby, ca. 1635-1639, England, Private Collection
Figure 2-6. Anthony Van Dyck, Self-Portrait with a Sunflower, ca. 1635-1636, Private Collection
Figure 2-7. William Morris, Autumn, ca. 1873, Stained glass, Bridgeman Art Library, Cragside House, Northumberland
Figure 2-8a-c. Three images from Jeremias Drexilius, The Heliotropium, 1863 ed., Glasgow University Library, Department of Special Collections
Figure 2-9. Elihu Vedder, The Soul of the Sunflower, 1868, The Love Collection
Figure 2-10. Elihu Vedder, Sun-God fireback, 1886, Spencer Museum of Art, The University of Kansas, 1981 (81.105)

Figure 3-1. Daniel Marot, “New Mantelpieces in Dutch Style,” in Werken van D. Marot, Suite 11, pl. 2, engraving by Marot, ca. 1702, Cooper-Hewitt Museum, 1921.6.352(61).
Figure 3-2a. The leather originally behind La Princesse du pays de la porcelaine in the Peacock Room when at 49 Princes Gate, London, 1892, Freer Gallery of Art Archives, Charles Lang Freer Papers
Figure 3-2b. The original leather in the Peacock Room, visible behind the shelving, 1948, Freer Gallery of Art Archives
Figure 3-2c. The leather in the Peacock Room, photographed in raking light, ca. 1947, Freer Gallery of Art Archives
Figure 3-3. Engraving of the Porcelain Room at Charlottenburg, Berlin, ca. 1705, after Eosander von Göthe in M. Merian, Theatrum Europeii XVI and XVII, Frankfurt, 1717 and 1718, Staatliche Museen Preussisser Kulturbesitz, Kunstdbibliothek, Berlin.
Figure 3-4. Christof Pitzler, Porcelain Room at the Oranienburg Palace, engraving by Jean-Baptiste Broebes, published in Vues des palais et maisons de plaisance de Sa Majesté le Roy de Prusse, Augsburg, 1773
Figure 3-5. Pyramidal Shelving Unit from the Porcelain Room at the Oranienburg Palace, late seventeenth century, now in the Schloss Charlottenburg
Figure 3-6. Daniel Marot, Engraving of a “China Closet” from Nouveaux livres de Partements, published before 1702, British Museum
Figure 3-7. “View of Mirror and Porcelain Cabinet from the entrance side,” in Representation au naturel des châteaux de Weissenstein au desus de Pommersfelden, et celui de Geubach…, engraving by Salomon Kleiner, Augsburg, 1728.
Figure 3-8. Spiegel-kabinett, 1719, Schloss Weissenstein, Pommersfelden, Graf von Schönborn Kunstsammlungen
Figure 3-9. Lackzimmer at Monplaisir, St. Petersbourg, 1720/22, Schlossverwaltung Ludwigburg, Staatliche Schlosser und Garten, Ludwigburg
Figure 3-10. Antonio Rinaldi, Chinese Palace at the Oranienbaum, 1762/68, published in Dawn Jacobson Chinoiserie (1993)
Figure 3-11. Thomas Jeckyll and James McNeill Whistler, Detail of six mirrors in the Peacock Room between the three pairs of window shutters (the central pair of shutters is shown), 1876/77, Freer Gallery of Art
Figure 3-12. Jules Hardouin-Mansart and Charles Le Brun, Galerie des Glaces (Hall of Mirrors), palace of Louis XIV, Versailles, France, ca. 1680, Massimo Listri/Corbis
Figure 3-13. Trianon de Porcelaine, engraving by Petrus Schenk, ca. 1680, F.H. Hofmann, Das Porzellan, Berlin, 1932, p. 471
Figure 3-14. Proposal for the decoration of the Petite Galerie at Versailles drawn by Lassurance, 1684, published in Peter Thornton Seventeenth-Century Interior Decoration in England, France and Holland (1978)
Figure 3-15. Thomas Jeckyll, Interior Wall and Recessed Bay, Billiard Room, 1 Holland Park, London, ca. 1870/72, photographed in 1902, English Heritage, NMR BB86/4973
Figure 3-16. Thomas Jeckyll, Fireplace Wall and Recessed Bay, Billiard Room, 1 Holland Park, London, ca. 1870/72, photographed in 1902, English Heritage, NMR BB86/4972
Figure 3-17. James McNeill Whistler, Detail of glossy, lacquer-like finish on the woodwork and cove ceiling of the Peacock Room, 1876/77, Freer Gallery of Art
Figure 3-18. James McNeill Whistler, Peacock mural (L'Art et L'Argent) in the Peacock Room, 1876/77, Freer Gallery of Art
Figure 3-19. Whistler’s Drawing Room, No. 2 Lindsey Row, ca. 1867/78, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Pennell Whistler Collection
Figure 3-20. Lacquer box (toilet case), Momoyama or Edo period, Freer Gallery of Art, 07.106
Figure 3-21. Jeckyll’s shelving system in the Peacock Room, gilded by Whistler, 1876/77, Freer Gallery of Art
Figure 3-22. Detail of narrow strips of shelving on either side of Whistler’s Princesse painting, Freer Gallery of Art
Figure 3-23. Thomas Jeckyll, Overmantel for the Oak Parlour, Heath Old Hall, Heath, Yorkshire, ca. 1872/75, Leeds Museum and Galleries (Lotherton Hall), 1999.0047
Figure 3-24. Thomas Jeckyll, Design for Overmantel for the Oak Parlour at Heath Old Hall, Heath, Yorkshire, ca. 1872/75, Victoria and Albert Museum, National Art Library, Edward Green Papers, 86.ZZ.166 MSL/1999/85/3
Figure 3-25. Thomas Jeckyll, Overmantel in the Morning Room, 1 Holland Park, London, ca. 1870/72, photographed ca. 1897, British Library
Figure 3-26. Thomas Jeckyll, Detail of Overmantel in the Billiard Room, 1 Holland Park, London, ca. 1870/72, photographed in 1902, English Heritage, NMR BB86/4972
Figure 3-27. Richard Norman Shaw, Overmantel design for the drawing room at Sutton Place, Surrey, 1875, Royal Institute of British Architects, London
Figure 3-28. Zushi-dana, published in Kazuko Koizumi, Traditional Japanese Furniture (1986), 87
Figure 3-29. Kuro-dana, published in Kazuko Koizumi, Traditional Japanese Furniture (1986), 88
Figure 3-30. Sho-dana, published in Kazuko Koizumi, *Traditional Japanese Furniture* (1986), 88

Figure 3-31. Thomas Jeckyll and James McNeill Whistler, *Harmony in Blue and Gold: The Peacock Room*, Detail of shelving brackets, 1876/77, Freer Gallery of Art

Figure 3-32. Meditation stools, seventeenth century, Zhejiang province, China, Photo: Charles Wong

Figure 3-33. Thomas Jeckyll, Writing Table for Heath Old Hall, ca. 1876, Private Collection

Figure 3-34. Thomas Jeckyll, Sketch of his own writing desk, ca. 1876, Victoria and Albert Museum, National Art Library, Edward Green Papers, 86.ZZ.166 MSL/1999/8/6/1

Figure 4-1. Mosaic Pavement, House of the Drinking Contest, Roman, Antioch, third century A.D., Princeton University Art Museum, gift of the Committee for the Excavation of Antioch to Princeton University

Figure 4-2. Leonardo da Vinci, *Last Supper*, ca. 1495–1498, Refectory, Santa Maria delle Grazie, Milan, photo: Alinari/Art Resource

Figure 4-3. Raphael and Workshop, *Feast of the Gods*, 1518/19, Villa Farnesina, Rome, Alinari

Figure 4-4. Raphael and Workshop, Detail of fruit and vegetables in foliage borders of the ceiling frescoes in the Loggia of the Villa Farnesina, Rome, 1518/19, Alinari

Figure 4-5. Raphael and Workshop, View of the Loggia, Villa Farnesina, Rome, 1518/19, Photo: Scala, Florence

Figure 4-6. Raphael and Workshop, Detail of a pendentive showing Venus, Ceres, and Juno (with peacock attribute), Loggia, Villa Farnesina, Rome, 1518/19, Photo: Scala, Florence

Figure 4-7. Raphael and Workshop, Detail of Cupid holding the thyrsus of Bacchus, Ceiling fresco in the Loggia of the Villa Farnesina, Rome, 1518/19, Alinari

Figure 4-8. Raphael and Workshop, Ceiling fresco to the right of the Feast of the Gods, Loggia, Villa Farnesina, Rome, 1518/19, Alinari

Figure 4-9. Raphael and Workshop, Detail of Bacchus from the *Feast of the Gods* ceiling fresco, Loggia, Villa Farnesina, Rome, 1518/19, Alinari

Figure 4-10. Raphael and Workshop, Detail of conventionalized (non-decorous) imagery, Loggia, Villa Farnesina, Rome, 1518/19, Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei

Figure 4-11. Raphael, Plan of the Villa Madama, 16th century, Photo: Scala, Florence

Figure 4-12. Robert Adam, Eating Room, Osterley Park House, ca. 1766, Isleworth, England, National Trust

Figure 4-13. Osterley Park House, built 16th century, remodeled by Robert Adam 1760s, Isleworth, England, National Trust

Figure 4-14. Robert Adam, painted ceiling medallion showing Aglaia (an attendant of Venus) enslaved by Love, State Bedchamber, Osterley Park House, 1760s, National Trust

Figure 4-15. Robert Adam, Detail of ceiling in the Eating Room, Osterley Park House, 1760s, National Trust

Figure 4-16. Robert Adam, Detail of grapevine frieze over a door in the Eating Room, Osterley Park House, 1760s, National Trust, Photo: Charles Brownell

Figure 4-17. Robert Adam, Detail of Chimneypiece wall in the Eating Room, Osterley Park House, 1760s, National Trust

Figure 4-18. Robert Adam, Sideboard Table, Eating Room, Osterley Park House, 1760s, National Trust, Photo: Charles Brownell
Figures 4-19a-d. (a) a Roman marriage, (b) a wedding feast, (c) the birth of a baby, and (d) the sacrifice of a ram in thanksgiving; all from the Eating Room, Osterley Park House, 1760s, National Trust


Figure 4-21. Robert Adam, Lyre-back Chair, Eating Room, Osterley Park House, 1760s, National Trust, Photo: Charles Brownell

Figure 4-22. Robert Adam, Detail of Mosaic Top of Table, Eating Room, Osterley Park House, 1760s, National Trust, Photo: Charles Brownell

Figure 4-23. View of Robert Adam’s Eating Room at Osterley Park House showing a painting by Antonio Zucchi, ca. 1766, Isleworth, England, National Trust

Figure 4-24. Robert Adam, Detail of Plasterwork on the walls of the Eating Room, Osterley Park House, 1760s, National Trust, Photo: Charles Brownell

Figure 4-25a. Robert Adam, Laid-out wall elevations of the Eating Room, ca. 1763, Osterley Park, National Trust

Figure 4-26. Thomas Hope, Plate IX from Household Furniture and Interior Decoration (1807)

Figure 4-27. Alexander Parris, John and Elizabeth Wickham House, 1811/13, Richmond, Virginia, Valentine Museum, Photo: Charles Brownell

Figure 4-28. Doorcase, Dining Room, Wickham House, 1811/13, Richmond, Virginia, Valentine Museum, Photo: Charles Brownell

Figure 4-29. Detail of Doorcase frieze showing grapes and wheat, Dining Room, Wickham House, 1811/13, Richmond, Virginia, Valentine Museum

Figure 4-30. Detail of Doorcase capital showing wheat, Dining Room, Wickham House, 1811/13, Richmond, Virginia, Valentine Museum

Figure 4-31. Detail of ceiling plasterwork showing grapes, Dining Room, Wickham House, 1811/13, Richmond, Virginia, Valentine Museum

Figure 4-32. Detail of painted chimneypiece panel showing Silenus mask, Dining Room, Wickham House, 1811/13, Richmond, Virginia, Valentine Museum, Photo: Charles Brownell

Figure 4-33. Detail of painted panel opposite the chimneypiece, Dining Room, Wickham House, 1811/13, Richmond, Virginia, Valentine Museum

Figure 4-34. The Fourdinois Sideboard, published in The Great Exhibition: A Facsimile of the Illustrated Catalogue of London’s 1851 Crystal Palace Exposition (1851; Reprint, New York: Gramercy Books, 1995)

Figure 4-35. Joseph Alexis Bailly, Carved Walnut Sideboard, ca. 1855, Cleveland Museum of Art, 1985.72

Figure 4-36. Louis Majorelle, Buffet, ca. 1898, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, 73.46.2

Figure 4-37. Émile Gallé, Sideboard, 1903, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, 77.4

Figure 4-38. Sideboard in the Peacock Room, designed by Thomas Jeckyll, painted by James McNeill Whistler, 1876/77, Freer Gallery of Art

Figure 4-39. The Peacock Room in 1892 showing sideboard designed by Philip Webb, Photo: H. Bedford Lemere, National Monuments Record; Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England, London

Figure 4-40. William Burges, St. Bacchus Sideboard, 1858, Detroit Institute of Arts, F82.50.A

Figure 4-41. William Burges, Detail of Front face of the St. Bacchus Sideboard, 1858, Detroit Institute of Arts, F82.50.A
Figure 4-42. William Burges, Detail of “The Martyrdom of St. Bacchus” panel, St. Bacchus Sideboard, 1858, Detroit Institute of Arts, F82.50.A
Figure 4-43. William Burges, Detail of “Cyder” panel, St. Bacchus Sideboard, 1858, Detroit Institute of Arts, F82.50.A
Figure 4-44. William Burges, Detail of cat and mouse frieze, St. Bacchus Sideboard, 1858, Detroit Institute of Arts, F82.50.A
Figure 4-45. Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Co., Green Dining Room, South Kensington Museum, 1865, Victoria and Albert Museum, London
Figure 4-46. Philip Webb, Design for the decoration of the wall and cornice of the Green Dining Room, 1866, Victoria and Albert Museum, E.5096-1960
Figure 4-47. Baptismal Font, Newcastle upon Tyne Cathedral, 15th Century, Photo: Bolckow
Figure 4-48. Christopher Dresser, Plate VII (dining room decoration), published in Studies in Design (1874)
Figure 4-49. Thomas Allen, Banquet service plate, “Mutton,” ca. 1877, Collection of Author, Photo by Author
Figure 4-50. William Morris and Philip Webb, Peacock and Vine, embroidery, 1876, William Morris Gallery, London Borough of Waltham Forest
Figure 4-51. William Morris, Edward Burne-Jones, and J.H. Dearle, The Knights of the Round Table Summoned to the Quest by the Strange Damsel, from the Holy Grail Tapestries, originally 1890, this version from a set made 1898/99 for George McCulloch, Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery, 1980 M 60
Figure 4-52. Railings with hops, Gordon Biersch Brewery Restaurant, Washington, DC, Photo by Author
Figure 4-53. Door pulls in the form of barley, Gordon Biersch Brewery Restaurant, Washington, DC, Photo by Author

Figure 5-1. ca. 1890 photograph of the Peacock Room by Henry Dixon and Son, London, Private Collection, Great Britain
Figure 5-2. Thomas Jeckyll and James McNeill Whistler, Peacock Room, 1876/77, Freer Gallery of Art
Figure 5-3. Peter R. Nelson, the Peacock Room as it may have appeared, April 1876, published in Linda Merrill, The Peacock Room: A Cultural Biography (1998)
Figure 5-4. William Morris and Philip Webb, Peacock and Vine, embroidery, 1876, William Morris Gallery, London Borough of Waltham Forest
Figure 5-5. Thomas Jeckyll, Sunflower Andirons, 1876, Freer Gallery of Art
Figure 5-6. No. 49 Princes Gate (corner house at far left), Knightsbridge, London, ca. 1868-1869, photograph taken of Exhibition Road front, 1968, London Metropolitan Archives
Figure 5-7. Christof Pitzler, Porcelain Room at the Oranienburg Palace, engraving by Jean-Baptiste Broebes, published in Vues des palais et maisons de plaisance de Sa Majesté le Roy de Prusse, Augsburg, 1773
Figure 5-8. Richard Norman Shaw, 1892 photograph of enfilade through drawing rooms looking west, 49 Princes Gate, Photograph: Bedford Lemere, National Monuments Record
Figure 5-9. Richard Norman Shaw, Morning Room (Tapestry Room) looking south-east, 49 Princes Gate, photograph 1892, Photograph: Bedford Lemere, National Monuments Record
Figure 5-10. The Peacock Room in 1892, Photo: H. Bedford Lemere, National Monuments Record; Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England, London

Figure 5-11. Thomas Jeckyll and James McNeill Whistler, Entrance Hall at No. 49 Princes Gate, 1875/76, photographed by Henry Dixon and Son, ca. 1890, Private Collection

Figure 5-12. Frederick Leyland’s Study at 49 Princes Gate, London, ca. 1890, Photo: Henry Dixon and Son, London, Private Collection, Great Britain

Figure 5-13. ‘Court Cupboards’ (tables) along the window wall display tablewares during an English royal banquet given by Charles II for the Knights of the Garter, published in Elias Ashmole, The Institutions, Laws and Ceremonies of the Most Noble Order of the Garter (London, 1672), Victoria and Albert Museum

Figure 5-14. A.F. Desportes, Tablewares displayed on a French buffet, ca. 1700, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Figure 5-15. Giacomo Giovannini (after drawings by Marco Antonio Chiarini), A Setting for a Feast in Bologna, 1693, Archivio di Stato, Bologna

Figure 5-16. An Englishman’s Breakfast (note the blue and white china used on the table), ca. 1775(?), Toledo Museum of Art

Figure 5-17. Jean-Francois de Troy, At the Dressing-Table (note the blue and white vase on a gilded bracket near the top center of the image), ca. 1727(?), Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri

Figure 5-18. Arthur Devis, Mr and Mrs Richard Bull in their House at Ongar in Essex, 1747, New York University, Institute of Fine Arts

Figure 5-19. Speke Hall, Liverpool, 1867, photographed by M.W.H. Wilson, Liverpool Record Office and Local Studies Division

Figure 5-20. The Leyland plate, ca. 1870, Speke Hall, Liverpool, Photo: National Trust, England

Figure 5-21. Edward Linley Sambourne’s Drawing Room at 18 Stafford Terrace, London, Photo: ca. 1980, The Victorian Society, London

Figure 5-22. James McNeill Whistler, Plans for porcelain installation in the dining room at Aubrey House, 1873/74, British Museum, Department of Prints and Drawings

Figure 5-23. Thomas Jeckyll, Sideboard, Oak Parlor, Heath Old Hall, Yorkshire, ca. 1868, Private Collection, Christie’s Images, Ltd.

Figure 5-24. Thomas Jeckyll, Buffet, Dining Room, Heath Old Hall, Yorkshire, ca. 1865/67, Collection of Michael Day

Figure 5-25. W.H. Milnes, The Oak Parlor, Heath Old Hall, Yorkshire, published in Lady Mary Green, The Old Hall at Heath (1889), British Library

Figure 5-26. Thomas Jeckyll, Overmantel for the Oak Parlour, Heath Old Hall, Heath, Yorkshire, ca. 1872/75, Leeds Museum and Galleries (Lotherton Hall), 1999.0047

Figure 5-27. Thomas Jeckyll, Overmantel in the Morning Room, 1 Holland Park, London, ca. 1870/72, photographed ca. 1897, British Library

Figure 5-28. Thomas Jeckyll, Detail of Overmantel in the Billiard Room, 1 Holland Park, London, ca. 1870/72, photographed in 1902, English Heritage, NMR BB86/4972

Figure 5-29a. The leather originally behind La Princesse du pays de la porcelaine in the Peacock Room when at 49 Princes Gate, London, 1892, Freer Gallery of Art Archives, Charles Lang Freer Papers

Figure 5-29b. The original leather in the Peacock Room, visible behind the shelving, 1948, Freer Gallery of Art Archives
Figure 5-29c. The leather in the Peacock Room, photographed in raking light, ca. 1947, Freer Gallery of Art Archives

Figure 5-30. James McNeil Whistler, Entrance hall panel for No. 49 Princes Gate, 1876, Freer Gallery of Art, 04.472

Figure 5-31. Peter R. Nelson, the Peacock Room as it may have appeared, October 1876, published in Linda Merrill, *The Peacock Room: A Cultural Biography* (1998)

Figure 5-32. Michael Thonet, Chair, 1859 (designed) after 1859-1986 (made), Victoria and Albert Museum, MISC.76:1, 2-1980

Figure 5-33. Thomas Jeckyll, Sketch of a side chair, watermarked 1868, Collection of Stephen Lycett Green

Figure 5-34. Thomas Jeckyll, Chair, Oak Parlor, ca. 1867, Private Collection

Figure 5-35. Thomas Jeckyll, Sketch of sideboard for the Oak Parlor, ca. 1868, Victoria and Albert Museum, National Art Library, London, 86.ZZ.166

Figure 5-36. Thomas Jeckyll and James McNeill Whistler, *Harmony in Blue and Gold: The Peacock Room*, Detail of shelving, 1876/77, Freer Gallery of Art

Figure 5-37. Thomas Jeckyll and James McNeill Whistler, *Harmony in Blue and Gold: The Peacock Room*, Detail of ceiling, 1876/77, Freer Gallery of Art

Figure 5-38. Whistler’s Drawing Room, No. 2 Lindsey Row, ca. 1867/78, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Pennell Whistler Collection

Figure 5-39. James McNeill Whistler, *Symphony in Flesh Colour and Pink: Portrait of Mrs Frances Leyland*, 1871-1874, The Frick Collection, 1916.1.133

Figure 5-40. The dining room at Whistler’s house at No. 2 Lindsey Row, London, 1867/78, Library of Congress, Washington, DC, Prints and Photographs Division, Pennell Whistler Collection

Figure 5-41. E.W. Godwin, The White House (lost), 1877/78, drawing; Victoria and Albert Museum, E.544-1963

Figure 5-42. E.W. Godwin, The White House, elevation and section of the lower-studio/drawing room fireplace, 1878, Victoria and Albert Museum, E.543-1963

Figure 5-43. James McNeill Whistler and E.W. Godwin, *Harmony in Yellow and Gold: The Butterfly Cabinet*, 1877/78, Hunterian Art Gallery, Glasgow

Figure 5-44. The Butterfly Cabinet as displayed in the William Watt stand at the Exposition Universelle, 1878, Victoria and Albert Museum

Figure 5-45. George Aitchison, Design for the Front Drawing Room at 15 Berkeley Square, 1872/73, British Royal Architectural Library, London, Royal Institute of British Architects

Figure 5-46. Albert Joseph Moore, Cartoon for the Peacock Frieze at 15 Berkeley Square, 1872/73, Victoria and Albert Museum

Figure 5-47. “The Vain Jackdaw” from Walter Crane, *The Baby’s Own Aesop: Being Condensed in Rhyme with Portable Morals Pictorially Pointed*, W.J. Linton, trans. (1887; repr., Bath: Robert Frederick, 1994), 18-19


Figure 5-49. William Morris, Peacock and Dragon textile, 1878, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 30.95.52

Figure 5-50. Arthur Heygate Mackmurdo, title page for *Wren’s City Churches* (1883)
Figure 5-51. James McNeill Whistler, Detail of peacock mural in the Peacock Room, 1876/77, Freer Gallery of Art
Figure 5-54. Page 437 from Isabella Beeton, *The Book of Household Management* (1861; repr., New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 1977)
Figure 5-55. E.W. Godwin, Proposed decoration for dining room, Dromore Castle, County Limerick, Ireland, ca. 1869, British Architectural Library, Drawings Collection, RIBA, London, Ran 7/B/1 (67)
Figure 5-56. E.W. Godwin, Design for dining room sideboard and wall decoration, Dromore Castle, ca. 1869, British Architectural Library, Drawings Collection, RIBA, London, Ran 7/B/1 (73)
Figure 5-57. E.W. Godwin, Drawing for “Art Furniture” for Dromore Castle, 1869, British Architectural Library, RIBA, London
Figure 5-58. William Morris and Philip Webb, *Peacock and Vine*, embroidery, 1876, William Morris Gallery, London Borough of Waltham Forest
Figure 5-59. Walter Crane, Peacocks and Amorini frieze, 1878, Cooper-Hewitt Museum, 1955-144-10
Figure 5-60. Walter Crane, Peacocks and Amorini alternate frieze, 1878, published in “Gold Medal Wall-Paper Decorations,” *The Building News and Engineering Journal* (London) 36 (February 21, 1879): 198, 201-202
Figure 5-61. Walter Crane, Peacocks and Amorini fill wallpaper, 1878, Victoria and Albert Museum, E.4047-1915
Figure 5-62. Walter Crane, Peacocks and Amorini dado wallpaper, 1878, published in “Gold Medal Wall-Paper Decorations,” *The Building News and Engineering Journal* (London) 36 (February 21, 1879): 198, 201-202
Figure 5-63. Walter Crane, Peacocks and Amorini fill wallpaper (embossed and gilded leather version), 1878, Victoria and Albert Museum, E.14-1945
Figure 5-64. Christopher Dresser, Plate 27 from Christopher Dresser, *Modern Ornamentation* (1886)
Figure 5-65. George Aitchison, Chimneypiece (with painted decoration by Thomas Armstrong), Dining Room, No. 52 Princes Gate, London, ca. 1876, Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England photographs
Figure 5-66. George Aitchison, Detail of Pomona panel from the Chimneypiece in the Dining Room, No. 52 Princes Gate, London, ca. 1876, Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England photographs
Figure 5-67. George Aitchison, Detail of Picus panel from the Chimneypiece in the Dining Room, No. 52 Princes Gate, London, ca. 1876, Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England photographs
Figure 5-68. E.W. Godwin, The White House (lost), detail of door, 1877/78, drawing: Victoria and Albert Museum, E.544-1963
Figure 5-69. The White House, 35 Tite Street, Chelsea, London, after alterations were made by Henry Quilter, the building’s second owner, ca. 1879, Photo: ca. 1950s, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea Libraries and Arts Service, L/3206
Figure 5-70. E.W. Godwin, The White House (lost), detail of proposed sculptural additions, 1877/78, drawing: Victoria and Albert Museum, E.544-1963
Figure 5-71. E.W. Godwin, Northampton Guildhall (formerly Northampton Town Hall), 1861/64, Photographed in 1998, David Allison
Figure 5-72. E.W. Godwin, Capital depicting “Shoe-making” carved by Edwin White, Northampton Town Hall, vestibule, 1861/64, Photographed in 1998, David Allison
Figure 5-73. E.W. Godwin, Design for a Double-sided Wardrobe, 1883, Victoria and Albert Museum, PD E.
Figure 5-74. Thomas Jeckyll, Lilley Rectory, Lilley, Hertfordshire, 1870/1
a. West elevation (left), photographed ca. 1950s, Mr. Brian Taylor,
b. South elevation (right), photographed ca. 1956/63, Mr. and Mrs. D.W. Cree, Bedfordshire
Figure 5-75. Thomas Jeckyll, architectural bricks from a parapet at Lilley Rectory, 1870/1, Philip and Wendy Wolstencroft
Figure 5-76. Thomas Jeckyll, architectural brick formerly over the entrance door of Lilley Rectory, 1870/1, Photographed in 2002, Philip and Wendy Wolstencroft
Figure 5-77. Thomas Jeckyll, sketch of dragon candelabra, 1876, letter from Jeckyll to Edward Green, 29 February 1876, Victoria and Albert Museum, National Art Library, Edward Green papers, 86.ZZ.166 MSL/1999/8/5/1
Figure 5-78. Dining Room at Ken Hill, Norfolk, showing the relocated Oak Parlor overmantel of 1872/75 by Thomas Jeckyll, Photo: ca. 1890, Edward Lycett Green
Figure 5-79. Thomas Jeckyll, Holland Memorial Screen, Holland Park, London, 1871, Photographed in the late 1800s, Norfolk Record Office, BR 220/210 p. 14
Figure 5-79a. Detail
Figure 5-80. Thomas Jeckyll, Pavilion, 1876, Photographed at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition, 1876, Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service: Bridewell Museum, NWHCM 1959: 118.35:B
This dissertation uncovers three previously unrecognized innovations of Thomas Jeckyll in the Peacock Room. At the same time, the dissertation admits that sometimes James McNeill Whistler chose a more conventional path in the design of the room than previously acknowledged. The dissertation illuminates the often overlooked principle of Classical Decor, first described in the first century BC by Vitruvius, and analyzes how it was instituted in the Peacock Room. Four major points illustrate this conclusion.

First, the meaning of the sunflower in the West is explored to account for the flower’s popularity and absorption into ancient heliotropic lore. Thomas Moore’s poetry may have inspired Aesthetic Movement designers such as Jeckyll to use the motif. Second, this
dissertation demonstrates that the Peacock Room is only a distant descendant of the traditional European porcelain chamber. It was a new idea to turn the porcelain chamber into a dining room. Further, the room lacks two of the three key features of a porcelain room: lacquer panels and large plate-glass mirrors. When Whistler made the surfaces of this room dark and glossy, he made the room more traditional, aligning it with the customary lacquer paneling of porcelain rooms. And Jeckyll’s sho-dana shelving system in the Leyland dining room was without precedent in porcelain or other kinds of Western rooms, with influences from Japan and China.

Third, Decor in the dining room was revealed as an established pattern in eating rooms from Ancient Roman triclinia to the present day. Fourth, Decor is present in the Peacock Room in four ways: in the trappings of the table used to decorate a dining room, in the darkness of this dining room, in the use of a foodstuff, the peacock, to decorate the room, and in the hearth’s sunflowers.

Through the lens of the history of Western domestic interiors, significant innovations by Jeckyll have been brought to light, and the meaning of specific elements in the Peacock Room has been elucidated. Jeckyll and Whistler gave the world a sensational story in the Peacock Room but also a complex work of art that is only beginning to be illuminated.
Introduction

What if we were look at the Peacock Room (figure Intro-1) afresh? What if we viewed the Peacock Room as a place where both Thomas Jeckyll and James McNeill Whistler broke with tradition in some ways and adhered to it in others? What if we considered Jeckyll’s contributions to the room just as important as Whistler’s? We might find that in some cases it was Jeckyll who tried something new while Whistler adhered to tradition. This complicates the history of the room. We would no longer be able to oversimplify it by saying it was a stuffy Victorian hodgepodge salvaged and streamlined by a great modern painter. This dissertation argues four major points related to this theme.

First, this dissertation explores the history of the sunflower in the West. Jeckyll’s sunflowers in the Peacock Room (and elsewhere) (figure Intro-2) were contemporary, if not early, examples of this ubiquitous Aesthetic Movement symbol. Second, this dissertation argues that Jeckyll’s scheme for the Peacock Room descended from the European porcelain room tradition, as noted by many scholars, but rejected several of the fundamental features of such rooms. The function of the room as a dining room and the imitation of Japanese display shelving, for example, are two key differences. Third, the dissertation surveys the history of the
classical principle of Decor (where rooms are adorned in a manner that is appropriate to their use) in interior decoration in the West since Roman times, revealing the ubiquity of this principle. And fourth, the dissertation proposes that Decor is present in the Peacock Room in four ways: the use of dishes in the decoration of an eating room; the darkness of this dining room; the use of peacocks as symbols of feasting that decorate an eating room; and the sunflowers, which relate to fire and sun imagery, in the form of andirons in the hearth. The dissertation will show that the Peacock Room is rooted just as firmly in the history of Western interiors as it is linked to the East.

The most important and most recent study of the Peacock Room, published by Linda Merrill in 1998, was the first to scrutinize the room’s history and effectively sorts out its rumor-laden afterlife in the press and in the scholarly literature. Merrill provided a foundational work that continues to be indispensable fourteen years after its publication. As a specialist in British and American painting, Merrill was particularly effective in her analysis of the room in terms of Whistler’s painting career and how his relationships with other painters, such as D.G. Rossetti, informed his art. The present dissertation is envisioned as a companion volume to Merrill’s work which focuses more heavily on the place of the Peacock Room within the history of western interiors and even within the Classical tradition.

Since this project focuses more on the decorative arts and the history of interiors, Thomas Jeckyll figures prominently. Like Merrill’s singular work on the Peacock Room, Susan Weber Soros is the only author to have written a monograph on Jeckyll, in collaboration with Catherine Arbuthnott. Published nine years ago, Soros’s essential study lays out the milestones of Jeckyll’s life. Jeckyll was an internationally recognized English designer in Whistler’s social and artistic circle who succeeded both in mass-producing his work and in securing high-level patrons. But
Jeckyll’s positions on the norms of interior decorating in the 1870s are perhaps even more telling than Whistler’s since he focused more singularly on interior decoration than Whistler. The dissertation scrutinizes Jeckyll’s position in the history of the decorative arts, his significance in relationship to the Peacock Room, and his relationship to Japonisme more fully than previous studies.

Chapter One establishes the major players and gives an up-to-date history of the Peacock Room. The patron behind the room and Whistler’s first major patron, Frederick Richards Leyland, and his family are introduced, as well as their elaborate homes in Liverpool and London. Whistler’s career in the 1860s and 1870s, a period when the established etcher was already a budding painter and designer, is examined. Thomas Jeckyll is introduced as the original designer of the Leyland dining room. And finally Charles Lang Freer, Whistler’s most important later patron, is discussed as the room’s savior and preserver in the twentieth century.

Chapter Two analyzes Thomas Jeckyll’s sunflower andirons, a major contribution to the Peacock Room. Unlike Jeckyll’s tall, spindle-like walnut shelving, which was gilded by Whistler, the sunflower andirons were not altered once Jeckyll left the project. Chapter two explores the presence of sunflowers in western interiors starting with their importation into Europe after the discovery of the “New World.” This new flower quickly became part of the heliotropic lore of Classical Antiquity and, later, emerged as a prominent symbol of the Aesthetic Movement, partly due to Jeckyll. Scholars have yet to include the origin of this symbol in publications on the Peacock Room, and have only begun to credit Jeckyll with some of its popularity. This chapter brings the history of the sunflower, and its uses in art and literature,
into the discussion of the Peacock Room in order to understand how and why it became an important Aesthetic Movement symbol.¹

Beyond Jeckyll’s sunflowers, Chapter Three addresses the designer’s other, major contributions to the Peacock Room which were departures from the traditional European porcelain chamber. In 1984 David Park Curry argued that the Peacock Room is akin to a European porcelain chamber, but this dissertation argues that such rooms are only distantly related to the Peacock Room. First, the history of European porcelain rooms and their function is considered in order to show that the Leyland dining room was the first to combine massed porcelain with a dining room. Second, the history of porcelain chambers detailed in this chapter also reveals that European porcelain rooms were normally outfitted with Asian lacquer panels and large panels of plate glass, two key elements missing from the Peacock Room. In this instance it was Whistler, not Jeckyll, who made the room more like a traditional porcelain chamber by painting the room dark blue and gold. This coloring, and its glossiness in certain areas, has been likened to Asian lacquerware by both Linda Merrill and Deanna Marohn Bendix.²


Chapter three also addresses Jeckyll’s revolutionary shelving system (*figure Intro-3*) in the Peacock Room which differs markedly from those of traditional porcelain chambers. In such rooms ceramics were wall-hung, set on brackets, or placed on pyramidal shelves, not on staggered, rectilinear shelves as in the Peacock Room. Kazuko Koizumi’s detailed descriptions of different types of Japanese display shelving led to the argument presented in this dissertation that the Peacock Room shelves most closely resemble Japanese *sho-dana* (*figure Intro-4*), a type of display shelving with flat tops, square posts, and staggered shelves. Both the Peacock Room and the *sho-dana* share all three of these features. This dissertation also explains the presence and style of the bracketing of the shelves (*figure Intro-5*). Since these shelves do not have a closed, supportive base, as *sho-dana* would, additional brackets were needed to secure them. These brackets differed in style because they were an outside addition. Comparative analysis has revealed how the brackets of the shelves in the Peacock Room are Chinese in style. 3

The depth of each shelf was kept quite shallow for the display of porcelain because the shelving was installed on all four walls of the room. Once he had replaced Jeckyll as decorator, Whistler gilded the shelves to harmonize better with his new blue and gold color scheme. Despite the sparkling and ubiquitous presence of the shelves themselves, the origins of specific traits of the Peacock Room shelving have not been systematically identified, nor have Jeckyll’s specific and numerous breaks with the porcelain room tradition been acknowledged. 4

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4 Several authors have acknowledged the mixing of Japanese and Chinese furniture elements in Jeckyll’s and others’ work without addressing the specific features of the Peacock Room shelving. For example, Susan Weber Soros suggested that a writing desk designed by Jeckyll in 1876 (the same year he was working on the Peacock Room)
Chapter Four surveys the history of Decor in the dining room from ancient Rome to the early twentieth century to show how common the principle was throughout history and how easily it was adapted to different styles. Decor, first recorded by Vitruvius, is a Classical principle that means “rightness.” According to this principle, rooms should be decorated in a manner that relates to their nature and function. The principle can be easily understood and incorporated into the decoration of a room without knowing Decor by name and without studying any architectural theory. For this reason, Decor has had many names such as Character, Convenance, Propriety, and so on, and appears almost continuously throughout Western architectural writings. Appendices A and B, which chronicle the “Decor Do’s” and “Decor Don’ts,” respectively, testify to the ubiquity of this concept through the millennia. No scholar has touched upon the issue of Decor in the Peacock Room, despite the widespread use of it and the comments it has drawn from countless distinguished figures from Vitruvius to William Morris.

was inspired by Chinese models. In this explanation, Soros even used an illustration of Chinese display shelving to make her point but she failed to connect the Peacock Room shelving to either Chinese or Japanese examples. See Susan Weber Soros and Catherine Arbuthnott, Thomas Jeckyll: Architect and Designer, 1827-1881 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 181-182. In 2008, Hannah Sigur acknowledged the “Japonesque” quality of the Peacock Room’s shelving without taking the point any further. See Hannah Sigur, The Influence of Japanese Art on Design (Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith Publishers, 2008), 105. Lionel Lambourne, in his study of Japonisme (which includes several pages on the Peacock Room), was able to point out what he called the “strange mixture” of Chinese and Vietnamese features of an 1888 cabinet by Gabriel Viardot that is not all that dissimilar to the Peacock Room’s shelves, but Lambourne did not dissect the sources for the Peacock Room shelving. See Lionel Lambourne, Japonisme: Cultural Crossings between Japan and the West (London: Phaidon, 2005), 92-96, 99.

5 For a summary of the theory of the evolution of Decor (also called Character) see John Archer, The Literature of British Domestic Architecture, 1715-1842 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1985), 46-56. See also Georg Germann, Gothic Revival in Europe and Britain: Sources, Influences and Ideas, trans. Gerald Onn (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1973), 22-23, 37, 52; pt. 2, chap. 1; and 131, 183. Soros briefly mentioned Jeckyll’s relationship with Decor (though not by name) stating that Jeckyll sometimes ignored the normal nineteenth-century rules for the color-coding of rooms according to gender. She took the point no further, though, even when she noted Jeckyll’s use of Characteristic decoration in other projects. Soros, Thomas Jeckyll, 171. In addition, Soros and others have agreed that Jeckyll’s sunflower andirons in the hearth were Characteristic designs given the sunflower’s ties to fire and sun imagery, but the idea has not been brought into the Peacock Room scholarship.
Notable examples are examined in chapter four beginning with the mosaic pavement in an ancient Roman *triclinium* or dining room where the god of wine, Dionysus, defeats Herakles in a drinking contest (*figure Intro-6*). Raphael’s *Feast of the Gods* ceiling fresco (*figure Intro-7*) is included for its ties to food and drink, and its location in one of the banqueting spaces at the Villa Farnesina, as is Robert Adam’s Neoclassical dining room at Osterley Park House (*figure Intro-8*) outside London, replete with grapes and wine ewer decorations in stucco. Many more examples are surveyed from late nineteenth-century France, England and America, to show the popularity of *Decor* both immediately before and after the Peacock Room’s creation, and the persistence of the principle through such diverse styles as Gothic Revival, Renaissance Revival, Aestheticism, and Art Nouveau. In all cases, from ancient Rome to the early twentieth century, Decorous imagery was freely mixed with less specific motifs such as conventionalized flora. This chapter shows that this mixing was a standard practice throughout the centuries and that it did not render meaningless the undeniably Decorous imagery in such spaces.

Chapter Five proposes that the classical principle of *Decor* is present in the Peacock Room in four ways. The four examples of *Decor* are the use of dishes to decorate a dining room, the Victorian darkness of this dining room, the use of peacocks as symbols of feasting in an eating room, and the sunflowers, relating to fire and sun imagery, in the form of andirons in the hearth.

First, chapter five will examine the blue and white Kangxi porcelain collected by Leyland and the importance of its presence in his fashionable London dining room. Details of Leyland’s porcelain collection, its origin and exact nature, are elusive, and scholars have not touched upon the obviousness of using dishes to decorate a dining room. Ultimately, the porcelain pieces displayed in the dining room at 49 Princes Gate fit within a tradition of extravagant exhibitions
of ceramics, glassware and plate (or silver, in American English) in banqueting rooms and reception rooms centuries before the birth of the dining room in its modern sense. In addition to a history and analysis of such displays, chapter five also covers the meaning of blue and white porcelain in other domestic spaces.

Second, chapter five considers the darkening of the Leyland dining room initiated by Whistler. At the time, the dark dining room was a popular preference. Jeckyll’s plan (figure Intro-9) for the Leyland dining room was originally light in mass and in color, but the latter was suppressed by Whistler when he covered most of the surfaces of the room with peacock blue paint. This chapter shows that Jeckyll’s design choices from the 1850s to his work in the Leyland dining room reveal a preference for lighter dining rooms while Whistler’s design choices in his own homes of the 1860s, ‘70s, and ‘80s reveal a preference for darker dining rooms and lighter drawing rooms.

Third, chapter five argues that Whistler’s use of peacocks in the Leyland dining room is another example of Decor. Peacocks were brought into England and eaten by the Romans as early as the first century. They were historically presented at table and used to decorate eating rooms. The presence of peacocks in secular Western interiors is detailed in Appendix C in order to show their prominence through the ages. Late nineteenth-century household guides, published in many editions in England and America, show that the peacock was still associated with feasting even if it was rarely eaten in the period. Leading designers of the period such as Christopher Dresser, Walter Crane, E.W. Godwin, William Morris and Philip Webb also created designs for dining rooms that featured the peacock as appropriate decoration. In these examples the bird was interspersed with other foodstuffs or references to wine or agriculture. In fact, Whistler’s close colleague and friend, Godwin, used Decor throughout his career as detailed in
Appendix D. In addition, renowned Whistler scholar Margaret F. MacDonald has noted several documented instances where Whistler’s artistic sensibilities were foisted upon his apprehensive guests who were asked to dine on food that had been tinted and stained to harmonize with the dishes. It is clear that Whistler’s artistic activities extended to food and dining yet no connection has been made with Whistler’s decorative scheme for the dining room known as the Peacock Room. 

Fourth, Jeckyll’s sunflower andirons are discussed in chapter five as yet another example of Decor or Character. Their location in the fireplace is appropriate considering the connections between sunflowers, heliotropic lore, sun and fire imagery laid out in chapter two. Other Characteristic projects by Jeckyll are surveyed to reveal the designer’s relationship to this concept. Perhaps Whistler left Jeckyll’s sunflower andirons untouched because he recognized the significance of their placement in the hearth.

The Classical principle of Decor is a major theme in this dissertation, in part, because an overt awareness of this principle is lacking in modern scholarship on the decorative arts. Although writers on the decorative arts occasionally acknowledge instances where decoration relates to nature or function (as in the case of grapes in a dining room or an image of the god of fire, Vulcan, in a fireplace) such acknowledgements are generally quite brief and infrequent. Further, if Decor is recognized as being at work in a certain design, it is hardly ever mentioned by name. In fact, many historians of high style decorative arts tend not to comment the symbolism of motifs, preferring instead to concentrate on a connoisseur-like approach. At the opposite end of the spectrum are material culture studies which emphasize room and furniture

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6 For the popularity of slain animals as dining room decoration in the Victorian era see Kenneth L. Ames, Death in the Dining Room and Other Tales of Victorian Culture (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992). For information on Whistler’s dining and entertaining practices see Margaret F. MacDonald, Whistler’s Mother’s Cook Book (San Francisco: Pomegranate, 1995), 42.
use, as they relate to daily life. This dissertation takes a stance somewhere in the middle-ground, where high style elements of reform design are recognized in conjunction with function and use, as well as symbolic significance. A well-rounded study must encompass all of the above factors in order to truly understand a collaborative multimedia work of art such as the Peacock Room.

This dissertation forges this new path in the scholarship of the decorative arts that aims at a broader view. The integral components of this approach are the interpretation of symbols, an analysis of style, and an examination of use and function. Visual analysis is often the only way of grasping the Decorous elements of a given design since the principle of *Decor* is rarely recognized and when it is recognized it is generally not known by name. Figurative designs can often be easier to comprehend than abstract ones. For example, mythological figures and their attributes can usually be analyzed without much speculation or guesswork. Such a figure on, say, a piece of furniture or wallpaper may be an example of *Decor* if it can be considered an appropriate choice given the function of the piece or the room in which it is housed. The approach to unearthing Decorous designs is largely case-by-case, at least until the principle becomes more widely known and, perhaps, a more concrete method can be developed. The examples of *Decor* in the Peacock Room are not as obvious as the other examples analyzed in this dissertation. It is precisely for this reason that the principle must be more fully acknowledged in decorative arts scholarship. We, as historians, may be ignorant of key instances of symbolism in decoration that could significantly alter our understanding of works of art if we do not actively pursue the issue of *Decor*. In this dissertation, the analysis of *Decor*, as used by Jeckyll and Whistler, reveals much about the design approaches of both men and their contributions to the Peacock Room.
Ultimately, this dissertation will consider the work of Thomas Jeckyll and James McNeill Whistler on an equal footing. In some instances these two designers adhered to tradition and in other ways they broke with it. Jeckyll’s artistic choices in the room have been invisible for far too long while Whistler’s have been exalted. This oversimplification has blocked a deeper understanding of the significance of the Peacock Room. Instead of scoring each designer’s contributions in the room as in a contest, this dissertation recognizes the conservative and the revolutionary as put forth by both men. Through this examination, the history of this room is made more complex but truer. It will no longer do to sum up the Leyland dining room as a tedious Victorian mélange transformed into the scintillating Peacock Room by a Modern master. The chapters of this dissertation will bear out these points with new evidence not yet part of the room’s story. This evidence is not presented to diminish Whistler’s dazzling accomplishments in the room but, rather, to expand the significance of this important room in the history of Western interiors. Though it hardly seems possible, this dissertation shows that the Peacock Room was even more remarkable than we had imagined.
Chapter 1: The Tale of a Dining Room, Two Patrons, and Two Designers

In the Peacock Room scholarship we are repeatedly told that this dining room is one of the most important surviving interiors of the British Aesthetic Movement. In one account, the room matters because a framed painting by Whistler hung over the mantel and another was to be placed at the opposite end of the room. In other estimations, the Peacock Room is a masterpiece because Whistler transformed Jeckyll’s supposedly derivative porcelain chamber into a unified expression of Japoniste fervor. All agree that the room was obscured by scandal, that gossip and legend grew up around the room and distracted viewers from its true value as a work of art. Therefore, the room is sometimes portrayed as an artistic opportunity turned tragedy, but the interaction of these men produced a memorable work of art. What is truly remarkable about the Peacock Room is that this beautifully appointed dining room came about through collaboration and compromise. It is unique because it is a typical design for neither Jeckyll nor Whistler. And this pair of designers is bookended by two powerful patrons. Frederick Leyland commissioned the room and is therefore responsible for its existence, while Charles Lang Freer saved the room, preserving it for future generations. The tale of this dining room unfolds in the pages that
follow, detailing how it took four men to create it and maintain it, with many scandals along the way.  

The Peacock Room was created by the Englishman Thomas Jeckyll (1827-1881) and the American James McNeill Whistler (1834-1903) in the London home of Frederick Richards Leyland, a tycoon of the Liverpool shipping industry, and his wife Frances Dawson Leyland (1836-1910). Leyland was born in Liverpool on September 9, 1831, and was just three years Whistler’s senior. Little is known about his early life though his family had no great fortune or social status. In the 1850s Leyland gradually ascended the ranks of Messrs. Bibby, Sons, and Co., shipping firm, then in the process of upgrading their Mediterranean fleet to steam-powered ships. Leyland was apparently as bright as he was ambitious. He made partner at the firm by the mid-1860s and by the end of 1872 Leyland had completely bought out his Bibby family partners. Thereafter, he conducted the business under the Leyland name.  

In the late 1860s Whistler met Leyland through their mutual friend, the Pre-Raphaelite painter Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882), whom Whistler had known since 1862. After having achieved success earlier as an etcher, Whistler was beginning to make a name for himself as a painter in Paris and London. For example, in the spring of 1867 Whistler had six paintings on display in Paris between the Salon and the Exposition Universelle. Things had not gone as smoothly for the artist earlier in the decade. Whistler’s *Symphony in White, No. 1: The White*  

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8 For the most detailed and up-to-date accounts of the Peacock Room’s history and biographical information on Frederick Leyland see Linda Merrill, *The Peacock Room: A Cultural Biography* (Washington, DC: Freer Gallery of Art; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).
Girl (1862) (figure 1-1) caused somewhat of a scandal because of its lack of color and the popular interpretation that the young girl in the painting had recently been deflowered. It was rejected from London’s Royal Academy in 1862 and from the Paris Salon in 1863. It was ultimately shown in the Salon des Refusés with many other “rejects,” most notably Édouard Manet’s Déjeuner sur l’Herbe (1863). Whistler may not have intended for his painting to become infamous but the affair did garner the artist ample press attention. Whistler would controversially manipulate the media in many more scandals, including that of the Peacock Room, sometimes to his great advantage.

By all accounts, Whistler and Leyland enjoyed a close artist-patron relationship for several years. Leyland commissioned a painting (surviving only in one fragment and several studies) called The Three Girls (figure 1-2) from Whistler in 1867. Later, once the Peacock Room designs were underway, The Three Girls was intended as a focal point in the room along with La Princesse du pays de la porcelain (1863-1865) (figure 1-3) which was already completed when Leyland bought it to hang in his home by 1872. Whistler also completed a portrait of Frederick Leyland (figure 1-4) in the winter of 1873 and worked diligently on a carefully crafted, full-length portrait, Symphony in Flesh Color and Pink: Portrait of Mrs. Frederick R. Leyland (figure 1-5), between 1871 and 1877. The artist did numerous studies on paper of the Leyland children throughout the 1870s as well. Many of these were undertaken during long visits to Speke Hall (figure 1-6), the Leyland home outside Liverpool. Whistler and his mother repeatedly made trips there beginning as early as 1869.

While at Speke Hall, Whistler developed a romantic relationship with Leyland’s sister-in-law, Lizzie Dawson, and even proposed marriage to her in 1871. But the engagement was ended by Dawson in 1873. The cause of this break remains unclear. In addition to his involvement
with Dawson, Whistler is rumored to have had an affair with Leyland’s wife Frances, though this may be pure speculation. Rather than having an affair with Frances Leyland, Linda Merrill contends that Whistler sought to expose Frederick Leyland’s extramarital activities in order to break up his marriage to Frances. In a letter written on July 17, 1877, once their artist-patron relationship had sufficiently soured, Leyland wrote to Whistler, “it is clear that I cannot expect from you the ordinary conduct of Gentleman and I therefore now tell you that if after this intimation I find you in [Frances’s] society again I will publicly horsewhip you.” Whether Whistler was the cause or not, Frances and Frederick Leyland ultimately separated in the summer of 1879, though they would never actually obtain a divorce.9

The Leylands spent most of the year in Liverpool and traveled to London only during the social season, usually staying at the upmarket Alexandra Hotel. In 1868 they settled into their first London house at 23 Queen’s Gate, Kensington. The Leylands lived at Queen’s Gate only a few months out of the year. The purchase of a house for this purpose alone was a show of wealth and the interiors of the house reflected this spirit of luxury. Leyland intently concentrated on the decoration of this house, just as he would later at 49 Princes Gate (site of the Peacock Room). At Queen’s Gate, he commissioned leading artists Edward Burne-Jones (1833-1898), William Morris (1834-1896), and Rossetti to adorn every inch of his mansion. It would not be long before the home was overflowing with his collections. Soon an even grander palace was sought to provide more space for Leyland’s fine collection of furniture and paintings.

In July of 1874 Leyland bought the house at 49 Princes Gate (figure 1-7), London, where the famed Peacock Room would eventually come to life. Between the mid-1850s and the mid-1870s Charles James Freake (1814-1884) built ninety-five houses in Princes Gate and Princes

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9 For Merrill’s assessment of the nature of the relationship between Frances Leyland and Whistler see Merrill, Peacock Room, 282-283.
Gardens, the site formerly known as the Brompton Park Nursery (established 1681). Number 49 was among the largest houses Freake built in this neighborhood called Knightsbridge, midway between fashionable Kensington and the West End. It is unlikely that Freake actually designed these houses himself. Assistants such as James Waller, William Tasker, George Edwards, and W.H. Nash are the more likely candidates having all planned, surveyed, or designed for Freake at one time or another.\(^10\)

Freake’s houses had conservative, Italianate façades that appealed to upper class clients who could redesign the interiors however they pleased. The façade of number 49 and the other larger houses are less heavily decorated than the smaller ones; they are without such details as swags and round-arched windows. Leyland’s Number 49 had other advantages, though. As an end unit terrace, the house had windows on three sides instead of two, and the eastern side of the house opened onto the parkland of Princes Gardens via a terrace. As one of the most formal rooms of the house, the dining room (soon to be the Peacock Room) occupied the prime location, its three large windows opening onto the terrace with its view of the park. Along with number 52, Leyland’s number 49 would have the most elaborate interiors of the lot.

The first owner of number 49 was Charles Somers, 3rd Earl Somers, who lived in the house between 1869 and 1874 (having bought it directly from Freake). When he sold the house to Leyland in 1874, the sale included number 68 Princes Gate Mews (the coach-house). Somers was known to be extravagant with interior decoration but no one has been able to specify any changes he made at number 49.

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In 1875 Leyland set about remodeling the interior of his new London home at Princes Gate. Because of the redecoration, Leyland probably did not live in the home until 1876. In most of the public rooms of the house Leyland’s extravagance reputedly came in the form of Renaissance and Baroque styling, for example, via paintings by Botticelli and chairs by Chippendale. He hired designer Thomas Jeckyll to work on the hall, dining room, and study. This choice may have been based on a recommendation from Murray Marks, the dealer from whom Leyland had been buying Kangxi porcelain since about 1870. Whistler and Rossetti had also dealt with Marks for several years by this time and had their own collections of blue and white porcelain.\footnote{Detailed descriptions of the artwork and antique furniture in the Leyland home at 49 Princes Gate are found in the article: Theodore Child, “A Pre-Raphaelite Mansion,” Harper’s New Monthly Magazine 82 (Dec. 1890): 81-82; cited in Merrill, Peacock Room, 147. Merrill maintains that this article was written with the help of F.R. Leyland, it is a matter for debate whether the information in the article is exaggerated or factual. Susan Weber Soros contends that Leyland’s study contained “a Renaissance cassone, a Louis XIV bureau, Chippendale chairs, and baroque inlaid cabinets of German and Italian origin,” though it is unclear what the source for this information is or if Soros is basing her descriptions on the extant 1892 photograph of the study at 49 Princes Gate. See Susan Weber Soros and Catherine Arbuthnott, Thomas Jeckyll: Architect and Designer, 1827-1881 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 191.}

Jeckyll hailed from Wymondham, Norwich, but had moved to London 1858 and found success there. Jeckyll worked in many arenas. He was an architect, he restored numerous churches, and he designed furniture and interiors. He was best known for his works in metal some of which could be industrially-produced for an elite clientele. His first major success in this field was the Norwich Gates (1859-62) (figure 1-8) shown at London’s International Exhibition of 1862. Jeckyll was also known for his Japonesque stove fronts (figure 1-9) and accessories which he began designing in the 1870s, often with Asian-inspired patterns. In addition, Jeckyll designed larger scale metalwork pieces influenced by Asian art like the pavilion (figures 1-10 and 1-10a) he sent to the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia. Done in the same year Jeckyll began the Peacock Room, the pavilion’s railing consisted of rows of
sunflowers nearly identical to the sunflower andirons of the Peacock Room. Another major commission of Jeckyll’s was the design of an entire wing added in 1870 at Alexander Constantine Ionides’s 1 Holland Park home (figure 1-11), London. Ionides was a wealthy Greek art collector and merchant whom Jeckyll knew through his associations with Whistler in the early 1860s.\textsuperscript{12}

In 1875, Leyland asked Whistler to contribute to Jeckyll’s decoration of the entrance hall (figure 1-12) and dining room at 49 Princes Gate. Prior to this commission Whistler had decorated several important interiors including what Deanna Marohn Bendix called his first Aesthetic house for himself at No. 7 Lindsey Row (now 101 Cheyne Walk) between 1863 and 1867. In this house and his next home down the street, No. 2 Lindsey Row (figure 1-13) (now 96 Cheyne Walk) where he lived until 1878, Whistler created spare, clean spaces where single colors dominated huge expanses of wall or ceiling and Oriental objects like fans, screens and china were placed sporadically about the rooms. A segment of the drawing room at No. 2 was recorded by the artist in the \textit{Symphony in Flesh Colour and Pink: Portrait of Mrs. Frederick R. Leyland}, 1871-77, and Whistler’s \textit{Harmony in Grey and Green: Miss Cicely Alexander} (figure 1-14), 1872-74, records a portion of the studio. Several photographs also survive. Whistler’s \textit{Six Projects} (figure 1-15), begun ca. 1868, may have been planned initially as decorative panels for Leyland’s house at Queen’s Gate but they were later installed in the dining room at 21 Cheyne Walk. In 1872 Whistler was commissioned by the South Kensington Museum (now the Victoria and Albert Museum) to paint two figures which were to be translated into mosaics and installed in alcoves in the south court of the library but the project was never realized. 1873 color schemes (figure 1-16) and drawings survive for several rooms Whistler designed for Aubrey

\textsuperscript{12} For the most comprehensive and current study on Thomas Jeckyll’s life and work see Susan Weber Soros and Catherine Arbuthnott, \textit{Thomas Jeckyll: Architect and Designer, 1827-1881} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).
House, which belonged to the London banker William Cleverly Alexander, and written descriptions of the decoration at Whistler’s first solo exhibition at the Flemish Gallery, Pall Mall, in 1874 survive. The exhibition included two shades of yellow matting on the floor, chairs and couches covered in light maroon cloth, upper part of walls tinted with maroon, with the lower part creamy white, blue pots with plants and flowers on steps and ledges, and a thin white blind making the light from the roof less harsh. After his work at 49 Princes Gate from 1875 to 1877 Whistler would go on to design many domestic interiors and exhibition spaces.13

At 49 Princes Gate, Whistler decorated the entrance hall and staircase, said to be done in “shades of willow.” The elaborate staircase had been brought in from Northumberland House by Leyland. He bought it at a September 1874 auction, just after the house was demolished. Leyland undoubtedly relished its ties to the Percys who were among the greatest members of the British aristocracy. The stairs were marble and the railing was ormolu (pounded or ground gold). The paneling (figure 1-17) above the dado was painted pale green and art was displayed in golden frames there. A subsequent owner of the house dismantled the decoration in the entrance hall but sold the panels which are now in the collection at the Freer Gallery. The panels, coupled with photographs of the hall as it was in Leyland’s time, give a sense of what it looked like.

Just as they had collaborated in the hall, Whistler and Jeckyll continued to work together in the dining room at 49 Princes Gate. It was again Leyland who asked Whistler to help Jeckyll with the decoration of the dining room. It has been reported that Jeckyll was indecisive about how to paint the doors and shutters by the end of April 1876. Essentially, this room was

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conceived as a showroom for Leyland’s prized collection of blue and white porcelain from China. Jeckyll constructed an architectural shell inside the room in order to include such features as the curving ceiling that gracefully bends downward into a point with each pendant light. This construction is what enabled the subsequent owners of the house to dismantle the Peacock Room and sell it. Jeckyll’s original vision was a brightly-colored scheme, where multi-colored flowers dotted the yellow-toned, leather wall hangings amidst warm walnut woodwork and window shutters. Leyland likely bought the leather from Murray Marks. The leather was believed to be sixteenth century Spanish leather imported into England by Catherine of Aragon. It is generally accepted today that the leather most likely came from Catton Hall, Old Catton, Norfolk, and is of eighteenth-century Dutch origin. Susan Weber Soros and Catherine Arbuthnott contend that Jeckyll’s light yellow color scheme was an innovative move on Jeckyll’s part because it bucked the dominant trend of the dark dining room. Jeckyll carried out similarly light dining rooms at other houses like Wattlefield Hall, discussed in more detail in chapter 5.¹⁴

By summer’s end 1876, Jeckyll was ill and no longer part of the project. Thus, Whistler’s involvement began as a simple consultation, but quickly transformed into a complete take-over. Much has been made of Jeckyll’s mental deterioration, documented through his incoherent letters, and ultimate institutionalization. The dramatic version of the story has the designer going mad over his artistic failings at Princes Gate and concludes with his untimely death in 1881. In reality, we may never know the extent to which his mental state and his artistic endeavors were related, if at all. Certainly this chain of events has fueled the sensationalism associated with the infamous room.

¹⁴ For a description of the leather and the earlier erroneous assessments of it see Soros, Jeckyll, 194; and Merrill, Peacock Room, 193-194. For Soros’s assessment of Jeckyll’s unorthodox approach to the traditional gendering of rooms by color see Soros, Jeckyll, 171.
Once Whistler was the sole designer for the room, his plans became more and more elaborate. At first, he tried to work with Leyland’s leather wall-hangings. He meticulously painted out certain colored flowers, one by one, in an effort to make the walls harmonize better with his painting over the mantel (figure 1-18). Whistler also gilded Jeckyll’s carved walnut shelves and painted blue and gold peacocks on the window shutters (figure 1-19). As he was carried away by his peacock-inspired, blue and gold vision, Leyland was away from the house, unaware of the artist’s activities. Adding insult to injury, Whistler paraded various members of society and the press through the room in the fall of 1876 as though it were his own house, not Leyland’s. Tensions came to a head in late October and early November in the infamous flurry of letters exchanged between Whistler and Leyland, disputing the matter of payment for the Peacock Room project. Whistler wanted two thousand guineas for his expanded designs, but since Leyland had not asked for them in the first place he paid only half that amount. To make matters worse, Leyland paid Whistler in pounds. Pounds were worth slightly less than guineas but, more to the point, they were traditionally used to pay tradesmen, not fine art painters accustomed to receiving guineas. Whistler grudgingly accepted the payment, on the condition that Leyland permit him to continue his work on the room and carry out his vision of it for the next few months.

And that he did, coating the expensive leather wall coverings in deep, peacock blue paint, finally obliterating Jeckyll’s cheery color scheme altogether. Whistler also adorned the wall opposite the Princesse painting with a mural of two dueling peacocks (figure 1-20), regarded by scholars as Whistler (the poor peacock) on the left and Leyland (the rich, raging peacock) on the right with coins at his feet. This was the spot in the room where The Three Girls (now lost) was to have hung. Whistler never completed that painting and may have even destroyed it in
bitterness and rage. Whistler completed the Peacock Room on March 5, 1877, and never returned to 49 Princes Gate.

The years immediately following the completion of the Peacock Room were tumultuous ones for Whistler that unfortunately included more quarrels with Leyland and others. The Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket (1875) (figure 1-21), a nearly abstract canvas full of explosive color, was exhibited at London’s Grosvenor Gallery in 1877. It became a sensation that July when the well-known art critic John Ruskin published his thoughts on the painting. Ruskin contended that Whistler was essentially “flinging a pot of paint in the public’s face” with this work. The insult led Whistler to sue the critic for libel and seek one thousand pounds in damages. Whistler’s intentions to seek legal action were known publicly within weeks of Ruskin’s remarks but the actual trial did not take place until late November 1878. Burne-Jones, who counted Leyland among his chief patrons at the time, served as a witness for Ruskin. In preparation for his time in court, Burne-Jones wrote letters to Leyland asking about Whistler paintings that Leyland had paid for but never received. In the end, Whistler won his suit but was awarded only a farthing (an insultingly trivial sum) in damages. The artist had been publicly vindicated but legal costs as well as debts that had been accruing in the preceding years nearly destroyed Whistler.

In May 1879 Whistler petitioned for bankruptcy. On June 4 he attempted to resolve his financial woes by meeting with sixteen of his creditors, Leyland chief among them. Leyland had the right to be present as a creditor since Whistler still had possession of the portraits of Mr. and Mrs. Leyland, and their daughter Florence, all of which had been paid for years earlier. It would be early summer 1879 before Whistler finally turned them over to Leyland. One unfinished work Whistler would not part with was The Three Girls despite its being commissioned and paid
for by Leyland ten years prior. Whistler kept *The Three Girls*, the large painting once destined for the Peacock Room, and left it unfinished at the time of the auction. In its unfinished state, Whistler knew that a value could not be adequately placed on the work and it would not be sold to Leyland or anyone else. The ultimate fate of *The Three Girls* may never be known.

Leyland’s involvement in Whistler’s financial business stung because Whistler attributed much of his difficulty to the Peacock Room scandal. *The Gold Scab: Eruption in Frilthy Lucre* (*The Creditor*), 1879, (figure 1-22), which shows Leyland as a hideous peacock monster sitting atop Whistler’s White House, painfully recorded Whistler’s feelings toward his former patron. One might mistake the painting as a small work because of its disgusting caricature of Leyland, but it is as large as it is hideous. At just over six feet tall and more than four feet wide, the venomous caricature rivals in size the legitimate portrait of Leyland that Whistler had painted a few years earlier. (The previous painting is just over seven feet tall and not quite four feet wide). *The Gold Scab* is also surrounded by one of the artist’s custom-designed golden frames with hand-painted patterns. The amount of time that Whistler must have spent on this large and detailed painting shows that it was quite meaningful to the artist, though it was certainly not a “labor of love.”

In reality, most of Whistler’s debt had mounted in relation to the construction of his White House (figure 1-23) on Tite Street, Chelsea, not from the Peacock Room scandal. The White House was an austere, avant-garde studio house that the artist had commissioned for himself from the architect E.W. Godwin (1833-1886) in 1877. The house was completed in 1878 but it had to be auctioned off mid-September 1879 along with most of Whistler’s other possessions to pay down his debts. Despite the embarrassment of the auction, Whistler’s creditors voted and agreed to spare the artist the humiliation of being labeled a bankrupt, a title
he would have kept until he paid off all of his debts. Instead, the creditors “Liquidated by Arrangement.” The remainder of Whistler’s works was auctioned off at Sotheby’s in February 1880. Whistler’s star was on the rise, though, and he avoided the unpleasantness of financial scandal by traveling to Venice where he had been commissioned to do a series of etchings. Important commissions and international honors laid ahead for Whistler after this dark period.

Despite the disastrous end to the personal and professional relationship Whistler and Leyland shared and Leyland’s subsequent remodeling of the house, photographs from the early 1890s reveal that Leyland kept the Peacock Room intact during his lifetime (figure 1-24). In 1879 it was probably Murray Marks who suggested that Leyland commission Richard Norman Shaw (1831-1912) to remodel his drawing rooms since Jeckyll was unwell. Shaw worked on the house from 1879 to 1880, but at this time his work was confined to the drawing rooms on the first floor (Whistler and Jeckyll had worked on the ground floor). The ceiling pattern (figure 1-25) and distinctive pendant lights (figure 1-26) Shaw placed in these drawing rooms were apparently a variation on Jeckyll’s distinctive ceiling and light fixtures in the Peacock Room. In 1885 Leyland hired Shaw again to redecorate the Morning Room (also known as the Tapestry Room) (figure 1-27) on the ground floor. The work was completed in 1886, but again Shaw was not permitted to touch the hall or dining room that had been done by Jeckyll and Whistler.\footnote{For information on Richard Norman Shaw’s work at 49 Princes Gate and his relationship to Murray Marks see Merrill, Peacock Room, 157-158, 169, 294-295. For more on Shaw’s work at Princes Gate as well as his life and work in general see Andrew Saint, Richard Norman Shaw, rev. ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).}

After Frederick Leyland’s death in 1892, the house at 49 Princes Gate stood empty for two years until Blanche Watney bought it in 1894. Watney would leave the Peacock Room in place for another ten years. La Princesse du pays de la porcelaine, the painting which had hung over the mantel of the Peacock Room, was the first part of the room obtained by Charles Lang
Freer (1854-1919), Whistler’s most important patron. Freer (figure 1-28) bought this painting in the summer of 1903, only a month after Whistler’s death that July. In early 1904 Watney decided to dismantle the rest of the room and sell it, exhibiting it at the Obach and Company Galleries, London. Obach’s Gustav Mayer contacted Freer on January 26, 1904, with an offer to sell him the Peacock Room since it was well-known that Freer was a major Whistler collector who already owned the Princesse. Freer was reluctant to purchase the entire room, though, in part because of his distaste for blue and white porcelain but also because of the difficulty of breaking down and transporting an entire room. Freer and Mayer corresponded on the matter for the next few months. Early in the negotiations, Freer offered to buy the peacock mural and shutters without the rest of the room. He emphasized the beauty of Whistler’s painted surfaces in the Peacock Room but admitted that he had never liked the “architectural design of the shelving and ceiling.” On this matter Freer even sought the advice of Rosalind Birnie Philip (1873-1958), Whistler’s sister-in-law and the executor of his estate. Predictably, as someone with a vested interest in the deceased artist’s reputation, Philip convinced Freer to purchase the whole room. Freer bought the Peacock Room on May 16, 1904, during a special visit to London undertaken just to see the room. To the delight of all parties involved, the room was surprisingly easy to dismantle since Jeckyll had created a “room within a room,” or an architectural shell within the structure of the house. In August and September 1904 the Peacock Room was finally on its way to its new home in Detroit, Michigan.

In 1890 Freer commissioned the house at 71 East Ferry Avenue (figure 1-29), Detroit. He hired the Philadelphia architect Wilson Eyre (1858-1944) to design it, and throughout the early 1890s several American artists collaborated with Freer and Eyre on its interior and exterior detailing. Frederick S. Church (1842-1924), Thomas Wilmer Dewing (1851-1938), Abbott
Handerson Thayer (1849-1921) and Dwight W. Tryon (1849-1925) not only worked closely with Freer on commissioned paintings for the house but also collaborated on various aspects of the house’s interiors. Freer would come to favor Dewing, Thayer, and Tryon especially for the similarities he saw between their works and those of Whistler. Freer considered their subtle color harmonies to be in tune with Whistler’s and, just like Whistler, these American painters had the same intensely-detailed approach to interior decoration. Freer amassed a substantial collection of Dewing, Thayer, and Tryon paintings which, along with Whistler’s works, represent the bulk of the American collection at the Freer Gallery of Art today.¹⁶

In the summer of 1904, after he had bought the Peacock Room that May, Freer turned again to Eyre to design the new structure that would house it. Freer had already been planning to convert his carriage house into an art gallery for his growing collection, and now that the Peacock Room would be coming to Detroit he added a room on the west end of the building for it. This structure (figure 1-30) was in the midst of Freer’s carefully planned garden, making the view from inside the Peacock Room, whether intentionally or not, reminiscent of the view of Princes Gardens from the dining room at 49 Princes Gate. Unfortunately, Eyre became ill in 1904 (though he corresponded regularly with Freer on the progress of the job). Eyre left it to his representatives to complete the work at Freer’s house even after he had regained his health late in 1905. The construction was finally completed in April 1906 and the Peacock Room was installed in its new home where it would remain for over a decade. The only major difference between how the Peacock Room appeared in London and how it appeared in Detroit was the

¹⁶ For detailed information on the construction, decoration and remodeling of Charles Lang Freer’s house at 71 East Ferry Avenue, Detroit, see Thomas W. Brunk, The Charles L. Freer Residence: the Original Freer Gallery of Art (Detroit: University of Detroit Mercy School of Architecture, 1999).
pottery. Freer preferred multi-colored, glazed earthenware pieces from the near and far east (figure 1-31) instead of the crisp blue and white Kangxi porcelain favored by Leyland.17

A month after the construction was finished, on May 5, 1906, the deed for Freer’s collection to be given to the nation was executed. Freer was to keep his collection and add to it until his death. Once Freer died, it would become property of the United States government. All of the American and Asian art Freer possessed (including the Peacock Room) would be installed in a museum in Washington, DC, as part of the Smithsonian Institution. In 1913 Freer commissioned the architect Charles A. Platt (1861-1933) to design the museum (figure 1-32). Ever since their first meeting in the early 1890s (through their mutual friend Tryon) Freer had often recommended Platt for many projects including some in Detroit and in Washington, DC. It would be ten years before the Freer Gallery project was completed, though, as men and materials were hard to secure during World War I. So Freer would never see his museum realized or even set foot in the building.18

Freer died on September 25, 1919, and the Peacock Room was dismantled and shipped to Washington that December. It would be four more years before the rest of the Freer collection was sent to Washington and the museum was completely finished under Platt’s direction (figure

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17 Photos taken in 1908 of the Peacock Room as installed in Detroit reveal that Freer also installed different andirons in the hearth, added a central seventeenth-century walnut table Freer bought in Detroit, and in 1907 wrought iron grills were installed over the doors and windows of the Peacock Room for additional security. For more information on these changes and additions see Brunk, Freer Residence, 90. The changes and additions Freer made were the subject of a reinstallation of the Peacock Room at the Freer Gallery of Art in 2011 (based on the 1908 photographs) where Freer’s own glazed earthenware pots were placed on the room’s shelving instead of the traditional blue and white Kangxi porcelain that is usually in the room and is in the style of the pots Leyland collected (Leyland’s collection was dispersed and sold upon his death in 1892). See the exhibition catalogue for more details: Lee Glazer, The Peacock Room Comes to America (Washington, District of Columbia: Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, 2012).

The Freer Gallery of Art opened its doors on May 9, 1923, and has the distinction of being the first art museum of the Smithsonian Institution. The Peacock Room, nearly fifty years old at the museum’s opening, was finally open to the public for the very first time.

The Peacock Room is one of the most significant extant British Aesthetic Movement dining rooms. For some, the room stands out as the home of Whistler’s *Princesse* and the dueling peacock mural. Others are impressed by Whistler’s glittering surfaces and dramatic dark blue paint. The *Harmony in Blue and Gold* can be admired on purely Aesthetic terms, or the blue paint of its walls can remind viewers of Whistler’s brazen actions and the quaint flowers he hid underneath. In either case, and despite the tragedy of Jeckyll’s mental illness, and the tortured relationship between Leyland and Whistler, these three men produced an unforgettable interior. A fourth man, Charles Freer, was needed to preserve the room as the work of art that it truly is. The Peacock Room was born out of a spirit of collaboration that met with unusual circumstances and clashing personalities. By building off of each other’s work, Jeckyll and Whistler made something neither man could have designed alone. They needed each other just as they needed their patrons, Leyland and Freer. Without them, this room would be just another period photograph along with some newspaper headlines. It took two designers and two patrons to produce and care for the Peacock Room. And in spite of all the discord along the way, the tale of this dining room recounts the details of a unique and complex harmony.
Chapter 2: Thomas Jeckyll’s Sunflowers: Out of the Shadows

For more than a century Thomas Jeckyll was a neglected, mysterious figure in the history of the Peacock Room. Worse than that, his contributions to the room were repeatedly overshadowed by those of Whistler, the more famous artist then and now, and even criticized by the same scholars who sought to bring Jeckyll back into the room’s narrative with some dignity. Part of the reason for Jeckyll’s supposedly questionable role as a designer in the Peacock Room was that Whistler literally painted out and concealed some of Jeckyll’s contributions, obscuring forever his original vision for the room. Another reason for Jeckyll’s secondary position has to do with the difficulty of categorizing an interior that has surfaces created by a famous modernist painter. Since no other examples of Whistler’s decorative work survive, the room has often been analyzed by painting scholars and considered in terms of Whistler’s paintings. Because of this, the room’s importance in the history of the decorative arts (and thus Jeckyll’s significance) has been overlooked. Additionally, at the time of the Peacock Room’s construction, Jeckyll was already beginning to show signs of mental distress and ultimately abandoned his work at 49 Princes Gate for the asylum. The Peacock Room was his last major work before his death in 1881. Sadly and unfairly, the impressive career of this prolific designer was drastically reduced.
Jeckyll, the supposedly second-rate designer gone mad, became just another footnote in a string of Peacock Room scandals.\textsuperscript{19}

Fortunately, the scholarship on Thomas Jeckyll is slowly germinating and the view of Jeckyll as an important Aesthetic Movement designer and architect is beginning to infiltrate published works. Much research and analysis is yet to be done, though. This chapter and the one that follows it will elucidate major contributions made by Thomas Jeckyll in the Peacock Room to show his inventiveness and his impact on the broader movements of Aestheticism and Japonisme.\textsuperscript{20}

Given Jeckyll’s obscurity in the writing on the Peacock Room, it is no surprise that his golden sunflower andirons (figure 2-1) have not been fully understood. When the pair is discussed, writers often mention the way Oscar Wilde opined on the sunflower’s beauty or the sunflower’s popularity to the point of ubiquity during the Aesthetic Movement. Such characterizations are near clichés to Peacock Room scholars, and yet, no one has put forth an interpretation as to why these flowers were used in the room’s hearth.\textsuperscript{21}


\textsuperscript{20} The sunflower andirons in the Peacock Room today are not the original pair but were acquired by the Freer Gallery of Art in 1983 and the matching fire-basket was acquired in 1995 according to Merrill, \textit{Peacock Room}, 35.

\textsuperscript{21} Linda Merrill has acknowledged that Jeckyll was indeed a popularizer of the sunflower, but she argues that the sunflower became an Aesthetic Movement symbol because of its “leonine beauty” and because its natural form could be maintained while also looking like a Japanese \textit{mon} (family crest). She cites Oscar Wilde as the figure who articulated this point of view: Oscar Wilde, “The English Renaissance of Art,” in \textit{Essays and Lectures} (1908; reprint, New York, 1978), 154; cited in Merrill, \textit{Peacock Room}, 201, 372n57. Soros made use of the same quotation by Oscar Wilde while also briefly acknowledging other popularizers such as William Morris Edward Burne-Jones,
In the broader scope of history and especially during the Aesthetic Movement, sunflowers have had a variety of meanings. Thomas Jeckyll himself used the sunflower in a number of contexts, some decorous, some not. The most famous example is the railings of his renowned Pavilion of 1876 (figures 2-2 and 2-2a). The Pavilion was made of cast and wrought iron that was then painted. It was first displayed at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition in 1876 and shown later at the Paris Exposition Universelle in 1878. Its sunflower railings were examples of Decor since they were flowers decorating a garden structure. In other instances, though the sunflower could be used merely as a pleasant decorative motif with no evident meaning. For example, in a church restoration project of 1860-1861 at Saint Mary and All Saints, Sculthorpe, Jeckyll included a carved sunflower that was of a generous size in the new arcade in the aisle at the southern end of the church. On the other hand, Jeckyll may have intended this sunflower as a symbol of Christian devotion and faithfulness. In the face of these possibilities, this dissertation focuses on one specific meaning the sunflower could have in a specific location: as a sun-like flower in the hearth that conjured ancient symbolic ties with heliotropism and fire. The history of the sunflower as both New-World oddity and Classical heliotrope will be surveyed in order to show how these flowers became one of the most recognizable symbols of Aestheticism. Jeckyll was a major popularizer of this motif.22

and others. See Soros, Jeckyll, 231. David Park Curry did not quote Wilde but mentioned him as a famous appreciator of the flower during the Aesthetic Movement. See Curry, Whistler at the Freer, 62.

22 As in the case of Jeckyll’s use of the sunflower in two different decorous contexts (as a garden flower on a garden pavilion and alluding to fire in the hearth), time after time many puzzles of this dissertation were explained by the different ways decorous imagery could be used. For information regarding Jeckyll’s use of the sunflower in his designs see Soros, Jeckyll, 141, 186, 195-196, 223-231. For mention of Jeckyll’s garden pavilion with sunflowers in catalogues of the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia see James D. McCabe, The Illustrated History of the Centennial Exhibition (1876; repr., Philadelphia: National Publishing Company, 1975), 132; and Edward Strahan (pseudonym of Earl Shinn), Walter Smith, and Joseph M. Wilson, The Master Pieces of the International Exhibition, 1876, 3 vols. (Philadelphia: Gebbie and Barrie, 1876-1878), 403, 407. Jeckyll’s name is not mentioned in either catalogue. Although not executed, sunflowers, present in a ca. 1870 drawing, were originally going to be painted or carved into the paneled ceiling of Jeckyll’s Billiard Room at No. 1 Holland Park. 1 Holland Park was one of the major domestic commissions Jeckyll worked on from 1870 to 1872 for the businessman Alexander Constantine
“Ah Sun-flower!”
William Blake, 1794

The history of the sunflower and its symbolic usage through the centuries must be investigated in order to understand Jeckyll’s sunflowers in the Peacock Room, and also how and why the sunflower became such an important icon of the Aesthetic movement. The history of sunflower lore has been startlingly neglected in the study of the Peacock Room.

Because the sunflower (figure 2-3) was thought to turn to face the sun from its rising to its setting it became a symbol of devotion (in various incarnations). In reality, once the head of the sunflower opens, it no longer turns toward the sun. The sunflower is phototropic, along with many other plants, so it tends to face east in the morning and west in the evening but only during its early stages. Nevertheless, when the sunflower was introduced to Europe in the early sixteenth century with other New World products such as tobacco and chocolate, it was classified as a heliotrope, that is, a flower that turns toward the sun.23

Through myths like that of Clytie and Apollo, heliotropic flowers were symbols of constancy since antiquity even though the sunflower was new to Europeans in the sixteenth century. The myth of Clytie and Apollo, repeated in Ovid’s Metamorphoses, is the tale of poor Clytie who pined away for Apollo even after he had moved onto a new love. Taking pity on the water nymph, Apollo turned Clytie into a flower that would follow his golden chariot’s path.

Ionides. Although Soros argues that the lost dining chairs of the Peacock Room had sunflowers embossed in leather, like those seen in a ca. 1892 photograph of the dining room at No. 1 Holland Park, G.W. Smalley’s description of the chairs does not include sunflowers, though he wrote “The furniture is to be gold; the chairs gold, lined with blue leather...” See also G.W. Smalley, “London Topics: Progress in Household Art,” New York Tribune, March 5, 1877, 2. (This Smalley article is dated February 17, London, but did not appear in the New York Tribune until March 5, 1877.) Through the firm of Barnard, Bishop, and Barnards, Jeckyll also released a number of sunflower andirons in the 1870s (like those in the Peacock Room) and a cast-iron roundel with a five sunflower designs attributed to him.

23 For the history of the sunflower and its symbolic use in art see Debra N. Mancoff, Sunflowers (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 2001), 11. Mancoff’s study is one of the only art historical resources on the subject. For a detailed and scientific understanding of the sunflower see Charles B. Heiser, The Sunflower (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1976), 28.
across the sky each day in blind devotion. In heliotrope lore, Apollo and Helios are often confused. Helios was older, was equated with the path of the sun and symbolized by a disk, while Apollo was associated with the sun’s warmth and luminosity. The conflation of these two deities led to the use of the term heliotrope, to describe flowers that follow the sun. It was in the seventeenth century that the sunflower merged with the Helios myths.24

The term heliotrope can be used for any flower that turns toward the sun but, more specifically, in ancient Rome it was a flower with small purple or white petals on a bending, curving stem (figure 2-4) which crowned the emperor. The marigold, originally from the Mediterranean region, was another popular heliotrope in Europe before the arrival of the sunflower. Its bloom resembles the sun and it was thought to open and close with the sun’s appearance each day. Its name comes from its association with the Virgin Mary. In Greece, the fifth century CE neoplatonist Proclus likened the heliotrope to a third flower, the lotus, because the lotus opens its petals to the sun all day and closes them at night. At the Pisa Cathedral, a lotus, sunflower, and passion flower are shown together as three exotics, symbolizing the three Magi.25

Prior to the sixteenth century Europeans promoted the marigold and the lotus as their heliotropes, but the sunflower had been growing in the Americas for thousands of years and was a food staple, was a dye, and was integral to grooming and medicine. Despite a lack of scientific evidence, European accounts claimed that sunflowers originated in Peru. This may have simply been because they were shipped from there with other new crops in the early sixteenth century or

24 Mancoff, Sunflowers, 21-25.

because of the sun disks prominent in central and southern American religions. Europeans
generally ignored the sunflower’s uses as food or medicine, focusing instead on its exoticism and
curiousness. By the seventeenth century it was common in many cultivated gardens throughout
Europe. 26

The sunflower was ubiquitous in Dutch and Flemish Baroque still life paintings, portraits
and the increasing number of gardens of the upper and middle classes, though it was not as
popular as the tulip. For example, Flemish painter Anthony van Dyck (1599-1641) created two
portraits with prominent sunflowers while working for the English court in the 1630s. Van
Dyck’s *Sir Kenelm Digby* (ca. 1635-1639) (figure 2-5) and *Self-Portrait with a Sunflower* (ca.
1635-1636) (figure 2-6) have traditionally been interpreted as emblems of the subjects’ royalist
sentiments, given the sunflower’s history as a symbol of devotion. J. Douglas Stewart dismissed
this interpretation, though, suggesting instead that the sunflower in Digby’s portrait is a reference
to the sitter’s reasserted faith in Catholicism and that the sunflower in van Dyck’s self-portrait
represents the devotion of the artist (or the arts in general) to beauty. In support of his argument
Stewart cited a 1654 poem by Joost van den Vondel that Stewart translates,

> Just as the sunflower, out of love, turns his eyes towards the heavenly canopy and follows
> with his face the all-quicking light of the sun who bestows color upon the universe and
> kindles trees and plants—thus the art of painting from innate inclination and kindled by a
> sacred fire, follows the beauty of nature.

Stewart recorded another interpretation of the painting by George Vertue from 1725. Vertue
called van Dyck’s *Self-Portrait with a Sunflower* “another [painting] having a Sun Flower,
alluding to his imitation of the beautys of nature and flower, is said to follow the light of the
Sun.” Stewart concluded, since this eighteenth-century remark and the seventeenth-century
poem are so similar, that “both authors must have drawn their interpretations from a shared

26 For the American and European uses of the sunflower see Mancoff, *Sunflowers*, 17-18, 29, 37-41.
tradition.” The issue must be cautiously raised that perhaps the British designer Thomas Jeckyll, and other Aesthetic Movement figures, shared in this same tradition when they adopted the sunflower as their preferred icon of artistic beauty.27

By the early nineteenth century the immense popularity of the sunflower had made it so common that it had lost its exotic appeal, despite the initial fascination begun in the sixteenth century. As industrialism grew throughout the century, though, the sunflower began to signify a rustic, home-grown object of beauty, perhaps because sunflowers are so easy to grow. This was particularly appealing to those of the Arts and Crafts movement who revered England’s medieval past and advocated that craftsmanship should not be made extinct by industrial production (figure 2-7). In addition, Debra Mancoff noted in 2001 that German Jesuit priest and humanities professor Jeremias Drexelius’s 1627 emblem book called The Heliotropium, or Conformity of the Will of the Divine. This book includes the sunflower many times as a symbol of constancy (figures 2-8a, b, and c), and it enjoyed a new popularity in the nineteenth century when it was published in English in 1863. Ultimately though, it was poetic references to the sunflower that contributed significantly to its revival at the end of the nineteenth century.28

Many well-known late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century poets wrote of the sunflower. For example, Charles B. Heiser contends that one of the most famous sunflower poems was written by William Blake in 1794 and included in his Songs of Experience:

Ah Sun-flower! weary of time


28 For the sunflower’s decline and rise in popularity in the nineteenth century see Mancoff, Sunflowers, 50-51, 59, 60.
Who countest the steps of the sun:
Seeking after that sweet golden clime
Where the traveler’s journey is done.²⁹

Percy Bysshe Shelley’s translation of El Magico prodigoso (*The Mighty Magician*) by Pedro Calderón de la Barca mentions the sunflower. The sunflower is the important element in Robert Browning’s 1842 poem “Rudel to the Lady of Tripoli.” James Montgomery and Charles Swinburne also wrote poetry with references to the sunflower. One poet who wrote of the sunflower, however, seems to have had a much more powerful influence than all the others although he has not been linked to the sunflower’s popularity. That man is the Irish poet Thomas Moore.³⁰

“Believe Me, If All Those Endearing Young Charms” is a love poem written by Moore as part of his *Irish Melodies* series that plays off of the heliotrope as a symbol of devotion:

Believe me, if all those endearing young charms,
Which I gaze on so fondly today,
Were to change by tomorrow, and fleet in my arms,
Like fairy gifts fading away;--
Thou wouldst still be ador’d, as this moment thou art,
Let thy loveliness fade as it will;--
And around the dear ruin each wish of my heart
Would entwine itself verdantly still.

It is not while beauty and youth are thine own,
And thy cheeks unprofan’d by a tear;--
That the fervor and faith of a soul can be known,
To which time will but make thee more dear!
Oh, the heart, that has truly lov’d, never forgets,
But as truly loves on to the close;--
As the sunflower turns on her god, when he sets,
The same look which she turn’d when he rose.”³¹


³⁰ For literary works that reference the sunflower see Heiser, *The Sunflower*, 25-27; and Mancoff, *Sunflowers*, 69. I am indebted to Dr. Charles Brownell for suggesting that Thomas Moore was a major popularizer of the sunflower in the nineteenth century through his poetry.

To give a sense of just how popular Moore’s work was, Elmer Nolan has asserted that the
nineteenth century in Ireland actually began in 1808 when Moore’s first volume of the *Melodies*
was published. The *Melodies* were printed in ten volumes from 1808 to 1834. Nolan estimates
that Moore was the most widely read Irish writer of the period and that the *Irish Melodies* are his
most famous works. The *Melodies* went into multiple editions as well. An 1846 edition of the
*Melodies* was illustrated by Daniel Maclise in a medieval style, though a small number were in a
“contemporary setting.” Moore was a celebrity because of the *Melodies* and, in Elmer Nolan’s
words, they were “a sensation in the drawing rooms of English Regency society.” In England,
the poet was in the same esteemed class as other notables of his era. For example, Lord Byron
and Moore “shared the adulation of London society during 1812.” They each attended countless
parties there that year and once Moore was back in Ireland by April, the two men began writing
to one another and would continue to do so until their deaths. 32

Moore’s work also influenced future generations of readers and writers. For instance,
Nolan has emphasized the tremendous impact Moore had on James Joyce, one of Ireland’s most
famous writers. In terms of the public, an 1884 magazine article called “What Do the Irish
Read?” shows the lasting impact of Moore as well. According to its author John Pope-Hennessy,
“all songbooks sold at fairs or read in Land League Reading Rooms included large sections from
the *Melodies.*” Charles Dickens and French composer Hector Berlioz had high praise for Moore
and cited the poet’s work in their own creations multiple times. Terence de Vere White has
noted that Moore approved of Dickens and that Dickens mentioned Moore thirty times in his
work, much more than he referred to other writers. White also mentions that “Byron’s *Farewell*

32 For an analysis of the immense popularity of Thomas Moore see Elmer Nolan, *Catholic Emancipations: Irish
Fiction from Thomas Moore to James Joyce* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2007), 1, 3, 18. For the
relationship between Moore and Lord Byron see Jeffrey Vail, *The Literary Relationship of Lord Byron and Thomas
to Moore appears in three [of Dickens’] books.” In Bleak House alone, which was published for the first time as a serial throughout 1852 and 1853, Moore’s sunflower love poem “Believe Me” is sung three times by Inspector Bucket. And as for Berlioz, Hoover H. Jordan has commented on the composer’s praise for Moore’s “Believe Me,” and argued that three of Berlioz’s pieces, his Irlande, Meditation Religieuse (1829), his Faust (1846), and his The Return to Life (1831) all relate to Moore’s work. Clearly the Irish Melodies were phenomenally well known to both the public and the artistic communities in England, Ireland, and France.  

Moore’s “Believe Me” focused on the symbolic associations the sunflower had with love and devotion, but Moore was apparently also fascinated with sun and fire-worship imagery which relates to the heliotrope. Moore’s 1817 poem Lalla Rookh, which is an “oriental tale,” makes many references to the sun, fire-worshippers and fire images. Mohammed Sharafuddin discussed Moore’s lament over the predominance of Islam in Persia, which replaced Zoroastrianism, the religion that worshipped fire as the “divine essence” and the “source of life.” Sharafuddin likens the journey of the “ancient Aryan god of light” Mithra to the path of the sun throughout the day, followed by the sunflower. It is unclear whether Moore ever linked his interest in fire and sun imagery to the heliotropic sunflower, but it seems likely.  

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An Aesthetic Movement artist who did link the sunflower with fire was American painter and designer Elihu Vedder. An 1868 drawing by Vedder, *The Soul of the Sunflower* (figure 2-9), clearly alludes to the heliotropic nature of the sunflower. Vedder presents a central figure with a face and flame-like tresses reminiscent of the sunflower’s wavy yellow petals. The face casts its gaze upwards, toward the sun, revealing its constant devotion to the sun’s light and heat. A markedly similar Vedder design called *Sun-God* (figure 2-10) was used by the Boston foundry Smith and Anthony, a distinguished Aesthetic Movement firm, in 1886 for fine cast-iron firebacks. The *Sun-God* design is so similar in fact that it is often misidentified as *The Soul of the Sunflower*. The difference between the two is that in the *Soul of the Sunflower* drawing we see the flower looking to the sun, and in the *Sun-God* fireback we see Helios or Apollo himself radiating heat and light like the sun, causing the flowers to grow. In the *Sun-God* fireback, Vedder was adhering to the principles of Decor or Character, by employing decoration that alluded to an object’s nature and function, and providing an appropriate image for the decoration in the hearth.

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35 Elihu Vedder’s fireback was mistakenly titled *The Soul of the Sunflower* in Doreen Bolger Burke, and others, *In Pursuit of Beauty: Americans and the Aesthetic Movement* (New York: Rizzoli and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1986), 301. Two of these firebacks survive in situ: in the Christian Heurich House (built 1892-1894), Washington, DC, and in the Gustavus Millhiser House (built 1894), Richmond, Virginia. In both cases, the fireback is present in the library probably because of Apollo’s role as god of learning. For information on Vedder’s fireback and drawing and their connections to Apollo and Helios see Kelly Goodman, “Elihu Vedder (1836-1923): A Reexamination of His Life and Works,” VCU graduate seminar paper (December 2003), 10. For a study of the principle of Decor in the hearth (which includes Vedder’s fireback) see Gay Acompanado, “Cast Iron: Images of the Hearth, 1540-1900,” VCU symposium paper (November 2009), 1-12. Acompanado has pointed out that the Aesthetic Movement was one of two periods of extensive use of Decor at the hearth. For a period advertisement with the image of Smith and Anthony’s *Sun-God* fireback designed by Elihu Vedder see C.A. Wellington, *The Fireplace and Its Surroundings: An Illustrated Description of Designs and Inventions for Artistic Heating, Furnishing and Decoration* (Boston: C.A. Wellington and Co., 1885), 16-17. The American tile manufacturer J.G. Low also apparently grasped the connection between the sunflower and the hearth as seen in J.G. & J.F. Low, *Illustrated Catalogue of Art Tiles by J.G. & J.F. Low* (Chelsea, Massachusetts: J.G. & J.F. Low, 1887), plate 50.
Conclusion

Jeckyll’s sunflower andirons in the Peacock Room, created a decade earlier than Vedder’s firebacks, are also Characteristic designs that allude to the heliotropic heritage of the sunflower and its connections to the sun, heat, and fire. These and other Characteristic designs by Jeckyll will be analyzed in more detail in Chapter 5. In the final analysis, Jeckyll was an important popularizer of the sunflower motif during the British Aesthetic Movement and popular poetry at the time inspired artists to favor this symbol. The sunflower andirons in the elaborate Peacock Room are sometimes overlooked because they blend so well with the dazzling gilding in the room, and because they were not designed or even altered by Whistler. Perhaps Whistler left the andirons in place because they matched his scheme. On the other hand, Whistler may have understood their connections to the hearth via the Classical heliotropic lore and contemporary poetry, deeming them perfectly and beautifully suited to their position in the room. In either case, the Peacock Room’s sunflower andirons remain significant as some of the few remaining elements that are pure Jeckyll designs and as iconic links to the larger Aesthetic Movement. To say that Jeckyll’s work in the Leyland dining room was overshadowed by Whistler’s painted decoration is a cliché. Given the multifaceted originality treated above, Jeckyll’s designs deserve to be brought out further into the light.
Chapter 3: Thomas Jeckyll and the Porcelain Room Tradition: A Decisive Break

Thomas Jeckyll’s vision of the Peacock Room has repeatedly been described as a variation on the European porcelain chambers of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. While such rooms had some features in common with the Peacock Room, such as massed porcelain, the significant differences between them have not been explained in any detail. This chapter will cover the origins and key elements of European porcelain chambers to show Jeckyll’s previously unnoticed innovations in the Peacock Room. Room function and size, mirrored decoration, lacquer panels, and the specifics of display shelving will all be analyzed in detail to reveal the freshness of Jeckyll’s Aestheticist and Japoniste scheme.

The Porcelain Cabinet Commonplace

Thomas Jeckyll suddenly became an important player in the Peacock Room’s fabled history in 1984 when David Park Curry, then curator of the room and the other Whistlers at the Freer Gallery of Art, wrote about the English designer. As the first attempt to take Jeckyll seriously, Curry’s assessment was luke-warm at best. While he was supplying forgotten
information on Jeckyll, Curry’s devotion to Whistler never wavered with statements about Whistler:

[Whistler transformed] a rather fussy Anglo-Dutch porcelain cabinet with dark leather walls and spindly walnut shelves carved with Oriental motifs… [into a] carefully balanced chamber shimmering with gold and turquoise paint, unified by repeated color and pattern. The originality of Whistler’s unusual synthesis was recognized immediately. The room still stands today as one of the most exciting interiors of the British Aesthetic Movement.36

To be fair, Curry was taking a sizeable risk by examining Jeckyll’s contribution at all, but twenty years later he was not any kinder to the designer:

[The Peacock Room shows] how seamlessly [Whistler] could accommodate his work to an already extant interior… As we have come to expect, Whistler’s contribution was to take something ordinary and make it highly aesthetic.37

What is “ordinary” about a unique system of shelving that, to the best of our knowledge, has appeared in virtually no other room? Despite these less-than-favorable accounts of Jeckyll’s plans for the room, Curry made an important connection between an Aesthetic Movement dining room, with massed porcelain decoration, and the centuries old porcelain cabinet. In 1998, Linda Merrill went further in exploring Jeckyll’s work in the Peacock Room. She argued that Jeckyll had done more than simply update the European porcelain room of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but that he had also absorbed and reproduced one of the fundamental concepts of such rooms. He oversaw F.R. Leyland’s dining room as a Gesamtkunstwerk, or a total work of art, where no detail escaped his decorative touch. Merrill, like Curry before her, likened this to the all-encompassing designs of Daniel Marot (1651-1752), the most famous European porcelain room designer (figure 3-1). The French Huguenot decorator, known for his work in Holland and England, designed many rooms for various

36 Curry, *Whistler at the Freer*, 53.
members of the House of Orange, some of which survive through engravings. These included porcelain rooms, even one for Queen Mary II (William of Orange’s wife). As the eminent Peter Thornton has shown, Marot’s rooms were total works of art, and Merrill credited Jeckyll with perceiving this concept in his reinterpretation of a porcelain room in 1876.  

Outside of the Gesamtkunstwerk observation, Merrill mostly parroted her predecessor Curry’s definition of a porcelain room from 1984. Curry listed the “standard” features of traditional porcelain rooms as “pots on elaborate shelving, ornately framed paintings, mirrors, built-in furniture, and complicated lighting fixtures.” Merrill’s list was nearly identical, except that she omitted the mirrors, though it is unclear why. Perhaps building on Curry’s idea that Jeckyll’s initial design for the room would have looked “Dutch,” with porcelain-filled shelves in front of leather wall hangings, Merrill assumed that leather wall hangings were also a standard feature in porcelain rooms. She noted that there were leather wall hangings in the porcelain room at Oranienburg, and went on to list a string of other rooms with leather-covered walls in Victorian London. The Oranienburg Palace was the mid-seventeenth century home of Frederich Wilhelm I of Brandenburg, Germany, and was decorated in a Dutch style by his wife Louise Henriette of Orange-Nassau. Merrill confused the issue, though, because even though Curry’s “Dutch” combination of porcelain and leather walls was accurate, he was not describing a

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38 For Merrill’s assessment of Jeckyll see Merrill, Peacock Room, 189-191. Prior to the publication of this scholarly work on the Peacock Room, Linda Merrill co-wrote a children’s book on the room in 1993 with Sarah Ridley. Although obviously aimed at children and not a work of scholarship, the book is irresponsibly biased, without a single mention of Thomas Jeckyll. In the book, Merrill and Ridley characterize the room before Whistler’s involvement as “dreadful,” and as something that was salvaged only through the genius of Whistler. Nowhere in the book or on its dust jacket is the reader warned of the fictitious nature of the book. It is extremely misleading as something written by the curator of the room and published in association with the Smithsonian Institution, even though it is a children’s book. See Linda Merrill and Sarah Ridley, The Princess and the Peacocks Or, the Story of the Room (New York and Washington, DC: Hyperion Books for Children in association with the Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, 1993). For Thornton’s view of Marot see Peter Thornton, Seventeenth-Century Interior Decoration in England France and Holland (New Haven and London: Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, Yale University Press, 1978), 249-251; and Thornton, Authentic Décor: The Domestic Interior, 1620-1920, 3rd ed., (London and New York: Seven Dials and Sterling, 2000), 49.
porcelain room. Modest amounts of porcelain could be found in many rooms of a European house, displayed on tables, shelves, on doorframes, and elsewhere. Additionally, leather wall hangings were not a standard feature in most porcelain rooms, even though they were used in the famous porcelain room Oranienburg. And finally, the popularity of leather wall coverings in various types of rooms that did not contain massed porcelain hardly ties this trend to the porcelain chamber tradition.³⁹

Merrill used one last piece of evidence to argue that leather wall coverings had been an important factor in earlier European porcelain rooms, or at least tied closely with the Far East. She excerpted one sentence from the following passage of a 1937 article on “English Chinoiserie Gilt Leather” by Hans Huth:

…leather appeared eminently desirable [for the covering of European walls in the eighteenth century] as it was solid and very practical, and the price was not unreasonable. Moreover, the colour-effects which "japanning" gave to this material made it most suitable as a background for objects from the Far East.⁴⁰

This is an undocumented statement by Huth from an article about gilt leather, not porcelain rooms. It may represent nothing more than an untested hypothesis set forth by Huth, or his subjective opinion. Huth certainly did not indicate whether he was referring specifically to porcelain either, and may have just as plausibly been referring to other imported “objects from the Far East” such as fans, screens, or lacquer boxes. Nor did Huth make any mention of the tradition of massing great quantities of porcelain. Massed porcelain display is the tradition at

³⁹For the lists of porcelain room features see Curry, Whistler at the Freer, 59-60; and Merrill, Peacock Room, 190-191. For Curry’s description of the “Dutch” look of the dining room at 49 Princes Gate see Curry, Whistler at the Freer, 61. For Merrill’s discussion of the leather wall hangings in the Peacock Room see Merrill, Peacock Room, 191-193. The original porcelain room, known as the “die alte Porcellain Cammer,” was taken down in sometime prior to 1690. Its walls had gilt leather on a blue ground. This is not to be confused with the redecoration of the room by Christof Pitzler known famously through the 1773 engraving of the room by Jean-Baptiste Broebe. For details and Broebe’s engraving see John Ayers, Oliver Impey, and J.V.G. Mallet, Porcelain for Palaces: The Fashion for Japan in Europe, 1650-1750 (London: Oriental Ceramic Society, 1990), 60.

issue in Peacock Room, not the occasional grouping of other oriental objects or vases sporadically about a room.41

It is a disappointment that Susan Weber Soros relied on Merrill and the above Huth quote as cited in Merrill’s book, in her pioneering 2003 monograph on Thomas Jeckyll (the first ever written on Jeckyll). Soros only added that the eighteenth-century porcelain room at Oranienburg is the first documented case of the appearance of leather wall covering in such a room, though she unconvincingly argues that the tradition originated in the seventeenth century. Like Merrill, Soros then stated that libraries, smoking rooms, and dining rooms were popularly covered with leather wall hangings in Victorian London. It is unclear what, if any, significance this fact has for the history of European porcelain chambers, however.42

Fortunately, one ambiguity of Merrill’s account of Jeckyll’s design for the Leyland dining room was cleared up by Soros. Merrill had suggested that the lost Japanese Room at the home of Cyril Flower (later Lord Battersea) at 3 Albert Mansions, Victoria Street, might have been designed by Jeckyll and could potentially be a forerunner of his massed porcelain dining room at 49 Princes Gate. Flower was, as Merrill described him, one of the first “chinamaniacs” collecting blue and white porcelain in great quantities. Soros was able to confirm that Jeckyll did design Flower’s rooms for his blue and white porcelain but it was during the same time that Jeckyll was working on Leyland’s dining room in 1876. It would be difficult to determine which came first, although it is generally agreed that it was Leyland who purchased the leather (figures

41 For the placement of small quantities of porcelain in various parts of a room see Peter Thornton, *Authentic Decor*, 60.

42 For Merrill’s argument about leather wall hangings in porcelain rooms based on the Huth quote see Merrill, *Peacock Room*, 189-192. For Soros’s repetition of this claim see Soros, *Jeckyll*, 195.
3-2a, b, and c) for his dining room and asked Jeckyll to incorporate it into the room. This suggests that the leather was not Jeckyll’s idea.

The Flower rooms are now lost and written information on their contents or design is scarce. From surviving letters, Soros describes Flower’s Japanese room as having a “Japanese-style ceiling, silk panels, and lacquer panels, in addition to the gilt leather wall covering and display shelving.” The presence of the leather wall hangings in Flower’s room may have been another factor that led Soros to agree with Merrill’s assessment that leather wall coverings were associated with Far Eastern objects like porcelain. Given the popularity of such wall coverings in a variety of Victorian interiors, it is likely impossible to prove that they were definitively linked to Oriental objects.43

Soros made one final and helpful contribution when she outlined the importance of a Jeckyll-designed room that could be another precursor of the Peacock Room. The servants’ hall at No. 1 Holland Park (directly below the better-known Billiard Room discussed below) had yellow walls and floor-to-ceiling shelves that held blue and white china. Soros reminded readers that E. W. Godwin (1833-1886) and Whistler had already used the same color scheme in their own dining rooms by the early 1870s. Moving beyond Soros’s interpretation, though, one can suggest that this servants’ hall could have been an experiment by Jeckyll. Presumably there was less pressure on the designer in his plans for a servants’ hall than for the large, public reception rooms of a London mansion. The materials and decoration used in this hall would also be less ornate and less expensive than that upstairs. It seems likely that the shelving displaying the blue and white porcelain in the servants’ hall was more rectilinear and utilitarian. If so, this hall may

43 For information on Leyland asking Jeckyll to incorporate the leather wall hangings in his dining room at 49 Princes Gate see Soros, Jeckyll, 191. For details regarding Jeckyll’s work for Cyril Flower including the Japanese Room see Soros, 108, 186, 191, 195, 247-8. Note that this room is not referred to as a dining room.
represent Jeckyll working out some of the ideas he would later use in Leyland’s dining room, especially the omnipresent, rectilinear, Japanese-style shelving (discussed in more detail below).

In the face of over a quarter-century of scholarship by the authors mentioned above and others who have published on Jeckyll and the Peacock Room, it is clear that there is some correlation between seventeenth- and eighteenth-century porcelain rooms and this 1876 dining room with massed porcelain on display. Despite the general acceptance of this correlation, no scholar has systematically identified the ways in which Jeckyll’s room broke significantly from the porcelain room tradition. His specific innovations differ from the standard porcelain room in the function of the room, its shelving, and its mirrored and lacquer decoration. These innovations will be detailed in the pages that follow. In addition, earlier designs will be explored to show how the shelving in the Peacock Room grew out of the Japanese sho-dana by way of Jeckyll’s Japoniste overmantels at Heath Old Hall and 1 Holland Park.

Room Function: What’s It For?

In the current literature on the Peacock Room it has not been mentioned, or even suggested, that Jeckyll was the first designer to convert the European porcelain room into a dining room. In the scholarship on porcelain rooms, and in this essay, such spaces are variously referred to as a cabinet or a chamber. In other published works the term closet can also be used to refer to small rooms. In his study of porcelain rooms Peter Thornton explained that, beginning in the late seventeenth century, a closet was “a delightful and comfortable little room where one could get away from the irksome demands of etiquette.” Grand cabinets were larger closets where one could receive business associates or “select company.” Thornton himself used the

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44 For information on Jeckyll’s decoration of the servants’ hall at No. 1 Holland Park see Soros, 186.
words interchangeably, referring, for example, to the porcelain room at Schloss Charlottenburg (figure 3-3), Berlin, 1703, as both a cabinet and a closet.

All three terms designated small, private spaces not meant for large-scale, public entertainment. As early as the thirteenth-century, “chamber” first came into use as a term for a room or set of rooms used by an individual, especially a private room such as a bedroom. Originating in the fourteenth century, “closet” is again a term for a small, private room. And finally, beginning in the sixteenth century, a “cabinet” was known as a small, private room or boudoir, or a small room used for housing special treasures. None of these terms is related to the later term “dining room,” which originated in the seventeenth century as a domestic or public space for the purpose of eating meals.

It was inside the small, more relaxed settings of the chamber, closet, or cabinet that the porcelain room was born and quickly spread throughout Europe. It was one of several types of rooms designed for the display of interesting collections of objects. Such curiosity collections peaked in the Netherlands between 1550 and 1650. Meredith Chilton has shown that the porcelain room grew out of two earlier traditions: sixteenth century “princely treasure chambers or cabinets of curiousity” and medieval buffets that displayed metal objects on tiered shelving. Thornton has explained that these showplace rooms became popular largely because of the domestic and foreign goods that were flooding European homes:

> The Dutch and the English contribution to the interior decoration [between 1670 and 1720] lay in goods rather than ideas. The Dutch produced enormous quantities of delftware in the form of tiles—brightly colored and easy to clean—and pottery that was highly decorative. They also imported most of the Chinese and Japanese porcelain that came to Europe, and because it was available in Holland in greater quantities than

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45 For an explanation of the intimacy of closets and grands cabinets see Thornton, Authentic Decor, 51-52.

elsewhere, they set a fashion for displaying it massed in formal arrangements. They also imported lacquer and likewise showed how this could be used for decoration, either unaltered or cut up and made into panels. The principal English contribution was the chair with a caned seat and back…  

Sometimes closets were medium-sized reception rooms designed to impress guests. For example, between 1688 and 1695 Frederick I of Prussia enlarged the Oranienburg Palace near Brandenburg, Germany, so that it included a 30-by-40 foot porcelain room (figure 3-4). The designer of the room, Christof Pitzler, had ties to the Marot style since he studied under Jean Marot, Daniel Marot’s father. The room had seven pyramids of tiered shelves (figure 3-5) in front of mirrors, and porcelain was hung on the walls. Thornton argued, though, that despite the occasional increase in the size of porcelain rooms, “such fanciful ornament would not have been suitable in a state room, one can be fairly sure.” Thornton included other kinds of fanciful decoration along with porcelain rooms but was very clear that this would not be seen in the major reception rooms of a great house or palace. So, Jeckyll’s decision to create a porcelain room that was also a dining room was quite a revelation, even though the connection between porcelain vessels, like those used for eating and drinking, and a dining room may seem like a very natural link. 

Key Features Absent: Lacquer and Plate-Glass Mirrors

The history of the porcelain room seems inextricably linked to two important features, in addition to the display of massed porcelain. Countless authors have tried to create a definitive list of the most common elements of these rooms (including Curry and Merrill whose lists are

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47 For information on the peak years of curiosity collections in the Netherlands see Oliver Impey, Chinoiserie: The Impact of Oriental Styles on Western Art and Decoration (London: Oxford University Press, 1977), 56.

For Chilton’s assessment of the origins of the porcelain chamber see Meredith Chilton, “Rooms of Porcelain,” in The International Fine Art and Antique Dealers Show (October 1992), 13. For Thornton’s quote about the objects filling European homes between 1670 and 1720 see Thornton, Authentic Decor, 49.

48 For information on the decoration of the porcelain room at Oranienburg see Chilton, “Rooms of Porcelain,” 15. For Thornton’s explanation of the appropriateness of porcelain room decoration in different types of rooms see Thornton, Authentic Decor, 51-52.
noted above) with little consensus. Despite the variations, lacquer paneling and large, plate-glass mirrors are practically universal. Whether the room in question is a Porzellanzimmer (porcelain room), a Lackcabinet (lacquer room), or a Spiegel-Kabinett (mirror room), at least two of the three features are usually present.49

Notable examples include the closet of Mary Princess of Orange (soon to be Queen of England) at Honselersdijk. The walls were fitted with imported lacquer panels from the Far East and the entire ceiling was paneled in mirror-glass. In such rooms, lacquer was cut into the desired shapes and sizes and affixed to the walls. Other House of Orange princesses popularized this combination. One such princess, married to the Stadholder of Friesland, paneled her closet with lacquer taken from Chinese screens. A second princess, married to the Elector of Brandenburg, built a porcelain room in the mid-1690s at Oranienburg. Only a few years later she had a “small Mirror and Porcelain Closet” installed at Schloss Lützenburg (also known as Charlottenburg) with mirror glass, gilt carving and lacquer panels in red. This was in addition to the larger porcelain room of Charlottenburg discussed in more detail below. And once Mary was Queen of England she brought lacquer and massed porcelain in the Marot style to England through the rooms at Hampton Court and Kensington Palace. Marot’s style spread throughout Europe via engravings (figure 3-6) of the various porcelain rooms and through his numerous devotees in the House of Orange.50

49 Peter Thornton narrowed down the features of the porcelain room to the triad of massed porcelain, lacquer, and mirror glass in Thornton, Authentic Decor, 54. Oliver Impey has stated that almost all later porcelain rooms have mirrors and mirrors were an “obligatory” part of porcelain rooms. In Germany such rooms were sometimes known as Spiegel-Kabinetts (mirror-cabinets). See Ayers, Impey, and Mallet, Porcelain for Palaces, 59.

50 For information on the various House of Orange porcelain rooms and the spread of the Marot style see Chilton, “Rooms of Porcelain,” 14-15, 19; Thornton, Seventeenth-Century, 249-250; and Thornton, Authentic Decor, 54. For general information on lacquer rooms see Impey, Chinoiserie, 165ff. Thornton added that when lacquer was cut up and mounted on walls there was often no regard paid to the direction of the scenes which could be hung sideways or upside-down. See Thornton, Form and Decoration, 131.
Also in the seventeenth century, Amalia van Solms (the widow of the Prince of Orange, Frederick Hendrik) used panels of oriental lacquer cabinets to panel her closet at Huis ‘ten Bosch. She used the panels of lacquer screens to line another closet at Honselaarsdijk, 1686, probably under the direction of Marot. Max Emmanuel of Bavaria created a “Dutch cabinet” in 1693 at the Residenz, Munich. It had lacquer and mirrored panels, and porcelain on brackets. In Pommersfelden, Prince Lothar Franz commissioned Ferdinand Plitzner to create a mirror and porcelain cabinet (figure 3-7) that showed off mirrors, porcelain, gilded carvings, and wood marquetry. He had done an earlier “gilded porcelain room,” between 1711 and 1718, in Gaibach where porcelain was placed on top of mirrored cabinets and on the mantle. The *Spiegel-Kabinett* (1719) (figure 3-8) at Schloss Weissenstein, Pommersfelden, had porcelain grouped on brackets and this more intimate room adjoined the Prince-Bishop’s study and bedroom. In 1725, Sophie Dorothea of Prussia created a porcelain room at Montbijou that had porcelain hung on small brackets attached to mirrored paneling. Prince Clemens August of Cologne had three exotic rooms designed for himself by Frenchman François Cuvilliés: a porcelain room, a lacquer room, and a third room with Chinese figures that were life size, from woodcuts. There were numerous other exotic rooms throughout Germany that contained porcelain, mirrors, and lacquer.\(^{51}\)

Further to the east, Peter the Great had a lacquer cabinet in scarlet at his summer palace called Monplaisir. The room also contained porcelain on brackets (figure 3-9). On the Gulf of Finland, Katalnaya Gorka, a small palace on the grounds of the Oranienbaum (note the connection to the House of Orange), had a “porcelain monkey-room” where Meissen porcelain was hung on brackets shaped like monkeys and birds. The Katalnaya Gorka was designed by Antonio Rinaldi, architect to Catherine the Great. Later, in 1762, Catherine commissioned

\(^{51}\) For descriptions of the various porcelain rooms mentioned see Chilton, “Rooms of Porcelain,” 15-16, 19; Impey, *Porcelain*, 60; and Thornton, *Seventeenth-Century*, 249.
Rinaldi to build a Chinese Palace (*figure 3-10*) on the Oranienbaum grounds with several chinoiserie rooms, though its façade bears no resemblance to the chinoiserie rooms once inside it.\(^52\)

This decorative triad (as Thornton called it) of massed porcelain, lacquer panels, and large, plate-glass mirrors that is fundamental to the history of the porcelain room does not appear in the Peacock Room. Massed porcelain has always been a part of the room, of course, but there is no lacquer work, and the only mirrors are inserted in two narrow strips of the wall between the three sets of shutters. Buried behind porcelain and in the shadows beneath the gilded shelves are these six small, often overlooked mirrors (*figure 3-11*). The mirrors get lost in the scale of this formal room and hardly fit into the tradition of the mirrored paneling that covered entire walls and ceilings in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century showplace rooms.

Both Thornton and Chilton agree that while Louis XIV (1638-1715) did not have a porcelain room at Versailles, the French, then leaders in fashion and design, still heavily influenced the development of the porcelain room. First, the concept of a room and all its furnishings and decoration as a total work of art or *Gesamtkunstwerk* (the concept Merrill acknowledged in Jeckyll’s work at 49 Princes Gate) was made famous by Charles Le Brun (1619-1690) at Versailles in opulent interiors such as the *Galerie des Glaces* (*Hall of Mirrors*) (*figure 3-12*). Second, in 1670 Louis XIV commissioned Louis Le Vau (1612-1670) to build the *Trianon de Porcelaine* (*figure 3-13*). This Chinese garden pavilion inspired by the *Porcelain Tower* in Peking sparked an interest in Far Eastern porcelain with its exterior decoration of faience and its interior color scheme of blue and white (though no Oriental porcelain was actually present). And third, mirrored paneling was used extensively and to great effect at

Versailles. The French mastered the production of mirrored paneling in 1691, making the large mirrors they favored more readily available. Prior to this date large plate mirrors could only be imported from Venice.\textsuperscript{53}

Even before the French advances in the manufacture of plate glass, mirrored paneling was a critical part of French design in the late seventeenth century and it fed directly into the development of the porcelain room. For example, in 1684 Louis XIV displayed his gem collection hanging on brackets in front of mirrors in a “petite galerie” (figure 3-14) off his bedroom at Versailles. Additionally, Thornton contended that Marot, the French expatriate and famed porcelain room designer, was likely inspired by another “petite galerie,” or closet, this time belonging to Louis “le Dauphin,” son of Louis XIV. At Versailles “le Dauphin” decorated his closet with massed porcelain on the chimneypiece, mirror-glass on the ceiling, and panels of Chinese lacquer on the walls. It is generally agreed that these two rooms at Versailles are the precedents for the European porcelain chamber and may have ignited the trend in the first place. In both cases, large, plate glass is a dominant element because it could multiply and enhance the appearance of precious collections. This is very different than Jeckyll’s modest, narrow mirrors in the Peacock Room. Jeckyll’s porcelain room turned dining room was far removed from the French love of mirror glass and represents a decisive break with one of the fundamental elements of the porcelain room tradition that has never before been acknowledged.\textsuperscript{54}

In the Peacock Room Jeckyll also rejected the use of the Far Eastern lacquer paneling that had likewise been such an essential feature of many porcelain rooms. Just like his rejection of large mirrors, this was not because he was unfamiliar with the concept. Earlier in his career,

\textsuperscript{53} For details on the showplace rooms of Louis XIV and Louis “le Dauphin” see Chilton, “Rooms of Porcelain,” 14; and Thornton, \textit{Seventeenth-Century}, 249.

\textsuperscript{54} Thornton, \textit{Seventeenth-Century}, 249.
between 1870 and 1872, Jeckyll had in fact covered a majority of the walls and the ceiling of the Billiard Room at No. 1 Holland Park (figure 3-15) with red lacquer panels as well as Japanese prints and paintings on silk. Significantly, in this room Jeckyll also installed above the mantel (figure 3-16) a large panel of mirror glass surrounded on three sides by Oriental porcelain on shelves that were inset with even more lacquer paneling. One can argue that Jeckyll did not use lacquer panels and large mirror glass in the Peacock Room because Leyland had asked the designer to cover the walls with the leather and to hang Whistler’s Princesse painting over the mantel. These two elements were “givens,” as Deanna Marohn Bendix calls them, since Leyland required them. Jeckyll still could have included either lacquer or mirrored panels anywhere on the ceiling, frieze, dado or furniture, but he decided against this course of action. Apparently Jeckyll wanted to allude to the European porcelain room in the Leyland dining room without including two of its most recognizable features.  

Ironically, certain areas of Whistler’s painted decoration in the Peacock Room have a hard, glossy, lacquer-like finish (figure 3-17). These areas, mainly confined to the woodwork around the doors and windows, the dado and the ceiling, contrast markedly with the more matte surfaces that cover the shutters, the upper portions of the wall (where the leather was painted out) and the infamous peacock mural L’Art et L’Argent (Art and Money) (figure 3-18). Is it possible that Whistler’s glossy surfaces represent a return to one of the more traditional elements of a European porcelain chamber? Whistler’s mother’s journal says that he saw two porcelain rooms of Catherine the Great’s while in Russia. These “Chinese rooms” at Tsarkoe Selo included lacquered and mirrored panels as well as porcelain decoration. We may never know what other

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55 For details on the Billiard Room at No. 1 Holland Park see Soros, Jeckyll, 184-186. For Bendix’s use of the term “givens,” describing the required features of the dining room Leyland required Jeckyll to incorporate see Bendix, Diabolical Designs, 125.
traditional porcelain rooms Whistler saw during his adult life in Europe. All along, it has been assumed in the literature that Jeckyll was familiar with the porcelain room tradition. His friend Whistler was apparently familiar with it as well.56

In their zest to establish Whistler as a serious student of Japanese art in the 1870s, both Merrill and Bendix have likened not only the Peacock Room but other Whistler interiors to lacquerware. For example, Bendix argued that Whistler’s drawing room at No. 2 Lindsey Row imitated lacquer in the dark, glossy treatment of its woodwork (figure 3-19). She suggests that this was likely done to harmonize with lacquer objects in the room. It is doubtful that such objects in Whistler’s possession ca. 1867 (the date of a famous photograph of the room that shows Whistler’s darkly painted woodwork) would be exclusively Japanese examples, or that the artist could distinguish the Japanese pieces from the Chinese ones at this early stage. Bendix also commented that the staircase panels that Whistler painted for Leyland’s entrance hall at 49 Princes Gate have “an effect similar to Japanese lacquerwork and screen paintings.” She even suggested that the matte portions of the Peacock Room, which lack the shiny hardness of lacquer, still resemble lacquer because of their color and gold style, and because the “emphasis is upon the beauty of the surface plane.” None of these theories by Bendix preclude the possibility

56 Merrill wrote, “As a child of ten, Whistler himself saw a porcelain room in Russia, at Catherine the Great’s suburban palace Tsarkoe Selo: his mother described in her diary ‘one suite in the Chinese style,’ in which all elements of the room were ‘framed together by the finest Chinese porcelain…Evelyn Harden, who is preparing an edition of Anna Whistler’s Russian diary, suggests that Anna conflated two different rooms. The walls of the Chinese Salon were covered with Chinese coromandel lacquer panels and ‘very precious Chinese enamels,’ and the ceiling held chandeliers made from Chinese vases; the Mirror Room was smaller, with mirrored walls and doors divided by majolica frames.” Letter from Harden to Merrill, 26 May 1996; and ‘Extracts from Mrs. Whistler’s Journal,’ 29 May 1844, copied by Emma Palmer, Pennell-Whistler Collection, Library of Congress, 296; both cited in Merrill, Peacock Room, 191, 370n7.
that these works could have been imitating Chinese lacquer, not Japanese, making Whistler’s
decoration in the Peacock Room in tune with that of traditional porcelain chambers.  

Similarly, Merrill agreed that the panels in the staircase of 49 Princes Gate resemble
lacquer panels. She added that after the 1989 cleaning of the Peacock Room at the Freer Gallery
of Art, Whistler’s painted decoration in the room looked more as if descended from lacquerware.
Contemporary accounts compared Whistler’s creation to lacquerware in the nineteenth century,
but the connection seemed tenuous until the brilliance of Whistler’s work was more fully
revealed. Merrill went on to argue that the way Whistler filled the room with painted variations
based on the single theme of the peacock feather motif recalled lacquerware designs. Merrill
even concluded that the entire room, which is rather dark when the shutters are closed, resembles
a monumental lacquer box (figure 3-20). As with Bendix’s assertions about Whistler’s work and
its connections to lacquer, the above theories set forth by Merrill are not specific enough to apply
solely to Japanese lacquer.  

One final assessment of Merrill’s is specifically linked to Japanese lacquer, though.
Merrill suggested that the peacock mural in the room was like a specific type of Japanese lacquer
with raised decoration because the paint in that area of the room sits off of the surface of the wall
like a shallow relief. Barring this last exception, Merrill’s account of the Peacock Room allows

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57 For Bendix’s comparisons of Whistler’s decorative work and Japanese lacquer see Bendix, *Diabolical Designs*, 67, 121, 138.

for the possibility that at least some of the lacquer-like painted areas of the room could signal a return to the porcelain room tradition of predominantly Chinese lacquer paneling.  

Shelves for Porcelain: Jeckyll’s Unprecedented Reform

This dissertation has shown how Jeckyll altered the traditional European porcelain room by converting it into a dining room, and by omitting the standard mirror glass and lacquer panels. There is yet another feature of the room to be discussed that may be Jeckyll’s most decisive innovation in the dining room at 49 Princes Gate. That revolutionary aspect of the room is the apparatus designed to showcase the third element in Thornton’s decorative triad: the porcelain display shelving (figure 3-21). When Jeckyll erected the shelving in the Peacock Room he had created a framework for the display of porcelain that differed from the European porcelain room in its placement, structure and styling. At the same time, Jeckyll’s shelving was an inversion of his own earlier overmantels which had displayed massed Oriental porcelain above the hearth. In the Peacock Room overmantel, porcelain could only be displayed in two narrow slivers of shelves at the edges of the Princesse painting (figure 3-22). Jeckyll essentially wrapped the entire room with the sort of shelving he had previously used only in mantelpieces. In the detailed examination that follows, the marked differences in origin and appearance between Jeckyll’s shelving and that of the porcelain chamber will become clear.

Three Jeckyll overmantels of the 1870s are precursors to Jeckyll’s shelving in the Peacock Room. First, comes the overmantel (figure 3-23) Jeckyll designed ca. 1872-1875 for the Oak Parlor at Heath Old Hall, Heath, Yorkshire, for Edward Green and his wife Mary. Jeckyll had been working on this house since 1865. Soros notes the mix of Asian and Jacobean features in the piece including Japanese lacquer panels showing flower and bird designs, inset

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59 For Merrill’s argument on the relief-like quality of the Peacock Room mural as an imitation of Japanese lacquer with raised decoration see Merrill, Peacock Room, 238.
blue and white Chinese porcelain plates, a convex mirror, rectangular beveled mirror, and two roundels of marble showing relief portraits of the Greens’ two sons. The green-stained and ebonized wood has “ring-turned columns,” though Jeckyll’s original sketch for the overmantel (figure 3-24) included bracketed shelves, a Chinese cornice and several beveled mirrors. In 1876 Jeckyll added three candelabra in the form of Chinese dragons (discussed in more detail in chapter 5).  

Jeckyll designed two Japoniste overmantels in the new wing of the Ionides family home at No. 1 Holland Park, London, ca. 1870-1872: one in the Morning Room (figure 3-25) and one in the Billiard Room (figure 3-26). The morning room was also known as a study and a sitting room and it had a view of the garden. The morning room’s overmantel touched the ceiling and had a large beveled mirror in the center. Around the mirror, on three sides, were thin, staggered, rectilinear shelves akin to those that Jeckyll would later design for the Peacock Room. Red and white Nankin vases were displayed on the shelves and matching carved red lacquer panels from Japan were set in surrounds consisting of reeded moldings. The green marble mantelpiece below was embedded with seventeen blue and white saucers. The circular forms of the dishes were echoed in Jeckyll’s grate which had Japanese mon (family crests) as a border. The grate was manufactured by Barnard, Bishop, and Barnards.  

The Billiard Room at No. 1 Holland Park was on the ground floor, directly below the morning room, and it had a similar overmantel. Like the morning room overmantel, this one had a large mirror glass in the center with staggered, spindle-like shelving in oak on three sides for the display of porcelain and inset red lacquer panels. A majority of the walls and the ceiling

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60 For information on Jeckyll’s overmantel for the Oak Parlor at Heath Old Hall see Soros, Jeckyll, 171, 178-179.

61 For details on the work Jeckyll did at No. 1 Holland Park see Soros, Jeckyll, 183-186.
contained lacquer panels as mentioned above. The overmantel did not reach all the way to the ceiling like that of the morning room, though, and the fireplace below had William de Morgan sunflower tiles in red lustre. The brass grate was again decorated with Japanese mon.62

Soros argued that the morning room mantelpiece at No. 1 Holland Park was one of the first known instances of the “dresser mantelpiece,” revived extensively in the 1870s. Dresser mantelpieces were like small museums in that they were designed to show off art objects like porcelain. Additionally, E.W. Godwin remarked on June 3, 1876, in an article simply called “Mantelpieces” for the journal Architect, that these popular overmantels “were nothing more nor less than repetitions of the upper part of the vernacular kitchen dresser.” Godwin himself designed an analogous piece to showcase porcelain in his 1877 Art Furniture Catalogue for the firm of William Watt. Richard Norman Shaw participated in the overmantel trend as well, through his designs for Sutton Place in 1875 (figure 3-27). Critic Gleeson White’s comments on the overmantel in “The Epoch-Making House” reveal that by 1897 the fad had become ubiquitous and had lost its original appeal.63

In addition to perceiving these three overmantels as tiny museums for the display of objets d’art, one can also consider them as miniature versions of the porcelain room. Thornton’s triad of porcelain, lacquer, and mirrors is present on a small scale in each of these three. Already in his work at Holland Park, though, Jeckyll was experimenting with Japanese-style shelving, albeit on a modest scale. He would later design an inversion of this shelving at 49 Princes Gate by building shelving on nearly all the wall surfaces of that dining room and excluding it from the

62 Ibid.

area above the mantel. In all these cases, this shelving broke away from the curvilinear and ornate Rococo shelving of the traditional porcelain chamber. It also rejected the porcelain room tradition for hanging porcelain on the walls and ceiling, or setting it on massive pyramidal shelving units as at Oranienburg.

Unlike Jeckyll’s designs, rooms in the Marot style were essentially French rooms with exotic objects. Jean-Baptiste Broebes (1660-1720) created the famous engraving showing this style at the porcelain cabinet at Oranienburg in 1773. It shows all manner of porcelain in lines on the walls, cornices, columns, and pilasters. Porcelain was also lined up on seven pyramidal shelving units made of gilded wood that stood in front of mirrors to multiply the effect. The porcelain room at Chartlottenburg (figure 3-3) has much the same sort of arrangement including five tiers of porcelain hung in rows above the doors. Marot’s own ca. 1700 engraving known as Design for a China closet (figure 3-6), and the ca. 1705 engraving after Eosander von Göthe of the Charlottenburg porcelain room parallel the Broebes engraving (figure 3-4). All three of the images show not only porcelain hung throughout the room but each scene is pervaded by a Baroque sensibility that includes heavy cornices or modillions, curvilinear panels or niches, and an excess of scrolling decoration inserted between small-scale Classical or Chinoiserie sculptures. Jeckyll dismissed not only the overall Rococo styling typical of the European porcelain chamber in general, preferring instead the attenuated and rectilinear forms in his shelving, but also the fashion for hanging porcelain or displaying it on pyramidal étagères. 64

Various aspects of the Peacock Room have been linked to Asian patterns and designs, but the specific traits that Jeckyll’s shelving has in common with Japanese display shelving of the

64 For the characterization of Marot style rooms as French with exotic objects see Thornton, Authentic Decor, 54. For information on Broebes’s engraving, Oranienburg, and Charlottenburg see Impey, Porcelain, 60; Jacobson, Chinoiserie, 39; and Impey, Chinoiserie, 165.
nineteenth century have not been systematically identified. The resemblance between the
Peacock Room shelving and Japanese examples is so strong that several types must be
investigated in order to properly classify them. Kazari-dana is the generic Japanese term for both
informal and formal display shelves. The Peacock Room shelving was designed to display
Leyland’s porcelain, so we can already broadly associate them with kazari-dana. The most
important formal kazari-dana are of three types, all decorated with maki-e and known together as
san-dana. Maki-e is the name for Japanese lacquer works with designs of sprinkled gold, silver
or fine powder. When Whistler gilded Jeckyll’s shelves, they came to resemble Japanese kazari-
dana with maki-e. It is impossible to ascertain whether Whistler gilded the shelves so that they
would look more like Japanese examples he may have seen or so that they would imitate the
gilded Rococo style of the traditional porcelain chamber. In any case, with or without Whistler’s
gilding, the shelves have much in common with Japanese kazari-dana of the nineteenth
century.65

Beyond function, there are several important visual distinctions between the three types
of kazari-dana shelving. First, the zushi-dana (figure 3-28) is best known for its “rolled-edge
top.” Second, the kuro-dana (figure 3-29) typically has a “flat top,” squared posts, and less
closed storage than the zushi-dana. And third, the sho-dana (figure 3-30) consists of a “flat top,”
and squared posts like the kuro-dana, but only closed storage in its base, as well as staggered
shelves. According to these descriptions put forth by Kazuko Koizumi, the Peacock Room
shelves most closely resemble Japanese sho-dana display shelving because they have flat tops
and square posts, and the shelves are, at times, staggered.

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65 For detailed descriptions of the classifications of Japanese display shelving see Kazuko Koizumi, *Traditional
technique see Komatsu Taishu and Takeuchi Namiko, *Gorgeous Maki-e Lacquerware from the Edo Period* (Tokyo:
Tokyo National Museum, 2002), from “Foreward” (no page number).
Although the shelving in the Peacock Room was apparently based on Japanese sho-dana, it is a Westernization of this type of kazari-dana. Japanese interior design centered around the concept of being seated on the floor. For this reason, varieties of kazari-dana usually consisted of only a few shelves that were within reach from a seated position on the ground. Not only do the Peacock Room shelves represent an elongated version of sho-dana, they only begin at the top of the dado. These long shelves begin where Japanese sho-dana would normally end (about three feet from the ground), and they extend all the way to the ceiling molding. Since these shelves do not have a closed storage base to support them, as a Japanese sho-dana would, additional brackets (figure 3-31) were needed to cantilever them and to secure them and the blue and white porcelain they displayed. It is not surprising that these brackets represent the part of the shelving unit that does not match Japanese sho-dana. You will not see brackets on the Japanese sho-dana because the shelves were not as tall as those in the Peacock Room and they relied on their heavy base for support.66

Since brackets were not part of Japanese sho-dana, Jeckyll looked elsewhere for inspiration in their design. The brackets supporting the shelves in the Peacock Room most closely resemble decoration in Chinese furniture (figure 3-32) and could not be more unlike the ornate modillions of the typical European porcelain room. This geometric patterning is most

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66 Only the two narrow strips of shelving between the three windows in the Peacock Room reach from the ceiling to the floor. The form of these shelves may have been a variation on an 1873 design by E.W. Godwin. These two units by Jeckyll and Godwin’s “Lucretia” corner cabinet (Detroit Institute of Arts, 1985.1) are not identical but both designs share a vertical emphasis and polygonal front section that bows out in a shape that is similar to a bow window. Thin, post-like legs are also common to both, leaving a space underneath the lowest shelf in the unit. As noted, though, Godwin’s “Lucretia” was a corner cabinet so it has a back that comes to a triangular point in order to stand flush against the two corner walls of any room. By contrast, Jeckyll’s much taller units were not placed in the corners of the room and have flat backs to parallel the flat walls between the Peacock Room’s windows. It is worth noting that Godwin’s corner cabinet was imitated (with some variations) by Daniel Cottier’s New York firm in 1877 and illustrated in Clarence Cook’s famous The House Beautiful. This was pointed out by Marilyn Johnson (and illustrated) in Burke, Doreen Bolger, and others, In Pursuit of Beauty: Americans and the Aesthetic Movement (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1986), 150-151, 415. See also Clarence Cook, The House Beautiful: Essays on Beds and Tables, Stools and Candelsticks (1877; repr., New York: Dover, 1995), 105 (ill. no. 39, “Cupboard of Today”).
commonly located in the corners of pieces of furniture, for example, where a vertical element joins a horizontal one in a perpendicular layout. The pattern usually consists of rectangular and square shapes that form a kind of right-angled spiral motif. This corner ornament can be curved as well, though the examples on the shelving and sideboard of the Peacock Room are the rectilinear variation seen in Chinese furniture. This was a motif from Chinese furniture that Jeckyll used in other designs such as the writing table (figures 3-33) he designed for Heath Old Hall (ca. 1876), and the design for his own writing desk (ca. 1876) (figure 3-34). It was not unusual for Jeckyll and Whistler to mix Japanese and Chinese elements indiscriminantly in the Peacock Room. Scholars generally agree that this is exactly what artists and designers did as they were exposed to a plethora of eastern motifs in the second half of the nineteenth century. Venues like the 1862 International Exhibition in London were founts of inspiration from this time forward, with little concern for cultural distinctions like those made above. After all, these mostly Japanese-looking shelves were designed to hold Chinese porcelain.

Ironically, many elaborate porcelain rooms in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe housed Japanese, not Chinese, porcelain. Even though Chinese porcelain had been imported into Europe since at least the late fourteenth century, Japanese porcelain began to be imported into Europe by the mid-seventeenth century when, for a short time, the Chinese trade fell apart for various reasons. The rough dates for Japanese export porcelain in Europe are 1659-1745, although it was still sought by Europe’s elite after this period. The popularity of porcelain rooms increased simultaneously with the flowering of Japanese porcelain imports in Europe. Oliver Impey contends that this was no coincidence and that the bright colors of Japanese porcelain are the reason behind the porcelain chamber’s popularity at this time. For example, in the Spiegel-Kabinett (1719) at Schloss Weissenstein, Pommersfelden (figure 3-8), already
mentioned, nearly all the porcelain was colorful Japanese Imari or imitation Imari from China or Europe. Japanese porcelain was sometimes imported into Holland and then enameled by the Dutch in the Imari style while at the same time Chinese porcelain was imported and enameled at Delft with Kakiemon motifs from Japan. Adding even more cultural confusion into the mix, Dawn Jacobson maintains that during the colorful Rococo period, polychrome lacquer was more popular than the normally black Japanese lacquer. Ultimately, European porcelain rooms were a mix of Chinese, Japanese, and European elements. The same can be said for the work of Jeckyll and Whistler in the Peacock Room.  

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the Peacock Room’s heritage from the European porcelain chambers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries has been overstated. This oversimplification, first suggested by David Park Curry, has obscured three important breaks with the porcelain room tradition brought about by Thomas Jeckyll. These divergences have revealed that the Peacock Room is only a distant descendant of the porcelain room.

As the first divergence, Jeckyll converted the traditional porcelain room into a dining room. In previous centuries porcelain rooms had been small, private closets or large rooms designed only to show off impressive collections. Such rooms were not used as the primary entertaining spaces of a house the way that the hall, dining room and drawing room were.

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67 Warfare that ultimately led to the demise of the Ming dynasty disrupted the Chinese porcelain trade in the mid-seventeenth century, opening the door for Japanese porcelain. For more information see Laurinda S. Dixon, “Trade and Tradition: Japan and the Dutch Golden Age,” in The Orient Expressed: Japan’s Influence on Western Art 1854-1918, by Gabriel P. Weisberg, and others (Jackson, Mississippi, Seattle, and London: Mississippi Museum of Art and University of Washington Press, 2011), 81. For Oliver Impey’s assessment of the correlation between Japanese porcelain and the popularity of the porcelain chamber see Impey, Porcelain, 24, 56-57, 60. See also Jacobson, Chinoiserie, 82; and J.V.G. Mallet, “European Ceramics and the Influence of Japan,” in Porcelain for Palaces, 40-42.
As the second divergence, Jeckyll deleted two of the defining features of such rooms, namely the large plate glass mirrors and the lacquer paneling commonly seen in traditional porcelain chambers. It is debatable whether the room’s walls today resemble lacquer panels but their final appearance has nothing to do with Jeckyll. It was Whistler who darkened and gilded the room, apparently making its surface resemble lacquer, as Merrill and other have argued, and making the room more like a traditional porcelain chamber.

As the third divergence, Jeckyll’s crucial break with the past grew out of his dismissal of the curvilinear Rococo styling and traditional methods of display in porcelain rooms. Jeckyll boldly introduced an unprecedented variation of Japanese sho-dana shelving with Chinese brackets into his foray into the porcelain room idiom. This artistic endeavor grew out of his earlier overmantels at Heath Old Hall and 1 Holland Park. These had been based on medieval dresser mantelpieces but with increasing amounts of authentic Asian elements. In this final experimental flourish, Jeckyll inverted his overmantel scheme when he removed the sho-dana display shelves from above the hearth and wrapped the entire room with them. Ultimately, through his bold aesthetic choices, Jeckyll transformed the European porcelain room to the point of obliteration. Without the standard lacquer paneling or large mirrors, and with a completely novel shelving system by Jeckyll, the massed porcelain remains in this Aesthetic Movement dining room as the only tenuous link to the old *porzellanzimmer.*
Chapter 4: An Introduction to Decor in the Dining Room

Introduction

The Classical principle of Decor holds that the ornamentation of buildings and rooms should suit the nature of the said buildings and rooms. Many names for this ancient principle have evolved, such as Propriety, Fitness, Correctness, Convenance, and Character. It is not a difficult concept to grasp, and yet Decor has been ignored far too often. One reason may be that it can seem obvious when, for example, a dining room is decorated with images of foodstuffs. On the other hand, there are very few scholars who comment upon Decor, and even fewer who know the principle by name. Nevertheless, Decor can be seen in the Peacock Room in four ways which will be analyzed in chapter five: dishes used to decorate an eating room, the darkness of the room, the peacock as a symbol of feasting, and the sunflower andirons in the hearth. The present chapter, along with Appendices A and B, will establish a history of Decor from ancient Rome to the present day, especially as this principle relates to dining room decoration. Ultimately these chapters will show that the use of this principle, first recorded by the Roman architectural theorist Vitruvius in the first century BC, places the Japonesque Aesthetic Movement Peacock Room within a much longer history of Decor in the dining room.
Vitruvius was a minor Roman architect but he is the only theorist whom we have for the Antiquity. Therefore, his Ten Books on Architecture is considered the fountainhead of Western design theory. In Book 1, Chapter 2 of the Ten Books, Vitruvius detailed six essential categories of architecture. The fifth of these was Decor:


In the same chapter Vitruvius went on to explain Decor via the following remark which has become a celebrated passage because of its description of the Orders:

Next, correctness [Decor] is the refined appearance of a project that has been composed of proven elements and with authority. It is achieved with respect to function, which is called thematismos in Greek, or tradition, or nature. Correctness of function occurs when temples dedicated to Jupiter the Thunderer and Heaver or the Sun and Moon are made open-air shrines, beneath their patron deity, because we see the appearance and effect of these divinities in the light of the outdoor world. Temples of Minerva, Mars, and Hercules will be Doric, because temples for these gods, on account of their courage in battle, should be set up without a trace of embellishment. Temples done in the Corinthian style for Venus, Proserpina, or the Fountain Spirits (nymphae) are those that will seem to possess the most fitting qualities, because, given the delicacy of these goddesses, the works executed in their honor seem best to augment a suitable quality of correctness when they are made more slender, ornamental, and are decorated with leaves and volutes. If temples are constructed in the Ionic style for Juno, Diana, Father Liber, and other gods of this type, the principle of the “mean” will apply, because their particular disposition will strike a balance between the stern lines of the Doric and the delicacy of the Corinthian.

In the paragraphs that follow Vitruvius wrote about tradition and nature as part of Decor. Tradition, he argued, must be upheld in terms of established conventions of decoration. Ignoring tradition would produce a “jarring” effect. And “natural correctness” for Vitruvius had to do with utilizing nature to its best advantage. For example, one should choose healthful building sites near water, or situate a building to take advantage of the light at different times of the day or
the year. As such, these other two aspects of Decor do not apply directly to this dissertation and will not be covered in detail.⁶⁸

In Book Seven of the *Ten Books*, Vitruvius quoted the lost Ancient Greek mathematician Licymnius (also known as Lykinos) to further explain his own views on Decor. According to Vitruvius, Licymnius argued:

The people of Alabanda are considered intelligent enough when it comes to all matters political, but they have been regarded as foolish because of one trifling flaw: that of a lack of a sense of propriety [Decor], for in their gymnasia all the statues are of lawyers pleading cases, and whereas in the forum there are discus throwers, runners, and ballplayers. Thus the inappropriate placement of the statues with regard to their site has won the city the reputation for poor judgment….⁶⁹

Since Classical Antiquity, designers have often made obvious use of the principle of Decor or “rightness.” For instance, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries images of grapes and wheat were popular dining room decorations since such images are associated with the eating and drinking done in the rooms designed specifically for that purpose. Gender has also frequently informed the use of Decor in architecture and decoration. For example, rooms frequented by women, such as drawing rooms, have often been light in color while those that fall traditionally in the masculine domain, like billiard rooms or dining rooms, have tended to be dark and heavy. Charles Brownell explained:

One of the most widespread architectural principles of the early Modern period declares that a building should express its nature. This belief perpetuated the tradition of Decor, but it embraced new ideas and acquired new names, such as Character. A passage from

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⁶⁸ See Vitruvius, *Ten Books on Architecture*, Ingrid D. Rowland, trans., with commentary and illustrations by Thomas Noble Howe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 1.2.1, 1.2.5-7. There are many other passages in the Ten Books where Vitruvius discussed his view of Decor or correctness. See also Vitruvius, *Ten Books*, 1.2.5, 6.2.5, 6.5.1-3, 6.8.10, 7.4.4-5, 7.5.1-8. There is much disagreement over the best translation of Vitruvius. Rowland’s is one of the most recent and its commentary is quite useful. An older edition that is considered to have a reliable translation is Vitruvius, *Ten Books on Architecture*, Morris Hickey Morgan, trans. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1912).

one of the older theorists will equip us to understand the early Modern novelties. Writing on “unnatural Productions,” Robert Morris gave the examples “as when the Portal to a Prison may be of the Corinthian, and that of a Palace be the Tuscan Order. Festoons of Fruit and Flowers have been the Wildness of Fancy in a Seat near the Sea; and a Pavillion [sic] in a Flower-Garden has been group’d with Variety of Fish.” The idea of distributing the Orders according to a building’s purpose goes back to Vitruvius’s discussion of Decor (1.2.5); the rhetorical figure of inverted applications of the Orders was becoming a commonplace; and the notion of relating architectural style to landscape broke new ground.  

Examples of the application of the Vitruvian principle of Decor exist in great numbers and in many periods of Western art history. Those who employed Decor over the centuries did not necessarily know the principle by name. Neither did they read or understand Vitruvius’ treatise on architecture. The concept of Decor is logical and easy to grasp. So, it was copied often by all manner of decorators, artists, patrons, and learned architects. Here follow three straightforward case studies from the Classical world to Neoclassicism, as well as ten further examples from the second half of the nineteenth century. A wider selection of texts pertaining to Decor that show the widespread advocacy of the principle by major architects and theorists in many centuries appears in the Appendices A and B. As we shall see, dining rooms were often the site of the application of this principle. The telltale examples of this chapter were selected above many others as outstanding instances of evidence. They show the persistence of Decor over the centuries. In each case, we will see Decorous motifs mixed with non-Decorous ones. Artists are

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not machines, and they are not always consistent in the decoration of houses. Conventional
decoration will often appear alongside the theme of Decor.  

In section one, we will begin with an Ancient Roman dining room, continue with a Renaissance room used for banquets, and then come to one of the first modern dining rooms in eighteenth-century England and its early nineteenth-century sequels. Section two covers the later nineteenth century. We will see how the French conception of Decor spread internationally from the mid-nineteenth century to places like the United States. Then the English path will be traced from Reform Gothic style of the 1850s through the Arts and Crafts Movement of the 1890s. All of the French, American, and English examples in this chapter include decoration that was linked to the room’s nature and function, that is, each dining room, or piece of a dining room, is an example of Decor because they all contain images connected to eating and drinking. These images were appropriate decoration for a dining room regardless of their creators’ knowledge or ignorance of Vitruvius’ ancient principle.

From the Classical World to Neoclassicism

We begin our journey in Ancient Rome. Our first example of Decor in the dining room is the mosaic pavement of Herakles and Dionysus (Roman Bacchus) engaged in a drinking contest (figure 4-1). This mosaic is one of the well-known floor decorations in the House of the Drinking Contest. This Ancient Roman house in Antioch dates to the third century AD and takes its name from the mosaic described here. It is no surprise that the god of wine, Dionysus, is the victor in this image. Dionysus is crowned with a garland of fruit and leaves. Nearby, a Maenad

71 On the issue of the inconsistency of Decor, that is, when characteristic motifs are mixed with less specific or less meaningful motifs such as flowers, in his consideration of the Bacchic imagery in the Eating Room at Robert Adam’s Osterley Park Charles Brownell has remarked that Adam’s selectiveness is not what an academic or a certified public accountant would like to see. Not every motif in the Eating Room relates to eating and drinking. Other kinds of imagery are present but their appearance does not render the Decorous imagery relating to food and drink insignificant. Charles Brownell, research note card, October 18, 1998, shared with the author.
wears a similar headpiece and dances with the cymbals. Maenads were the female devotees of Dionysus in Greek myth. Dionysus reclines on a couch (a lectus in Latin; a kline in Greek) and holds a rhyton (his drinking vessel) aloft. In front of him sits a krater, a vessel used for mixing wine and water. A tipsy Herakles, his club leaning on the couch, struggles to finish his beverage. The pediment above all three figures holds a comic mask, probably selected because of Dionysus’s role as the patron of drama and because of the subject in the mosaic is comic.

Images, like that of Dionysus, have a variety of meanings seen throughout this dissertation. In some instances Dionysus is illustrated for his connections to wine, and in others he is shown for his connections to drama. In this case, it is fitting that this Dionysian imagery was used in the decoration of a dining room. Roman triclinia were major entertaining rooms and, as such, they were the site of eating, drinking, and festivity.72

72 For mythographic sources on Dionysus (Bacchus), his attributes and retinue see Thomas H. Carpenter, and Christopher A. Faraone, eds., Masks of Dionysus (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993). Carpenter and Faraone give the first significant discussion of Dionysus. More recent accounts include Antonia Tripolitis, Religions of the Hellenistic-Roman Age (Grand Rapids, Michigan, and London: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002), 22-30; and William Hansen, Handbook of Classical Mythology (Oxford: ABC-CLIO, 2004), 147-151, 223-225, 279-281. For information on the mosaic pavements from the House of the Drinking Contest, Antioch, see John J. Dobbins, “Pictures for the Floor: The Virginia Museum’s Roman Mosaics,” in Arts in Virginia 22 issue 1 (1982), 2-13. For the connection between decoration and function in the House of the Drinking Contest (though she does not call this phenomenon Decor by name) see Shelley Hales, The Roman House and Social Identity (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 216. Another ancient Roman house in Antioch, the Atrium House, has similar decoration including a mosaic showing the drinking contest between Hercules and Dionysus. See Christine Kondoleon, Antioch: The Lost Ancient City (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000), 66-71, 170-172. For the principle of Decor in Roman houses see John R. Clarke, The Houses of Roman Italy 100 BC – AD 250: Ritual, Space, and Decoration (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and Oxford: University of California Press, 1991), 2, 28-29. Other authors, such as Matthew B. Roller, discuss the numerous motifs of, for example, diners being served by slaves, or the Dionysian imagery that often decorate Roman triclinia without explicitly highlighting the principle of Vitruvian Decor. See Matthew B. Roller, Dining Posture in Ancient Rome: Bodies, Values, and Status (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006), 53-56, 61-72, 80-84. See also Christine Kondoleon, Domestic and Divine: Roman Mosaics in the House of Dionysos (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1995), 2-3, 11, 18-19. See also Joseph Jay Deiss, Herculaneum: Italy’s Buried Treasure (New York: Harper and Row, 1985), 104, 106. Here, Deiss wrote of patrician and middle-class houses that, “Certain aspects...both enjoy in common, such as the paintings of fruit, fish, or game, which frequently enlivened their dining-room walls—like the dining rooms of nineteenth-century England and America.” Roger Ling analyzed the extent to which Dyonisiac decoration occurred in Pompeian triclinia, arguing that the prevalence of such imagery has been overstated. He did not, however, deny the existence of decoration that expresses nature and function but, rather, acknowledged that such dining room decoration was not always Dyonisiac. Like the others, though, he did not mention the principle of Decor by name. See Roger Ling, “The Decoration of Roman Triclinia,” in In Vino Veritas, edited by Oswyn Murray and Manuela Tecusan (London: British School at Rome in association with American Academy at Rome,
Ancient Roman diners would have had the mosaic in full view on the floor as they enjoyed their meal. They would have been in reclining positions on three couches that formed a U-shape around three sides of the room. The fourth side was left open to allow servants easy access to the diners and the feast. The Romans did not call the rooms that were set up this way “dining rooms,” but, rather, they called them *triclinia*. The word is derived from Greek via Latin for the three (*tri-*) couches (*-clinia*). Typically, the mosaic floors of Roman *triclinia* had a clearly visible central image, such as that of Dionysus and Herakles, and less specific images (usually simple patterning) on the floors underneath the couches. This is the case in the house at Antioch. Outside of the main, figural image, the mosaic is made up of various geometric patterns. In both its placement and subject matter, the *triclinium* mosaic from the House of the Drinking Contest takes into account the nature and function of the room, a place for eating and drinking, making it a prime example of the principle of *Decor*. Its geometric patterning shows that when *Decor* was employed, Characteristic motifs related to eating and drinking were mixed with other, generic yet pleasant imagery. This will be the case in all the examples discussed in

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1995), 239-251. The awareness of the principle of *Decor* is not simply lacking in the Roman *triclinia* scholarship but is underrepresented in the writings of many decorative arts historians for many other periods. For example, the renowned decorative arts historian Peter Thornton (1925-2007) who was an authority on so many topics was apparently aware of *Decor* (though it is unclear whether he knew the principle by name) but, as far as this author has been able to discover in all of his published works, made a few passing remarks on the topic. One appeared in an article co-written with David Watkin. In their discussion of the Thomas Hope’s dining room in the mansion on Duchess Street (which was not illustrated in Hope’s *Household Furniture* (1807) as other rooms in the mansion were) Thornton and Watkin identify objects from Hope’s plates that “certainly were in the [dining] room or are very likely to have been,” without explaining why. They include plate 9, plate 24/6, and plate 47. Plate 9 shows a collection of furniture including a sideboard. The pieces are adorned with images of Bacchus and Ceres. Hope even explained that the decoration was “allusive to the liquid element.” Plate 24/6 is a detail described as a sideboard pedestal, and Plate 47 shows various tablewares, again decorated with Bacchic imagery. As may often be the case, Thornton and Watkin may have assumed that the characteristic decoration was obvious and therefore not worth mentioning. Thornton also acknowledged the traditionally feminine nature of drawing rooms versus the typically masculine nature of dining rooms in his book *Authentic Décor*. This dissertation shows that this is the position taken by scholars in most cases. This leaves little hope that the more subtle examples of *Decor*, such as those in the Peacock Room, will be recognized. See Peter Thornton and David Watkin, “New Light on the Hope Mansion in Duchess Street,” *Apollo* 126 no. 307 (Sept. 1987), 170. Also see Thomas Hope, *Household Furniture and Interior Decoration* (1807; repr., New York: Dover, 1971), 36-38, 66-67, 112-113. And Thornton, *Authentic Decor: the Domestic Interior, 1620-1920*, 3rd edition (London: Seven Dials; New York: Sterling, 2000), 219-220.
this chapter. This use of the *Decor* principle was common in Ancient Rome and has been acknowledged by scholars (though we may never know if the creators of such decoration read Vitruvius or knew the *Decor* principle by name). For example, in her analysis of the decoration of Roman *triclinia* in Antioch (which often included drinking cups, *kraters*, and other kinds of imagery relating to eating and drinking) Christine Kondoleon wrote that “the suitability of this theme for reception areas was clearly a commonplace of Roman decoration.”

Our second example of *Decor* in the dining room takes us into the Renaissance. Surely the most famous Renaissance example of this principle is Leonardo da Vinci’s *Last Supper* fresco (*figure 4-2*) in the refectory (dining hall) of the convent of Santa Maria della Grazie, Milan, but we will examine the depiction of another famous meal: *The Feast of the Gods* ceiling fresco (*figure 4-3*) in the *Loggia of Cupid and Psyche* at the Villa Farnesina in Rome. The villa was built between 1506 and 1510 for the art patron and banker Agostino Chigi (1465-1520). The decorative program of frescoes in the *loggia* was designed by Raphael and executed by the artist and the members of his workshop between 1518 and 1519. The tale of Cupid and Psyche, wherein the two protagonists endure a series of misadventures and trials before they ultimately marry, comes from *The Golden Ass* by Apuleius. *The Golden Ass* is a rare, complete novel that survives from the second century AD. Bette Talvacchia has suggested that the choice of subject matter may have derived from Chigi’s recent marriage in 1519 to Francesca Ordeaschi.

Additionally, Chigi bought a sculpture of the winged Psyche that dated from antiquity and it had

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pride of place in the Farnesina loggia. Talvacchia and others have also suggested that the fruits, vegetables and foliage on the loggia ceiling (figure 4-4) were likely chosen as appropriate decoration since the loggia opened onto a garden (although it seems unlikely that an ornamental garden adjoining a formal entertaining space would contain the vegetables of an ordinary kitchen garden). Without denying the plausible connections of the loggia imagery, Chigi’s recent wedding, his statue of Psyche, and the adjacent garden, the present author suggests that the painted images of food, drink, and feasting also relate to the loggia’s nature and function as a banqueting room. Additionally, the imagery was not simply suitable for this entertaining space but the legend of Cupid and Psyche may well have been chosen because the story concludes with a large banquet.  

As one’s eyes travel up the curves of the vaulted ceiling, dense foliage bursts with fruits, vegetables, and flowers. This overflowing greenery forms a border around the pendentives, spandrels, and the two, large ceiling panels (figure 4-5). Inside the triangular pendentives, episodes from the legend of Cupid and Psyche appear (figure 4-6), but only those which occurred in the heavens and which would therefore be appropriate for a ceiling painting (the earthly scenes and those of the underworld are omitted). Alternating with these episodes are images of putti holding various attributes of the gods, including one with Bacchus’s thyrsus (figure 4-7). In Greek and Roman mythology, the thyrsus is the staff of Bacchus or Dionysus. It is often covered

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74 Many authors note the vegetation on the Loggia of Cupid and Psyche ceiling as a link to the adjacent garden without mentioning the visual connection to the banqueting that went on in the Villa Farnesina Loggia. See, for example, Bette Talvacchia, *Raphael* (London: Phaidon, 2007), 194; and Elsa Gerlini, *Villa Farnesina alla Lungara Rome* (Rome: Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, 1990), 55. For Talvacchia’s suggestion of the link between Chigi’s marriage, his purchase of the Psyche sculpture, and the Cupid and Psyche decorative program at the Villa Farnesina see Talvacchia, *Raphael*, 198. Roger Jones and Nicholas Penny were far less certain of this connection, though, since the legend of Cupid and Psyche was “commonly regarded as an allegory of the immortality of the soul.” They acknowledged that the legend was used on Florentine wedding chests, but also that between 1511 and 1519 Chigi and Ordeaschi had been lovers and had had children. Their relationship and their offspring were only legitimized in 1519, after eight years together. See Roger Jones and Nicholas Penny, *Raphael* (New Haven and London: Yale, 1983), 184.
in vines and tipped with a pinecone. It can symbolize fertility because of its phallic shape, or it can refer more generally to the revelry and wine-drinking associated with Bacchus. Likewise, the pinecone itself can also be considered a Dionysian symbol of welcome and festivity.\footnote{For an outline of the decorative program of the Villa Farnesina loggia ceiling, including the “suitability” of placing the heavenly episodes from the myth of Cupid and Psyche on the vaulted ceiling of the loggia which was made to look like a great pergola taking the sky as its backdrop, see Jones and Penny, \textit{Raphael}, 183-189. For a definition of the thyrsus see M.C. Howatson, ed., \textit{The Oxford Companion to Classical Literature}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 571. See also Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short, \textit{A New Latin Dictionary} (New York: American Book Company, 1907), 1870, under “thyrsus.”}

The majority of the ceiling is taken up by two great rectangular panels that represent (from right to left), the final two scenes of the legend of Cupid and Psyche (6.23 and 6.24). Both images are meant to appear as though woven on large tapestries suspended over the room like great canopies. Beyond its illusionistically taut borders, the ceiling fresco on the right illustrates the text from Apuleius’s chapter 6.23 (\textit{figure 4-8}). On the right side, Jupiter is pictured with his eagle and with one foot on the globe. He has assembled the gods via Mercury, who is present on the left with his winged helmet and caduceus. Amidst the pantheon and near the center of the image is the seated Bacchus wearing a crown of grape vines and accompanied by a tiger and sphinx. Each creature is accompanied by a white-haired, bearded male figure who personifies a river. The sphinx represents the Nile River and Bacchus’ wanderings there while the tiger represents the Tigris River and Bacchus’ travels to Syria. It was there that Bacchus famously crossed the Tigris on the back of a Tiger (hence the similarity between “Tigris” and “tiger”).

According to Apuleius’ text, Jupiter is addressing the group with Cupid and his mother Venus at the forefront. Jupiter decrees that Cupid should be permitted to make Psyche his true wife forever, meaning that Venus must stop interfering and tormenting Psyche (Venus was jealous of Psyche’s great beauty). Next, at far left, Mercury carries out Jupiter’s order by transporting Psyche to heaven and permitting her to drink from the goblet of nectar in his outstretched hand.

To the left of the fresco just described is another fresco of the same shape and size (\textit{figure 4-3}). It represents the final scene in the Cupid and Psyche story: their wedding banquet. Again the imagery comes directly from Apuleius’s text (6.24). The newlyweds recline on a bank of clouds while other gods assemble at a great golden table, dance, sing, sprinkle flowers, and play musical instruments. Bacchus (\textit{figure 4-9}), again wearing his crown of grape vines, is prominently placed to the right of the couple. He is pouring wine to be enjoyed at the great celebration. This image of a divine feast, combined with the presence of the god Bacchus and the foliage borders teeming with fruits and vegetables, were highly appropriate decorative choices for one of the grandest banqueting spaces of the Villa Farnesina.\footnote{For the description of the wedding banquet of Cupid and Psyche see Apuleius, \textit{The Golden Ass Or, A Book of Changes}, Joel C. Relihan, trans. (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing, 2007), 6.24 (p. 128). In this passage Apuleius does not mention Bacchus by name, though does describe two cupbearers present at the banquet. The first is Jupiter’s cupbearer, also known as Ganymede, and the second is Liber, a Roman god of wine commonly viewed as an equivalent to Roman Bacchus or Greek Dionysus. Both are visible in the Villa Farnesina fresco. For more on the mythography of Bacchus see Conti, \textit{Mythologies}, 270-297. A decorative program similar to that of the Villa Farnesina loggia, with images from the wedding banquet of Cupid and Psyche, appears in Giulio Romano’s Sala di Psiche in the Palazzo del Te (1524-1534), Matua, Italy. I plan to argue that the principle of \textit{Decor} is at work in that room, as at the Farnesina, and I thank Dr. Charles Brownell for leading me to this argument.}

As in our first example from Ancient Rome, this Renaissance example of \textit{Decor} reveals that when Characteristic images of food and drink appear, they are always mixed with other motifs that may not relate to eating and drinking. For example, in the \textit{loggia} there are number of scenes from the legend of Cupid and Psyche that do not relate to the great banquet at the end of the story. In addition, there are pleasant yet non-specific patterns of birds and flowers on the
small barrel vaults of the arched openings around the room, below the mythological scenes
(figure 4-10). Regardless of the presence of these other scenes and of the non-specific motifs,
the room’s overall adherence to the principle of Vitruvian *Decor* is clear. The connection is
emphasized by the pervasive representations of foodstuffs, wine drinking and feasting, no matter
what other kinds of pleasant images are interspersed with the group. The overall scheme was
obviously based on the room’s nature and function which will be analyzed below.

Unlike the creators of the House of the Drinking Contest mosaic, though, whose
identities are lost to history (and with them any evidence of their knowledge of Vitruvius), there
is a far greater likelihood that Raphael and his workshop were specifically aware of Vitruvian
*Decor* in the creation of painted decoration of the Farnesina loggia in 1518. Upon the death of
architect Donato Bramante (ca. 1443/4-1514), Raphael took on the role of head papal architect.
In this task, under the auspices of Pope Leo X, Raphael was aided by two established architects:
Giuliano da Sangallo (1443-1516) and Fra Giovanni Giocondo (ca. 1433-1515). Giocondo
published a Latin version of Vitruvius in 1511 that Raphael used a few years later in
commissioning Marco Fabio Calvo (ca. 1450-1527) to translate the text into Italian (the first
edition in the language). As is widely known, Calvo not only stayed in Raphael’s home as he
worked on the translation, suggesting a close working relationship, but Raphael is also known to
have annotated the text and proof-read it. Many designs by Raphael have been tied to Vitruvius
by scholars in various ways. Chief among them are his plans for the Villa Madama (figure 4-
11). Begun by Raphael in 1518 but left unfinished upon his death in 1520, the plans for the Villa
Madama were detailed extensively by Raphael in a letter of 1519. In some instances, Raphael’s
text in the letter copies passages of Calvo’s Vitruvius exactly. Clearly the artist was intimately

Like the Ancient Romans, the Romans of the sixteenth century did not call a loggia a “dining room” but it was indeed used for banqueting. A celebrated decorative arts historian, the late Peter Thornton, noted that loggias were one of several dining spaces in Italian Renaissance houses (though loggias were certainly grander than some of the other choices). As an open air terrace with walls on only three sides and a roof overhead, the loggia offered scenic views during meals:

…the loggia was very important to the Italians who, with their essentially trustworthy and felicitous climate, are able to spend so much more of their time out of doors than we less fortunate northerners. The loggia brings the out of doors conveniently within the walls of a building, and in many cases was actually connected with its surroundings—facing directly onto a garden, with steps leading down, for instance, or even doubling as an entrance foyer (in which case there would usually be another less public loggia on another side of the building).

At grander houses, if loggie were present on more than one side of the house, diners could eat on the northern loggia to escape the hot sun in the summer, on the southern loggia in the winter to soak up any warm sunlight, and so on. At the Villa Farnesina, there is only one loggia. It was originally used as an entrance foyer (when not used for banquets) and its position, facing a great garden and the Tiber River, takes advantage of the natural landscape.\footnote{For Thornton’s analysis of Italian Renaissance room types and his discussion of the loggia see Peter Thornton, Italian Renaissance Interior 1400-1600 (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1991), 285, 290-291, 313. It is worth noting that Thornton also wrote that sometimes salettas (one of the other dining room options; a small, private dining room only for very important people in a grand house) were called triclinio and were set up for only three to six diners, reclining on couches on three sides of a square table in the Ancient Roman fashion. Even though Roman triclinia were not always small, sixteenth-century Italians preferred the intimate version; see Thornton, Italian Renaissance...}
The banqueting imagery in the Loggia of Cupid and Psyche corresponds with what Marta Ajmar-Wollheim has pointed out, that rooms and furniture became increasingly specialized throughout the Renaissance. Further, written records exist that document at least one large feast that was held in Chigi’s *loggia* in 1518. Elsa Gerlini’s translation of Cardinal Fabio Chigi’s account of this banquet states that,

…[In the loggia] food was served in gold and silver dishes which at the end of each course were thrown into the Tiber—however, the lavishness of the host was counterbalanced by the shrewdness of the business man since nets were cleverly concealed on the bottom of the river to catch the precious dishes.

So, the *Loggia of Cupid and Psyche*, with its *Feast of the Gods* ceiling fresco, was used for dining and its decoration of food, wine, and diners is another example of *Decor* in the dining room.

Our third example of *Decor* in the dining room occurs at Osterley Park House (*figure 4-12*), west of London. Robert Adam, the famed Neoclassical designer, was commissioned to remodel the sixteenth-century home in the 1760s (*figure 4-13*). At Osterley Park, *Decor*, is a consistent pattern, room to room. We find this in Adam’s work for instance, scholarship shows that all the major rooms at Osterley make use of the principle of *Decor*, or *Character* as it was commonly called in the period, as a way of stamping or marking the room. John Hardy and

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*Interior*, 290-291. The notion of a dining space facing a garden on one side was apparently a popular idea at certain times throughout history, not only during the Italian Renaissance. For example, in his explanation of the Ancient Roman *triclinium*, Roller includes a view of the garden as one of the essential features of such rooms; see Roller, *Dining Posture*, 53-56. And Linda Merrill emphasized the garden views from the Peacock Room (the dining room opened up onto a terrace which was, and still is, adjacent to a small park called Princes Gardens) likening it to a Chinese garden pavilion; see Linda Merrill, *The Peacock Room: A Cultural Biography* (Washington, DC and New Haven: Freer Gallery of Art and Yale University Press, 1998), 197. When Charles Lang Freer installed the Peacock Room at his home at Detroit it was in the midst of his garden, though he did not use it as a dining room.

Maurice Tomlin have noted the use of Decor room by room at Osterley Park House. For example, Hardy and Tomlin have pointed out a love theme in the State Bedchamber at Osterley, full of Venuses and Cupids (figure 4-14). They also noted that the Antechamber (also called the Tapestry Room) contains Characteristic tapestries. For example, and apropos of other sections of this dissertation, the tapestry opposite the fireplace shows Venus visiting Vulcan (god of fire) at his forge.81

Appropriate decoration appears conspicuously in the Osterley Park dining room. We begin with the plasterwork ceiling decoration because it is the keynote and we will work our way down (figure 4-15). In addition to eating, this is a room for drinking. The English custom at the time was to relegate the women to the drawing room after meals so that the men could drink and smoke cigars in the dining room. Accordingly, many of the motifs relate to wine and beer. Starting in the middle of the ceiling, the centerpiece is a rosette surrounded by concentric ovals. A garland of hop leaves, hops being used in the brewing of beer, fills in the space between the bands of concentric ovals. Thyrsi crisscross in the center of the design, each staff with wrapped in a garland of ivy, a plant sacred to Bacchus, and with pinecones capping both ends. The ceiling’s largest, outermost oval is enwrapped just like the thyrsi, except with scrolling grapevines and bunches of grapes instead of ivy. This central oval area frame is adjoined to the corners of the room by four roundels. Each of these contains a wine pitcher or an instrument of sacrifice, and each roundel is again surrounded by grapevines.

The cornice frieze includes Bacchanalian boys and goats playing amidst grapevines and bunches of grapes. The frieze over each door is covered with grapevines (figure 4-16). The painting above the chimneypiece is an image of an offering to Ceres, the goddess of grain (figure

4-17). This is, of course, also a room for eating. The rest of the decoration is not Characteristic.

Skulls, the remains of animal sacrifice, decorate the chimneypiece itself, along with Doric elements. Ram’s heads and paterae (classical dishes used in animal sacrifice) are present on the sideboard pedestals and the sideboard table (figure 4-18).

The stucco wall panels contain scrolling acanthus vines and painted roundels and tablets. The roundels show a Roman marriage, a wedding feast, the birth of a baby, and the sacrifice of a ram in thanksgiving (figures 4-19a, b, c, and d). The tablets show nymphs and satyrs, although the ears of the satyrs are more conspicuous in the illustration of them in the Works in Architecture of Robert and James Adam, published in three volumes between 1773 and 1822. Satyrs were male companions of Bacchus with goat-like features such as large ears. Satyrs also appear in the form of mask handles on the vases positioned on the room’s two sideboard pedestals (figure 4-20).

It is important to acknowledge that the numerous motifs that correspond to the drinking, eating and conviviality that went on in this room were freely mixed with other decoration. Examples include the lyre-back chairs of mahogany (figure 4-21) and the small tables with pleasant motifs of mosaic flowers on their tops (figure 4-22) and Greek key patterns in gold on their sides (figure 4-18). Also, the paintings over each door contain female figures representing the continents. These items show that when Character is present, other, less specific decoration can also be present. This mixing does not compromise the effect or render all the grapevines and thyrsi meaningless. In any case, the application of Decor would be far less popular (and much more severe and predictable) if its practitioners were limited to the use of Characteristic imagery alone. The principle would become quite tiresome if no other kind of ornament were permissible
in such schemes. In the final analysis, the dining room at Osterley Park is another prime example of the principle of Decor in a fashionable dining room.

Adding to the list of pleasant motifs not specifically linked to dining, there are two large paintings at either end of the room. Painted by Antonio Zucchi (1726-95), these show Turkish dancers among Roman ruins (figure 4-23) and athletic figures in the ruins of a Roman bath. As writers usually fail to note, the combined effect of the wall paintings and the scrolling plasterwork (figure 4-24) on the walls is Adam’s eighteenth-century British counterpart to an ancient Roman interior with grotesques and landscapes. Grotesques are a fantasy kind of wall decoration more popularly known as arabesques. The designs originated in ancient Rome and were present in grottos (hence the term “grotesque”) and interiors. Charles Brownell argues that Adam specifically mixed grotesques and landscapes paintings with ruins in this Osterley Park dining room because, as a student of Roman interiors, he knew that this was exactly what the Romans did in Third and Fourth Style wall paintings.82

Like all the early dining rooms discussed here, this room at Osterley Park was not called a dining room when it was first created. It is known simply as the Eating Room, or the Eating Parlour as Adam himself identified it on his original designs of the 1760s (figures 4-25a and b).

82 For information on the Osterly Park Eating Room see Eileen Harris, The Genius of Robert Adam: His Interiors (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2001), 160-163. In their guidebook on Osterley, John Hardy and Maurice Tomlin wrote of the eating room: “The traditional iconography of a banqueting room has always been to do with wine, and therefore with the god Bacchus. This one is no exception.” See John Hardy and Maurice Tomlin, Osterley Park House (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1985), 30. See also Peter Ward-Jackson, Osterley Park: A Guide (London: Victoria and Albert Museum and Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1971), 13-14. For the images of the satyrs and other illustrations of the designs at Osterley (and other Adam projects) see Robert Adam, Works in Architecture of Robert and James Adam (1773-1778 (vol. 1), 1779 (vol. 2), 1822 (vol. 3); repr., London: Alec Tiranti, 1959). Published when Adam had established his style and matured as a designer, Works represents a collection of completed Adam projects. In it Adam wrote of his desire to capture the spirit of antiquity but, at the same time, infuse it with “novelty and variety.” This was a sharp break from the Classicism of the past. Adam wrote that the geniuses of antiquity did not rigidly adhere to rules. Adam’s view was that the ancients were free to experiment and bend the “rules” as they saw fit. In Works, Adam proposed his brand of ornamentation as the new British style. Apparently Adam knew about Vitruvian Decor but felt free to use it or reject it depending on the situation.
The room is considered one of the first dedicated dining rooms in England. The invention of the dining room is just one of several specialized room types that came into fashion from the mid-eighteenth century in England and America. As we have just seen, the principle of Vitruvian Decor, first incorporated in the Ancient Roman triclinium and later seen in a Renaissance loggia, was carried right along with this new room type, the modern dining room, as it developed in the eighteenth century. Many but by no means all stylish dining rooms from the First Phase of Neoclassicism show the pursuit of Decor, or Character.  

83 For Adam’s use of the term “Eating Parlour” see Harris, *Genius of Adam*, 160 ill. 232. In great English houses generally the hall, the drawing room, and the dining room were the main reception rooms. The hall was the most conservative and imposing since it was the first impression made on guests who arrived at the house. Fewer people were permitted to enter the drawing room and even fewer in the dining room. Peter Thornton explained how the English took their cue from the French in the area of room types, and in many other fashionable fields. The English differed, however, in the stress they placed on the dining room since their custom was to linger for hours at meals, as the conversation was carefully stoked. The men would stay even longer to drink in the dining room while the women removed (or withdrew) themselves to the drawing room. In France, the dining room was less important than in England since French people tended to leave the table as soon as they finished their meal. Significantly, the English custom was passed on to the Americans. See Peter Thornton, *Authentic Décor*, 18-19, 50-53, 93-97, 145-150. American dining rooms began to appear in America between 1700 and 1725, according to Mark Wenger. The dining room was, of course, a room specially designed for taking meals and fits in with the broader eighteenth century trend towards having more rooms, each with a distinct function. Carl Lounsbury tells us that the dining room took on an “escalating importance” after 1750, and it often vied with other rooms in the house for the title of “best room.” As noted above, in city and town houses, a formal dining room could be behind a parlor on the first floor or above it on the second floor. In these scenarios an informal eating room would exist in the front room of the basement (the kitchen was often conveniently in the back part of the basement). When no formal dining room was present and two parlors occupied the main floor of a city or town house, families simply ate all their meals and spent time together in that same front, basement room. See Mark Wenger, “The Central Passage in Virginia: Evolution of an Eighteenth-Century Living Space,” in *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, Vol. 2, edited by C. Wells (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1986), 24-36, 137-149. Mark Wenger, “The Dining Room in Early Virginia,” in *Perspectives of Vernacular Architecture*, Vol. 3, edited by Thomas Carter and Bernard L. Herman (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1989), 149-159. Carl R. Lounsbury, ed., *An Illustrated Glossary of Early Southern Architecture and Landscape* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 1999). For details on other examples of Decorous dining rooms from the First Phase of Neoclassicism such as Adam’s work at Syon House and George Steuart’s at Attingham, see Eileen Harris, *The Genius of Robert Adam: His Interiors* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2001), 64-83; Damie Stillman, *English Neoclassical Architecture*, 2 vols., Studies in Architecture, vol. XXVI (London: A. Zwemmer, 1988), 1: 99-136; Charles Brownell, “The Classical Tradition in Ornament and the John and Elizabeth Wickham House,” (paper presented at the annual conference of the Valentine, the Richmond History Center, Richmond, Virginia, March, 1999), 13-14; Christopher Hussey, *English Country Houses: Mid Georgian* (Suffolk: Antique Collectors’ Club, 1986), 13-15, 86-97, 195-202; H. Avray Tipping, *English Homes, Period VI*, Vol. 1, *Late Georgian, 1760-1820* (London: Country Life, 1926), 139-164, 283-298; and J. Lees-Milne, *Guide to Attingham* (London: National Trust, 1949).
This was the standard practice during the First Phase of Neoclassicism. We see Neoclassicism making inroads in America through period books which show the ubiquity of Character. For instance, The American Builder’s Companion, first published in 1806 and authored by Daniel Raynerd and Asher Benjamin, advised readers to decorate dining rooms with “any thing that denotes eating or drinking.” Raynerd, the apparent author of the passage, was an English-trained plaster-worker portraying London ideas in the United States.  

Such ideas were reinforced within the Second Phase of Neoclassicism. For instance, in 1807 London, the illustrious collector and decorator Thomas Hope published a detailed account of the interiors of his mansion on Duchess Street in Household Furniture and Interior Decoration. Plate 9 (figure 4-26) illustrates a sideboard and other furniture generally accepted as dining room pieces. They are embellished with images of Bacchus and Ceres, wheat and grapes.

In the accompanying text, Hope described the dining room ornament:

Sideboard adorned with emblems of Bacchus and of Ceres. Cellaret [a container for drinks] ornamented with amphorae and with figures, allusive to the liquid element. To the right, a sloping altar or pedestal, surmounted by a vase. To the left, a lofty candelabrum, destined to support a torch. On the table, a vase with Bacchanalian marks, placed between two cassolettes: over the same a picture, representing a Bacchanalian procession:…

Decor was also present in dining rooms on the other side of the Atlantic during the Second Phase of Neoclassicism. For example, the John and Elizabeth Wickham House, Richmond, Virginia (1811-1813), by Alexander Parris (1780-1852), incorporates the theme

84 For the full quotations on Decor (though not mentioned by name) almost certainly written by Daniel Raynerd since he co-authored the first edition, see those listed chronologically in Appendices A and B, and in Asher Benjamin and Daniel Raynerd, The American Builder’s Companion (1827; repr., New York: Dover, 1969), 75. For information on Raynerd see Jack Quinan, “Daniel Raynerd, Stucco Worker,” in Old-Time New England 65 nos. 3-4 (Winter-Spring 1975), 1-21.

85 See Thomas Hope, Household Furniture and Interior Decoration (1807; repr., New York: Dover, 1971), 36-38. Hope also noted the presence of “Baccanalian masks” on the “Mantle-piece, belonging to the eating-room,” described and illustrated in Hope, pp. 118-119.
In the dining room, the Order around the doorcase (figure 4-28) contains carved garlands of grapevines in the frieze (figure 4-29) and, in the capitals, wheat replaces the acanthus leaves that are traditionally included in the Corinthian Order (figure 4-30). The stucco ceiling, possibly executed by Daniel Raynerd, also contains reliefs of grapes (figure 4-31). The chimneypiece has a painted mask of Silenus (figure 4-32), the often drunk god and teacher of Bacchus, which was copied from Hope’s *Household Furniture* (figure 4-32a). A painted image of a Bacchanal, replete with youths pouring libations to Bacchus and panthers (animals associated with Bacchus), appears on the wall opposite (figure 4-33).

The Second Half of the Nineteenth Century: France

Decorous dining rooms were not limited to Classical and Neoclassical design, though. In fact, the Classical principle of *Decor* not only endured but thrived during the second half of the nineteenth century in many different styles. We begin at mid-century with a Renaissance Revival piece but we will quickly move on and see the adaptability of *Decor* to nearly any style. The seminal Fourdinois sideboard (figure 4-34) was shown in 1851 at London’s Great Exhibition. The Maison Fourdinois was a Parisian cabinetry firm in operation from 1835 to 1887 under Alexandre-Georges Fourdinois (1799-1871) and his son Henri Auguste Fourdinois (1830-1907). The massive sideboard, a specialized piece of furniture made only for dining rooms, won a medal at the Great Exhibition and was widely publicized in print. It is one of a great many Decorous sideboards that fill the pages of the catalogue of the Great Exhibition. But decorative arts curator for the Virginia Museum Barry Shifman, has called the Fourdinois

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sideboard “one of the most important pieces of mid-nineteenth-century French furniture ever made,” and its decorative program was consecrated to the principle of Decor. Again, though, the makers of this piece of furniture need not have been experts or even readers of Vitruvius, the application of the principle is obvious.  

Instead of focusing on grains or grapes, the French interpretation of Character, via Renaissance Revival pieces such as the Fourdinois sideboard, were more literal in their display of slain game, fruits, and other vivid images. In the Fourdinois piece, six sculpted hunting dogs in seated positions on the base acted as legs, supporting the weight of the sideboard above. Moving up one level we see roundels and rectangular panels, each filled with reliefs of different crops from the harvest. The dramatic central relief panel on this level displays a slain deer, as well as a limp lobster and a dead bird. Just above this morose grouping there was a painting of flowers and fruit. To the left and right of that painting were four female allegories (two to each side) of the continents: Europe, Asia, Africa and America. Each of these held a local attribute: wine, tea, coffee, and sugarcane, respectively. Rounding off the corners on this level are two terms. Terms (or terminal figures) consist of a carved head and bust that tapers and smooths into a pillar-like form at the bottom. The term figure on the left represents fishing and the one on the right symbolizes hunting. The crowning central image of this sideboard, in the midst of the broken pediment at the top, was Ceres, goddess of grain. She held one cornucopia in each hand.

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87 Charles Brownell has discussed his views on the impact of the Fourdinois sideboard on American and English design with the author; Charles Brownell, interview by author, Richmond, VA, December 13, 2012. For information on the Fourdinois sideboard at London’s Great Exhibition, 1851, and its subsequent provenance see Barry Shifman, “The Fourdinois Sideboard at the 1851 Great Exhibition,” in Apollo 491 (2003), 14-21. Additionally, former Virginia Commonwealth University student Sarah McIlvaine detailed the Characteristic decoration of the sideboards of this period arguing that the English sideboards were not as obviously Decorous as the French ones. See McIlvaine, “Little Buildings: A Study of Aedicular Furniture from the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (1500-1900),” (master’s thesis, Virginia Commonwealth University, 2011), 22-41. For the popularity of slain animals as dining room decoration in the Victorian Era see Kenneth L. Ames, Death in the Dining Room and Other Tales of Victorian Culture (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992).
And putti on her right picked grapes, while those on her left harvested wheat. It would be difficult to imagine a better example of Decor in the dining room and yet, less specific motifs such as flowers and putti were also present. Clearly when the principle of Decor is used, other, generic imagery is also incorporated.

The famous Fourdinois sideboard was published widely along with a swath of similar pieces in the catalogue of the Great Exhibition of 1851. Because of this and almost immediately thereafter, copies of this type of dining room furniture that included carvings related to food and drink began to appear on both sides of the Atlantic. We will look at three members of this family before returning to our survey of Decorous dining rooms. Our first example is a ca. 1855 carved walnut sideboard (figure 4-35) attributed to the French-born American sculptor Joseph Alexis Bailly (1825-1883). The sideboard has many characteristics in common with the Fourdinois piece. Now in the collection of the Cleveland Museum of Art, the sideboard is perhaps not quite as large as the French example but has a monumental presence nonetheless because of a tiered layout which is widest and heaviest at the base. As in the Fourdinois sideboard, carved hunting dogs appear in the lowest level, this time only as busts in the centers of four sets of coffered panels (the outermost sets being curved to fit the rounded edges of the piece). Between most of the panel sets are term figures in the form of putti, the only exception being the vine-wrapped thyrsus carved between the two panels in the center. On the second level, garlands of fruit fill in the borders between a central medallion overflowing with more produce and two seated Native American guardians, one at either end. On the third level up from the ground, between two empty niches, is the largest and most dramatic grouping. The centerpiece of this figural group is a slain stag whose antlers and head drape over the edge of its tier. The grouping was copied directly from the Fourdinois sideboard and is just as grisly. Limp fowl, expired hares, and
foliage round out this macabre tableau. The upper levels of the Cleveland sideboard include more ripe fruit with bunches of grapes chief among them. Both sideboards have a broken pediment with a central figure as the crowing adornment. Instead of a sculpted Ceres, as in the Fourdinois piece, the Cleveland sideboard has a bird with its wings outstretched (perhaps an American eagle?). Overall, this sideboard is an undeniable, American descendant of the French version of Decor.

The second descendant of the the Fourdinois sideboard comes from France. Decorous dining room furniture continued to be produced in France, even as new styles took hold. Louis Majorelle (1859-1926), a leading Art Nouveau designer, included fruit and game in a dining room buffet from 1898 (figure 4-36). As Frederick R. Brandt has pointed out, this piece incorporates several delicacies of French gourmets. Hares appear the large marquetry panel at the back amidst some type of grain or grass, commonly misidentified as cattails. Snails (escargot) are present in the galleries throughout the piece. Branches with an unidentified kind of fruit appear on the skirt and on the drawer between elaborate pulls in the form of duck heads according to Brandt. Perhaps these are instead goose heads, present as a reference to the delicacy pâté de foie gras and simple goose meat as well. These birds have captured snakes in their mouths which seems more in keeping with the aggressive reputation of geese who fiercely protect their nests, not ducks.88

And our third Fourdinois offspring comes from another major Art Nouveau figure, Émile Gallé (1846-1904). In 1903 Gallé designed a sideboard (figure 4-37) that incorporated conspicuous sheaves of wheat in varying sizes as well as agricultural scenes found in the lower,

88 For more information on the Majorelle sideboard see Frederick R. Brandt, Late 19th and Early 20th Century Decorative Arts: The Sydney and Frances Lewis Collection in the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (Richmond, Seattle, and London: Virginia Museum of Fine Arts and the University of Washington Press, 1985), 60-61. Brandt appreciated the references to food in the Majorelle buffet (though without citing the Decor principle by name).
marquetry panels. The door panel on the left shows harvesters at work in the field, and the one of the right shows the tilled field with haystacks. The piece makes use of the Decor principle and is an even better example of the Art Nouveau style than the Majorelle piece because of its sweeping curves and stylized botanical forms, though neither designer necessarily knew Decor by name.89

During the nineteenth century England and France competed with one another for supremacy in design. As the Fourdinois sideboard shows, the French pieces were often like odes to the principle of Decor while English examples took a different path. These pieces were more subdued, having come out of the Gothic tradition that evolved into the Arts and Crafts Movement in England. Former Virginia Commonwealth University student Sarah McIlvaine analyzed a number of these sideboards from the major exhibition catalogues of the period in order to show this development. It was this strain of decoration that led to sideboards such as the two originally incorporated in the Peacock Room. Both sideboards, one by Thomas Jeckyll (figure 4-38) and the other by Philip Webb for Morris’s firm (figure 4-39), fit McIlvaine’s criteria for the English style. First, a horizontal and rectilinear emphasis is present, as opposed to the curvilinear, vertical tiers of the French model. Second, a more matte finish is used, opposite of the glossy French pieces. And finally, considerably less emphasis was placed on Decorous motifs (if any) and less interest was also placed in concealing the methods of construction. Character would have to be incorporated in other ways in the Leylands’ dining room and other

89 As noted above, Brandt acknowledged the references to food in the Majorelle Buffet but he did not mention any connection to eating and dining in his discussion of the Gallé sideboard’s sheaves of wheat. See Brandt, Late 19th and Early 20th Century Decorative Arts, 118-119. Additionally, former Virginia Commonwealth University student Sarah McIlvaine appreciated the Decorous design elements of the Gallé and other contemporary sideboards. See Sarah McIlvaine, “Little Buildings,” 39-40.
English examples since the conspicuous, bulging carved elements from the French sideboards were omitted.  

The Second Half of the Nineteenth Century: England

In England, we begin in the 1850s as we did with our French examples above. In 1858, the Reform Gothic architect and designer William Burges (1827-1881) was commissioned by Herbert George Yatman to create the Saint Bacchus Sideboard (*figure 4-40*), among several similar pieces. Thomas Morten (1836-1866) probably painted the surfaces of the sideboard which are full of medieval patterns in rich colors such as gold, maroon, and blue. There are also figural portions which make references to drinking and eating.

Moving left to right along the largest, central frieze of painted decoration, on the left side of the piece there is a profile head with two faces and the text “Half and Half” (usually a drink made from mixing two kinds of beer). Around the corner from this panel we move to the front of the sideboard which has four pairs of panel doors (*figure 4-41*). The two door panels on the left contain more emblematic heads: on the left a female head labeled as “Ale,” on the right another female head labeled as “Sherry.” Next are the two pairs of central door panels. The first pair, on the left, is labeled “Saint Bacchus Disputeth with Water.” At far left are two Bacchic devotees, a man and a woman, with grapevine wreaths on their heads. The beads of the woman’s necklace look conspicuously like grapes strung together as well. To their right is Bacchus who

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has a golden halo and wears a grapevine wreath on his head. He also wears a garment that has a pattern of bunches of grapes on it and his buttons resemble grapes. On the right panel of this pair we see the female personification of Water dressed all in blue and pointing her finger angrily at Bacchus. Behind her, on the right side of this panel are female figures labeled “Ginger Beer” and “Soda Water.” Moving to the right we see the second pair of central door panels, this one labeled “Martyrdom of Saint Bacchus,” (figure 4-42). In the right panel and man and a woman are operating a press with Bacchus trapped inside. His blood, in the form of wine, pours out at the bottom of the press for others to drink. The panel on the right reads “His Shrine,” indicating an altar at right with a wine barrel perched on top of it. A man and a woman kneel and pray in front of the shrine. The last pair of panels on the front of the sideboard at the far right show two male figures: one labeled “Port” and the other representing yet another type of alcoholic beverage. Rounding the corner of the sideboard, the panel on the right side is the last emblematic head, a female figure labeled “Cyder,” (figure 4-43). And lastly, below the large panels just described and running along all three of the visible faces of the sideboard is a frieze of striped cats chasing mice (figure 4-44).

Obviously, the painted decoration on Burges’s sideboard refers plainly to the nature and function of this dining room piece since it incorporates so many Decorous, or Characteristic, images. The Bacchic subject matter is clearly dominated by textual and visual references to alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages. In addition, the frieze of cats chasing mice is a reference to the hunt and food, a theme we will twice more in this chapter. The cats also chase away the mice, protecting the dinner on the table. This combination of imagery, openly and wittily appropriate for the decoration of a dining room, is a prime example of the English version of the principle of Decor. And as in all the examples described in this chapter, the Decorous imagery
here is freely mixed with less specific ornamentation such as rinceaux, geometric patterning, and conventionalized flora. As is so often the case, different types of imagery co-exist within Characteristic schemes.

The iconic Green Dining Room (figure 4-45), commissioned in 1865, is our second English example of Decor in the dining room. The firm of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Co., led by William Morris, was selected to create one of three refreshment rooms for London’s South Kensington Museum (now the Victoria and Albert Museum). Even though the room survives today and is very well known, no one tells us about the motifs in the room. A basic idea of Aesthetic Movement and Arts and Crafts Movement was to delight and inform the viewer. This is why date stones became popular in buildings at this time as well as Decorous imagery as in the Green Dining Room. In that room, the uppermost frieze just below the ceiling contains images of hounds chasing hares (figure 4-46). This is essentially a hunting scene, the result of which will assuredly end up as a feast on the dining room table. No one has argued the appropriateness of this design for a dining room. Authors almost invariably comment on the origin of the running hound motif but take the point no further. Webb apparently copied these hounds from the baptismal font of Newcastle upon Tyne Cathedral (figure 4-47). The hounds were part of the coat of arms of Robert Rhodes, a fifteenth-century builder who likely constructed the steeple of the cathedral and perhaps also the font itself. Rooks also appear in the coat of arms on the font but not hares; they were an addition to the Green Dining Room hounds by Webb. Ultimately, Webb used the sprinting hound motif but added the hares in order to transform Rhodes’ family arms into a hunting scene. In so doing, he created decoration for an eating room that was appropriate because it referred to the hunt and eating. The frieze looks suspiciously like Burges’s band of cats and mice, suggesting a shared prototype. Continuing the
theme, small panels containing images of fruit appear at eye level in a pilastered frieze that encircles the room. These were designed by Edward Burne-Jones. And in the fill between Webb’s frieze and Burne-Jones’ panels are William Morris’ olive trees bearing their fruit on a green ground and in a low plaster relief.  

Webb’s hares in the hunting frieze in the Green Dining Room are of particular interest because they belong to a larger trend in Decorous, English dining rooms during the second half of the nineteenth century. Charles Brownell argues that hares became a standard image in decorating dining rooms on both sides of the Atlantic after the Fourdinois sideboard was shown in 1851 at London’s Great Exhibition. Hares were commonly eaten at table, so much so that in 1851 the major English writer and critic Leigh Hunt wrote that hares with their “hollow countenances” ought to be “abolished” from the “customs at table.” Hunt argued that they “retain a look of ‘life in death’,” and he found that unacceptable. An 1867 menu from the Grill Room (also known as the Edward Poynter Room), which neighbors Morris and Co.’s Green Dining room in the Victoria and Albert Museum, includes “Jugged Hare” on the first class menu and “Stewed Rabbit” as part of the second class fare.

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92 For details on the Green Dining Room commission see Sheila Kirk, *Philip Webb: Pioneer of Arts and Crafts Architecture* (Chichester, England: Wiley-Academy, 2005), 46, 305 n. 44; Linda Parry, ed., *William Morris* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1996), 141-142, 1..6-8; Fiona MacCarthy, *William Morris: A Life for Our Time* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), 212-213; and Aymer Vallance, *The Art of William Morris* (1897; repr., New York: Dover Publications, 1988), 60. Curiously none of these authors mention the principle of Decor by name or even simply acknowledge the appropriateness of the fruit and animal motifs in the decoration of the Green Dining Room. Philip Webb apparently appropriated the motif of the sprinting hounds for the Green Dining Room from the baptismal font of Newcastle upon Tyne Cathedral. The hounds were part of the coat of arms of Robert Rhodes, a fifteenth-century builder who likely constructed the steeple of the cathedral and perhaps also the font itself. Rooks also appear in the coat of arms on the font but not hares, they were an addition to the Green Dining Room hounds by Webb. Rhodes’s arms also appear on the ceiling below the belfry of the cathedral, adding credence to the theory of Rhodes was its builder. See St Nicholas’ church: History and architecture, *Historical Account of Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Including the Borough of Gateshead*, Eneas Mackenzie, in British History Online, http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=43352 (accessed 02 March 2013).

93 See Leigh Hunt, *Table-Talk. To Which Are Added Imaginary Conversations of Pope and Swift* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1851), 5. The Poynter Room and the Green Dining Room are part of a trio of nineteenth-century, interconnected Refreshment Rooms at the Victoria and Albert Museum that also includes the Gamble Room. For
Webb was not the only designer to see hares as appropriate imagery for dining room decoration. For example, plate 7 (figure 4-48) of Christopher Dresser’s *Studies in Design* (1874) contains, in Dresser’s words, “Grotesque dado-rail. Being formed of the hare, this is especially suited to a dining room.” A row of hares parades across this charming piece of banded decoration with geometric patterns for upper and lower borders. Wedgwood made important use of a similar border in some dishes of the 1880s. The immensely popular Wedgwood pattern “Banquet,” designed by Thomas Allen, included hares and other forms of Decorous imagery. The central images of “Banquet” dishes usually contain foodstuffs such as turkeys, mutton, fruit or soup, while the plates’ borders show leaping hares, fish, poultry and other foodstuffs. For example, the central image of the plate labeled “Mutton,” (figure 4-49), is a youth holding down a lamb, presumably in preparation for its slaughter. A circular border around this image reads, “Eat thy food with a thankful heart.” And in the plate’s larger border beyond the verge line: putti hold leashes attached to running, hunting dogs. The scenes of putti and dogs “chase” scenes of hares, fish, sheep, and deer around the border. Naturally all of these creatures are the objects of desire for the hunting dogs. Dresser and Allen, like Webb and the French designers before them, had understood the appropriateness of such imagery around the dining room.

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94 See Christopher Dresser, *Studies in Design* (1874; repr., Layton, Utah: Gibbs Smith Publisher, 2002), pl. 7 (no page number). In addition to “Banquet,” Thomas Allen created another Wedgwood pattern called “Ivanhoe” which contained the same Decorous borders as “Banquet.” Displayed at the Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1878, the central images of the “Ivanhoe” pattern showed different scenes from Sir Walter Scott’s 1820 novel of the same name. For information on and images of the Wedgwood patterns “Banquet” and “Ivanhoe” by Thomas Allen, see Maureen Batkin, *Wedgwood Ceramics 1846-1959* (London: Richard Dennis, 1982), 90, 96-97.
Once again, the Decorous designs from the Green Dining Room, such as the fruit and the hunting frieze, are mixed with cheerful imagery that would be suitable for any entertaining room. From the bottom up, the dado is made up of blue painted panels which contain no motifs. Between the small, Burne-Jones wall panels with fruit already mentioned are floral panels and allegorical figure panels representing the signs of the zodiac. Burne-Jones also designed the stained glass windows in the room which show medieval figures engaged in household duties. Above these panels and the fill relief showing olive trees, the borders of Webb’s hunting frieze contain images of golden suns and conventionalized flora. Similar designs are visible on the ceiling as well.

Overall, the principle of Vitruvian Decor is at work yet again, whether or not the designers involved knew its name, and whether or not every single motif relates to food, drink, or banqueting. Additionally, the Green Dining Room was a great collaboration among many artists. It follows that the degree of suitability of the motifs would vary in a work crafted by several different designers. It is worth noting, though, that the Decorous elements of the room that denote food and drink were not all by one hand. This suggests the ubiquity of the Decor principle since, apparently, more than one designer incorporated Decor into the Green Dining Room.

William Morris and his firm would continue to use the principle of Decor in two significant later projects. First, in 1876, mere months before Whistler painted peacocks in Leyland’s London dining room, Morris and Webb designed a Peacock and Vine (figure 4-50) wall hanging that was executed by the Royal School of Art Needlework. Formed in 1872, the Royal School was the best-known of several similar organizations founded in London at this time to promote the decorative arts and revive handicrafts. Peacock and Vine was one of many
designs submitted by Morris to the school. This surviving embroidered wall hanging is a perfect example of a Decorous dining room piece since it includes a large frontal peacock as its central motif with a field of grape vines surrounding it. The status of peacocks as symbols of feasting in Britain will be discussed at length in chapter five. The piece was displayed with other works by the Royal School of Art Needlework at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition of 1876. At that time, the Peacock and Vine textile was specifically praised in Harper’s Bazaar. In 2013, Morris textile authority Linda Parry wrote:

This [display at the Centennial] provided one of the first opportunities for new types of British embroidery to be seen in the United States and it became an important watershed in the development of that country’s needlework.  

Second, William Morris went on to use the Decor principle in the dining room of William Knox D’Arcy (1849-1917). In 1890, D’Arcy commissioned a set of six tapestries for his home outside London, Stanmore Hall, containing scenes from the Legend of King Arthur. The set of tapestries would become known as the Holy Grail tapestries and Morris and Co. would produce several other versions of them following this commission. The largest of the group was the tapestry titled The Knights of the Round Table Summoned to the Quest by the Strange Damsel (figure 4-51). The scene shows the knights eating and drinking at table as they are called to serve the mission. As in the Green Dining Room, the imagery was deemed eminently suitable to the decoration of a dining room. Further, this case is something like that of the Villa Farnesina loggia, where the decoration is more than just appropriate. In both cases, a particular legend was specifically chosen because it included a great feast within its story.  


96 I am grateful to Dr. Charles Brownell for calling Morris’s Holy Grail tapestries to my attention and for suggesting their connection to the tradition of Decor in the dining room. This issue has not been raised in the scholarly literature on the tapestries.
Conclusion

The examples of Decor that appear throughout history are endless. They suggest that the principle is natural and logical. One need not study architecture, the decorative arts, or architectural theory in order to understand it and apply it. Perhaps it is the obviousness of Decor that has left it relatively neglected in the study of historic interiors. By name, Decor is often unfamiliar to even the most learned scholars. And yet, when the present author gave a gift of a framed photograph of a cup of coffee on a café table, the recipients of this gift, knowing nothing of Vitruvian Decor, hung the photograph above the coffee-maker in their kitchen. Few would miss the significance of the placement of this work of art. Other instances of the application of Decor are perceived less easily, though. This dissertation argues that this is the case with the Peacock Room. Simple as the Decor principle may be, it must be studied so that the more subtle examples, such as the Peacock Room, can be understood.

From Ancient Rome to Victorian England, the above pieces show that in varying styles and periods, the centuries-old tradition of Vitruvian Decor has had a long history in the dining room. The chosen examples emphasize that the principle of appropriate decoration can be applied in dramatically different ways. And the tradition continues today. In 2013 a Washington, DC, branch of the national chain of Gordon Biersch Brewery Restaurants pays homage to Vitruvius, perhaps unwittingly. Just two blocks from the Smithsonian, hops cast of iron hang from the hand railings (figure 4-52) of the restaurant’s entrance. To open the door, one must grip iron pulls in the form of barley (figure 4-53). These motifs are repeated inside the restaurant in various locations. Barley and hops, two of the commonest ingredients used in beer
brewing, could not be any more appropriate for the decoration of a brewery restaurant, known for its wide selection of beers. The designers of this space may not have known a thing about Vitruvius, but their decoration is another prime example of the principle of Vitruvian *Decor*. 
Chapter 5: The Principle of Decor in the Peacock Room

Introduction

This chapter will argue that the tradition of Vitruvian Decor (established in chapter four and appendices A and B), wherein decoration expresses nature and function, is present in the Peacock Room in four distinct ways. Of the four examples of Decor, or Character, in the Peacock Room, the first may have been a contribution of Leyland, Jeckyll, or even the dealer Murray Marks. The second and third examples of Decor were initiated entirely by Whistler and the fourth example is curiously one of the few contributions by Jeckyll that Whistler did not alter or delete.

First, this chapter will consider Leyland’s blue and white Kangxi porcelain collection and the significance of its placement in the Leyland dining room at 49 Princes Gate (figure 5-1). Little is known about the collection itself, and yet the appropriateness of decorating an eating room with dishes has not been discussed. Leyland’s porcelain collection aligns with the centuries-old tradition of elaborate displays of plate (silver, in American English), ceramics, and glassware that existed in entertaining spaces and banqueting halls long before the emergence of the modern dining room. Such displays will be analyzed below, as well as the significance of blue-and-white china in other rooms of the house.
Second, this chapter examines Whistler’s darkening of the room with his peacock blue paint (figure 5-2). The dark dining room was an established preference at this time that could appear in the form of bulky and heavy pieces in the room or through the use of dark colors. Jeckyll’s proposed scheme was light in color and light in mass (figure 5-3). When Whistler made the room dark he stifled Jeckyll’s atypically light dining room scheme. Just as Jeckyll’s design choices in the Peacock Room aligned with his wishes for lighter dining room schemes documented as early as the 1850s, Whistler’s design choices fit a repeated pattern of dark dining rooms and light drawing rooms in his own homes of the 1860s, ’70s, and ’80s.

Third, the culinary history of the peacock is detailed to show its appropriateness in the decoration of an English dining room (figure 5-4). The aesthetics of food was an integral and documented part of Whistlerian dining rooms and Whistler adhered to the tradition of Decor in projects that are contemporary with the Peacock Room. This suggests that he favored the principle.

Fourth, this chapter will explore the meaning of Jeckyll’s sunflower andirons (figure 5-5) that were left in place by Whistler. Earlier projects reveal that the designer understood and used Decor in several instances. We may never know Jeckyll’s true intentions in terms of the sunflower but the evidence strongly suggests that both Jeckyll and Whistler used Decor throughout their careers and Whistler may have left the sunflowers in the hearth to honor that theme.

Dishes in the Dining Room

In July 1874 Frederick Leyland gave up the terraced home at 23 Queen’s Gate, Kensington, that he and his family had occupied since 1868 and bought an end unit terrace at 49 Princes Gate, Knightsbridge. Even though these two houses are less than a mile apart, and even
though the Leyland family only used either house for a few months each year (for the London social season), this move was significant. There is no comparison between 23 Queen’s Gate and 49 Princes Gate (figure 5-6). Though its façade is prettily ornamented with Classical details, 23 Queen’s Gate is essentially a very tall, narrow row house. It is sandwiched between two other houses, meaning that its only windows are on the front and the back of the house. By contrast, the house at 49 Princes Gate seems massive. As an end unit terrace, the tall, imposing structure boasts windows on three sides, and the east side of the house opens onto a park called Princes Gardens. The Leylands’ new home was indisputably larger and better situated than their previous domicile and was clearly intended to announce that the family had “arrived.”

More space also meant more room for Frederick Leyland’s collections of art, objéts d’art, and furniture. Whether Leyland moved to 49 Princes Gate in order to make more room for his treasured collections or to simply show off his wealth in as many ways as possible, there were many places in the house that could have displayed his collection of blue and white Kangxi porcelain. After the infamous financial dispute over the Peacock Room that put an end to their dealings and their friendship, Whistler probably would have argued that Leyland was no great appreciator of art and that his collection was a display of wealth and nothing more. He famously wrote that Leyland would be remembered as the miserly philistine who refused to pay for great art like the ignoramus who had paid Correggio mere pennies for his work. At times, scholars have done exactly what Whistler wanted. In this way of thinking about Leyland, one can surmise that Leyland’s porcelain collection was displayed en masse at Princes Gate because seeing all the porcelain at once is more impressive than seeing a smattering of blue and white
pots dotted throughout the house here and there. But if this were true, it does not explain why
the massed porcelain appeared in the dining room.\footnote{For Whistler’s statement comparing Leyland to “the man who paid Correggio in pennies” see letter from James McNeill Whistler to Frederick R. Leyland, October 31, 1876, in The Correspondence of James McNeill Whistler, 1855-1903, edited by Margaret F. MacDonald, Patricia de Montfort and Nigel Thorp; including The Correspondence of Anna McNeill Whistler, 1855-1880, edited by Georgiag Toutziari. On-line edition, University of Glasgow. 
Also, the Pennells, Whistler biographers and supporters extraordinaires, wrote that Leyland would only be remembered because of Whistler. Their accounts of Whistler’s life and career are, for the most part, secondhand and likely to be at least somewhat biased given their overt devotion to the artist. It tallies that they would have promoted Whistler’s version of things and tried to preserve it in print for posterity. See Elizabeth Robins Pennell and Joseph Pennell, The Whistler Journal (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1921), 99.}

If one had a large collection of porcelain and one was intent on showing it off as a display of one’s wealth, would not a porcelain room be the ultimate luxury in a fine London house like 49 Princes Gate? A traditional porcelain room (figure 5-7) is one that exists solely for the display of an expensive collection of blue and white china (as detailed in chapter 3). A porcelain room is not a drawing room, a kitchen, a bathroom, or a dining room. It is like an art gallery in one’s own home or a room set aside only for listening to music, or reading books. Leyland had plenty of room in his new house for a porcelain room if that was what he had wanted. For example, there were three inter-connected drawing rooms on the first floor (figure 5-8). There was also a Tapestry Room (also called the Morning Room) on the ground floor (figure 5-9). Surely one of these spaces, or other options in the house, could have been fitted as a porcelain room. To be fair, these rooms were decorated after the Peacock Room, between 1879 and 1886 by Richard Norman Shaw, but Shaw was not permitted to change anything in the Peacock Room or the entrance hall that Jeckyll and Whistler had also worked on. This suggests that the porcelain was in the Leyland dining room for a reason, despite the bitter quarrel over the room (a quarrel which would have led some patrons to redecorate the room entirely, erasing any memory of the rebellious Whistler—something Leyland did not do). Surviving photographs taken upon
Leyland’s death in 1892 show that the Peacock Room was changed very little (if at all) after its completion in 1877 (figure 5-10).\footnote{For the details of Leyland’s renovations at 49 Princes Gate, including Richard Norman Shaw’s work there after the completion of the Peacock Room, see chapter 1 of this dissertation.}

In addition to the fact that Leyland had room for a separate porcelain room in his spacious new house, he could have installed his porcelain collection in any other space in the house besides the dining room. In so doing, Leyland would have been combining essentially two room types into one. This is what ultimately happened with the combination of the dining room and a porcelain room. It could have impressed visitors as they entered the home and took in the cavernous hall with its sweeping staircase from Northumberland House (figure 5-11). It could have adorned one of the three drawing rooms mentioned above. The porcelain collection, as a group of decorative objects from a far-off land, could have appropriately filled the walls and impressed visitors in any of the public rooms of the house. Alternatively, if Leyland’s collection existed for his own aesthetic satisfaction, and not just to show his wealth off to others, the porcelain could have been set up in his bedroom, his study (figure 5-12), or in any of the other private rooms in the house.

The fact is that Leyland’s porcelain collection was not installed in any of these locations. It was installed in the dining room because china is associated with eating. This connection is the first example of Decor in the Peacock Room. As shown in the previous chapter, Decor is often found in the dining room because it is a room with a clear function that is easily symbolized. Since it has just been shown that Leyland could have installed his porcelain collection in a number of other locations at 49 Princes Gate, it is difficult to discern another, more obvious reason why the dining room would have been chosen above all others. It is unknown who actually made the decision to place the china in the dining room. The plausible
candidates are Leyland himself, his architect and designer Jeckyll, or even the agent who apparently helped him amass his porcelain collection, Murray Marks. In any case, the decision was likely made because combining a dining room and a porcelain room makes logical sense.

This dissertation does not suggest that the Leyland family or their guests literally ate off of the Kangxi porcelain displayed in the dining room at 49 Princes Gate. This seems unlikely given the status of the pieces as collectors’ items. Indeed, if the blue and white china had been placed in another room in the house, which would have put it in a different context, it would not necessarily have conjured up images of feasts and dining the way it did in the dining room. However, when china decorates a dining room it assumes this very obvious meaning that binds it to centuries-old displays of Asian or non-Asian ceramics, plate (called silver in the United States), glassware, and even centerpieces and other kinds of table decoration. Period photographs show vases and urns on the shelves of the Peacock Room but also large platters and smaller plates whose visual ties to feasting cannot be denied (figure 5-10).

Ceramics, glassware, and plate were routinely displayed and made available for easy use on various types of furniture in any room used for banqueting both before and after the eighteenth century emergence of the formal dining room (and the specialized dining room furniture that developed along with it). Prior to the eighteenth century, and at least as far back as the medieval period, even the grandest houses had fewer rooms and fewer specialized rooms that served only one or two purposes. Because of the multi-purpose nature of most rooms at this time, furniture had to be flexible as well. The French and Spanish term for furniture is meubles (the same spelling is pronounced differently in each language), meaning moveable (in German, Möbel; in Italian, mobili) and it reflects the originally transient nature of most pieces.
Nevertheless, specialized uses for tables and cabinets came into being even if they were only used temporarily during feasts.

Decorative arts historian Peter Thornton has explained the different types of display pieces related to dining in his pioneering book on seventeenth-century England, Holland, and France:

…[cup-board is] a term that embraces a variety of forms, the common purpose of which was to provide a stage (board) on which precious vessels (‘cups’) could be displayed. Such furniture was usually to be found in rooms where grand company dined, but cup-boards might also sometimes be placed in bedchambers. Cup-boards had originally taken the form of a simple table but gradually acquired extra shelves or staging on which larger quantities of plate could be shown. Eventually, the lower sections came to be enclosed, with a door in front, and thus the term ‘cupboard’, as we understand it, gained its modern meaning.

Thornton added that such furniture had been used to display items and serve food and drink in the sixteenth century as well. Also, he noted that the bedchamber cupboards he mentioned were still associated with eating because it was on the cupboard that the “livery” of food and drink were set up for owners or guests in the house (in case they got hungry or thirsty during the night). 99

The cupboard continued to evolve as the seventeenth century progressed. A cupboard with many levels or stages (sometimes called a court cupboard) became interchangeable with a sideboard, even when a sideboard in the dining room was just a table (figure 5-13). The sideboard was the preferred piece of dining room furniture by the mid-seventeenth century. Although it was used in much the same way as the cupboard, to display table wares and aid in the serving of food and drink, the cupboard with stages was out of style by about 1650. Other

variations existed in France. French cupboards with stages could be called *dressoirs, buffets, or desserts* (*figure 5-14*). These were again used for displaying plate or serving food or drink but they were more elaborate than their English counterparts. All of these were technically still moveable (even if they were not moved often because they were heavy) but built-in versions of these came into fashion in the late seventeenth century.\(^{100}\)

Certainly the displays of tablewares found on sideboards, cupboards, and the like were related geographically and thematically to extensive table decorations, centerpieces, and dishes used in eating. Thornton argued, “The piling of dishes of food in decorative conformations was a… popular form of table ornament that could also be indulged in at the sideboard.” In both locations (on the table itself and on nearby pieces of furniture) silver, glass, and ceramics were present for two purposes. First, these items were present because they were used in the serving, eating, and drinking that went on in such spaces. And second, they were there for decoration; either as visual delights for guests or as signs of wealth (*figure 5-15*).\(^{101}\)

Such festive arrays on the table and the sideboard (or other types of serving furniture used during banquets) necessarily included ceramics, not just plate and glass. And as imported ceramics began to flood European markets in the seventeenth century, blue and white china infiltrated these settings. Some pieces may have actually been used at table for serving, eating and drinking, especially in wealthier households (*figure 5-16*). Other porcelain pieces may have resided in eating rooms purely for show. Did this negate the association of ceramics with feasting in general? No, because the specific rules would have varied from house to house as to

\(^{100}\) See Thornton, *Seventeenth-Century*, 233, 238-239. Thornton also noted that, for the period 1670-1720, even though tiered cupboards with many shelves in dining rooms were going out of fashion (this is where plate was normally displayed), people still made temporary displays of plate for special occasions. See also Thornton, *Authentic Decor*, 60.

\(^{101}\) See Thornton, *Seventeenth-Century*, 17, 288.
which pieces were used during meals or which teacups were filled with tea, versus the ones that were never touched, seen but not used. Only the servants or owners of each house, perhaps, would know which ceramics were for use and which ones were just there for appearances. The overall effect remained the same: eating rooms were outfitted and decorated with the trappings of the table even if some pieces were purely ornamental.

That is not to say that imported, blue and white porcelain could not be displayed in other rooms as, of course, it was (*figure 5-17*). The key is that when such pieces appeared in the dining room, they assumed their obvious association with eating and drinking whether they were actually used or not. Oliver Impey has noted that as blue and white china came into Europe in greater quantities in the seventeenth-century, porcelain moved from the curio cabinet to the table to the walls. “The walls” Impey was referring to were those of the porcelain chamber. Recall that it was during this period that specialized porcelain rooms also developed (see chapter 3 for more details). Meredith Chilton concurred on this subject:

> In the seventeenth century, Oriental porcelain became so abundant that it was taken out of the treasure chamber and the cabinet and placed on furniture, mantle-pieces, tiered on chimneypieces, and ultimately it was displayed on the walls of rooms themselves.

Thornton also added that in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, in addition to “massed arrays” of porcelain, porcelain could be fitted in here and there: in the fireplace when not in use, on the mantel (*figures 5-18 and 5-18a*) or above it in shelves, over doors, or on projecting cornices. Essentially, from this time forward, blue and white porcelain could be displayed in interiors in three ways: here and there wherever it could be squeezed in for decorative effect, in massed arrays in porcelain rooms that existed for their own sake, and here
and there in dining rooms or banqueting spaces where they were lumped in with other ceramics, plate and glass. Only in the last instance did their ties to feasting become apparent.\(^{102}\)

As far as can be determined from scant surviving evidence of the Leylands’ dining habits, the family adhered to the above traditions in at least one other home besides 49 Princes Gate (the home of the Peacock Room, that china-filled dining room). In 1867, Frederick Leyland and his family began renting out an impressive manor house just outside his native Liverpool called Speke Hall (figure 5-19). Begun in the late fifteenth-century, the half-timbered mansion had been coveted by Leyland for at least a year before he secured a lease from the owners who had rejected more than one applicant before Leyland applied. A surviving photograph of about 1870 (figure 5-20) shows three liveried servants on display with the Leyland plate. Silver platters, pitchers, and jugs are arrayed among three large candelabra. A surviving letter has the local vicar remarking on the “magnificent” plate Leyland used even in his everyday eating. Capping off the whole scene is the master’s monogram (comprised of an overlapping FRL) which appears

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\(^{102}\) See Oliver Impey, “Porcelain for Palaces,” in Porcelain for Palaces: The Fashion for Japan in Europe, 1650-1750, by John Ayers, Oliver Impey, and J.V.G. Mallet (London: Oriental Ceramic Society, 1990), 56, 63-64. Impey also noted that the peak years for porcelain rooms in Europe were during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, but by the mid-eighteenth-century such rooms were reduced to the china cabinet, usually with glass doors. Also, in many great English houses porcelain was displayed on the mantel, sometimes on pyramidal shelves above the fireplace, or on shelves or case furniture (wherever there was an open surface). See also Meredith Chilton, “Rooms of Porcelain,” The International Fine Art and Antique Dealers Show (1992), 13. And Thornton, Authentic Decor, 60. Dawn Jacobson has argued that seventeenth century Chinese import porcelain was displayed in a decidedly western manner: “towering and clustering on cabinets and chimneypieces, or mounted in silver or ormolu.” Additionally, and after the Glorious Revolution (1688), opulent homes like Blenheim and Chatsworth were built. As a relief from the large reception rooms of such palaces, more intimately-scaled closets and dressing rooms were used by the elite to drink tea. It was in these smaller rooms where Chinoiserie was popular. Japanned furniture would be present along with blue and white porcelain “ranged above the fireplace or glowing on tops of the cabinets.” See Dawn Jacobson, Chinoiserie, London: Phaidon, 1993), 32, 34. And, as noted in chapter three, once Mary was Queen of England in the eighteenth century she brought the fashion for lacquer and massed porcelain to England through the rooms at Hampton Court and Kensington Palace. A period writer, Daniel Defoe, wrote that Queen Mary “brought in the custom or humour, as I may call it, of furnishing houses with china-ware, which increased to a strange degree afterwards, piling their china upon the tops of cabinets, scrutores, and every chimneypiece, to the tops of the ceilings, and even setting up shelves for their china-ware, where they wanted such places, till it became a grievance in the expense of it, and even injurious to their families and estates.” See Daniel Defoe, A Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain (1724-1726; repr., Devon and London: Webb and Bower in association with Michael Joseph, 1989), 60.
with an image of a bird in a diamond panel fringed with leaves. The silver pieces are displayed on what is essentially a sideboard: the seventeenth-century long table with turned legs from the house’s Great Hall. The photograph was staged in the kitchen courtyard perhaps to take advantage of the natural light. In actual use it is difficult to imagine this arrangement appearing anywhere else but the dining room at Speke Hall. The photograph shows that the tradition of displaying tablewares *en masse* continued well into the late nineteenth century and that the Leylands made use of it in their home, too.\(^{103}\)

At the same time, slight variations in the display of tablewares were emerging, as well. Thornton has noted:

> Plates of porcelain or *faience* [glazed earthenware] came to be used as wall-decoration in the 1870s, either hanging from a nail in a wire frame or standing on edge on a cornice at the top of tall paneling in the seventeenth-century manner.

As with older traditions, such decoration could appear in various locations in the home. E.W. Godwin, for example, was known for installing plate rails in his own home, and the trend was picked up by others such as the artist Edward Linley Sambourne (1844-1910). Sambourne’s plate rail (*figure 5-21*) was placed in the drawing room of his home at 18 Stafford Terrace, London, in the mid-1870s and can still be seen there today. Just as in earlier periods, though,

\(^{103}\) For information on Leyland’s time at Speke Hall and the house itself, as well as the vicar’s comments on the plate, see A.J. Tibbles, “Speke Hall and Frederick Leyland: Antiquarian Refinements,” *Apollo* 139 (May 1994), 34-37. See also Linda Merrill, *The Peacock Room: A Cultural Biography* (Washington, D.C.: Freer Gallery of Art; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 117-121. Although the photograph of the Leyland plate and servants was staged in the kitchen courtyard, a drape was hung behind the main grouping probably so the view into the rest of the courtyard or into a window wouldn’t ruin the photograph. Surviving letters tell us that the Leylands dined in the multi-story Great Hall (also called the banqueting hall) but that in the winter the huge space was cold and drafty. To remedy this problem the family also dined in a smaller room in the west wing of the house. Both rooms are mentioned in surviving letters. See letter from Anna McNeill Whistler to Kate Palmer, November 3-4, 1871, in *The Correspondence of James McNeill Whistler, 1855-1903*, edited by Margaret F. MacDonald, Patricia de Montfort and Nigel Thorp; including *The Correspondence of Anna McNeill Whistler, 1855-1880*, edited by Georgia Toutziari. Online edition, University of Glasgow. [http://www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/correspondence/date/display/?cid=10071&year=1871&month=11&rs=1](http://www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/correspondence/date/display/?cid=10071&year=1871&month=11&rs=1). Also see George Whitley (Liverpool solicitor for Speke Hall) to James Sprot (great-uncle and guardian of Adelaide Watt, heir to Speke Hall), 30 October 1867 and 30 October 1868, Speke Hall; cited in Merrill, *Peacock Room*, 120, 362n60.
when ceramics were displayed in dining rooms they assumed their natural associations with eating and drinking. Whistler was attuned to this type of decoration as ca. 1873 sketches for the decoration of the dining room at Aubrey House show (figure 5-22). At this time Aubrey House, Campden Hill, Kensington, was newly acquired by William Cleverly Alexander, a banker and important Whistler collector. On Leyland’s stationery, Whistler drew plates and platters in rows on plate rails and above the door case for Alexander’s new dining room.\textsuperscript{104}

Since we do not know whose idea it was to place the Leyland china in the dining room at 49 Princes Gate, the extent to which Jeckyll used china to decorate dining rooms is unclear, though the designer used porcelain in a variety of ways. Certainly at Heath Old Hall, the surviving Jeckyll sideboard (figure 5-23) designed for the eating area of the Oak Parlor and the buffet (figure 5-24) made for the dining room at Heath Old Hall (discussed in more detail later in this chapter) would have been display areas for plate, ceramics, and glass. They were presumably also used as serving areas in the traditional manner. A surviving 1889 sketch in the British Library of the eating area of the Oak Parlor by W.H. Milnes (figure 5-25) even shows three shelves on the wall that display a selection of platters and vessels. Unfortunately, the sketch is not detailed enough to determine whether these are examples of plate, ceramics, or glass.\textsuperscript{105}

In other instances, though, Jeckyll used porcelain in other parts of the house in the more decorative and exotic manner, downplaying the connections to banqueting. For example, three


\textsuperscript{105} For information on Jeckyll’s work at Heath Old Hall see Susan Weber Soros and Catherine Arbuthnott, \textit{Thomas Jeckyll: Architect and Designer, 1827-1881} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 171-183.
overmantels detailed in chapter three used import china in modest amounts in shelving above the hearth. These were the overmantel in the Oak Parlor, Heath Old Hall (1872-1875) (*figure 5-26*), and two overmantels at 1 Holland Park (ca. 1870-1872): one in the Morning Room (*figure 5-27*), the other in the Billiard Room (*figure 5-28*). Additionally, and prior to the Leyland dining room, Jeckyll designed two rooms with massed arrays of porcelain: again, at 1 Holland Park, in the servants’ hall (probably just as a storage area for the family’s china), and one in the “Japanese Room” belonging to Lord Battersea (1876) (both lost and discussed in chapter 3). Ultimately, Jeckyll was apparently familiar with the three different ways of displaying porcelain outlined above: placing modest amounts in any room (and diminishing the ties to dining), placing massed arrays in their own room (as in the Japanese Room), or placing modest amounts in a dining room (thereby highlighting the ties to dining). This outline of Jeckyll’s use of porcelain emphasizes the originality of combining a massed array of porcelain and a dining room detailed in chapter three since it was something that had not been done before.  

In the final analysis, we know very little about Frederick Leyland’s porcelain collection or how serious or interested the collector was in it. It is as if scholars have dutifully followed Whistler’s wishes and characterized Leyland as a superficial, perhaps greedy, collector. It is generally agreed that Rossetti and Whistler, praised as two early pioneers of collecting blue and white in the 1860s, got Leyland interested in starting his own collection. We are often made to believe that Rossetti, Whistler and the dealer Murray Marks told Leyland which pieces to buy and maybe even where and how to display them. But this supposed shallowness of Leyland as a collector has been overemphasized based on second hand (perhaps unreliable) sources because there is such little information to go on.

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G.C. Williamson’s 1919 book on Murray Marks is usually the main source of information on Leyland’s porcelain collection. Scholars both discredit this “Tribute of Regard” written decades after the fact and use it to paint a picture of Leyland that aligns a little too perfectly with Whistler’s portrayal of the miserly philistine. The fact is that we do not know whose idea it was for Leyland to collect porcelain, how involved he was with it, or whether he cared that much about it or not. Even the Christie, Manson and Woods sale catalogue in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France is of no help because it is a record of the porcelain collection that dates from Leyland’s death in 1892. This profile of the collection written fifteen years after the room’s completion might represent an entirely different collection from what Leyland started with. In fifteen years he could have sold all the original pieces and replaced them many times over.107

Similarly, we do not know the motivation for putting the massed porcelain on display in the dining room or with whom the idea originated (though Jeckyll, Leyland, or Marks are the likely candidates). In the end Leyland chose or was influenced to choose the dining room for this display. Whether he was an impassioned and sensitive collector or not, it is just as plausible as any other scenario to say that his china collection was put on display in the dining room because it was putting dishes in an eating room. The obvious ties between dishes and dining can

107 See G.C. Williamson, Murray Marks and His Friends: A Tribute of Regard (London and New York: Jay Lane, 1919). All the major writers on the Peacock Room rely on Williamson’s account of the dealings of Leyland’s collection and his dealings with Marks. Other secondhand sources are occasionally cited. Some, like Williamson’s account, were written decades later. See David Park Curry, James McNeill Whistler at the Freer Gallery of Art (New York: Freer Gallery of Art in Association with W.W. Norton and Company, 1984), 60; Bendix, Diabolical Designs, 287n66; Soros, Jeckyll, 190-191; Merrill, Peacock Room, 168-171, 265; and Andrew Saint, Richard Norman Shaw, rev. ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 61. At the same time, and on the page following his reliance on Williamson, Curry wrote that Williamson’s ‘Tribute of Regard’ (the subtitle of the book on Marks) is “probably not to be trusted.” For the sale catalogue published at Leyland’s death see Christie, Manson, and Woods, London, Catalogue of the Valuable and Extensive Collection of Old Nankin Porcelain, Old Chinese Enamelled Porcelain and Cloissonné Enamels, Decorative Objects, Furniture, and Tapestry, the Property of F.R. Leyland, Esq., Deceased, Late of 49 Prince’s Gate, S.W., and Woolton Hall, near Liverpool (Sale cat., 26-27 May 1892), collection of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris; cited in Merrill, Peacock Room, 390.
certainly be read as an example of the principle of Decor and it follows logically that this connection was grasped by the men involved in the creation of this room. Short of traveling back in time and eavesdropping on the collaborative discussions between Leyland, Jeckyll, Whistler, Marks, and perhaps others, the reasoning behinds the room’s decoration may remain ambiguous. But scholars today should not allow biased or unreliable sources obscure the pathways to fresh perspective on this important room.

The Dark Dining Room

According to Peter Thornton, the peak years for the dark dining room trend ran from 1820 to 1870. In most cases the darkness of this room was emphasized by the comparative lightness of the drawing room. The dining room was long considered to be a masculine room since the men traditionally took it over after dinner to drink and smoke in. On the other hand, the drawing room was traditionally considered to be a feminine space since it was where the women were diverted after dinner and where they assembled at various times throughout the day. As such, many period decorating guides and works on architecture argue for a masculine darkness or heaviness in the dining room and a feminine lightness in the drawing room. The darkness in the dining room could be seen in the use of dark colors, the use of bulky or heavy elements, or both. Thornton chose two important British period writers to summarize the typical stance on these two rooms, J.C. Loudon and Robert Kerr. Loudon’s Encyclopedia of Cottage, Farm and Villa Architecture and Furniture, first published in 1833 and in many editions thereafter, advised that dining rooms should be decorated with crimson velvet draperies, crimson leather upholstery, and carved mahogany furniture. In Loudon’s estimation drawing rooms, on the other hand, should have buff-colored silk hung on the walls and furniture with pale blue silk
upholstery while the “frames of the chairs and sofas might be buff or cream colour and gold.”

Additionally, Loudon wrote:

In this room I would have a splendid white marble chimney-piece, copied from one of the most magnificent designs common in old English houses…white is the most elegant, and most in accordance with our present taste.

In 1871, Robert Kerr described the dining room as one which had “freedom from the heat and glare of sunshine…,” that is, dark. Kerr also said that the dining room is one of “masculine importance,” whose decoration should be “massive and simple.” By comparison, Kerr wrote about the drawing room in this way:

…The character to be always aimed at in a Drawing-room is especial cheerfulness, refinement of elegance, and what is called lightness as opposed to massiveness…entirely ladylike. The comparison of Dining-room and Drawing-room, therefore, is in almost every way one of contrast.108

Susan Weber Soros, the authority on the work of Thomas Jeckyll and E.W. Godwin, also wrote about the dark dining room custom. Soros and Catherine Arbuthnott described Jeckyll’s desire for lighter frames for the furnishings in a dining room commission as early as the 1850s (described in more detail below). Soros and Arbuthnott explained:

Jeckyll’s preference reveals his admiration for the lightness and detail that would become the hallmark of the Aesthetic Movement and the “Queen Anne” styles. Like Godwin in the 1870s… he was prepared to go against the conventional gender coding of rooms. Dining rooms were then considered “masculine” spaces to be filled with dark, heavy, mahogany furniture. To advocate light cane chairs [as Jeckyll had done], which were also known as “fancy chairs,” was to advocate the “feminine” closely associated with the drawing room and bedrooms.109

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109 See Soros, Jeckyll, 171.
British period writings by three professional decorators bear out the theses of Thornton and Soros. For example, in 1874 Christopher Dresser remarked:

A dining-room we generally make rather dark…It is desirable that the spread table and viands have prominence given to them by the shade of the walls. But our tablecloths…instead of being white…should be of cream-tint… The effect of lightness is usually given to drawing-rooms…we generally make these rooms too light; we give to them a coldness which is freezing,…

E.W. Godwin was aware of the traditionally dark English dining room but by 1876 he, like Jeckyll before him, rejected it:

How is it that the conventional English dining-room is always heavy, not to say gloomy?…the sideboard is what the trade truly describe as “massive,” the table is massive, the dozen and a half chairs are massive, and the three-decked article which does more work than all the rest of the furniture put together is the lightest thing in the room. On the floor is the heaviest Turkey carpets, with more than a tendency to red, and the margins of the boards beyond the carpet are stained and varnished as dark as they can be. On the walls is a paper of a “rich warm tone”—crimson and raw sienna, with a gold outline to the pattern. The curtains are to match. The upholsterer has reveled in sticky cut velvets. The chairs are obliged to have castors [small wheels] fixed to them, as they are much too massive and heavy to lift. As to the table, its weight is so great that the castors on its legs are quite formidable-looking contrivances of the mechanical engineer. The sideboard is immovable or next to immovable; its weight is simply beyond the power of any known castor to bear. Its usual office is apparently to support a group of black bronze horses under an oval glass shade, an office which could be effectually performed by a small bracket or the lightest of coffee tables….To add to the weight of the scene, there is a black mantelpiece of very broad slabs of marble with enormous consoles or brackets; a black marble clock and two more black bronzes enliven the mantelshelf with fits of gloomy flickering when the lights are lit….If by chance you enter such a room in the intervals when the cloth is not laid, there are but two courses before you, either to finish the day with Fox’s “Book of Martyrs,” or fly to champagne…

In another article Godwin enumerated the all-too-familiar features of the typical drawing room and dining room:

The drawing-room of the middle classes is quite as much a matter of course as the dining-room. Just as the latter is bound by some occult reason to be hot and heavy in it “decorations,” so the former is bound to be cold and light. If the dining-room has a prescriptive right to a flock paper and a general tone of crimson and oak, it is as certain that the drawing-room has an equal right to a satin paper and a general tone of bluish white touched up with gold…
Similar remarks were made by William Watt in his commentary that accompanied a catalogue of furniture designed by E.W. Godwin. The ubiquity of the dark dining room is apparent, even as Watt attempted to move away from it:

While we agree with those who uphold the English tradition that the dining room should be substantially furnished, we are not satisfied with the usual practice of making the dining room as heavy and dark as possible, and by stocking it with carved chairs, sideboards, and tables.110

Later British writers would look back on the Victorian era, recalling the dark dining room trend as a near cliché. Arnold Bennett, one of the most important novelists of the early twentieth century, echoed Dresser’s assessment by remembering the dramatic sparkle of objects in Victorian dining rooms. As one of his characters sat down to dinner in a fine house, Bennett wrote:

Here the curtains were drawn, and all the interest of the room was centered on the large white gleaming table, about which the members stood or sat under the downward radiance of a chandelier. Beyond the circle illuminated by the shaded chandelier could be discerned dim forms of furniture and of pictures, with a glint of high light here and there burning on the corner of some gold frame.

And the critic and wit Osbert Lancaster, who was brought up in a Victorian house, wrote that dining room decoration changed very little from roughly the 1830s until the beginning of World War I. The typical arrangement incorporated family portraits or still life paintings, sizable mahogany furniture, and dark wall coverings.111

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Across the Atlantic, American writers recognized the dominance of the dark dining room in England, whether they endorsed it or bemoaned it. For example, the American art critic Clarence Cook, who copied certain ideas from earlier British reformers that helped form the basis for the American Aesthetic Movement, in 1877 advocated lighter, more cheerful dining rooms. It is unclear exactly which English reformers shaped his views, but his comments betray an understanding of the popularity of the dark dining room all the same. Cook wrote:

> It does not appear whence the tradition came—nor do I know that it prevails at present—that dining-rooms ought to be somber in their general color and decoration, in opposition to drawing rooms, which ought to be light and cheerful. We were taught that dining-rooms ought to be fitted up with dark hangings and furniture, dark paper, dark stuffs, and the rest. The reasonable view would seem to be that a dining-room should be as cheerful…as it can be made…

By contrast, a year later Henry Hudson Holly, a major American popularizer of British ideas, took the opposite and more conservative position. Holly was an habitual plagiarizer of British reform designers. Very probably echoing Dresser, in *Modern Dwellings* Holly advised:

> Dining-rooms, as a general thing, should be treated in dark colors, so that their walls may form an agreeable background for the table-cloth and fixtures. A white table-cloth is generally too glaring…and out of keeping with the surroundings. For general purposes, one of cream tint is preferable.

And finally, in 1882 the American painter Maria R. Dewing noted that while the prevailing English custom of a “heavy and ponderous [dining room] approaching the gloom of a Gothic church” did provide a dramatic backdrop for sparkling tableware and bejeweled guests, she preferred a lighter scheme in such rooms to “add joyousness to the feast.” Apparently during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the dark dining room trend had enough of a monopoly and was common enough in English and American homes to warrant numerous arguments in print, both for and against its existence.¹¹²

Ultimately, it was Whistler who gave the Leyland dining room its cave-like darkness. Jeckyll had originally carried out a much brighter scheme (figure 5-3) for the room at 49 Princes Gate, where multi-colored flowers dotted the yellow-gold background of the leather-covered walls in the dining room. As noted in chapter two, the leather wall hangings were a prized possession of Frederick Leyland and are believed to be of eighteenth-century Dutch origin (figures 5-29a, b, and c). Jeckyll had also planned to use shades of yellow and white at least on the doors and windows of the room. In a letter to Whistler, Frederick Leyland explained Jeckyll’s color choices as he asked Whistler to intervene:

Jekell [sic] writes to know what colour to do the doors and windows in [the] dining room. He speaks of two yellows and white—Would it not be better to do it like the dado in the hall—i.e. using Dutch metal in larger masses. It ought to go well with the leather. I wrote him suggesting this but I wish you would give him your ideas.

Dutch metal was less expensive substitute for gold leaf made from copper and zinc alloys. Normally, woodwork treated with dutch metal sheets would appear bright and golden in color. In the case of the dado panels in Leyland’s hall, though, Whistler had managed a completely different effect (figure 5-30). First, Whistler affixed the sheets of metal leaf to the panels with a transparent green glaze. Then he allowed the metal leaf to tarnish or oxidize before applying a final, sealing coat of the transparent green glaze. Surviving dado panels from the entrance hall, a space both Jeckyll and Whistler decorated, are quite dark. Trimmed in dark brown, the central panels are dominated by a black-green color field punctuated by roughly grid-like metallic accents in a coppery-bronze. These lines are the result of the overlapping edges of small sheets of metal leaf. The only lightness in the panels comes in the form of a few sprigs of sparse, abstracted flowers in peach and cream tones. With his suggestion of dutch metal, it is unclear

whether Leyland was steering Jeckyll toward the dark dining room scheme, though. Whistler’s dado panels might have not have tarnished yet at the time of Leyland’s letter so they might have appeared more golden. In any case, Leyland was apparently uneasy with the idea of yellow and white woodwork in his dining room.113

Initially Whistler tried to honor Jeckyll’s lighter color scheme, meticulously painting out certain colored flowers one by one in an effort to make the leather-covered walls harmonize better with his painting over the mantel. The woodwork in the room he laid with metal leaf and glazed green, just as Leyland had requested, in a manner similar to paneling in the hall (figure 5-31). In the end, though, the lightness of Jeckyll’s color scheme in the dining room at 49 Princes Gate was painted out by Whistler. The lightness of its forms, however, could not be altered by the painter Whistler.

The lightness of form in the dining room scheme Jeckyll designed for the Leylands was one of several instances where the designer expressed a desire to move away from the heavy forms of the dark dining room. As noted above, Soros has suggested that, since at least the mid-1850s, Jeckyll argued for dining room schemes that were lighter in form than the traditional examples. Her evidence includes surviving letters as well as Jeckyll’s proposed designs for the Wattlefield Hall dining room and the dining ensemble for the Parlour at Heath Old Hall. Soros has argued that these designs were innovations because they broke with the trend of the dark, heavy, masculine dining room. Although Jeckyll expressed a desire for a lighter-looking dining

room in these two earlier projects, the present author would add that Jeckyll finally succeeded in carrying out this lightness of form in the Leyland dining room at the end of his career.\textsuperscript{114}

In the mid-1850s, Jeckyll decorated rooms and chose furniture for John Mitchell at Wattlefield Hall, Wymondham. The house itself was designed by John Chessell Buckler and Charles Alban Buckler between 1855 and 1856. Jeckyll’s work at Wattlefield Hall does not survive, though letters from Jeckyll to Mitchell reveal the designer’s wishes for the dining room scheme. Two letters written by Jeckyll in 1855 show that the designer wanted to move away from “the customary chair of plain heavy mahogany with stuffed seat” associated with the dark dining room and use “nice light stained cane bottom chairs” instead. Soros characterized this as ahead of its time, foreshadowing later developments of the Aesthetic Movement and Mackintosh’s style, though it is unclear which sort of dining room Mitchell ultimately allowed at Wattlefield.\textsuperscript{115}

In the following decade, Jeckyll wrote about his preference for lighter forms in the dining room again. Between 1865 and 1876 Jeckyll redecorated Heath Old Hall, Heath, Yorkshire, for Edward and Mary Green. Jeckyll’s redecoration of the house, built by John Kaye of Dalton in the sixteenth century, included the Oak Parlour, the dining room and several other spaces. The dining room chairs, table and buffet all survive and, despite being made of a warm-toned walnut, adhere to a traditional, heavy look. The buffet (\textit{figure 5-24}) is particularly substantial, filled in with rich carvings, thick, turned legs, and surmounted by the Green family coat of arms. Like the other furniture in the room, the wood-carvings of the buffet are a mixture of Jacobean and

\textsuperscript{114} For a discussion of the traditional color schemes for nineteenth century rooms and Jeckyll’s break from such traditions see Soros, \textit{Jeckyll}, 171. For information on Whistler’s “green-gold” woodwork treatment see Merrill, \textit{Peacock Room}, 210-211.

\textsuperscript{115} Thomas Jeckyll to John Mitchell, December 8 and 13, 1855, Wymondham Abbey Muniment Room, Wymondham, Norfolk (John Mitchell papers, Colton Church papers, Becket’s Chapel papers, curate’s licenses, topographical and antiquarian records); quoted in Soros, \textit{Jeckyll}, 171.
Asian-inspired patterns in what is called the “Anglo-Japanese” style. This style was popular in the period among designers such as Jeckyll and E.W. Godwin.

The smaller dining area in the Oak Parlour, which included a sideboard, table, and chairs all made of oak, is similarly carved, also partly upholstered, and heavy-looking compared to the lighter, Sussex-style chairs Jeckyll had wanted to use earlier at Wattlefield Hall. But an 1867 letter from Jeckyll to his patron Edward Green reveals that Jeckyll regretted the final look of these chairs. Jeckyll wrote:

[The chairs as completed were] comfortable and stylish…in accordance with the style of the house…[but they were] to a certain extent a mistake…they would [have been] far better, …if made from the same design but of hard thin material like the modern Austrian chairs, and in black and gold, red and gold, or white and gold.

Jeckyll was probably referring to light bentwood chairs (figure 5-32) such as those made by the Viennese cabinetmaker Michael Thonet (1796-1871). A surviving Jeckyll sketch of a side chair with an 1868 watermark (figure 5-33) may be an image of the lighter chairs Jeckyll had wanted. Like the surviving chairs from the Oak Parlour (figure 5-34), this chair has the same basic organization with its reclined back and linenfold back splat panels (the “same design” Jeckyll mentioned in his letter). The chair in the drawing, though, has completely rectilinear and streamlined components without any carving or bulky turned elements. On the small, upholstered panels of the chair Jeckyll sketched an asymmetrical pattern of sparse flowers and vines, not unlike Whistler’s pattern of sprigs on the Leyland hall dado panels mentioned above. Had the chairs been constructed this way, one can imagine the overall effect of lightness that would emanate from their simple frame and clean lines.\textsuperscript{116}

\textsuperscript{116} Thomas Jeckyll to Edward Green, November 29, 1867, Victoria and Albert Museum, National Art Library (Edward Green papers, 86.ZZ.166 MSL/1999/8/1/3); quoted and described in Soros, Jeckyll, 171-183.
A similar incongruity between initial sketch and final product is present in the sideboard for the Oak Parlour (figure 5-25). The surviving completed sideboard is a substantial piece with a variety of carved and turned decoration that includes everything from basketweave patterning to spiral legs. There is also a central storage cabinet beginning underneath the main serving surface of the piece and extending all the way down to the floor. By contrast, the original sketch for this sideboard (figure 5-35) shows little more than a simple table, though the spiral legs are present. There is no storage cabinet underneath and the detailed carvings of the final piece are absent. Perhaps, as in the case of the chairs, this piece was “bulked up” at the client’s request and in order to harmonize better with Green’s sixteenth-century home. Ultimately, even though Jeckyll was not often permitted to realize these lighter-looking designs, Soros argued that at Heath Old Hall, as at Wattlefield, “lightness and flexibility” were important and desirable qualities to Jeckyll in his furniture designs.117

Jeckyll’s wish for a dining room that was light in form was finally granted at 49 Princes Gate, under a patron who was amenable, to a degree, to his atypical plan. The lightness Jeckyll proposed extended from the forms in the room to the lightness of the color in the room as well. Leyland’s uneasiness, documented in a letter to Whistler, over the “two yellows and white” that Jeckyll had suggested for the woodwork in the dining room has already been noted above. In addition, Jeckyll did not shy away from using the golden-toned leather. It was not only warm and light in color but it was also decorated with sweetly curving vines that had miniature bouquets of multicolored flowers. Though the thick, textured look of the leather might have been weighty in appearance, the color and motifs decorating it would have been more typically appropriate for a drawing room or bedroom at the time. The heavy carved furniture of Jeckyll’s

117 Soros, Jeckyll, 174-176.
earlier designs, apparently done at the behest of his patrons and against his own taste, is absent in the room as well.

Period photographs show that the chairs selected for the room were conspicuously light in form (figures 5-1 and 5-10). Soros and Arbuthnott do not attribute the chairs to Jeckyll but they do credit him with their upholstery in leather that was embossed with sunflowers. Their overall appearance resembles Louis XVI or Louis XVI revival chairs. Their sleek and rectilinear frames maintained a slim profile that harmonized with the spindle-like shelving in the room. Because of their striking lightness of form these chairs are noteworthy but no one has been able to explain who chose them for the room or to tell us where they originated.

Likewise, the shelving is appropriately delicate since it would be used only to display ceramics, and the carving on the shelving units is limited to geometric patterns confined by the edges of the slim pieces. No bulbous, turned elements project from the streamlined posts or brackets (figure 5-36). Additionally, the star pattern on the ceiling consists of molding that is thin, linear and geometric (figure 5-37). Today one must ignore Whistler’s flamboyant painting on the ceiling to perceive the original clarity of Jeckyll’s geometric pattern.

The lightness of the room’s forms survive today as the only evidence of Jeckyll’s preferences. No matter how path-breaking the proposed light color scheme for this dining room would have been, it was obliterated by Whistler in the end. In what is often considered his most daring and rebellious act in the Peacock Room, Whistler completely covered Leyland’s expensive leather wall coverings with peacock blue paint. This occurred toward the end of Whistler’s work on the project, long after Jeckyll’s departure and presumably after Whistler’s quarrel with Leyland over payment. Perhaps the artist sensed that the relationship with his patron was already lost so he might as well transform the room exactly as he wanted. In any
case, Whistler never seemed overly concerned with “burning bridges” when it came to aesthetic matters. This final, bold act of rebellion only added to the animosity between artist and patron, who would never reconcile in the end.

It is ironic that Whistler’s transformation of the room from light to dark is considered one of his most audacious acts since the dark dining room was quite popular at the time. By covering the walls with dark blue paint, Whistler actually made the room more traditional. Fortunately, the lightness of the dining room partially survives in Jeckyll’s shelving and ceiling, though both were obscured by Whistler. Ultimately the surviving room reveals the struggle between two competing visions. The lightness Jeckyll initiated survives in form only, and the darkness Whistler imposed on the room, tying it to the dark, heavy, masculine dining room, is present only in the room’s color.

Whistler apparently adhered to the custom of the dark dining room and the light drawing room in his own homes in the 1860s, 70s, and 80s as well. Written accounts suggest that Whistler parroted the tradition of the dark dining room at three of his residences, just as he did in the Peacock Room. First, after living for four years at No. 7 Lindsey Row, Chelsea (now 101 Cheyne Walk), Whistler moved down the street to No. 2 Lindsey Row (now 96 Cheyne Walk) where he resided from 1867 until 1878. The drawing room at No. 2 Lindsey Row (figure 5-38) was light in color, consisting of white, flesh color, and yellow. Its color scheme is notably preserved in Whistler’s Symphony in Flesh Colour and Pink: Portrait of Mrs. Frederick R. Leyland (figure 5-39) which was painted in the room between 1871 and 1877. In the painting, Frances Leyland wears a dress designed by Whistler to match the room. The room itself had white matting on the floor with interwoven strips of gold and peach, white paneling on the lower wall, and a light tone of pink on the upper wall. In the painting Whistler added white flowers to
both the room and the dress to complete the delicate and light scheme. It is likely that Whistler’s
drawing room was perceived not only as an appropriate setting for a portrait of a refined woman,
it was probably also considered to be a room that was decorated appropriately as a space where
women would gather and converse while men remained in the darker blue dining room.\footnote{118}

According to Whistler’s biographers, Elizabeth Robins Pennell and Joseph Pennell
writing in 1911, the dining room at No. 2 Lindsey Row (\textit{figure 5-40}) contrasted with the lighter
drawing room there. The Pennells recorded the words of Whistler’s assistant and neighbor
Walter Greaves who recalled that the dining room was done in shades of blue. A darker shade of
blue was used for the doors and the dado, with a lighter blue on the upper walls, and purple fans
in the Japanese style were attached to the walls and the ceiling. Moving from the drawing room
of peach, yellow and white tones, to the blue and purple dining room would have been a
noticeable shift.\footnote{119}

Second, in 1878 Whistler moved from Lindsey Row to his famed White House (\textit{figure 5-41}) on Tite Street, Chelsea, designed by his friend E.W. Godwin. More details on the house and

\footnote{118} For detailed information on Whistler’s interior decoration at No. 7 Lindsey Row, Chelsea, not discussed here, where he lived from 1863 to 1867, see Deanna Marohn Bendix, \textit{Diabolical Designs: Paintings, Interiors, and Exhibitions of James McNeill Whistler} (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995), 63-73. There is little evidence of the color schemes at this house, though, and Linda Merrill has argued that the period photographs identified in Bendix as No. 7 Lindsey are actually images of rooms at No. 2 Lindsey Row. So it is difficult to reconstruct Whistler’s interior decoration at the earlier house with any certainty. See Linda Merrill, \textit{The Peacock Room: A Cultural Biography} (Washington, DC and New Haven: Freer Gallery of Art and Yale University Press, 1998), 149, 365n9. The setting for Whistler’s portrait of Frances Leyland is commonly accepted as the drawing room at No. 2 Lindsey Row. See, for example, Merrill, \textit{Peacock Room}, 131; and Susan Grace Galassi, “Whistler and Aesthetic Dress: Mrs. Frances Leyland,” in \textit{Whistler, Women and Fashion}, by Margaret F. MacDonald, Susan Grace Galassi, Aileen Ribiero, and Patricia de Montfort (New Haven, London, and New York: Yale and The Frick Collection, 2003), 92-115. Galassi gave the details of the design of Frances Leyland’s dress by Whistler in the portrait as well. Linda Merrill recognized the gendering of the Leyland portraits (that Frederick’s portrait was mostly black and severe, while Frances’s was light and delicate-looking) but did not extend this issue into the notion of the feminine drawing room at No. 2 Lindsey Row. See Merrill, \textit{Peacock Room}, 131. Except for the grey-green floor and baseboard, the background of Frederick Leyland’s portrait is entirely black making a setting identification impossible.

\footnote{119} For Walter Greaves’s description of the dining room at No. 2 Lindsey Row see Elizabeth Robins Pennell and Joseph Pennell, \textit{The Life of James McNeill Whistler} (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1911), 97-98. For detailed information on the decoration at No. 2 Lindsey Row see Bendix, \textit{Diabolical Designs}, 86-94.
its exterior are included below in section 2. The drawing room at the White House, also called
the studio-drawing room, was white, terracotta, and yellow, making it similar to Whistler’s
cheery drawing room at No. 2 Lindsey Row. The art dealer Walter Dowdeswell described the
room as “a large terra cotta coloured room with white woodwork.” It also had large windows
that faced the garden and filled the room with light. Two Godwin drawings of the fireplace wall
of the interior of the drawing room show that between the white woodwork there were panels of
white plaster that were scratched for a textural effect (figure 5-42). The square yellow tiles
around the hearth were also in harmony with the light, warm color scheme.120

Both Merrill and Bendix have argued that another Whistler-Godwin project of the late
1870s, the Harmony in Yellow and Gold: The Butterfly Cabinet (figure 5-43), may have been
intended for the light-colored drawing room at the White House. The Butterfly Cabinet was
designed by Godwin in 1877 and decorated by Whistler in 1878 for the London design firm
William Watt. It was originally a fireplace with dado paneling on either side and was later
converted into a cabinet. The original design scheme worked out by the two men was on display
at the 1878 Exposition Universelle in Paris (figure 5-44). The booth was described as “Drawing
Room Furniture,” and was one of many booths that the Watt included in the exposition. Its
yellow and gold color scheme, much brighter than that of the Peacock Room but with similar
motifs, aligned with the tradition of a light, cheery drawing room and supports the idea that
Whistler adhered to the traditional color schemes of interior decoration. Merrill even went so far
as to say that the color scheme of the Butterfly Cabinet “revive[d] the combination of yellows
that Jeckyll proposed to Leyland for the dining room at Prince’s Gate.” But Jeckyll’s reversal of

120 Walter Dowdeswell, n.d., pc, transcription, 2:26, 1997, ND237.W6A18, Lessing J. Rosenwald Collection, Rare
Book and Special Collections Division, Library of Congress; cited in Bendix, Diabolical Designs, 153-154, 292n38.
For more details on the White House interiors see Bendix, Diabolical Designs, 143-164.
the typical color schemes for dining rooms and drawing rooms as well as Whistler’s preference for the more popular mode have gone unnoticed.\textsuperscript{121}

In the dining room of the White House Whistler made another room not unlike the Peacock room he finished the previous year. Because of the scandals over the Peacock Room, the Ruskin trial, and Whistler’s subsequent bankruptcy, the White House was auctioned off to help pay down Whistler’s debts in September 1879. From auction records of 1879 and 1880, Deanna Marohn-Bendix gleaned that the dining room of the White House was decorated blue and yellow and was set up for the display of plate and blue and white porcelain. The dining room had a mahogany dining table, chairs painted yellow with cane seats, and straw matting on the floor, a floor covering Whistler favored in many of his interiors. The walls were apparently the site of the blue coloring in the room. Even though the artist did not get to enjoy his artistic house for long, within it he repeated the pattern of light drawing room and darker dining room yet again.\textsuperscript{122}

And third, after favoring the dark dining room at Lindsey Row, Princes Gate, and Tite Street, the interiors of Whistler’s new home at No. 13 Tite Street received a similar treatment. With the humiliation of his bankruptcy and his sojourn to Venice behind him, Whistler returned to Chelsea and moved into No. 13 in 1881. Visitors to Whistler’s home commented that the most of the interior was again dominated by white and yellow. One friend, Charles Augustus

\textsuperscript{121} For the details of the construction and original display of the Butterfly Cabinet see Andrew McLaren Young, et al., \textit{The Paintings of James McNeill Whistler} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), 113. For the suggestion that the Butterfly Cabinet was designed for the White House drawing room see Merrill, \textit{Peacock Room}, 261; and Bendix, \textit{Diabolical Designs}, 156.

\textsuperscript{122} For information on the contents of the White House as sold at auction in 1879-80 see Catalogue of Porcelain and Other Works of Art; “Particulars and Condition of Sale of an Excellent ‘Brick Detached Residence... Known as ‘the White House,’ Tite Street, Chelsea,” Baker and Sons, September 18, 1879; and “Art Sale: Messrs. Christie’s,” Academy, pc, 6:32; all in the Whistler papers, Birnie Philip Bequest, Special Collections, Glasgow University Library, Scotland; as cited in Bendix, \textit{Diabolical Designs}, 159, 292n50.
Howell, remarked that he “felt in it as if standing inside an egg.” The dining room was not part of the lighter scheme found throughout the rest of the house. Visitors described the dominant color of the dining room as “a rather dark green blue,” and as “a strangely vigorous blue-green” with yellow accents throughout the room. Now, in at least our fourth example, Whistler created yet another dark dining room to contrast with a light drawing room.\textsuperscript{123}

Later examples of interior decoration by Whistler fall outside the scope of this study of the Peacock Room and a lack of documentation of the exact nature of such spaces makes reconstructing them difficult. However, the preceding cases show that from the late 1860s to the early 1880s (a time period that includes the Peacock Room project) Whistler’s color preferences were consistent, adhering to the custom of the darker dining room and the lighter drawing room. Jeckyll, on the other hand, apparently broke free of this trend with his original scheme for the dining room at Princes Gate that would have been light in both color and form. His desire to break away from the dark, heavy forms of the typical dining room is documented as early as the mid-1850s, as Soros has shown. This may seem surprising since Whistler is so often described as a modern master whose works are forerunners of later modern innovations. Whistler certainly was one of the first major artists to look to Asian art for inspiration, and some of his paintings verge on abstraction, but there were still traditional elements at play in his interior decoration work. Whistler’s daring decision to paint the walls peacock blue incensed Leyland. The present author would add that Whistler’s dark blue paint also placed the room in the tradition of the dark dining room, a tradition that includes at least three other Whistlerian dining rooms. And Jeckyll,

\textsuperscript{123} The two quotes on the dark coloring of the dining room at No. 13 Tite Street see T.R. Way, \textit{Memories of James McNeill Whistler, the Artist} (London and New York: John Lane, the Bodley Head, and John Lane Company, 1912), 63; and Mrs. Julian Hawthorne, “Mr. Whistler’s New Portraits,” Harper’s Bazaar 14 (October 15, 1881): 658-659. For the comment on the egg-like coloring in the other rooms of the house see Charles Augustus Howell, quoted in Elizabeth Robins Pennell and Joseph Pennell, \textit{The Life of James McNeill Whistler} (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1911), 209. For more information on the interiors at No. 13 Tite Street see Bendix, \textit{Diabolical Designs}, 166-172.
the lesser-known designer, was the innovator in the Leyland dining room in terms of its original
color scheme and the lightness of its design.124

Peacocks as Symbols of Feasting

Studies of the Peacock Room often mention the front drawing room scheme for the house
at 15 Berkeley Square, London, by George Aitchison (1825-1910). Aitchison’s design for the
room is filled with peacocks and it predates the Peacock Room. Two designs for the room
survive: Aitchison’s sketch of the overall scheme (figure 5-45) and a cartoon for the room’s
frieze (figure 5-46) by Albert Joseph Moore (1841-1893). Both of these were created between
1872 and 1873, just a few years before Jeckyll and Whistler worked on the Leyland dining room.
Aitchison’s peacocks are familiar to Peacock Room scholars but no one has suggested why these
birds were used. In history in general and in the period in particular, peacocks have had a variety
of meanings. For example, the celebrated designer Walter Crane, who used the peacock in many
instances, included the bird in The Baby’s Own Aesop, first published in 1887. First, in the tale
of “The Vain Jackdaw,” Crane referred to the pride and vanity of the peacock (figure 5-47).
Second, in “The Peacock’s Complaint,” Crane recalled the peacock’s ancient association as an
attribute of the goddess Juno (figure 5-48). In other instances, peacocks were used but with no
evident meaning. For example, William Morris (1834-1896), founder of the British Arts and
Crafts movement, used the peacock in his “Peacock and Dragon” textile in 1878 (figure 5-49). And
noted designer Arthur H. Mackmurdo (1851-1942) incorporated three attenuated peacocks
into the far right and far left edges of the proto-Art Nouveau frontispiece for Wren’s City

124 At least one other example of a light-colored drawing room by Whistler has come to light for the period of the
1880s. The room was described in 1886 by a critic in this way: “I have lately seen a drawing room…one of
[Whistler’s] most successful harmonies in white and gold. The walls were pale golden, a rug of a darker shade lay
on the floor, white and gold cretonne covered the furniture and covered the windows.” See Art Age (June 1886),
Churches first published in 1883 (figure 5-50). In the face of these possibilities, this dissertation focuses on one specific meaning the peacock could have in a specific location: as a foodstuff and a symbol for banqueting in dining rooms.\(^{125}\)

The eponymous peacock is a second example of Decor instigated by Whistler in the Leyland dining room (figure 5-51). These beautiful birds are obviously integral to the design and color scheme of the room. Most studies of this room repeat the claim that it was Chinese and Japanese art that inspired Whistler to incorporate the peacock. It is true that peacocks are common motifs in Asian art (though they have been arguably as common in the West as shown in Appendix C: Peacocks in secular interiors), and the peacock itself has its origins in Southeast Asia. This bird, however, had been in England for hundreds of years by the nineteenth century. And more than that, it had been eaten for hundreds of years as well. The history of the peacock in England, beginning with its introduction by the Romans in the first century, is explored below to emphasize the peacock’s culinary significance and its appropriateness in dining room decoration. Additionally, Whistler’s own highly Aesthetic dining practices as well as other examples of his use of the principle of Decor are included to underscore his relationship to this concept. Ultimately, Whistler’s peacocks may have been much more than just beautiful or exotic Aesthetic fantasies. Instead, peacocks were recognized as eminently appropriate designs for the decoration of a dining room, and Whistler may have had this in mind.

\(^{125}\) For information on Aitchison’s and Moore’s peacock freize in the front drawing room at 15 Berkeley Square see Merrill, *Peacock Room*, 224-225. For details on Morris’s “Peacock and Dragon” textile see Appendix C under 1878. For information on Mackmurdo’s frontispiece for *Wren’s City Churches* see Dennis W. Durham, “Arthur Heygate Mackmurdo (1851-1942) and the Century Guild Chair of c. 1882-83,” (paper presented at the Twelfth Annual Virginia Commonwealth University Symposium on Architectural History and the Decorative Arts, Richmond, Virginia, November 2003), 7-12; and Dennis W. Durham, “Arthur Heygate Mackmurdo (1851-1942) and the Century Guild Chair: Pulling Together the Pieces,” (Research report, ARTH 789 (Brownell), Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, Virginia, 2003), 9-12. And for Crane’s peacock imagery in *The Baby’s Own Aesop* see Walter Crane, *The Baby’s Own Aesop: Being Condensed in Rhyme with Portable Morals Pictorially Pointed*, W.J. Linton, trans. (1887; repr., Bath: Robert Frederick, 1994), 18-19. In the same book, Crane also illustrated the peacock in “Neither Beast Nor Bird,” 27.
Peacocks are native to Southeast Asia, but when the Romans invaded Britain in 43 CE they brought with them many changes including new foods such as peacocks. The culinary particulars of the Roman Empire come down to us from many sources such as the Cookery Book of Apicius. Apicius wrote about the peacock as a dish that ranked above others such as rabbit and even lobster:

Dishes. Peacocks occupy the first rank, provided they be dressed in such manner that the hard and tough parts be tender. The second place have dishes made of rabbit[,] third spiny lobster[,] fourth comes chicken and fifth young pig.

Despite Apicius’s praise for the peacock, the peacock has been known as a rather tough meat since Roman times. For example, the Roman poet Horace described the peacock as a luxurious meat eaten more for its dazzling appearance than for its taste:

However, if you set a peacock on the table, I shall hardly be able to prevent you from tickling your palate with that bird rather than a hen, seduced as you are by appearances, because that bird is rare and costs a heap of gold and makes a lovely sight when it fans open its tail. But what has this to do with taste in itself? What? Do you eat the feathers that you praise so much? When the peacock is roasted where is the plumage? So far as the meat is concerned, the difference is almost nil. And yet you choose peacock, deluded by its incomparable beauty. Very well. But where have you derived the capacity to determine that this pike grasping here was caught in the Tiber or in the sea? Whether it was scooped out of the waves between two Roman bridges or at the mouth of the Etruscan stream? You droop foolishly for a three-pound mullet which you must necessarily chop up into separate portions. You are seduced by appearances, I see. But then why do you detest big-sized pike? Obviously because pike are big by nature and mullet light of weight. Rarely is a famished stomach fussy about ordinary vulgar food.

Various agricultural treatises are also helpful such as those of Cato and Varro, and descriptions like Petronius’ famous account of a feast given by a wealthy man named Trimalchio. Later in history, Christian Romans were also fascinated with peacock but imbued it with different meaning. According to St. Augustine of Hippo, peacock meat was so tough that it did not putrefy or smell even a year after it the bird had been killed. Augustine wrote:

For who but the Creator of all things has given the flesh of the peacock the property of not rotting after death? This property seemed to me incredible when I first heard of it.
But then it so happened that a bird of this kind was cooked and served up to us at Carthage. I took what seemed to me to be a suitable slice from its breast, and gave instructions that it was to be kept. Then, after some days, by which time any other kind of cooked meat would have gone rotten, it was brought out and set before me, and gave off no offensive smell. It was found to be still in the same state after it had been kept for upwards of thirty days. And it was still the same a year later, except that it was now a little more shriveled, and drier.

Even though Rome withdrew from Britain in 410 CE, in later times peacocks were kept on large estates and eaten. So the Roman tradition of keeping and eating peacocks endured, long after the Romans left Britain.  

D.W. Yalden’s bird population chart shows that the zenith of the peacock population in England was during the Medieval period. Outside of food consumption, the peacock was popular in other ways. For example, Geoffrey Chaucer’s seven-hundred-line poem “Parliament of Birds,” written circa 1380, is about an imagined gathering of different bird species on Saint Valentine’s day to choose their mates. The poem, and paintings depicting it (figure 5-52), have been related to the gatherings and verbal communications of birds which can often seem similar to human interactions. The peacock and the parrot are the only two non-European birds included in Chaucer’s poem, suggesting that these two were perhaps not exotic anymore.


127 For the peacock population through the centuries in Britain see D.W. Yalden, The History of British Birds (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 101. For a discussion of Geoffrey Chaucer’s “Parliament of Birds” see
The scientific name for the peacock is *Pavo cristatus*, which relates to several British place names. Yalden provided a chart of these that includes two references to the peacock. “Peamore” is from the Old English “*pawa, mere*” meaning peacock lake. “Poundon” is from the Old English “*pawan, dun*” meaning peacock’s tail.\(^{128}\)

A popular medieval preacher’s handbook called *Liber de Moralitatibus* written circa 1290 by Marcus of Orvieto, a Franciscan, reveals various pieces of information about the peacock. Marcus recounts Saint Augustine’s tale of the time the saint tried to eat peacock in Carthage but found it hard to cook and hard to eat, and also learned that it would not putrefy or smell over time. Because of this presumed “incorruptibility” of peacock meat, the peacock became a resurrection symbol popular in catacombs and other Christian sites. Conversely, the blue breast feathers of the peacock could also stand for the vanity of the devil. And finally Marcus tells us that Pliny noted that one can never find any peacock leavings because the peacock eats its own dung. Pliny wrote:

…I must mention the tradition that peacocks swallow back their own dung, begrudging men its benefits.

All of these accounts show the widespread familiarity with the peacock.\(^{129}\)

In the Medieval and Renaissance eras the peacock, along with the swan, was considered noble and was only eaten by the wealthy. A compendium of Medieval recipes and their sources

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lists eleven recipes for peacock all dating from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. In the late fourteenth century birds such as peacocks could be bought pre-cooked from London vendors then set out for feasts with their plumage decorating them. They were considered an elite foodstuff and the average person was unlikely to have eaten one. Throughout the Medieval period, the swan and the peacock were reserved for special meals and were used as fancy centerpieces that were brought out to the table in a formal procession. At more elaborate, special feasts a peacock or swan would be brought out seated upright on a platter, through the use of a rod in the animal’s neck, and with reattached beak and tail feathers. By some accounts, their beaks and legs were often gilded for presentation as well. Both the swan and the peacock were considered to be outside the normative categories of game and poultry, and both were known for their “dry stringy flesh.” They were clearly enjoyed much more for their looks at extravagant events than for their taste.\(^{130}\)

By the eighteenth century peacocks and other exotic birds were no longer in style at the dinner table. They did not disappear simply because they were not being eaten, though. Christine E. Jackson has argued:

Blue peacocks must have been numerous in eighteenth century Europe for so many to have been incorporated in bird pictures. They had figured in folklore and mythology for centuries, but were not often painted in the seventeenth century where macaws took pride of place and provided brilliant splashes of color.

Over time, people ate fewer kinds of birds for a variety of reasons. Some birds were on the verge of extinction and laws were enacted to protect them. The availability of meat and poultry increasingly improved over time. And there are simply changes in taste over the centuries.\footnote{For the unpopularity of peacocks at the table in the eighteenth century see Mason, \textit{Food Culture}, 25. For the popularity of peacocks in eighteenth century bird painting see Jackson, \textit{Bird Painting}, 60. For the changing food fashions see Boyd, \textit{British Cookery}, 302.}

One much better-tasting bird, the turkey (\textit{figure 5-53}), came to be associated with the peacock, but replaced it at the table. Sometime during the last decade of the fifteenth century to the first decade of the sixteenth century Spanish explorers in the Caribbean encountered wild and domesticated turkeys for the first time. The assumption was made, based on visual characteristics such as the fanned out tail feathers, that turkeys and peacocks were related. In sixteenth century Europe, this made the turkey new and exotic. By the seventeenth century, however, it had been bred in Europe so much that it no longer seemed quite so special. Even if it was exotic only for a brief time, the turkey remained popular because it tasted good. There was also a shift in seventeenth-century European food toward better quality meat, over the flashy but tough-to-eat peacock. The peacock was generally taken off the menu as a result of this change. Despite these changes, confusion between the peacock and the turkey remained. For example, William Shakespeare used the turkey more than once to describe characters who were “too big for their britches,” so to speak. This characterization probably relates to the older concept of the peacock, with his flashy feathers, as a symbol of vanity and pride.\footnote{For the “discovery” of the turkey by Europeans in the New World and its subsequent conflation with the peacock, including Shakespeare’s use of the turkey, see Boehrer, \textit{Animal Characters}, 133-163.}

The notion of the peacock as food, and the confusion of the turkey and the peacock, apparently persisted into the nineteenth century even though the peacock was rarely eaten anymore. Two popular British housekeeping guides of the period included the peacock. First,
there is *An Encyclopedia of Domestic Economy: Comprising Such Subjects as Are Most Immediately Connected with Housekeeping*, by Thomas Webster “assisted by the late Mrs. Parkes,” first published in London in 1844. The book was published in New York the following year and in many British and American editions through at least 1861. Chapter 5 of Book 7, “On Food,” is about birds. Webster and Parkes described the peacock in this way:

> This beautiful and magnificent bird is a native of India, and is found in a wild state in Java and Ceylon, where they perch upon trees like the turkey in America. When the conquering Alexander led his armies into the peaceful plains of India, he is said to have been so struck by the sight of the peacock in the full magnificence of its plumage, that he forbade any one to destroy them under pain of death: but its antiquity we learn from the history of King Solomon, and the choice of the goddess Juno who regarded it as her favourite bird. The peacock has been introduced on the table by the ancients as well as the moderns, but rather as a showy and ornamental dish, being preserved in some of its fine plumage….The flesh is coarse and ill colored, and is scarcely ever eaten in these times. At three years old the tail is splendid and complete; and it lives to the age of twenty years. Its chief value is as an ornament to pleasure-grounds, where it is useful in destroying reptiles.\(^{133}\)

Second, Mrs. Isabella Beeton’s classic *Book of Household Management*, published in London in 1861 and read widely thereafter in numerous editions, contains no peacock recipe nor mention of the bird. The peacock is far from absent, though. Chapter twenty is called “General Observations on Birds.” These observations precede the chapter of poultry recipes and serve as an introduction to them. The chapter’s opening image (*figure 5-54*) consists of ten birds with the peacock in the dead center of the image. The peacock is accompanied by a turkey, a duck, geese, roosters and hens—all edible birds enjoyed at table. The peacock may not have been as tasty as the rest but his image was included with the poultry in the recipe section of this book. Both

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Webster and Beeton’s household guides show that in the mid-to-late-nineteenth century the peacock was still associated with feasting, even if it was no longer cooked very often.\textsuperscript{134}

Additionally, four separate examples, the work of five definers of the Aesthetic Movement, is testimony that the peacock was associated with feasting. First, in the 1860s, E.W. Godwin incorporated the peacock into the dining room at Dromore Castle. The castle was a comprehensive commission that occupied the designer from 1867 until 1873. It included all manner of decorative arts such as wall decoration, textiles, and furniture for the Limerick family in County Limerick, Ireland.

Before detailing the Characteristic decoration in the dining room at Dromore, though, it is worth noting that Godwin was not simply aware of the Characteristic decoration. Neither is a reading of his work as Decorous purely subjective. In a short article on dining room decoration Godwin laid out specific principles for decoration. For example, he recommended wall paintings in the dining room “representing the modern labours of the months in relation to meat and drink.” Godwin made use of Decorous imagery in a variety of ways throughout his career as detailed in Appendix D.\textsuperscript{135}

Returning to the dining room at Dromore Castle, there are three sets of symbolism present in Godwin’s designs there and all three are examples of Decor. This mixing of Decorous imagery is customary and we have seen it many times in the previous chapter. First, the proposed wall decoration was a frieze of the eight virtues of Temperance, Truth, Humility,

\textsuperscript{134} Isabella Beeton, \textit{The Book of Household Management} (1861; repr., New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 1977), 437, 501. Beeton did include a recipe for swan, though she was careful to note that this bird was rarely eaten in her day. We can surmise that the case was much the same with the dry stringy peacock, who had so often been paraded out at feasts just like the swan.

\textsuperscript{135} For Godwin’s comments on dining room decoration see Godwin, “My House ‘in’ London, Chapter III.—The Dining-Room,” \textit{Architect} (London), (July 29, 1876), 58-59.
Patience, Chastity, Charity, Liberality, and Industry (figure 5-55). This is a variation from the wall decoration related to “meat and drink” that Godwin recommended above, but it was still Decorous, nevertheless. The virtues were, in fact, appropriate dining room decoration since the custom in the Victorian era was for families to pray together daily in that room. Osbert Lancaster recalled:

It should never be forgotten that the dining-room of the [Victorian] period had taken over some of the function of a private chapel in that it was invariably the scene of family prayers.

Second, the oak buffet (now lost) (figure 5-56) in the dining room contained the Limerick family coat of arms carved in the pediment of the piece. This established ownership and reminded visitors whose impressive house they were enjoying. And third, just above the coat of arms on the buffet, a peacock was present as a foodstuff and a reference to banqueting. A detail drawing of the oak peacock survives showing the bird’s significance in Godwin’s dining-room scheme at Dromore (figure 5-57). The same drawing shows that Godwin apparently also designed a closely related whatnot en suite. These three layers of meaning in the dining room at Dromore Castle show that generic decoration was apparently not enough for Godwin.136

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136 I thank Charles Brownell for pointing out the custom of daily prayers in the Victorian dining room. For Osbert Lancaster’s comments on the Victorian dining-room (published in many editions) see Lancaster, Home Sweet Homes (first American ed., London and New York: John Murray and Transatlantic Arts, 1946), 42; and Lancaster repeats his comments in Here, of All Places (Boston and Cambridge: Houghton Mifflin and Riverside Press, 1958), 94. See also Osbert Lancaster, All Done From Memory (Boston and Cambridge: Houghton Mifflin Company and the Riverside Press, 1953), 17, 31, 184-186. Godwin’s Dromore Castle buffet with peacock survives today only via two drawings, though the last record of it dates to 1949. The most detailed image of the buffet with the highest degree of finish dates to ca. 1869 and is in the British Architectural Library Drawings Collection, RIBA, London, Ran 7/B/1 (73). For details on the buffet and the Dromore Castle commission see in Susan Weber Soros, “E.W. Godwin and Interior Design,” and “The Furniture of E.W. Godwin,” both in E.W. Godwin: Aesthetic Movement Architect and Designer, edited by Susan Weber Soros (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 191-196, 232-235; also see Susan Weber Soros, The Secular Furniture of E.W. Godwin with Catalogue Raisonné (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 35-36, 44, 144, 193, 241. In both of Soros’ books on Godwin, the author suggests the use of the peacock in the buffet as a Medieval symbol of the Resurrection in keeping with the Gothic Revival elements of Godwin’s work. In Secular Furniture Soros tentatively suggests that the buffet peacock could be an early sign of Japonisme in Godwin’s work. The peacock’s ties with banqueting imagery are not mentioned in either work. Godwin’s peacock buffet for Dromore Castle has not previously been linked with the peacock whatnot, also for Dromore Castle. Both were to be made in oak and the visual similarities in overall design are obvious. In addition to the crowning peacock ornament, the whatnot and the central section of the buffet are both tall and narrow with a
The Dromore buffet and whatnot also shows Godwin working toward his severe style in furniture. Here we see him restricting imagery to the pediment area, cutting imagery to the minimum. It is as if he will allow only some essentials. Instead of giving us dead hares and grapes in the French manner (still the fashion in the twentieth-century, for example, in Art Nouveau pieces covered in the previous chapter), he cuts to the peacock as a symbol of banqueting. The wall painting designs did not share the same severity as the furniture, though.

Given Godwin’s interest in cleanliness and hygiene in the home, it is not surprising that he would, for the most part, omit detailed carvings that could collect dust and take longer to clean. Painted decoration, on the other hand, could be exceedingly detailed and provide a wealth of flat imagery that did not add to the housemaid’s workload nor worry the health-conscious homeowner.137

Second, two major designers of the period, William Morris and Philip Webb, in collaboration with the Royal School of Art Needlework, created the wall hanging called *Peacock and Vine* (figure 5-58). This embroidery, already discussed in chapter four, was undoubtedly

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designed as dining room decoration because of its central peacock motif surrounded by grape vines. As already noted in chapter four, the piece was displayed at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition and, if we can rely on Linda Parry, “provided one of the first opportunities for new types of British embroidery to be seen in the United States and it became an important watershed in the development of that country’s needlework.”

Third, in 1878 another leader of the Aesthetic Movement, the noted designer Walter Crane (1845-1915), like Godwin before him, made use of the Decorous peacock and its ties to banqueting. Instead of a buffet, Crane designed a set of coordinating frieze and fill wallpapers known as “Peacocks and Amorini.” In both gilded, embossed papers, the association of peacocks with feasting is inescapable. In one version, the frieze (figure 5-59) displays winged female figures standing on small, wheeled carts with sheaves of wheat fanned out at their feet. Each figure holds a single-bladed scythe in each hand, an obvious reference to agriculture and the harvest. Alternating with the female figures are frontal peacocks with tail feathers fanned out in their splendor. The lower border of the frieze is decorated with a wave pattern, probably derived from the peacock feathers. In the second version of the frieze for this paper (figure 5-60), which was published and won a gold medal at the Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1878, Crane used a row of frontal peacocks in square frames as the main imagery. Shells appear regularly at the top of the frieze as a reference to the shellfish eaten at table. The background for this version of the frieze is another wave pattern used as an abstracted version of peacock feathers.

The fill (figure 5-61) that accompanied both frieze options expands on the same imagery: peacocks, angelic figures (this time amorini), and wheat. Trophies with wheat, grapes with

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scythes, cornucopias full of fruit, and scrolling foliage show a systematic exercise on the theme of banqueting. A cherub in the center of each wallpaper panel holds the tragic and comic masks of Greek drama, no doubt referring to Dionysus as god of drama and drinking, as we have seen in chapter 4. The published version of this paper also included a dado (figure 5-62) with food from the sea, fish and shellfish, and another wave pattern, this time as a reference to the scales of the fish. This coordinating pair of wallpapers by Crane, with all their links to eating and drinking, was designed as dining room decoration. And further, extant pieces of these wallpapers show that they were embossed in gold (figure 5-63). To the right side of the published version it reads, “This paper and frieze also made as embossed leather papers.” Crane created these a year after the Peacock Room’s completion, and they are full of peacock motifs, abstracted feathers, and raised golden decoration all for a dining room. The “Peacocks and Amorini” wallpapers may have been Crane’s answer to Whistler’s famous room.\(^\text{139}\)

And fourth, yet another example, this one provided in Christopher Dresser’s 1886 publication *Modern Ornamentation*, reveals a familiar pair of birds (figure 5-64). At the top of an image of proposed wall decoration, a peacock is shown with hops and wheat, while the bottom panel includes a turkey with grapes. Certainly these two friezes were intended as dining

\(^{139}\text{For more information on Walter Crane’s “Peacock and Amorini” wallpapers see the entries for 1878 in Appendix C: Peacocks in Secular Interiors. The only images in Crane’s “Peacocks and Amorini” wallpaper that were apparently not consonant with the theme of dining are the pairs of cockatoos that appear in the fill. Crane’s Peacocks and Amorini’ papers were published at least twice. First, they were published in 1878 to celebrate their gold medal win at the Paris Exposition Universelle in 1878. See “Gold Medal Wall-Paper Decorations,” *The Building News and Engineering Journal* (London) 36 (February 21, 1879): 198, 201-202; and second, in 1883, in “Walter Crane,” *The Art Amateur, a Monthly Journal Devoted to the Cultivation of Art in the Household* 9 no. 6 (November 1883), 125. Isobel Spencer described the “Peacocks and Amorini” papers by Crane as “a more formal paper...[and along with a few other papers at the time it was done] in an embossed and gilded range designed to simulate more expensive Spanish leather wall-coverings and [was] suited to grand reception rooms and public buildings.” Spencer did not take the point any further or analyze the specific motifs in “Peacocks and Amorini.” See Isobel Spencer, *Walter Crane* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1975), 93, 106.}
room decorations adhering to the principles of Decor by this contemporary of Jeckyll and Whistler.\footnote{Christopher Dresser, \textit{Modern Ornamentation} (1886; repr., New York: Garland Publishing, 1978), plate 27.}

The work of Godwin, Morris, Webb, Crane, and Dresser shows that the peacock was still associated with dining despite rarely being consumed in the late nineteenth century. These celebrated designers used the peacock as the central decorative motif in dining room decoration. Godwin’s suite of dining room furniture for Dromore Castle was one of his major commissions. Morris and Webb’s design had an influence internationally. Crane and Dresser both published designs that obviously associated the peacock with dining room decoration. All of these telltale examples, from before and after the Peacock Room’s creation (1876-1877), reveal the longstanding reputation of the peacock as a foodstuff that has existed since the Roman Empire.

Whistler’s own entertaining and dining routines suggest that he considered food to be an integral part of an aesthetic dining experience. Just as no detail of interior decoration escaped his penetrating eye, Whistler’s approach to dining was quite visually oriented. Margaret F. MacDonald, the celebrated Whistler expert, has pointed out multiple cases, preserved in surviving menus and written recollections by Whistler’s guests, in which nervous diners were subject to the artist’s creative impulses. MacDonald explained:

[Whistler] was too particular; the food got cold while the sauce was being prepared….And not everyone appreciated tinted rice pudding and butter stained apple green to harmonize with the china.

MacDonald has also noted that Whistler’s staff was not immune to his culinary eccentricities. After Whistler’s bankruptcy in 1879, his cook had to be let go:

Mrs. Cossins went to work for the sculptor J.E. Böehm. He recognized her apprenticeship at once from the salad, “a symphony in tomatoes,” which she prepared on her very first day.
Such anecdotes illuminate the fact that food and dining entered into Whistler’s aesthetic life. Thus, it is plausible that his peacocks in the Leyland dining room were images of great beauty as well as culinary significance.¹⁴¹

It is also documented that Whistler competed with at least one example of a Characteristic dining room when he was working on the Peacock Room. A letter of September 1876, from Whistler to Leyland, has often been quoted by writers on the Peacock Room. Of Leyland’s dining room, the artist wrote, “There is no room in London like it mon cher –and Mrs. Eustace Smith is wiped out utterly!” In this letter Whistler was referring to the interior decoration at No. 52 Princes Gate, the home of the wealthy shipbuilder, ship-owner and art collector Thomas Eustace Smith (1831-1903) and his wife Mary (also known as Eustacia). Frederic Leighton, Walter Crane, George Aitchison, and Thomas Armstrong, a minor painter and friend of Aitchison, all worked on the interiors of the home, just steps from the Leyland’s mansion at No. 49.¹⁴²

Aitchison and Armstrong worked together on the Smith dining room. The only part of their decoration that survives is the walnut chimneypiece with a classical pediment and two pairs of painted panels on either side (figure 5-65). In the top panel on the left is Pomona (figure 5-66), Roman goddess of fruit, and in the top panel on the right is Picus (figure 5-67), a Roman god of agriculture who helped feed Romulus and Remus. Picus is better known for being

¹⁴¹ For information on Whistler’s dining and entertaining practices see Margaret F. MacDonald, *Whistler’s Mother’s Cook Book* (San Francisco: Pomegranate, 1995), 42, 47.

transformed into a woodpecker by Circe in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Both Pomona and Picus are ancient Italian deities associated with agriculture and both are subjects in book fourteen of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. Directly below the Pomona and Picus panels, two other panels contain quotations in Latin from two separate works by Horace. Underneath Pomona, the Latin inscription from Horace’s *Epistles* (book 1, epistle 5) translates, “we can sleep late; We can talk the night away agreeably.” And on the panel underneath Picus, the Latin from Horace’s *Odes* (book 3, ode 8) translates, “enjoy the gifts the present hour offers: leave what is weighty.” Not only are the two passages from different works by Horace, neither of them relate to Pomona or Picus, gods who are only loosely tied to each other. Rather, with a dining room as their setting, what all four panels have in common is the connection to food and conversation at the dining room table. The two figures and the two quotations were apparently put together simply as characteristic decoration in this dining room. Unlike the Peacock Room, the use of Decor here is perhaps more obvious, expected even, in such a classically-themed room.\(^{143}\)

Whistler’s words to Leyland in 1876 show more than simply his awareness of the interior decoration at the Smith house or his feeling of direct competition with it, though. Whistler’s

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\(^{143}\) See Greenacomb, Survey of London: Knightsbridge, 204-205. See also Horace, *The Epistles of Horace*, David Ferry, trans. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001), 24-25; and Horace, *The Odes of Horace*, Jeffrey H. Kaimowitz, trans. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 108. For general information on Pomona and Picus see M.C. Howatson, ed., *The Oxford Companion to Classical Literature*, 2nd ed. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 1377, 1399. K. Sara Myers noted that, “The characters in Ovid’s Italian stories [seen only in books 14 and 15] of the *Metamorphoses* include relatively obscure, but ancient, native Italian agricultural and rustic deities, such as Picus, Vertumnus, Pomona,” and “The only tales in book 14 [of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*] that feature rustic Italian figures are those of Picus and Canens, the Apulian shepherd, and Pomona and Vertumnus. All three tales also include ‘foreign’ characters such as Circe, Pan, Iphis, and Anaxarete.” Myers also observed that statues appear in the book 14 stories of both Picus and Pomona. In the former, a white marble statue of a young man with a woodpecker on his head prompts the telling of the story of Picus, Canens and Circe by Marcareus, and in the latter, while Vertumnus is telling Pomona the story of Iphis and Anaxarete as part of his scheme to woo Pomona, Vertumnus mentions of statue of Anaxarete on the island of Salamis that supposedly attests to the validity of Vertumnus’s story. See Myers’s introduction to Ovid, *Metamorphoses: Book XIV*, K. Sara Myers, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 6-8; and for the tales of Picus and Pomona in English translation see Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Charles Martin, trans. and ed. (New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company, 2010), 389-393, 400-405. The statues are mentioned on pp. 389 and 404.
letter also shows that he had the Smith’s interiors in mind while he was working on the Peacock Room. It is doubtful that Whistler would not have comprehended the principle of Decor that was so clearly at work in the Smith dining room. Perhaps in his attempts to outshine Eustacia Smith, Whistler decided similarly to use the principle of Decor in the dining room, but to do so in an altogether more dazzling and less transparent way than by simply borrowing quotes and figures from Classical literature. In this light, Whistler’s Characteristic peacocks, along with the dramatic dark of the dining room as discussed above, were Aesthetic updates to the tradition of Decor. They made reference to the nature and function of the room as an eating room since peacocks were historically eaten, but they made this reference in a dramatically beautiful and modern way. By using a limited color palette and by concentrating on a single motif that reappears throughout the room in different variations, Whistler provided a unified interior that adhered to the tenets of Decor without seeming old-fashioned.144

Inspired, perhaps, by his decoration in the Peacock Room or that of the Smith dining room down the street, Whistler went on to use Decor at his White House, now lost. The artist was heavily involved in the design of the White House, working closely and communicating nearly every day with his architect and friend E.W. Godwin. The White House was an avant-garde artist house but traditional elements were still at play in its design. The 1878 pen and ink elevation of the house’s façade (figure 5-68), as well as surviving twentieth-century photographs of it (figure 5-69), shows that there was an inscription above Whistler’s blue-green door. In Godwin’s drawing the inscription ran diagonally from the door in three parallel rows and read “The White House” with Whistler’s butterfly monogram to the right. In reality, the actual inscription was less artfully executed but the words “The White House” were placed horizontally

144 Recall that by ca. 1873 Whistler had already used plates and platters to decorate a dining room in his unrealized sketches for the dining room of Aubrey House. See details above and in Bendix, Diabolical Designs, 111-113.
above the door, nevertheless. Marking the house in this way, identifying it to all visitors or passersby, is a prime example of Decor since it speaks to the nature and raison d’être of the building. This appropriate inscription was not included in Godwin’s more minimal, earlier elevation of the White House created in 1877. Rather, it was one of many elements, such as figural relief panels (figure 5-70), added for the benefit of the Metropolitan Board of Works to make the avant-garde home less austere and bizarre, and therefore acceptable to the Board. The inscription also fits in with the Aesthetic Movement emphasis on design that delights and informs viewers, mentioned in chapter 4.  

Perhaps these proposed additions to the White House were designed not simply to appease the Metropolitan Board of Works. The sketchiness of Godwin’s drawing of the figural elements makes it difficult to tell whether they included allegorical figures with specific meanings or decoration that related to the nature and function of this studio-house. The feature that cannot be disputed as an example of Decor, though, is the inscription over the front door. This label on the house may have been included to appease passersby by marking the house as

145 For the history of Whistler’s White House by Godwin and its controversial design see Aileen Reid, “The Architectural Career of E.W. Godwin,” in E.W. Godwin: Aesthetic Movement Architect and Designer, 127-183. Other additions were proposed for the façade of the White House as concessions to the Board. They included rectangular panels of relief sculpture, presumably added to break up some of the blank areas of white. The largest panel was to be above the windows on the top left portion of the façade. Though sketchy, Godwin’s drawing of this panel appears to include a group of figures twisting and pulling at one another in a swirl of activity. The panel is not unlike those of Jean Goujon’s (ca. 1510-1572) Fontaine des Innocents, Paris (1547-1550). Below this panel is a pair of windows which was to have a sculptural niche between them. Godwin’s drawing shows the proposed female figure for the niche. The figure is draped in fabric with her left arm curled up around the side of her head in a Classical manner. Charles Brownell has traced the origin of such posed female figures through eighteenth-century Neoclassical drawings by B.H. Latrobe and engravings by John Flaxman to, ultimately, painted vases from Ancient Greece. Below that sculpture and its flanking windows were three smaller, rectangular panels. Although the sketchiness of Godwin’s drawing makes the decoration of these panels difficult to discern, they appear to be filled with generic foliate decoration in the rinceaux family. The same decoration appears in a small lunette over the door and underneath a single window to the right of the door. It is worth mentioning that at least some of this conventional foliage appears to be asymmetrical. The asymmetry of some of the panels suggests that this proposed sculptural decoration, though largely Neoclassical in origin, may not have been as traditional as has been thought. For Charles Brownell’s analysis of the Classical gesture of the female figure with arm raised see Charles E. Brownell, “An Introduction to the Art of Latrobe’s Drawings,” in Latrobe’s View of America, 1795-1820, Edward C. Carter II, John C. Van Horne, and Charles E. Brownell, eds. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985), 17-34.
belonging to the eccentric artist Whistler. The label identified the house and perhaps its
belonging to an artist would have accounted for the oddities of its designs.

Godwin used *Decor* on numerous occasions both before and after his work with Whistler
on the White House. These instances are detailed in Appendix D. Among the most telling
examples are his full-scale application of the principle on the interior and exterior of the
Northampton Town Hall (1861-1864) (*figure 5-71*). Narrative sculptures, architectural elements
like capitals (*figure 5-72*), and paintings all refer to local history and trades, as well as the legal
nature of the building. An 1883 Godwin design for a double-sided wardrobe (*figure 5-73*) is
inscribed in the frieze with the Latin word “RESARTUS.” This translates to “re-clothed,” or
“re-tailored,” and speaks to the nature and function of the piece of furniture as a storage cabinet
for clothing. Like other Aesthetic Movement designers, Godwin designed eloquent pieces that
delighted as well as informed. And Godwin supported the notion of *Decor* in his numerous
writings on design as well. For instance, in an article titled “Mantelpieces” published in an 1876
issue of the *Architect*, Godwin parroted the near cliché adage about the difference between
appropriate decoration of a palace versus that of a cottage. This theme comes up over and over
again through the centuries and is listed along with Godwin’s full quote in Appendix B: “*Decor
Don’ts.*”

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146 For details of the Northampton Town Hall commission see Reid, “The Architectural Career of E.W. Godwin,” in *E.W. Godwin: Aesthetic Movement Architect and Designer*, 139-143. Reid makes the connection between the “law-giving function of the building” and its appropriate decoration, although she does not acknowledge the *Decor* principle by name; see page 143. For information on the “RESARTUS” wardrobe see Soros, *Secular Furniture*, 234. Also, Godwin was known to be fascinated with historic costume and even founded the Costume Society in 1882. See Soros, “Godwin as Antiquary,” in *E.W. Godwin: Aesthetic Movement Architect and Designer*, 58-65. The inscription on the wardrobe may plausibly have derived from the title of the 1836 novel by Thomas Carlyle *Sarto Resartus* (in English: *The Tailor Re-Tailored*) about a German philosopher who wrote a history book on clothes. Whistler painted Carlyle’s portrait in 1873, the *Arrangement in Grey and Black No. 2: Portrait of Thomas Carlyle*, in much the same manner as his famous portrait of his mother, the *Arrangement in Grey and Black: Portrait of the Painter’s Mother* (1871). See Andrew McLaren Young, et al., *The Paintings of James McNeill Whistler* (catalogue raisonné, two vols.), (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), Text vol.: 59-63, 82-84. For Godwin’s use of the palace vs. cottage theme see Appendix B under 1876; see also E.W. Godwin, “Mantelpieces,” *Architect* [London] 15 (3 June 1876), 353.
Whatever the motivation, and whether the idea came from Whistler or his friend Godwin, Whistler approved of the label above the door of his house. In so doing, whether he knew the name of the principle or not, Whistler permitted the classical principle of *Decor* to be incorporated on the otherwise strikingly modern façade of the White House.

Given the examples covered above by Godwin, Crane, and Dresser, some of the most esteemed designers of the period, we can conclude that the prominence of the peacock in culinary history has largely been forgotten today. Further, Whistler’s use of the peacock in his famous Peacock Room may not have been based solely on Aesthetic principles or Asian art motifs. Whistler was perpetuating the tradition of *Decor* where the decorations of a room make reference to the room’s nature and function. In this tradition, the peacock is a beautiful yet appropriate image to adorn the walls of a dining room where fashionable Londoners would eat. Even though the peacock was not eaten much in the late nineteenth century, its image apparently still conjured up echoes of its culinary past. Additionally, it is documented that Whistler incorporated food into his aesthetic creations and that he made use of the Classical principle of *Decor* as well. After all, even when the peacock was eaten by the well-to-do in the Medieval period, it was beloved for its looks, not its flavor, just as it was in Whistler’s time.

**Sunflowers in the Hearth**

Beyond the issue of the dishes in the dining room, the tradition of the dark dining room, and the peacock as a symbol of feasting, there is a fourth and final instance of the principle of *Decor* in the Peacock Room: the sunflower andirons designed by Jeckyll for the hearth (*figure 5-5*). As seen in chapter three, through the work of figures such as Jeckyll and Elihu Vedder,
Aesthetic Movement designers had begun exploring the symbolic possibilities of the sunflower by the late 1860s. These explorations led naturally to the use of the sunflower in and around the hearth because of the flower’s associations with ancient heliotropic lore. Jeckyll was one of the first Aesthetic Movement figures to use the sunflower in such appropriate settings, thereby employing the principle of *Decor* or “rightness.” The original sunflower andirons were made of polished brass presumably since their golden coloring was more like the sun than cast iron (the other option available). Jeckyll was obviously familiar with the idea of appropriate design that makes reference to nature and function. His use of the ancient principle of *Decor* is made clear through three important commissions outlined below which were fulfilled prior to Jeckyll’s work at 49 Princes Gate.\(^{147}\)

First, six years before he began working on the Leyland dining room, Jeckyll was commissioned by the Reverend Arthur Coles Haviland to build the Lilley Rectory (demolished 1960s) (*figure 5-74a and b*), Lilley, Hertfordshire. On the rectory’s exterior, Jeckyll designed a series of terracotta reliefs which were situated in the parapets above each bay window and over the front porch. These small panels had specific designs that indicated the nature and function of individual rooms in the house. Only some of Jeckyll’s relief panels from Lilley Rectory survive (*figure 5-75*) but a written account by a former resident of the house describes those over the dining room as having grapes and sheaves of wheat, and those over the drawing room as having butterflies and flowers. In addition, the surviving example from the area above the entrance to the house (*figure 5-76*) lists not only the architect, patron and date of the construction, but also

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\(^{147}\) Jeckyll’s sunflower andirons were made by the firm of Barnard, Bishop, and Barnards beginning in 1876 after Jeckyll’s success with the Pavilion which was first displayed at the American Centennial that year in Philadelphia. The andirons took the form of the sunflowers in the Pavilion’s railing. The original sunflower andirons in the Peacock Room were sold in 1919 and the current andirons in the room at the Freer Gallery were acquired in 1983. For details on the sunflower andirons see Soros, *Jeckyll*, 227-230; and Merrill, *Peacock Room*, 35, 202.
the clerk of works and contractors. All of these relief designs are examples of *Decor* because they would have informed passersby and visitors about the different aspects of the house and its nature.\(^{148}\)

Second, Jeckyll also used Characteristic decoration in at least two other projects. As already noted, Jeckyll worked from 1865-76 on the restoration and redecoration of Heath Old Hall for Edward and Mary Green. In the Oak Parlour for this residence Jeckyll designed a set of candelabras in the form of fire-breathing dragons (*figure 5-77*). The “flame” that comes from the dragons’ mouths is made of metal and culminates in the wick of the candle, where the actual flame would be when lit. These were part of the overmantel, another connection to fire and the hearth, seen in a ca. 1890 photograph (*figure 5-78*). Even when the overmantel was removed by the Greens to a new location (the dining room at Ken Hill, Norfolk) the dragon candelabras were still attached, as a period photograph shows.

Third, within the same period, in 1871, Jeckyll also showed off his knowledge of *Decor* when he was commissioned to design the Holland Memorial Screen (*figures 5-79 and 5-79a*), Holland Park, London. This consisted of stone fountains with bronze panels and cast- and wrought-iron railings dedicated to the memory of the third Baron Holland. As period photographs show, the bronze panels were decorated with wave patterns and fish, alluding to the nature and function of the fountain and the flow of water.\(^{149}\)

Given Jeckyll’s repeated use of Characteristic design throughout his career, his golden sunflower andirons in the Peacock Room can be viewed as examples of *Decor*. They allude to

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\(^{148}\) For a description of Jeckyll’s work at the Lilley Rectory see Soros, *Jeckyll*, 93-94, 246. Additionally, there are extant terracotta panels from Lilley Rectory that show owls and suns. Perhaps these were appropriately placed on part of the rectory’s façade near a bedroom.

\(^{149}\) For information on the Heath Old Hall and Holland Memorial Screen commissions see Soros, *Jeckyll*, 171-179, 210-211.
the heliotropic heritage of the sunflower and its connections to the sun, heat, and fire. In the final work of his career, the Leyland dining room, he was achieving his goal of the light dining room, implementing the ideas he had had decades earlier. Jeckyll’s metalwork sunflowers, one recalls, originated in the railings of the pagoda-like garden pavilion he submitted to the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia (figure 5-80 and 5-80a). Jeckyll had begun working on the Pavilion in January 1876, before his work on the Leyland house. Here, the best-loved Aesthetic Movement flower decorated a garden pavilion. These sunflowers were just another example of Characteristic design since they were floral images decorating a garden structure.\footnote{For the details of Jeckyll’s work on the pavilion as well as the sunflower andirons see Soros, Jeckyll, 50, 195. Additionally, Linda Merrill interpreted Jeckyll’s original scheme for the Leyland dining room as a garden pavilion, so the flowers in that case could be Characteristic, relating to the garden theme, just like the railing sunflowers in Jeckyll’s pavilion; see Merrill, Peacock Room, 197.}

As has been shown throughout this dissertation, symbols can have multiple meanings. In the case of Jeckyll’s sunflowers, both meanings were Characteristic in their original context, just in different ways. After his success with the sunflower railings at the American Centennial, Jeckyll converted the sunflowers into andirons that were manufactured by the firm of Barnard, Bishop, and Barnards. Perhaps at this point Jeckyll viewed the sunflowers as somewhat of a signature piece, a calling card of the designer that made reference to one of his best known works. Sadly, it will never be known what other designs Jeckyll could have put forth after his work at No. 49 Princes Gate, and how those designs might have made use of the principle of Decor.

The sunflower has undeniable symbolic connections to fire and the hearth. Whistler could have savored those connections. The sunflower andirons were one of the few Jeckyll designs left untouched by Whistler in this dining room. It is possible that he left them in the hearth simply because their polished brass finish matched his new gold and blue color scheme.

On the other hand, given Whistler’s repeated use of Decor in his numerous dark dining rooms
and with the notion of the peacock as a symbol of feasting, perhaps Whistler understood the sunflower’s connections to the hearth. He may have found the andirons perfectly and beautifully suited to their position in the room.

Conclusion

The dishes that decorate the walls of the Peacock Room, the room’s overall darkness, the theme of an edible bird on its walls, and the radiant sunflowers in its hearth can all be considered as examples of the Vitruvian principle of Decor, or, in Victorian language, Character. Whistler is responsible for two of these components: the darkness of the room and the peacock motif. Whistler also chose to maintain the china on the walls and the effect of the brass andirons as originally designed by Jeckyll even after he had chosen to alter nearly every other aspect of the room. At the end of a tragically short career, Jeckyll was poised in the Leyland dining room to embark on one of his most interesting design phases. Within it was the realization of a light dining room scheme he had coveted for decades, even if that lightness survives today in form only. Simultaneously, Whistler was in the midst of a career phase where he preferred dark dining rooms and light drawing rooms. Whistler imposed that vision onto the Leyland dining room, obscuring Jeckyll’s plan, angering his patron, and converting the space into the Peacock Room. His peacocks were not only things of great beauty but they complemented the Characteristic darkness of this dining room through their culinary pedigree and, therefore, their connection to Decor.

Whistler cannot be credited with the creation of the other two potentially Characteristic aspects of the Peacock Room: the dishes filling the room and the sunflower andirons in the hearth. It is significant, though, that he did not alter Jeckyll’s sunflowers. It is possible that Jeckyll hoped that visitors in the room would grasp their clever location with all its symbolic
possibilities extending back to ancient heliotropic lore. Several prior designs, including a different yet still Characteristic use of the sunflower, demonstrate his capacity for the proper application of *Decor* in a variety of settings. The evidence presented here reveals that both Jeckyll and Whistler made use of *Decor, or Character*, in the Leyland dining room and throughout their careers, even if they had different ideas on it. The Peacock Room as a represented two competing visions in a venerable tradition.
This dissertation has uncovered three previously unrecognized innovations of Thomas Jeckyll in the famed Peacock Room. At the same time, the dissertation has admitted that there were certain instances where James McNeill Whistler may have chosen a more conventional path in the design of the room than previously acknowledged. The dissertation has also illuminated the often overlooked principle of Classical Decor, and shown how Jeckyll and Whistler instituted Decorous elements into the Peacock Room. To this end, four major points have been argued in the preceding pages.

First, the presence and meaning of the sunflower in the West has been explored to account for the flower’s popularity and absorption into ancient heliotropic lore. Popular nineteenth-century poetry promoted the devotion of the supposedly heliotropic sunflower. The verses of Thomas Moore apparently had a lasting impact and may have inspired Aesthetic Movement designers such as Thomas Jeckyll to use the image in their designs. Jeckyll was a major popularizer of the sunflower motif through the international success of his metalwork designs.

Second, this dissertation has demonstrated that the Peacock Room is only a distant descendant of the traditional European porcelain chamber, namely through the presence of its
massed array of Kangxi porcelain. It was a new idea to turn one of these rooms into a dining room, rather than to leave it as a simple showplace room as tradition would dictate. Further, the room lacks two of the three key features of a porcelain room: lacquer panels and large plate-glass mirrors. When Whistler gave the surfaces of this room a dark and, in certain places, a glossy appearance, he made the room more traditional, aligning it with the customary lacquer paneling of porcelain rooms. And lastly, Jeckyll’s shelving system in the Leyland dining room was without precedent in porcelain or other kinds of Western rooms, taking its cue from Japanese and Chinese sources.

Third, *Decor* in the dining room was revealed as an established pattern in eating rooms from the ancient world to the present day. *Decor*, an ancient principle wherein decoration relates to the nature and function of a building or room, is easy to understand and easy to incorporate into a room, whether one studies architectural theory or not. Notable examples by prominent, international leaders of nineteenth-century design showed that both before and after 1876 and 1877, the years of the Peacock Room’s creation, *Decor* was alive and well in many styles.

Fourth, *Decor* was shown to be present in the Peacock Room in four distinct ways: in the trappings of the table used to decorate a dining room, in the darkness of this dining room, in the use of a foodstuff, the peacock, to decorate the room, and in the supposedly heliotropic sunflowers placed in the hearth. Jeckyll and Whistler’s apparent discrepancy over what constituted an appropriate dining room, lightness or darkness, shows the variety of ways *Decor* can be interpreted. Though the two men held different views, the record of Characteristic designs throughout both of their careers tells us that this was a standard practice for them. Telltale examples by their contemporaries as well as period quotations bear out this thesis.
In the end, this dissertation has put forth a fresh perspective on a room that has been written and gossiped about for well over a century. Through the lens of the history of domestic interiors in the West, significant innovations by Thomas Jeckyll have been brought to light, and the meaning of specific elements in the Peacock Room has been elucidated. A thorough account of the persistence of Vitruvian Decor in Western interiors from ancient times to the present day has been provided in order to open up this new vision of the Peacock Room as one in a long line of Decorous dining rooms throughout history. Together, Thomas Jeckyll and James McNeill Whistler gave the world a sensational story in the Peacock Room but also an enduring and complex work of art that is only just beginning to be illuminated.
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Appendix A

*Decor* Quotations from Architectural Books: The “Do’s”

1st century BC

Vitruvius, *De Architectura*, Pierre Gros, ed., Antonio Corso and Elisa Romano, trans., 2 vols. (Torino, Italy: Giulio Einaudi, 1997), 1.2.1 (p. 26), 1.2.5-7 (p. 28-30):

Architectura autem constat ex ordinatione, quae graece taxis dicitur, et ex dispositione, hanc autem Graeci diathesis vocitant, et eurythmia et symmetria et decor et distributione, quae graece oikonomyia dicitur...Decor autem est emendatus operis aspectus probatis rebus compositi cum auctoritate. Is perficitur statione, quode graece thematismos dicitur, seu consuetudine aut natura. Statione, cum Iovi Fulguri et Caelo et Salo et Lunae aedificia sub diu hypaethra constituentur. Horum enim deorum et species et effectus in aperto mundo atque lucenti praesentes videmus. Minervae et Marti et Herculi aedes doricae fient. His enim diis propter virtutem sine deliciis aedificia constitui decet. Veneri Florae Proserpinae Fonti Lumphis corinthio genere constitutae aptas videbuntur habere proprietates, quod his diis propter teneritatem graciliora et florida foliisque et volutis ornata opera facta augere videbuntur lustum decorem. Iunoni Dianae Libero Patri ceterisque diis qui eadem sunt similitudine si aedes ionicae construerunt, habita erit ratio mediocritatis, quod et ab severo more doricorum et ab teneritate corinthiorum temperabitur earum institution proprietatis. Ad consuetudinem autem decor sic exprimitur, cum aedificiis interioribus magnificis item vestibula convenientia et elegantia erunt facta. Si enim interiora prospectus habuerint elegantes, auditus autem humiles et inhonestos, non erunt cum decore. Item si doricis epistyliis in coronis denticuli sculpentur aut pulvinatis capitulis et ionicis epistyliis exprimentur triglyphi, translatis ex alia ratione proprietatibus in aliud genus opera offendetur aspectus, alis ante ordinis consuetudinibus institutis. Naturalis autem decor sic erit, si primum omnibus templis saluberrimae regiones aquarumque fontes in his locis idonei eligentur in quibus fana constituantur, deinde maxime Aescuplapio Saluti, quorum deorum plurimi medicinis aegri curare videntur. Cum enim ex pestilenti in salubribus aquarum usus subministrabantur, celeries convalescent. Ita efficietur uti ex natura loci maiores auctasque cum dignitate divinitas excipiat opiniones. Item naturae decor erit, si cubiculis et bibliothecis ab oriente lumina capiuntur, balineis et hibernaculis ab occidente hiberno, pinacotheccis et quibus
certis luminibus opus est partibus a septentrione, quod ea caeli regio neque exclaratur neque obscuratur solis cursu sed est certa inmutabilis die perpetuo.


Columnarum autem proportiones et symmetriae non erunt isdem rationibus quibus in aedibus sacris scripsi. Aliam enim in deorum templis debent habere gravitatem, aliam in porticibus et ceteris operibus subtilitatem.


Nunc explicabimus quibus proprietatibus genera aedificiorum ad usum et caeli regiones acte debant spectare. Hiberna triclinia et balnearia uti occidentem hibernum spectent, ideo quod vespertino lumine opus est uti, praeterea quod etiam sol occidens adversus habens splendorem, calorem remittens efficit vespertino tempore regionem tepidiorem. Cubica et bibliothecae ad orientem spectare debent, usus enim matutinum postulat lumen, item in bibliothecis libri non putrescent. Nam quaeque ad meridiem et occidentem spectant, a tineis et umore libri vitiantur, quod venti umidi advenentes procreant eas et alunt infinitensque umidos spiritus pallore volumina corrupunt.

Triclinia verna et autumnalia ad orientem. Cum enim praetenta luminibus adversus solis impetus progresdiens ad occidentem efficit ea temperate ad id tempus quo opus solitum est uti. Aestiva ad septentrionem quod ea region non ut reliquae per solstitium propter calorem efficiunt austuosae, ea quod est avera a solis cursu semper refrigerate et salubritatem et voluptatem in usu praestat. Non minus pinacothecae et plumariorum textrina pictorumque officinae, uti colores eorum in opere propter constantiam luminis inmutata permaneant qualitate.


Igitur his qui communi sunt fortuna, non necessaria magnifica vestibula nex tabulina neque atria, quod in aliiis official praestant ambiendo quae ab aliis ambiuntur. Qui autem fructibus rusticis serviunt, in eorum vestibulis stabula tabernae, in aedibus cryptae horrea apothecae ceteraque quae ad fructus servandos magis quam ad elegantiae decorum possunt esse, ita sunt facienda. Item feneratoribus et publicinis commodiora et speciosiora et ab insidiis tuta, forensibus autem et desertis elegantiora at spatiiosiora ad conventos excipiundos, nobilibus vero qui honores magistratusque gerundo praestare debent officia civibus, faciunda sunt vestibula regalia alta, atria et peristylia amplitissima, silvae ambulationesque laxiores ad decorem maiestatis perfectae, praeterea bibliothecas pinacothecas basilicas non dissimili modo quam publicorum operum magnificentia comparatas, quod in domibus eorum saepius et publica consilia et privata iudicia arbitriaque conficiuntur. Ergo si his rationibus ad singulorum generum personas, uti in libro primo de decore est scriptum, ita disposita erunt aedificia, non erit quod reprehendatur. Habeunt enim ad omnes res commodas et emendates explicationes. Earum autem rerum non solum erunt in urbe atria proxima Ianuis solent esse, ruri ab pseudourbanis statim peristyla, deinde tunc atria habentia circum porticus pavimenta spectantes ad palaestras et ambulationes.
Quoad portui urbanas rationes aedificiorum summatim perscribere, proposui, nunc rusticorum expeditionum ut sint ad usum commodae quibusque rationibus conlocare oporteat eas dicam.

1st century  Marcus Vitruvius Pollio, *Ten Books on Architecture*, Ingrid D. Rowland, trans., BC with commentary and illustrations by Thomas Noble Howe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 1.2.1, 1.2.5-7:

Architecture consists of ordering, which is called *taxis* in Greek, and of design—the Greeks call this *diathesis*—and shapeliness and symmetry and correctness [Decor] and allocation, which is called *oikonomia* in Greek….Next, correctness (decor) is the refined appearance of a project that has been composed of proven elements and with authority. It is achieved with respect to function, which is called *thematismos* in Greek, or tradition, or nature. Correctness of function occurs when temples dedicated to Jupiter the Thunderer and Heaver or the Sun and Moon are made open-air shrines, beneath their patron deity, because we see the appearance and effect of these divinities in the light of the outdoor world. Temples of Minerva, Mars, and Hercules will be Doric, because temples for these gods, on account of their courage in battle, should be set up without a trace of embellishment. Temples done in the Corinthian style for Venus, Proserpina, or the Fountain Spirits (nymphs) are those that will seem to possess the most fitting qualities, because, given the delicacy of these goddesses, the works executed in their honor seem best to augment a suitable quality of correctness when they are made more slender, ornamental, and are decorated with leaves and volutes. If temples are constructed in the Ionic style for Juno, Diana, Father Liber, and other gods of this type, the principle of the “mean” will apply, because their particular disposition will strike a balance between the stern lines of the Doric and the delicacy of the Corinthian.


The proportions and symmetries of the columns do not follow the same principles as I described for temples, for these dimensions should have one type of dignity in the sacred enclosures of the gods, and a different, lighter appearance in porticoes and other projects of the sort.


Orientation of Rooms. Now we shall explain where types of buildings with particular characteristics should face as befits their use and the regions of the sky. Winter dining rooms and baths should face the setting winter sun, both because they should make use of the evening light and also because the setting sun, shining full on and yielding up heat, makes this region warmer at evening time. Cubicula and libraries should face east, for the morning light makes them serviceable, and furthermore, the books in libraries will rot. For in libraries that face south and west, the books are spoiled by worms and moisture, as the oncoming moist winds give rise to such things and nurture them, while as they pour forth their moist breath they corrupt the scrolls by discoloring them [with mold].
Spring dining rooms and autumn dining rooms should face east. Extended in this direction, with their windows facing the force of the sun, this, as it proceeds westward, moderates their temperature in the season when one is accustomed to use them. Summer dining rooms should face north because that region of the heavens does not, like the rest, become boiling hot in the heat of the solstice. Instead, because it is turned away from the course of the sun, it is always cool and when in use, a dining room so oriented affords good health and pleasure. The same orientation is appropriate for picture galleries and the workshops of brocaders, embroiderers, and painters, so that the colors in their work, thanks to the consistency of the light, will not change their quality.


…for those of moderate income, magnificent vestibules, tablina, and atria are unnecessary, because they perform their duties by making the rounds visiting others, rather than having others make the rounds visiting them. Those who deal in farm products have stables and sheds in their entrance courts, and in their homes should have installed crypts, granaries, storerooms, and other furnishings that have more to do with strong provisions than with maintaining an elegant correctness. Likewise, moneylenders and tax collectors public rooms should be more commodious, better looking, and well secured, but for lawyers and orators they should be more elegant, and spacious enough to accommodate meetings. For the most prominent citizens…vestibules should be constructed that are lofty and lordly, the atria and peristyles at their most spacious, lush gardens and broad walkways refined as properly befits their dignity….

ca. 1450 Leon Battista Alberti, *De re aedificatoria* (Florentiae: accuratissime impressum opera Magistri Nicolai Laurentii Alamani, 1485), Liber Quintus (no page number):

Magnus est hominum in familia et rerum numerus quem non eque i urbe atq e in argo ad arbitrium colloces. Quid enim urbanis aedificationibus euenit ut uicinus partes stillicidium publica area uia et eiusmo li plerae omnia impediut / quo minus ipse tibi satisfacias id in rusticinis non euenit liberiora illic praepedita istic sunt omnia: ergo cum aliis plerisque rationibus / tum etiam hac iuuet sic rem distinguere / ut alia urbana alia rusticana esse: privatis dicam aedificia I utrisque aliud tenuiores aliud opulentiores cives exigent…

ca. 1450 Leon Battista Alberti, *De re aedificatoria* (Florentiae: accuratissime impressum opera Magistri Nicolai Laurentii Alamani, 1485), Liber Nonus (no page number):

Itaqe in privatis ornamentis severissime cotinebit sese: tame in plerisque liberiores utet uia. Na coluna quidem siquid forte toto erit corpore tenuior / aut uetere sortassis no nihil habeat informe aut depravatu. Quin quod publicis opibus no cocedit / ut a gravitate et cosultissima lineameros lege paulo aberretur: id in istis etia ad iucuditate interdu facit. Et q illud cadebat puenuste quod festivissimi assuever ad sores triclinios pro lateribus hostii uastas macipioru statuas supliminare in caput sustentates appagere: et columnas in porticibus praesertim hortoru ponere: quae aut arboru truncos nodis desectis: aut sasces loro cocictos referret: aut quae nolubiles et palmatae et
aspae frondibus et aviculis rivulisqe resertae essent. Aut et ubi robustissimu esse opus
voluissent: quadrandula colunam / cui dimidia rotunda hinc: atq© altera hinc dimidia pmineret.
Tum et pro capitalisa aut siscellas pendentibus racemis frectibusqe plenas: aut revirente
sumiscaulibus palma: aut aguui globos variis plexibus conodatos: aut alis plaudetes aqlas: aut
gorgoneos vultus colubris iter se rixabeth ipoeneret: et quae similia logu esset peque. Sed bis
quoad poterit artisex dignissimas ptiu formas productis arte lineaet at angulos finibus tuebit: et
volvisse no fraudare opus deceit mebros concinnitate: sed visentes loco ludere venusto / vel
potius oblectare inveti lepiditate videatur. Cuq triclinios et litonum et coceptaculos alia
popularia sint: alia occultusoria et prius itima: i illis serviet splendori soresi cu publica urbis popa
nequaq odiosa. In bis aut recoditoribus paulo sublasciure ad arbitriu licebit.

ca. 1450 Leon Battista Alberti, De re aedificatoria (Florentiae: accuratissime impressum
opera Magistri Nicolai Laurentii Alamani, 1485), Liber Nonus (no page number):

Sed cu privatos aediu aliae sint urbanae aliae no urbanae: quod cuiq© ornamenti codicat
consideremus inter aedea urbanas et villa praeter illa quae supioribus libris diximus / hoc i terest
/ q urbanas ornameta prae illis multo sapere gravitatem oportet: villis aut oes festivitatis
amoenitatisqe illece / brae cecedent.

ca. 1450 Leon Battista Alberti, On the Art of Building in Ten Books, translated by Joseph
Rykwert, Neil Leach, and Robert Tavernor (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and

In urban building there are restrictions such as party walls, dripping-gutters, public ground, rights
of way, and so on, to prevent one’s achieving a satisfactory result. In the countryside this does
not happen; here everything is more open, whereas the city is restrictive. This, then, is one of the
many reasons why private buildings in the city should be distinguished from those in the country.
And with either, the poor will have different requirements from those of the wealthy…

ca. 1450 Leon Battista Alberti, On the Art of Building in Ten Books, translated by Joseph
Rykwert, Neil Leach, and Robert Tavernor (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and

The severest restraint is called for, in the ornament of private buildings, therefore, although a
certain license is often possible…sometimes it may be more delightful to stray a little from the
dignity and calculated rules of lineaments, which would not be permitted in public works. How
charming was the practice of those more fanciful architects…of making columns, especially for
garden porticoes, that resembled tree trunks,… or…for capitals they would set up baskets laden
with hanging bunches of grapes and fruits, or palms sending off new shoots from the tops of their
stems, or a mass of snakes tangled in various knots,…or a gorgon’s head full of wrestling
snakes… the artist must, as far as he is able, guard its part in its noble form by skillfully
maintaining the lines and angles, as if he would not wish to cheat the work of the appropriate
concinnitas of its members, yet seeming to entertain the viewer with a charming trick—or, better
still, to please him by the wit of his invention. And since dining rooms, corridors, and chambers
may be either public or enclosed and thoroughly private, the former should combine the splendor
of the forum with civic pomp, provided it is not too offensive, but in more private examples a
degree of license may be taken according to taste.

ca. 1450 Leon Battista Alberti, On the Art of Building in Ten Books, translated by Joseph
Rykwert, Neil Leach, and Robert Tavernor (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and

Since some private houses are in the city and others are outside, let us consider what ornament is
appropriate in either case. Aside from the differences mentioned in earlier books, there is a
further difference between a town house and a villa: the ornament to a town house ought to be far
more sober in character, whereas in a villa the allures of license and delight are allowed.

1537-1544 Sebastiano Serlio, Sebastiano Serlio on Architecture, vol. 1, Vaughan Hart and
Peter Hicks, trans. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), 338
(4.7, p. 167r originally):

Since…Ionic work was taken from the form of a matron, it is also suitable when you…make a
fireplace in such an Order to imitate this ‘type’…to remain within the terms of the Order while
preserving decorum.

1537-1544 Sebastiano Serlio, Sebastiano Serlio on Architecture, vol. 1, Vaughan Hart and
Peter Hicks, trans. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), 340
(4.8, p. 169r originally):

The Corinthian capital was derived from a Corinthian maid. I am not going to expend any
further effort telling the story of the capital’s origin because Vitruvius does it in the first chapter
of his fourth book. I would certainly say that if you have to build a sacred temple in this Order,
you should dedicate it to the Mother of our Saviour Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary, who was not
only a virgin before, but was a virgin during and also after giving birth. In the same way this
Order, having such a character, is suitable for all those Saints, male and female, who led a
virginal life. Also monasteries, and convents which cloister maidens dedicated to divine
worship, should be built in this style. If, on the other hand, houses—public or private—and
tombs are to be for people of upright and chaste lives, this type of ornament could be used to
preserve decorum.

ca. 1540- Benvenuto Cellini, The Life of Benvenuto Cellini Written by Himself, John

While this work was going forward, I set aside certain hours of day for the salt-cellar, and certain
others for the Jupiter. There were more men engaged upon the former than I had at my disposal
for the latter, so the salt-cellar was by this time completely finished…it was oval in form,…
wrought of solid gold. While speaking of the model, I said before how I had represented Sea and
Earth, seated, with their legs interlaced, as we observe in the case of firths and promontories; this
attitude was therefore metaphorically appropriate. The Sea carried a trident in his right hand,
and in his left I put a ship of delicate workmanship to hold the salt. Below him were his four
sea-horses, fashioned like our horses from the head to the front hoofs; all the rest of their body,
from the middle backwards, resembled a fish, and the tails of these creatures were agreeably interwoven. Above this group the Sea sat throned in an attitude of pride and dignity; around him were many kinds of fishes and other creatures of the ocean. The water was represented with its waves, and enameled in the appropriate color. I had portrayed Earth under the form of a very handsome woman, holding her horn of plenty, entirely nude like the male figure; in her left hand I placed a little temple of Ionic architecture, most delicately wrought, which was meant to contain the pepper. Beneath her were the handsomest living creatures which the earth produces; and the rocks were partly enameled, partly left in gold…


Between these… walls [at the Palazzo del Te, Matua, Italy] is the fireplace, and when a fire is lighted the [painted] giants [on the walls] seem to be burning. Pluto in his car is drawn by shriveled horses, and flees to the center accompanied by the Furies, and thus Giulio [Romano] decorated the chimneypiece most beautifully with the idea of fire. To make the work more terrible, he represented huge giants struck in various ways by the lightning and thunderbolts, falling to earth, some killed, some wounded, and some crushed beneath mountains and ruins.


…for Messer Girolamo, organist of Milan Cathedral, and his close friend, [Giulio] Romano painted in fresco over a chimney-piece a Vulcan who is working his bellows with one hand and holding with a pair of tongs in the other the iron tip of an arrow which he is forging, while Venus is tempering in a vessel those already made, and putting them in Cupid’s quiver; this is one of the loveliest works that Giulio ever painted, and there is little else to be seen from his hand in fresco.


…for Messer Bindo Altoviti [Jacopo Sansovino] had constructed a very costly chimney-piece,….carved by Benedetto da Rovezzano [for Altoviti’s house in Florence]…Messer Altoviti also had executed by Sansovino himself a scene of little figures to go in the frieze of the chimney-piece, with Vulcan and other Gods, which was a very rare work.

1563 John Shute, *The First and Chief Groundes of Architecture* (1563; repr., London: Gregg Press, 1965), 2v, 3v:

These pillers, partelye for their beautye and comlines, partlye for their fortitude and strength, the writers of them, have resembled and lynked to certain feyned Goddes and Goddesses. As namely Tucana, is applied unto Atlas, the kynge of Mauritania: Dorica, unto Hercules and the god Mars: Ionica to Diana, or Appollo. Corinthia unto Vesta or some lyke virgin, and Composita, to Pandora, of Hesiodus, the which he faineth to have ben endewed wyth diners of
those graces… [Vitruvius has shown] what ground plottes stande in the moste fertill and frutefull places…your principall chambers of rest and libraries, and such other like must receyve their lightes from the East, for that the sone by natural heate at his rising draweth to him all corupte humors and evill vapors of the earth…with winter Chambers and parlors they shal receive light from the west. For that side is defendid from the south wincedes which are grevous and contagious…Your study places, were you wold write, draw or devise, or the places wher your Sellers shuld be cast, ought to receive their light from the northe, by cause in that parte are the lights, which are stedfast…

1570 Andrea Palladio, *Quattro Libri dell’Architettura: Reproduzione in Fac-Simile* (Milan: Ulrico Hoepli Editore, 1990), 2.1-2 (pp. 3-4):

Del Decoro, O’ Convenienza, che si deve osservare nelle fabriche private. Cap. Primo. Ho esposto nel passato libro tutte quelle cose, che mi sono parse piu degne di consideratione per la fabrica de gli edificij publici, & delle case private, onde l’opera riesca bella, gratiosa, e perpertua: & ho detto ancho, quanto alle case private, alcune cose pertinenti alla commodità, alla quale principalmente farà qust’altro libro indirizzato. E perche commoda si deverà dire quella casa, laquelle sarà conveniente alla qualità di chi l’haverà ad habitare, e le sue parti corrisponderanno al tutto, e fra se stesse. Però doverà l’Architetto sopra l’tutto avertire, che (come dice Vitruvio nel primo, e sesto libro) a’Gentil’huomini grandi, e mastimamente di Republica si richiederanno case con loggie, e sale spatiose, & ornate: acciò che in tai luoghi si possano trattenere con piacere quelli, che aspettaranno il padrone per salutarlo, ò pregarlo di qualche aiuto, e favore: Et a’Gentil’huomini minori si converranno ancho fabriche minori, di minore spesa, e di manco adornamenti. A’Causidici, & Avocati si douerà medesimamente fabricare, che nelle lor case vi siano luoghi belli da passeggire, & adorni: accioche i cliente vi dimorino senza loro noia. Le case de’ mercatanti haverrano i luoghi, ove si ripongano le mercantie, rivolti à Settentrione, & in maniera disposti, che i padroni non habbiano a temere de i ladri. Si serberà anco il Decoro quanto all’opera, se le parti risponderanno al tutto, onde ne gli edificij grandij; vi siano membri grandi; ne’ piccoli, piccoli, e ne i mediocri, medici: che brutta cosa certo sarebbe, e discóvenevole, che in una fabrica molto grande sossero sale, e stanze picciole: e per lo contrario in una picciola sossero due, o tre stanze, che occupassero il tutto. Si deverà dunque (come ho detto) per quanto si possa, haver risguardo, & a quelli, che vogliono fabricare, e non tanto à quello, che esti possano, quanto di che qualità fabrica loro stia bene: e poi che si haverà eletto; si disporranno quelli adornamenti, che pareranno convenire: Ma spesse volte fa bisogno all’Architetto accommodarsi piu alla volontà di coloro, che spendono, che a quello, che si devrebbe osservare.

Del Compartimento Delle stanze, & d’altri luoghi. Cap. II. …si devera haver molta cura, non solo circa le parti prinicipali, come sono loggie, sale, cortili, stanze magnifiche, & scale ampie, lucide, e facili à salire; ma ancora che le piu picciole, brute parti siano in luoghi accómoda ti per servigio delle maggiore e piu degne: Percioche si come nel corpo humano solo alcune parti nobili, e belle, & alcune più tosto ignobili, e brute, che altramente, e veggiamo nondimeno che quelle hanno di queste grandissimo bisogno, ne senza loro potrebbono stare; così ancho nelle fabriche deono essere alcune parti riguardi evoli, & honorate, & alcune meno eleganti: senza lequali però le sudette non potrebbono restar libere, & così perderebbono in parte della lor
dignità, & bellezza. Ma si come Iddio Benedetto ha ordinati questi membri nostri, che i più belli siano in luoghi più estesi ad effer veduti, & i meno honesti in luoghi nascosti; così ancor noi nel fabricare; collocheremo le parti principali, e riguardevoli in luoghi scoperti, e le men belle in luoghi più ascossi a gli occhi nostri che sia possibile: perché in quelle si riporranno tutte le brutezze della casa, e tutte quelle cose, che potessero dare impaccio, & in parte rendere brutte le parti più belle. Però lodo che nella più bassa parte della fabrica, la quale io faccio alquanto sotterra; siano disposte le cantine, i magazzini da legne, le dispense, le cucine, i tinelli, i luoghi a liscia, o bucata, i fornì, e gli altri simili, che all'uso quotidiano sono necessari: dal che si cavano due commodità: l'una che la parte di sopra resta tutta libera, e l'altra, che non meno importa; è, che detto ordine di sopra divien sano per habitarui, essendo il suo pavimento Iontano dall'humido della terra: oltre che alzandosi; ha più bella gratia ad esser veduto, & al veder fuori. Si avvertirà poi nel resto della fabrica, che vi siano stáze grandi, mediocri, e picciole: e tutte l'una à cáto a l'altra, onde possano scambievolemente servirsi. Le picciole si amezeranno per cavarne camerini, ove si ripongano gli studioli, ò le librarie, gli arnesi da cavalcare, & altri inuogli, de' quali ogni giorno habbiamo dibisogno, e nó sta bene che stiano nelle camere, dove si dorme, mangia, e si rievono i forestieri. Appartiene ancho alla cómodità, che le stanze per la estate siano ampie, e spaciose, e rivolte à Settentrione; e quelle per lo inverno à Meriggie, e Ponente, e siano più tosto picciole che altramemte: percioche nella estate noi cerchiamo l'ombre, & i venti, e nell'inverno i Soli, & le picciole stanze più facilmente si scalderanno che le grandi. Ma quelle, delle quali vorremo servirci Primavera, e l’Autunno; saranno volte all’Oriéte, e riguarderanno sopra giardini, e verdure. A questa medesima parte faranno anco gli studij, ò librarie: perché la mattina più che d’altro tempo si adoperano. Ma le stanze grandi con le mediocri, e queste con le picciole deono essere in maniera cópartite, che (come ho detto altrove) una parte della fabrica corrisponda all’altra, e così tutto il corpo dell’edificio habbia in se una certa còvenienza di mé bri, che lo rédà tutto bello, e gratioso. Ma perché nelle città quasi sempre, ò i muri de’vicini, o le strade, e le pizze publiche assegnano certi, terminioltra iquali non si può l’Architetto estédere; fa dibi sogno accómodarsi secondo l’occasione de’ siti: alche daranno gran lume (se non m’inganno) le pian te, e gli alzati che seguono: isequali serviranno per esempio delle cose dette ancho nel passato libro.

1570 Andrea Palladio, Quattro Libri dell’Architettura: Reproduzione in Fac-Simile (Milan: Ulrico Hoepli Editore, 1990), 3.17 (p. 32):

…Oltra di ciò perché (come egli dice al cap. VII, del primo Libro) usaron gli antichi di fare appresso le piazze i Tempij consacrati à Mercurio, & à Iside, come à Dei prefidenti à i negotij, & alle mercantie…

1570 Andrea Palladio, Quattro Libri dell’Architettura: Reproduzione in Fac-Simile (Milan: Ulrico Hoepli Editore, 1990), 4.1 (p. 5):

…Dico adunque, che gli antichi Toscani ordinarono che à Venere, à Marte, & à Vulcano, si facessero i Tempij fuori della Città, come à quelli, che movessero gl’ànim & alle lascivie, alle guerre, & à gli incendij; & nella Città à quelli, che alla Pudicitia, alla Pacem & alle buone arti erano preposti: & che à quelli Dei, nella tutella de quali specialmente fosse posta la Città; & à Giove, & à Giunone, & a Minerva iquali tenevano che sossero anche essi difensori delle Città, si fabricassero Tempij in luoghi altissimi, nel mezo della terra, e nella rocca. Et à Pallade, à
Mercurio, & Iside, perche à gli artefici, & alle mercantie erano presidenti; edificarono i Tempij vicino alle Piazze, & alcuna volta sopra le Piazze istesse; ad Apolline, & à Bacco presso al Theatro: ad Hercole, vicino al Circo, & allo Amfitheatro. Ad Esculapio, alla Salute, & a quelli Iddij, per le medecine de’quali credevano che molti huomini si risanassero, fabricarono in luoghi sommamente sani, & vicino ad acque salubri, accioche co’l venire dall’aere cattivo, e pestilente al buono, & sano, & co’l bere di quelle acque, gli infermi più presto, e con minor difficultà si sanassero, onde si accrescesse, il zelo della religione. E così al rimanente de gli altri Dei pensarono convenirsi il ritrovar i luoghi da fabricar i lor Tempij, secondo le proprietà, che a quelli attribuirono, & alle maniere de sacrificij loro. Ma noi, che siamo per la gratia special di Dio da quelle tenebre liberati, havendo lasciata la lor vana, e falsa superstitione; eleggeremo quei siti per i Tempij, che saranno nella più nobile, & più celebre parte della Città, lontani da’luoghi dishonesti, e ornate piazze, nellequali molte strade mettano capo; onde ogni parte del Tempio possa esser veduta con sua dignità, & arrechi divotione, & meraviglia à chiunque lo veda e rimiri.

1570 Andrea Palladio, Quattro Libri dell’Architettura: Reproduzione in Fac-Simile (Milan: Ulrico Hoepli Editore, 1990), 4.2 (p. 6):

Hebbero gli Antichi riguardo à quello, che si convenisse à ciascuno de’loro Dei non solo nell’eleggere I luoghi, ne’quali si dovessero fabricare i Tempij, come è stato detto di sopra, ma ancho nell’elegger la forma: ande al Sole, & alla Luna, perche continuuamente intorno al Mondo si girano, & con questo lor girare procuono gli effetto à ciascuno manifesti, fecero I Tempij di forma ritonda: ò al meno che alla rotondità si avicinarono, & consi ancho à Vesta, laqual dissero Dea della Terra; ilquale Elemento sappiamo ch’è tondo. A’Giove, come patrone dell’Aere, & del Cielo, fecero i Tempij scoperti nel mezzo co’portici intorno, come dirò più di sotto. Ne gli ornamenti ancora hebbero grandistima consideration à qual Dio fabricassero; per la qual cosa à Minerva, à Marte, & ad Hercole fe cero i Tempij di opera Dorica: percioche à tali Dei dicevano convenirsi per la militia, della qua le erano fatti prefidenti, le fabriche senza delicatezze, e tenerezze. Ma à Venere, à Flora, al le Muse, & alle Ninfe, & alle più delicate Dee, dissero doversi fare i Tempij, che alla florita, e tenera età Virginale si consacessero, onde à quelli diedero l’opra Corinthis: parendo loro, che l’opere sottili, e floride, ornate di foglie, & di volute si convenissero à tale età. Ma à Giunone, à Diana, à Bacco, & ad altri Dei, à iquali ne la gravità de’primi, ne la delicatezza de’secondi, pareva che si convenisse; attribuirono l’opere Ioniche; le quali tra le Doriche, e le Corinthie tengono il luogo di mezo. Così leggiamo che gli Antichi nell’edificare i Tempij si ingegnarono di servare il Decoro, nel quale consiste una bellissima parte dell’Architettura. E però ancora noi, che non habbiamo i Dei falsi, per servare il Decoro circa la forma de’Tempij, eleggeremo la più perfetta, & più eccellente; e conciosiache la Ritonda sia tale, perchè sola tra tutte le figure è semplice, uniforme, eguale, forte, e capace, faremo i Tempij ritondi; à quali si conviene massimamente questa figura, perchè essendo essa da un solo termine rinchiusa, nel quale non si può ne principio, ne fine trovare, ne l’uno dall’altro distinguere; & havendo le sue parti simili tra di loro, e che tutte participano della figura del tutto; e finalmente ritrovandosi in ogni sua parte l’estremito egualmente lontano dal mezo; è attissima a dimostrare la Unità, la infinita Essenza, la Uniformità, & la Giustitia di DIO.
Chapter 1. On the Decorum or Suitability that Must be Maintained in Private Buildings:
One must describe as suitable a house which will be appropriate to the status of the person who will have to live in it and of which the parts will correspond to the whole and to each other. But above all the architect must observe that (as Vitruvius says in Books I and VI), for great men and especially those in public office, houses with loggias and spacious, ornate halls will be required, so that those waiting to greet the master of the house or to ask him for some help or a favor can spend their time pleasantly in such spaces; similarly, smaller buildings of lesser expense and ornament will be appropriate for men of lower status. One must build in the same way for judges and lawyers so that in their houses there are beautiful and ornate areas to walk about in and their clients can pass the time without tedium. Merchants’ houses should have places for storing their good which face north and are so arranged that the owners have no fear of burglars. A building will also have decorum if the parts correspond to the whole, so that in large buildings there will be large members, and in small ones, small, and in medium-sized ones, medium; it would certainly be displeasing and inappropriate if the halls and rooms in a very large building were small and, conversely, if two or three rooms in a small building were to occupy all of it. Therefore, as far as possible one must (as I have said) pay particular attention to those who want to build, not so much for what they can afford as for the type of building that would suit them; then, when the choice has been made, the parts should be so arranged that they match the whole and each other, and the appropriate decoration applied; but the architect is frequently obliged to accommodate himself to the wishes of those who are paying rather than attending to what he should.

Chapter 2. On the Planning of Rooms and Other Places:….one must take great care not only with the most important elements, such as loggias, halls, courtyards, magnificent rooms, and large staircases, which should be well lit and easy to ascend, but also so that the smallest and ugliest parts will be in places that are subordinate to those which are larger and more prestigious. The reason is that since there are some noble and beautiful parts of the human body and some that are less pleasant and agreeable than otherwise, we can nevertheless see that the former have an absolute dependence on the latter and cannot exist without them; similarly too in buildings there must be some parts that are admirable and praiseworthy and others which are less elegant, without which, however, the former could not remain independent and thus would, in part, lose their dignity and beauty. But, just as our blessed God has arranged our own members so that the most beautiful are in positions most exposed to view and the more unpleasant are hidden, we too when building should place the most important and prestigious parts in full view and the less beautiful in locations concealed as far from our eyes as possible, because all the unpleasant things of the house are placed in them as well as all those that could be a nuisance and tend to make the most beautiful parts ugly. So I am in favor of putting the cellars, the wood stores, the pantries, the kitchens, the smaller dining rooms, the laundries, the ovens, and the other things essential for daily life in the lowest part of the building, which I put partly underground: two advantages arise from this; one is that the upper part of the house remains entirely unencumbered and the other, which is no less important, is that the story above becomes healthy to live in since its floor is distanced from the dampness of the earth; moreover, raising the upper part up has the
added charm that it can be seen from a distance and one has views from it. Then one will note that in the rest of the building there should be large, medium-sized, and small rooms, one side by side with the next, so that they can be mutually useful. The small ones should be divided up to create even smaller rooms where studies or libraries could be located, as well as riding equipment and other tackle which we need every day and which would be awkward to put in the rooms where one sleeps, eats, or receive guests. It would also contribute to comfort if the summer rooms were large and spacious and oriented to the north, and those for the winter to the south and west and were small rather than otherwise, because in the summer we seek the shade and breezes, and in the winter, the sun, and smaller rooms get warmer more readily than large ones. But those we would want to use in the spring and autumn will be oriented to the east and look out over gardens and greenery. Studies and libraries should be in the same part of the house because they are used in the morning more than at any other time. But the large rooms should be distributed with the medium-sized, and the latter with the small rooms in such a way that (as I have said elsewhere) one part of the building corresponds to the other so that the whole body of the building would have an inherently suitable distribution of its members, making the whole beautiful and graceful. But because in cities neighbors’ walls, the streets, or public squares nearly always predetermine certain boundaries over which the architect cannot trespass, he must abide by the constraints of the sites, on which the plans and elevations that follow will shed a great deal of light (unless I am much mistaken) and also serve as examples of what I have said in the previous book.


…the ancients were accustomed to build temples consecrated to Mercury and Isis next to [public] squares, since they were the presiding deities of business and trade…


…the ancient Tuscans arranged that temples dedicated to Venus, Mars, and Vulcan, that is, the gods who incited their souls to lust, war, and arson, should be built outside the city; similarly they built temples dedicated to the gods who presided over chastity, peace, and practical arts inside the city; and for those gods who protected the city particularly—Jove, Juno, and Minerva—whom they also believed were defenders of cities, they built temples in very high places, in the middle of the city and in the fortress. They built temples for Pallas, Mercury, and Isis close to and sometimes on squares themselves because they presided over craftsmen and merchants; those to Apollo and Bacchus next to the theater and those to Hercules near the circus and amphitheater. For Asclepius, Salus, and those gods of medicine by whom it was believed many were healed, they built temples in locations which were particularly healthy and close to pure waters, so that the sick, coming from foul and contagious air to fresh and healthy air and drinking those waters, would recuperate more quickly and with much less difficulty, so that religious fervor increased. Similarly they thought it appropriate to find places to build temples for the other gods according to the characteristics that they attributed to them and the form of
sacrifices made for them. But we who, by God’s special grace, are free of that darkness and have deserted their foolish and false superstitions, should choose sites for temples in the most dignified and prestigious part of the city, far away from unsavory areas and on beautiful and ornate squares where many streets end, so that every part of the temple can be seen in all its majesty…


The ancients were very concerned about what was appropriate for each of their deities, not only when choosing the sites where they would have to build temples, as I have said above, but also when selecting the shape; thus for the Sun and Moon they built temples of round form, or at least that were almost so, because they endlessly revolve around the world and with their revolutions produce effects obvious to all; so too for Vesta, said to be the goddess of the Earth, which we know is a circular body. For Jupiter, patron of the air and heaven, they built temples that were unroofed in the middle with porticoes around them, as I will say further on. So too, when it came to ornaments, they were very careful about which deity they were building for; so that for Minerva, Mars, and Hercules they made Doric temples, because they said that buildings without refinement and delicacy were appropriate to soldiers, whose patron deities they were. But for Venus, Flora, the Muses, the nymphs, and other more gentle goddesses, they said that it was essential to build temples that corresponded to the blooming and tender age of virginity, so they gave them Corinthian since it seemed to them that intricate and ornate work, decorated with flowers and volutes, would be suitable for that age. But for Juno, Diana, Bacchus, and the other gods, for whom neither the gravity of the former nor the delicacy of the latter was suitable, they assigned Ionic, which is midway between Doric and Corinthian.

So we read that when building temples the ancients used every ingenuity to maintain decorum, which is one of the most beautiful aspects of architecture. Therefore, to maintain decorum in the shapes of our temples, we too, who have no false gods, should choose the most perfect and excellent one; and because the circular form would be just that, as it alone amongst all the plans is simple, uniform, equal, strong, and capacious, let us build temples circular; this form is far and away the most appropriate for them, because it is enclosed by only one boundary in which the beginning and end, which are indistinguishable, cannot be found, and since its parts are identical to each other, all of them contributing to the figure as a whole, and finally, since at every point the outer edge is equidistant from the center, it is perfectly adapted to demonstrate the unity, the infinite existence, the consistency, and the justice of God.


As it is said in the beginning of this Booke, the manner and order of the Ionica being made after the Feminine kind, it is so likewise a materiall thing, that having a Chimney to make of that order, wee must, as neere as we can, make some shew of that sexe therein: the proportion whereof shall be thus, that a height of the opennesse, being placed, it shall be from the ground of the Chamber or Hall, to the Architrave, …
The derivation of the Capitall Corinthia, was from a Mayd of Corinthia: but for that Vitruvius in his fourth Booke and first Chapter describeth his petygree, whereof I will not trouble my selfe to speake of, this much I will say: If a workeman had a Temple to make for the Virgin Mary, or any other Saints that were Virgins, or Soules of Sepulchers for persons of honest life and conversation, then a man might use this manner of worke.

…when a house without is made wholy after the old maner, it were unfit that the Roofe [ceilings] should not be agreeable, as also of the Bedsteeds, Bankes, &c. And which is more, …, each place should be stuffed and suted within, with things fitting to that which it sheweth outward.

In all inventions of capricious ornaments one must first design the ground or the thing plain, as it is for [use?]…and on that vary it, adorn it, compose it with decorum according to the use and the order it is of…and, to say true, all these composed ornaments,…which proceed out of abundance of designs and were brought in by Michael Angel and his followers, in my opinion do not [do] well in solid architecture and the façades of houses, but in garden loggias, stucco, or ornaments of chimney pieces, or in the inner parts of houses, those compositions are of necessity to be used. For as outwardly every wise man carries a gravity in public places, where there is nothing else looked for, yet inwardly has his imaginacy put on fire, and sometimes licentiously flying out, as nature herself does oftentimes, extravagantly, to delight [us], to amaze us, sometimes [to] move us to laughter, sometimes to contemplation and horror, so in architecture the outward ornaments ought to be solid, proportionable according, to the rules, masculine, and unaffected, whereas, within, the chimeras used by the ancients, the varied and composed ornaments both of the house itself and the moveable[s] [=furniture] within it are most commendable.

Essendo…l’opera ionica tolta dalla forma matronnale; è ancora conveniente cosa havendosi a fare alcuno camino di cotal ordine, d’imitar più che si puote questa specie: per stare i termini dell’ordine servando decoro.
La derivation del capitel Corinthio su da una vergine Corinthia, nè altrimenti mi assaticherò di narrare la sua origine: perché Vitruvio la descrive nel quarto libro al primo capitolo. Dirò ben che havendosi da far un tempio sacro di questo ordine, ei si debbia dedicar all Vergine Maria madre di Gesù Christo redentor nostro, laqual non pur su vergine innanzi: ma su vergine nel parto, & dopo’l parto ancora. & così a tutti quei Santi, & a quelle sante, che hanno tenuto vita verginale: questotal ordine si conviene anco a monasteri, & chiostri, che rinchiodon le vergini date al culto divino, si farà di questa maniera. Mase case publiche, o private, o sepulcri si faranno a persone di vita honesta, & casta; si potrà usare questo modo di ornamenti per servir il decoro del capitel Corinthio.


First, that no *Roome* bee furnished with too many [pictures], which in truth were a *Surfet* of *Ornament*, unlesse they bee *Galleries*, or some peculiar *Repository for Rarities of Art*. Next, that the best *Pieces* be placed not where there is the *least*, but where there are the *fewest lights*; therefore not onely *Rooms* windowed on both ends, which we call through-lighted; but with two or moe *Windowes* on the same side, are enemies to this *Art*; and sure it is, that no *Painting* can be seene in full *Perfection* but (as all *Nature* is illuminated) by a *single Light*. Thirdly, that in the *placing* there be some care also taken, how the *Painter* did stand in the *Working*, which an intelligent *Eye*, will easily discover, and that *Posture* is the most natural; so as *Italian* pieces will appeare best in a *Roome* where the *Windowes* are high; because they are commonly made to a descending *Light*, which of all other doth set off mens *Faces* in their truest Spirit. Lastly, that they bee as *properly* bestowed for their *quality*, as *fitly* for their *grace*: that is, *chearefull* Paintings in *Feasting* and *Banquetting Roomes*; *Graver Stories* in *Galleries*, *Land-schips*, and *Boscage*, and such *wilde* workes in open *Tarraces*, or in *Summer houses* (as we call them) and the like.


*Decor* is the keeping of a due *Respect* betweene the *Inhabitant*, and the *Habitation*. Whence *Palladius* did conclude, that the principall *Entrance* was never to be regulated by any certaine *Dimensions*; but by the dignity of the *Master*; yet to exceede rather, in the *more*, then in the *lesse*, is a marke of *Generosity*, and may always be excused with some noble *Embleme*, or *Inscription*, as that of the *Conte di Bevilacqua*, over his large *Gate* at *Verona*, where perchance had bee committed a little *Disproportion*.


Mais cela n’est pas de si grande obligation que les Antiques lesplus réguliers ne s’en soient souvent dispensés, car les ornements ne sont qu’accessoires dans les ordres, et s’y peuvent
introduire diversement selon l’occasion, principalement au corinthien, où les architectes ayant à représenter une beauté féminine et virginale, comme nous pouvons juger par ce que Vitrue nous raconte de Callimacus au 1er chap. de son 4e livre, ne doivent rien épargner de ce qui peut embellir et perfectionner une œuvre,…Néanmoins il n’en va pas de même des autres, où la beauté doit être plus mâle, et surtout à l’ordre dorique, la solidité duquel répugne aux ornements délicats, de sorte qu’il réussit mieux dans la simple régularité de ses proportions…Pour l’ordre ionique, il est au milieu des deux extrêmes, et tient comme la balance entre la solidité dorique, et la gentillesse corinthienne, c’est pourquoi nous le trouvons diversement employé dans les bâtiments antique, quelquefois assez orné, d’autrefois plus simple, selon le génie de l’architecte, ou la qualité de l’édifice.


Mais revenons à l’ordre dorique, et considérons en gros sa forme, ses propriétés, et la différence d’avec les autres, avant que d’entrer dans le détail de ses proportions, car les règles générales doivent précéder les particulières. Ayant donc posé pour fondement que cet ordre nous représente la solidité, qui est sa qualité spécifique et principale, on ne le droit employer que dans les grands édifices et bâtiments de cette nature, comme aux portes des citadelles et des ville, aux dehors des temples, aux places publiques, et autres semblables lieux, où la délicatesse des ornements est inutile et peu convenable, tellement que la manière héroïque et gigantesque de cet ordre y fait merveilleusement bien son effet, et montre une certaine beauté mâle et naïve, qui est proprement ce qu’on appelle la grande manière.

Je vais remarquer sur ce propos une chose à mon avis assez curieuse, touchant le principe de la différence des manières, et d’où vient qu’en une pareille quantité de superficie, l’une semble grande et magnifique, et l’autre paraît petite et mesquine : la raison en est fort belle, et n’est pas commune. Je dis donc que pour introduire dans l’architecture cette grandeur de manière dont nous parlons, il faut faire que la division de principaux membres des ordres ait peu de parties, et qu’elles soient toutes grandes et de grand relief, afin que l’œil n’y voyant rien de petit, l’imagination en soit fortement touchée.

1658 William Sanderson, *Graphice. The Use of the Pen and Pensil. Or, the Most Excellent Art of Painting: In Two Parts* (London: Robert Crofts, 1658), 26-27:

In the entrance of your house, or *Porch*; [hang paintings] with some *Rustique* figures, or things rurall. The *Hall* with Paintings of *Neat-heards*, *Pesants*, *Shep-heards*, *Milke-maides* attending Cattle, in proper degrees, some other also, of *Kichenry*; severall sorts of *Foul* and *Fish*, fitted for the Cooking. Pictures becomes the sides of your *Staire-case*; when the grace of a Painting invites your guest to breathe, and stop at the ease-pace; and to delight him, with some *Ruine* or *Building* which may at a view, as he passes up, be observed. And a Piece over-head, to cover the *Siebling*, at the top-landing, to be for-shortened, in figures looking downward out of the Clouds with Garlands or *Cornu-Copias*, to bid wellcome. The Great Chamber with *Landskips, Hunting, Fishing, Fowling* or, *History* of Notable actions. The *Dyning-Roome*; with the most eminent; a *King* and *Queen*, if possibly to be purchased at any rate, (I mean their Pictures) rarely done: the
want whereof in former times, were supplied onely, with the Court-Arms of their Majestyes; few
good subjects then, but conceived it expedient, to express their Love and Loyalty, by some such
Embleme, or note of remembrance. But then in reverence to their Persons forbear to place any
other Pictures of Life, as not worthy their Companions; being themselves, Ornament sufficient,
for any Room: unless (as some will have it) at the nether end, two or three, of their own bloud:
Or of chiefe Nobility, (Favourits) to waite upon their princely Persons. Inward with-drawing
Chambers; place others of the Life, whether of Honour, friendship or of Art only. Your own and
your wives Children, best become your discretion, and her modesty, (if she be faire) to furnish
the most private, or Bed-Chamber; lest, (being too publique) an Italian-minded Guest gaze too
long on them, and commend the worke for your wive’s sake…Cheerfull Paintings, In
Banqueting Rooms: but here, as any where, forbear Obscene Pictures; those Centaures, Satyrs,
Ravishings, Jupiter-scapes in several Shapes, though often done by rare Artists: unless you
meant to publish the sign, because you delight in the sinn. Graver stories; Histories your best
figures, and rarest Worke becomes Galleries; here you Walk, Judge, Examine, Censure.
Landskips become Chimney-pieces, Boscage, and Wildworke, in Terraces or open places;
Summer-Houses, Stone-walks some Church Prospects, or Buildings, set out well, at the end of
the Walke.

1664 Roland Fréart, sieur de Chambray, A Parallel to the Antient Architecture with the
modern… made English… by John Evelyn (London: Tho. Roycroft, 1664), 8:

For Ornaments are but accessories in the Orders, and may be diversly introduced as occasion
requires; principally in that of the Corinthian, where Artists being to represent an effeminate and
virginal beauty (as we may easily deduce from what Vitruvius has recounted to us of Callimacus.
1. Cap. 4. Book) ought to omit nothing which may contribute to the perfection and
embellishment of the Work:…where there is a more masculine beauty requir’d: especially in the
Dorique, the solidity whereof is totally repugnant to these Ornaments; since it succeeds so much
better in the plain and simple regularity of its proportions…As for the Ioniq Order, ‘tis as it
were in the middle of the two extremes, holding in a manner the Balance ‘twixt the Dorique
solidity, and gentleness of the Corinthian; for which reason we find it diversly employ’d in
ancient Buildings, simple and plain according to the genius of the Architect, or quality of the
Structure [as noted above in the original French for 1650].

1664 Roland Fréart, sieur de Chambray, A Parallel to the Antient Architecture with the
modern… made English… by John Evelyn (London: Tho. Roycroft, 1664), 10-11:

But let us return to the Dorique Order, and consider its form, proprieties, and difference form the
others in gross, before we enter into the Parcels of its Proportions, since general rules are ever to
precede particular. Having then propos’d for a foundation, that this Order represents Solidity to
us, as its Specifique and principal quality, we ought not to employ it but in great masse Buildings
and Edifices of the like nature; as for Ports of Citadels, and Fortresses of Towns, the outside of
Churches or Publique places, and the like, where the delicateness of the Ornament is neither
convenient, nor profitable; for as much as the heroic and gigantine manner of this Order does
excellently well in those places, discovering a certain masculine and natural beauty, which is
properly that the French call la grand Maniere.
Upon this subject I am observing a thing which in my opinion is very curious touching the beginning of the difference of Manners; when it proceeds, that in the fame of quantity of Superficies, the one seems great, and magnificent, and the other appears poor and but trifling. The reason of which is very pretty, and not ordinary…to introduce into Architecture this grandure of Manner of which we speak, we ought so to proceed, that the division of the principal Members of the Orders consist but of few parts, that they be all great and of a bold and ample Relievo and Swelling; that the Eye beholding nothing which is little and mean, the Imagination may be the more vigorously touch’d and concern’d with it [as noted above in the original French for 1650].


I went to see the Cavaliere in the morning and found him shading the drawing for the façade on the service courtyard…He asked me my opinion…I said that it was a novel idea…I added that this façade seemed to me nobler than the one he had designed for the front of the Louvre, and remarked in jest that it could be said that he had made the back more elaborate than the front. He replied that he had intended this façade to be richer in decoration as it was inside the Louvre and looked toward the gardens; he would make the design for the interior of the courtyard more elaborate than for the exterior on either side, for that was how it should be.


Let the Porch or entrance into the house, be set out with Rustick figures, and thing rural….Let the Hall be adorned with Shepherds, Peasants, Milk-maids, Neat-herds, Flocks of Sheep and the like, in their respective places and proper attendants; as also Fowls, Fish and the like…Let the Stair-case be set off with some admirable monument or building, either new or ruinous, to be seen and observed at a view passing up: and let the Ceiling over the top-stair be put with figures foreshortened looking downwards out of Clouds, with Garlands and Cornucopia’s…Let Landskips, Hunting, Fishing, Fowling, Histories and Antiquities be put in the Great Chamber…In the Dining-room let be placed the Pictures of the King and Queen; or their Coat of Arms…In the inward or with-drawing Chambers, put other draughts of the life, of Persons of Honour; intimate or special friends, and acquaintance, or of Artists only…In Banqueting-rooms, put cheerful and merry paintings, as of Baccus, Centaures, Satyrs, Syrens, and the like, but forbearing all obscene Pictures…Histories, grave Stories, and the best works become Galleries; where any one may walk, and exercise their senses in viewing, examining, delighting, judging and censuring…In Summer-houses and Stone-walks, plus Castles, Churches or some fair building: In Tarraces, put Boscage, and wild works. Upon Chimney-pieces, put only Landskips, for they chiefly adorn…And in the Bed-Chamber, put your own, your Wives and Childrens Pictures; as only becoming the most private Room, and your Modesty: lest (if you Wife be a beauty) some wanton and libidinous guest should gaze too long on them, and commend the work on her sake.
Let the *Porch* or Entrance into the *House*, be adorned with *Rustick Figures*, and things *Rural*. In the *Hall Shep-herds, Peasants, Cattle, Sheep* and the like. The *Stair-case*, ought to be set out with Pieces of *Buildings, Land-skips, History, &c.* the like in the *Dining*, and *Withdrawing Rooms*, but with those of better *Painting*. For the *Galleries*, let there be good *Histories*. In *Banquetting* and *Summer Houses*, put those Pieces that seem cheerful and merry; with good *Landskips*. In your *Bed Chambers*, place your own, with your *Wives, Children* and *Relations*.


1729 Vitruvius, *The theory and practice of architecture; or Vitruvius and Vignola abridg’d. The first by the famous Mr. Perrault, of the Royal Academy of Sciences in France, carefully done into English. And the other by Joseph Moxon; and now accurately publish’d the fifth time*, A. Boyer and Joseph Moxon, trans. (London: printed for J. Darby, in Bartholomew-Close; A. Bettesworth, in Pater-Noster-Row; F. Clay, without Temple-Bar; all in trust for Richard, James, and Bethel Wellington, 1729), 5-7:

*Decorum* or *Decency*, is that which makes the *Aspect* of the Fabrick [building] so *correct*, that there appears nothing that is not approv’d of by, and founded upon some Authority. It teaches us to have regard to three things, which are, *Design, Custom* and *Nature*. The *Regard to Design* makes us chuse [*sic*] for Example, other dispositions and proportions for a Palace than for a Church. The *Respect we have to Custom*, is the Reason, for Example, That the *Porches and Entries of Houses are Adorned*, when the inner parts are Rich and Magnificent. The *Regard we have to the Nature of Places*, makes us chuse different *Prospects* for different parts of the Fabrick, to make them the wholsomer and the more convenient: For Example, the *Bed-Chambers* and the *Libraries* are exposed to the *Morning Sun*; the *Winter* Apartments, to the West the *Closets of Pictures* and other *Curiosities*, which should always have equal Light, to the *North*. [and the other Vitruvian *Decor* passages as noted above for the first century BC]


Their [*the ancients’*?] Decorum was always just in every Representation, whether serious, jovial, or charming: For this End they establish’d a certain *Modus* to be observ’d in the Use and Application of the several *Orders*; and by these Rules they always kept Pace with Nature, and still, by a strict Observance of them, they produc’d the various Effects for which they were intended. The *Dorick* Order was [*sic*] to grave and solemn Uses, and call’d the *Dorian* Modus: The *Ionick* Order to Riant Uses, and call’d the *Ionian* Modus: The *Corinthian* Order was us’d in Palaces, &c. and call’d the *Lydian* Modus.
Useless and empty Rooms are so many additional Incumbrances in a Structure, and equally blameable as having too little, and in all which they are to be proportioned to the Dignity of the principal Inhabitant. The Parts should be so disposed, that, from the highest station, in those little Communities, all the subservient Apartments should be joined by an easy Gradation, that every Link in the Concatenation should be justly regulated; and in this Light I would be understood, that they could no where else be so well placed. As in History Painting, one principal Figure possesseth the superior Light, the fore Ground and Eminence of the Piece, and the subordinate Figures are placed Part in Sight, Part in Groups and Shade for Contrast, and keeping in the Design; so in Building, all the subservient Offices should terminate by gradual Progression in Utility and Situation.

Architecture consists of Ordination, which the Greeks call taxis; of Disposition; which the Greeks call diathesis; of Eurithmy, Symmetry, Decor, and Distribution, which the Greeks call oiconomia…. Decor consists in the proper appearance of a work, and its being compounded of approved and authorized parts. This has regard, either to station, which the Greeks call thematismos, custom; or nature. To station, when temples which are erected to Jove the thunderer, the heavens, the sun, or the moon, are built uncovered, and exposed to air, because the influences and effects of those deities are perceived in the open air; when to Minerva, Mars, Hercules, Doric temples are built; for on account of the attributes of these deities, edifices constructed without delicacy are most suitable. To Venus, Flora, Proserpine, and the nympha of the fountains, the corinthian kind are erected with propriety; for by reason of the delicacy of those goddesses, the graceful, gay manner, with foliage, and ornamented volutes, give a due decorum to the work. To Juno, Diana, Bacchus, and such other deities, Ionic temples are constructed, as possessing the mediocrity; for being tempered of the severity of the Doric, and the tenderness of the Corinthian, they become most suitable.
Le Clerc thinks [that the Tuscan order is] proper in gates of citadels and prisons, of which the entrances should be terrifick; and they are likewise fit for gates to gardens, or parks, for grottos, fountains, and bathes; where elegance of form, and neatness of workmanship, would be out of character...The Tuscan, order as it conveys the ideas of strength and rustic simplicity, is very proper for rural purposes; and may be employed in farm houses, in barns and sheds for implements of husbandry, in stables, manages and dog-kennels, in green houses, grottos and fountains, in gates of parks and gardens, and generally wherever magnificence is not required, and expence is to be avoided. Serlio recommends the use thereof in prisons, arsenals, treasuries, sea ports and gates of fortified places; and Le Clerc observes, that though the Tuscan order as treated by Vitruvius, by Palladio, and some others, ought to be entirely rejected; yet according to the composition of Vignola, there is a beauty in its simplicity, which recommends it to notice; and entitles it to a place, both in private and public buildings: as, in colonnades and porticos, surrounding squares or markets; in granaries or storehouses; and even in royal palaces: to adorn lower apartments, offices, stables and other places, where strength and simplicity are required; and where richer, or more delicate orders would be improper.

1791 William Chambers, A Treatise on the Decorative Part of Civil Architecture (1791; repr., New York: Dover, 2003), 63-64:

[Chambers gives directives for the five orders based on Fréart, listed above for 1650, for instance]:

The Corinthian order is proper for all buildings, where elegance, gaiety, and magnificence are required. The ancients employed it in temples dedicated to Venus, to Flora, Proserpine, and the nymphae of fountains; because the flowers, foliage, and volutes, with which it is adorned, seemed well adapted to the delicacy and elegance of such deities. Being the most splendid of all the orders, it is extremely proper for the decoration of palaces, public squares, or galleries and arcades, surrounding them; for churches dedicated to the Virgin Mary, or to other virgin saints: and on account of its rich, gay, and graceful appearance, it may with propriety be used in theaters, in ball or banqueting rooms, and in all places consecrated to festive mirth, or convivial recreation.

1791 William Chambers, A Treatise on the Decorative Part of Civil Architecture (1791; repr., New York: Dover, 2003), 127:

In designing [ornaments for chimneypieces], regard must be had to the nature of the place where they are to be employed. Such as are intended for halls, guard rooms, salons, galleries, and other considerable places; must be composed of large parts, few in number, of distinct and simple forms, and having a bold relief: but chimney pieces for drawing rooms, dressing rooms, bed chambers, and such like; may be of a more delicate and complicated composition. The workmanship of all chimney pieces must be perfectly well finished, like all other objects liable to a close inspection: and the ornaments, figures, and profiles; both in form, proportions, and quantity, must be suited to the other parts of the room; and be allusive to the uses for which it is intended. All nudities, and indecent representations must be avoided both in chimney pieces and in every other ornament of apartments, to which children, ladies, and other modest grave
persons, have constant recourse: together with all representations capable of exciting horror, grief, disgust, or any gloomy unpleasing sensations.

1791 William Chambers, *A Treatise on the Decorative Part of Civil Architecture* (1791; repr., New York: Dover, 2003), 130:

In interior decorations, where the eye is nearer the objects than in exterior; every thing should be more delicate, and calculated for closer inspection...

1801-1812 Charles Percier and Pierre Fontaine, *Recueil de Décorations Intérieures* (Paris: Hessling, 1801), 23 (Table Explicative, Planche IX):

Cheminée exécuté à Paris. Cet ouvrage, construit en marbre blanc veiné, est orné de petites figures qui représentent des courses de chars et des rinceaux d’ornemens en bronze doré. On a cherché à cacher les joints entre les piédroits et la traverse par la saillie du filet qui les sépare. La plaque en fonte derrière le foyer est formée de plusieurs compartimens; sur celui du milieu, on a représenté les forges de Vulcain; une grille en cuivre doré et découpée à jour sert de garde-cendres. Elle remplace les devantures de chenets ordinaires.

1801-1812 Charles Percier and Pierre Fontaine, *Recueil de Décorations Intérieures*, (1812; repr., New York: Dover, 1991), 73 (Explanatory Table, Plate 9), [as quoted above for 1801]:

Fireplace made in Paris. This piece, built of veined white marble, is adorned with little figures that represent chariot races and with ornamented ormolu scrolls. We attempted to disguise the joins between the uprights and the cross piece by the projection of the fillet separating them. The cast-iron plaque behind the hearth is formed of several compartments; on the center one we depicted Vulcan’s forges. A gilded-copper openwork grille serves as a fender and replaces the usual andiron frontage.


The large sideboard, inclosed or surrounded with Ionic pillars; the handsome and extensive dining-table; the respectable and substantial looking chairs; the large face glass; the family portraits; the marble fire-places; and the Wilton carpet; are the furniture that should supply the dining-room.


In ornamenting a dining room, there may be introduced grapevines, wheat, barley, or fruit of any kind; cups, vases, &c. or any thing that denotes eating or drinking; but care must be taken to group them in some graceful form. In a drawing room, foliage, wreaths, festoons, or baskets of flowers, with myrtles, jessamines, convolvalus, roses, &c. displayed with taste, and in a lively
manner. Every subject that is introduced, ought to approach as near to nature as art will admit of.


…it is essential that every building should be comfortable to the uses it is intended for, and that it should express clearly its destination and its character, marked in the most decided and indisputable manner. The cathedral and the church; the palace of the sovereign, and the dignified prelate; the hotel of the nobleman; the hall of justice; the mansion of the chief magistrate; the house of the rich individual; the gay theater, and the gloomy prison; nay even the warehouse and the shop, require a different style of architecture in their external appearance, and the same distinctive marks must be continued in the internal arrangements as well as in the decorations.

1807 Thomas Hope, *Household Furniture and Interior Decoration* (1807; repr., New York: Dover, 1971), plate 9 (pp. 36-38):

Sideboard adorned with emblems of Bacchus and of Ceres. Cellaret ornamented with amphorae and with figures, allusive to the liquid element. To the right, a sloping altar or pedestal, surmounted by a vase. To the left, a lofty candelabrum, destined to support a torch. On the table, a vase with Bacchanalian marks, placed between two cassolettes: over the same a picture, representing a Bacchanalian procession: the picture-frame of mahogany and gold, strengthened at the corners by metal gilt clasps.


No. 3. Mantel-piece of white marble, studded with bronze ornaments. The candelabrum placed between two Mythriac figures, and the heads of Vesta and of Vulcan are emblematic of the worship of fire.

1807 Thomas Hope, *Household Furniture and Interior Decoration* (1807; repr., New York: Dover, 1971), plate 29 (pp. 76-77):

No. 3. Bedstead of mahogany and bronze. The pilasters ornamented with figures of Night, rising on her crescent, and spreading her poppies.
No. 4. Toilet stand for ewer and bason. Sea monsters and other aquatic emblems round the frieze.

1816 Colonel Isaac Coles to General John Hartwell Cocke, February 23, 1816, Cocke Papers, box 21, no. 640, Special Collections, Alderman Library, University of Virginia.

[in reference to Bremo, Thomas Jefferson said]:

215
The Tuscan order was too plain—it would do for your Barns, &c. but was not fit for a dwelling House. The Doric would not cost much more and would be vastly handsomer….


[Benjamin gives directives for the five orders taken from William Chambers, listed above for 1791, for instance]:

The Corinthian order is proper for all buildings, where elegance, gaiety and magnificence are required. The ancients employed it in temples dedicated to Venus, to Flora, Proserpine, and the nymphs of fountains; because the flowers, foliage, and volutes, with which it is adorned, seemed well adapted to the delicacy and elegance of such deities. Being the most splendid of all the orders, it is proper for the decoration of squares, or galleries and arcades, surrounding them; for churches, and on account of its rich, gay, and graceful appearance, it may with propriety, be used in theatres, in ball or banqueting rooms, and in all places consecrated to festive mirth, or convivial recreation.


Something might be said on the subject of fitness, with regard to furniture and interior decoration of our dwelling-houses. This is a great charm about a country house, fitted up or furnished simply, appropriately, and comfortably. A profusion of mirrors, of gilding, or of chairs and sofas, too magnificent except for show, strikes us disagreeably amid the freshness, the silence, and simplicity of that nature which quietly looks us in the face at every window of a house in the country. The expression of purpose in architecture is conveyed by features in a building, or by its whole appearance, suggesting the end in view, or the purpose for which it is intended….Not only should the whole house have a general character denoting the end in view, but every portion of it should be made, as far as possible, to convey the same impression. The various useful features entering into its composition should all be expressive of the end for which they are intended, and should appear to answer their purpose….The prominent features conveying expression of purpose in dwelling-houses, are the chimneys, the windows, and the porch, veranda, or piazza…


There is no other church in Boston, where ‘the dim, religious light,’ so conducive to a devotional frame of mind, is admitted with such judicious…economy… [than at King’s Chapel, Boston. The fittings] at once bespeak the distinctive character of a church,…It has the air, neither of a disguised ball-room, nor a travestied theatre; herein lies its great contrast to the
church of our own time;... there are few of these that do not strongly resemble either the one or the other.


Furniture in “good keeping” adds to correctness in point of taste, a propriety of color, character, form and material, which befits the uses for which it and the apartment in which it is placed are intended. Thus, the furniture of the hall, however correct, would not be in good keeping with the dining-room, nor the furniture of the dining-room in keeping with the library.


[T]he details of the architecture are full of character...the bay windows [in the drawing room] are richly bordered with stained glass of ruby and gold...producing a rich and mellow tone of light in the apartment, in admirable keeping with its character; and the several mantelpieces have wheat, maize, and tobacco, the staple productions of the plantation, sculptured upon their marble surfaces.


The Dining Room and Library are... well adapted to give scope to the Gothic style—it can dispense with the amount of florid decoration that is needful with Elizabethan or French work, and whatever amount of severity, size, and dignity may be obtained in these rooms will but serve to give greater value to the elegance and lightness necessary for the Drawing Room.

1868 Charles Locke Eastlake, *Hints on Household Taste, in Furniture, Upholstery and Other Details* (1868, repr., New York: Dover, 1986), 85:

To fulfill the first and most essential principles of good design, every article of furniture should, at the first glance, proclaim its real purpose;...


Are we to decorate a dining-room, let the decoration give the sense of richness; a drawing-room, let it give cheerfulness; a library, let it give worth; a bed-room, repose; but glitter must never occur in large quantities, for that which excites can only be sparingly indulged in—if too freely employed, it gives the sense of vulgarity.

1874 Christopher Dresser, *Studies in Design* (1874; repr., Layton, Utah: Gibbs Smith Publisher, 2002), 31-32:
A dining-room we generally make rather dark…. It is desirable that the spread table and viands have prominence given to them by the shade of the walls. But our table-cloths…instead of being white,…should be of cream-tint….The emblems of the feast—fish, birds, and beasts—may sometimes be incorporated with the decoration of a dining-room…. but these must be drawn in the conventional manner. The effect of lightness is usually given to drawing-rooms…we generally make these rooms too light; we give to them a coldness which is freezing,…

1874 Christopher Dresser, *Studies in Design* (1874; repr., Layton, Utah: Gibbs Smith Publisher, 2002), plate 7:

Grotesque dado-rail. Being formed of the hare, this is specially suited to a dining room.


[In friezes] subjects appropriate to the apartment should be chosen. If, for instance, the frieze of a dining-room be paneled, fruits and game would be in keeping; if continuously treated, some convivial assemblage, or perhaps a hunting scene, would be proper. In a parlor, flowers would appear well; or, if there are no panels, a mythological scene, introducing, for instance, the Muses, or other appropriate figures. In a library, portraits of authors would do, or, if continuous, scenes from historical or political works.

1878 Harriet Prescott Spofford, *Art Decoration Applied to Furniture* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1878), 195:

…the rich warm colors are the best,…It has been the custom to have pictures of still-life in the dining-room—of game, fish, fruit. But, for our own part, the perpetual reminder of dead flesh and murderous propensities is not agreeable at table; and the habit of having on the wall those paintings of fish hanging from their nail, with all their beautiful dying colors, seems no better than the barbarous Eastern custom of carrying the live fish swimming in his tank around the table…and serving him twenty minutes afterward….There are many who think the dining-room the best place for portraits. We have already expressed our preferences for them in the hall; but if one is blessed with some generations of family portraits, the last generation may well hang on the dining-room wall, looking down on the daily meeting of the children and grandchildren. …The dining-room is an excellent place for pictures of a curious nature, and those involving memorabilia;…

1878 Harriet Prescott Spofford, *Art Decoration Applied to Furniture* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1878), 221:

The mantel-piece of the drawing-room is always to be its most elaborate and beautiful point, giving the key-note, as it were, of the rest of the room,… its ornaments few but majestic and splendid, its dignity completely maintained.
It has been said that a room should express in its decoration and furnishing something of the individuality and characteristics of its occupants, and that its general aspect should inform us in an inarticulate way of the kind of person who lives there. It must be confessed, however, that the expression of personality which a room is capable of conveying in this way is not very explicit and may be misleading, but when decoration becomes articulate in the writing on the wall it affords a more definite revelation of the character and tastes of its owner… In the dining-room the mottoes may be in a less heroic strain, such as:

Stay with me flagons,
Comfort me with apples,

from the Song of Songs: or from Omar Khayyam:
Ah! fill the cup, what boots it to repeat
How Time is slipping underneath our feet?
Unbord to-morrow and dead yesterday.
Why fret about them if to-day be sweet?
Appendix B

Decor Quotations from Architectural Books: The “Don’ts”


Ipsi autem politionibus eorum ornatus proprias debent habere decoris rationes, uti et ex locis aptas at generum discriminibus non alienas habeant dignitates. Tricliniis hibernis non est utilis compositione nec megalographia, nec camerarum coronario opere subtilis ornatus, quod ea et ab ignis fumo et ab luminum crebis fuliginibus corrumpuntur. In his vero supra podia abaci ex atramento sunt subigendi et poliendi, cuneis silaceis seu miniaceis interpositis. Explicata camera pura et polita, etiam pavimentorum non erit displicens, si qui animadvertere voluerit, Graecorum ad hibernaculorum usum minime sumptuosus et utilis apparatus. Foditur enim infra libramentum triclinii altitudine circiter pedum binum, et solo festucato inducitor aut rudus aut testaceum pavimentum ita fastigatum ut in canali habeat nares. Deinde congestis et spisse calcatis carbonibus inducitur e sadali. Ad regulam et libellam summo libramento cote despumato redditor species nigri pavimenti. Ita conviviis eorum et quod poculis et pytismatis effunditur simul cadi siccescitque, quique versantur ibi ministrantes etsi nudis pedibus fuerint, non recipent frigus ab eius mod genere pavamenti.


…Licynos mathematicus prodiit et ait Alabandaeas satis acutos ad omnes res civiles haberi, sed propter non magnum vitium indecentiae insipientes eos esse iudicatos, quod in gymnasio eorum quae sunt statuae omnes sunt causas agentes,
Correctness in Painting: Winter Dining Rooms. Now the walls themselves ought to have their own principles of correctness when it comes to finishing their decoration, so that they will have a dignity in keeping with their site and with the specific characteristics of the type of building. In winter dining rooms neither monumental painting nor subtle ornamentation of the ceilings with stucco or moldings will be of any value as decoration, because these will be marred by smoke from the fire and constant soot from the many lamps. Rather, for these rooms panels worked and finished in black should be arrayed above the podium, with inlaid wedges of ochre or cinnabar in between. Once the vaults have been completed and given a plain finish, this form of decoration for the pavements, used by the Greeks for their winter dining rooms, will give not unattractive, not to mention inexpensive and useful, results: underneath the level of the dining room one should excavate to a depth of about two feet, and when the soil has been packed down, either lay in a rubble underpavement or a terracotta underpavement, sloped so that it has openings (nostrils) onto a channel. Then, onto coals that have been trampled to compactness, a mortar mixed of gravel and lime and ash should be laid to a thickness of half a foot. The topmost layer, planed to the rule and the level by polishing with a whetstone, presents the appearance of black pavement. Thus, during their banquets, any wine that is spilled from their cups or spat onto the ground will dry as quickly as possible, and those who do the pouring, even if they serve with bare feet, will not catch cold from this type of pavement.

The people of Alabanda are considered intelligent enough when it comes to all matters political, but they have been regarded as foolish because of one trifling flaw: that of a lack of a sense of propriety [Decor], for in their gymnasias all the statues are of lawyers pleading cases, and whereas in the forum there are discus throwers, runners, and ballplayers. Thus the inappropriate placement of the statues with regard to their site has won the city the reputation for poor judgment….

If a painter chose to join a human head to the neck of a horse, and to spread feathers of many a hue over limbs picked up now here now there, so that what at the top is a lovely woman ends below in a black and ugly fish, could you, my friends, if favored with a private view, refrain from laughing?

ca. 1450  Leon Battista Alberti, *De re aedificatoria* (Florentiæ: accuratissime impressum opera Magistri Nicolai Laurentii Alamani, 1485), Liber Nonus (no page number):

Urbana aut domus intestinis pietibus coclavios coenaculos ve festivitate nequicq ceder hortesibus: sed extimus uti est porticus et vestibulu non ita festivitates caprabit ut non multo meminisse gravitatis videat.


In a town house the internal parts, such as the drawing rooms and dining rooms, should be no less festive than those of a country one; but the external parts, such as the portico and vestibule, should not be so frivolous as to appear to have obscured some sense of dignity.


…les bouquets et les guirlandes ne siéent point à Hercule, il est plus paré d’une massue toute raboteuse, car il y a des beautés de plusieurs espèces, et souvent si dissemblables que ce qui convient à l’une est contraire à l’autre.

1664  Roland Fréart, sieur de Chambray, *A Parallel to the Antient Architecture with the modern… made English…by John Evelyn* (London: Tho. Roycroft, 1664), 8:

*Garlands and Posies* suit not with Hercules; He is best adorn’d with a rough-hewn and massive Club…


*Decor*, which is not only where the *Inhabitant*, and *habitation* suite, seeing that is many times accidental; but where a *Building*, and particularly the *Ornaments* thereof, become the *station*, and *occasion*, as *Vitruvius* expressly shews in appropriating the several *Orders* to their natural affections; so as he would not
have set a *Corinthian Column* at the Entrance of a *Prison*, nore a *Tuscan* before the *Portico* of a *Church*, as some have done among us with no great regard to the *decorum*; Here therefore it is, that the *Judgment* of an *Architect* ought to be consulted, since even in the disposition of the *Offices* of our most private houses, we find no where greater absurdities committed, whilst we many times, find the *Kitchin* where the *Parlour* should have been, and *that* in the first and best *story*, which should have been damned to the lowermost and the worst.

1729  
Vitruvius, *The theory and practice of architecture; or Vitruvius and Vignola abridg'd. The first by the famous Mr. Perrault, of the Royal Academy of Sciences in France, carefully done into English. And the other by Joseph Moxon; and now accurately publish'd the fifth time*, A. Boyer and Joseph Moxon, trans. (London: printed for J. Darby, in Bartholomew-Close; A. Bettesworth, in Pater-Noster-Row; F. Clay, without Temple-Bar; all in trust for Richard, James, and Bethel Wellington, 1729), 7.4.4-5, 7.5.6 [as noted above for the first century BC].

1730  

Ornaments certainly give a noble Contrast to a Design, where they are appropriated to the Purpose of the Building, but it must be consider’d, Festoons of Fruits and Flowers would illy become the Entrance of a Prison, or frosted rustic Work the Approach of a Palace: Propriety in Ornaments is therefore a grand part of Designing,…

1731  

Yet shall (my Lord) your just, your noble rules  
Fill half the land with Imitating-Fools;  
Who random drawings from your sheets shall take,  
And of one beauty many blunders make;  
Load some vain Church with old Theatric state,  
Turn Arcs of triumph to a Garden-gate;…

1755  

1757  
The Fancy of a young Designer may flow into Luxuriancy; the Starts and Sallies of an unrestricted Genius may inadvertently lose Sight of Nature; as when the Portal to a *Prison* may be of the *Corinthian*, and that of a *Palace* be the *Tuscan Order*. Festoons of Fruit and Flowers have been the Wildness of Fancy in a Seat near the Sea; and a Pavillion [sic] in a Flower-Garden has been group’d with Variety of Fish, &c. In short, unnatural Productions are the Things I would mark out for avoiding in Design…

1771

Vitruvius, *The architecture of M. Vitruvius Pollio: Translated from the Original Latin, by W. Newton, Architect*, translated by William Newton (London: William Griffin, and John Clark, and published by J. Dodsley, 1771), 7.4.4-5, 7.5.6 [as noted above for the first century BC].

1806


Regard ought to be paid to the use of a room, as it is as easy to introduce emblematical subjects as those void of meaning. An ornament, however well executed, is not fit to be put in every room. Those that would be exceedingly well adapted to a dancing room, for instance, would be ridiculous if put in a church or a courthouse; or even those modelled for a drawingroom or a bedroom, would not be fit for a diningroom or a hall…A hall, saloon, or staircase, ought to exhibit something of more solidity and strength. Therefore trophies of different kinds may be introduced, and not so highly ornamented as the rest of the house. I would not recommend the last mentioned apartments to be finished higher than the Doric order, if regard is paid to any.

1806-09


The fact is that modern artists have often copied and applied whatever they found in the works of antiquity indiscriminately whether good or bad, without considering or examining the principles by which they were produced, oftentimes confounding together the works of different and remote ages as well as the works of different character, unmindful that every architect was not an Hermogenes, a Dinocrates, or a Ctesiphon; no more than every painter was a Zeuxia, a Protagenes, or an Apelles; or every sculptor a Glycon, a Phidias, or a Praxiteles. Every age has had its Borrominis, its Vanvitellis, its Fugas, who bewildered themselves with childish conceits, which others blindly following, error was heaped upon error, and conceit upon conceit, until the first principles of art were totally lost, and every idea of good architecture sacrificed at the shrines of whim, folly, and caprice. Costume is as necessary in architecture as in painting, and if we were accustomed to reason closely and to criticize seriously we should feel, and be as much displeased with the impropriety of placing Corinthian columns and statues in the front of a prison as with the picture of a painter who had clothed the figure of a Grecian sage with the motley jacket of a merryandrew.

The Doric order, next in strength to the Tuscan, and of a grave, robust, masculine aspect, is, by Scamozzi, called the Herculean. Being the most ancient of all the orders, it retains more of the structure of the primitive huts, in its form, than any of the rest;...Delicate ornaments are repugnant to its characteristic solidity and it succeeds best, in the simple regularity of its proportions. Nosegays and garlands of flowers grace not a Hercules, who always appears more becomingly, with a rough club and lion’s skin. For there are beauties of various sorts and often so dissimilar, in their natures, that those which may be highly proper on one occasion, may be quite the reverse, even ridiculously absurd, on others.


The ancient Greek architects were, ..., very careful that every ornament or decoration which they used should always accord in character and situation with the order and the building to which they applied it; and both the order and the ornament were characteristic of the destination of the edifice: never building a prison of the Corinthian order, nor a theater of the Doric.


The two great rules for design are these: 1st, *that there should be no features about a building which are not necessary for convenience, construction, or propriety;* 2nd, *that all ornament should consist of enrichment of the essential construction of the building.*

…what I mean by propriety is this, that the external and internal appearance of an edifice should be illustrative of, and in accordance with, the purpose for which it is destined.

1842 Andrew Jackson Downing, *Cottage Residences* (1842; repr., New York: Dover, 1981), 11:

Although, at first thought, it would appear that persons would be little likely to fall into error in violating the truthfulness of a building, yet examples do not unfrequently occur. Some of our dwelling-houses are so meagre and comfortless in their exteriors, that one might be fairly pardoned for supposing them barns, and, on the other hand, we have seen stables so decorated with green shutters and pilasters that they have actually been mistaken for dwelling-houses. A blind passion for a particular style of building may also tend to destroy expression of purpose. It would certainly be difficult for a stranger in some of our towns, where the taste for Grecian temples prevails, to distinguish with accuracy between a church, a bank, and a hall of justice.

1851 Leigh Hunt, *Table-Talk. To Which Are Added Imaginary Conversations of Pope and Swift* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1851), 5-6:

Anomalies of Dishes and Furniture, &c. Among the customs at table which deserve to be abolished is that of serving up dishes that retain a look of ‘life in death’--codfish with their staring eyes, hares with their hollow countenances, &c. It is in bad taste, an incongruity, an anomaly; to say nothing of its effect on morbid imaginations. Even furniture would be better without such inconsistencies. Claws, and hands, and human heads are not suited to the dead wood of goods and chattels. A chair should not seem as if it could walk off with us; nor a table look like a monstrous three-footed animal, with a great flat circular back, and no head. It is such furniture as the devil might have had in Pandemonium--‘Gorgons, and hydras, and chimeras dire.’ A lady sometimes makes tea out of a serpent’s mouth; and a dragon serves her for a seat in a garden. This is making a witch of her, instead of a Venus or a Flora. Titania did not sit on a toadstool, but on a bank full of wild thyme and violets. This bad taste is never more remarkably exemplified than in the case of fountains….nobody,…(except Pope, by an implication), has protested against their impossible combinations and vomiting mouths;…A fountain should suggest…feelings of purity and freshness; yet they…seem to endeavor to make one sick.


All the public inscriptions [in Coketown] were painted alike, in severe characters of black and white. The jail might have been the infirmary, the infirmary might have been the jail, the town-hall might have been either, or both, or anything else, for anything that appeared to the contrary in the graces of their construction. Fact,
fact, fact, everywhere in the material aspect of the town; fact, fact, fact, everywhere in the immaterial.


The greatest difficulty to deal with is the Drawing Room;...the requirements are directly opposed to what is generally considered to be in the spirit of Gothic design. A massive feeling for the Dining Room and Hall seems right—but for the Ladies’ Room lightness and grace ought to be aimed at, to attain this without an expression of feebleness or wanton curvature, is not easily done, and to leave the framing of the woodwork light enough, leaves little scope for any characteristic treatment.

1868 Charles Locke Eastlake, *Hints on Household Taste, in Furniture, Upholstery and Other Details* (1868, repr., New York: Dover, 1986), 69:

Renounce them henceforth,...those trophies of slaughtered hares and partridges which you may occasionally see standing out in bold relief from the backboard of a buffet or the door of a cabinet.

1876 Isaac Hobbs, *Hobbs's Architecture: Containing Designs and Ground Plans for Villas, Cottages and Other Edifices, Both Suburban and Rural, Adapted to the United States. With Rules for Criticism, and Introduction* (Philadelphia, J.B. Lippincott, 1876), 180:

Design LXXX: Ornamental Residence. This design is in the American style of architecture. All our buildings we aim to make light and airy. We continue to introduce turret-, bay-, and oriel-windows; and are not afraid to use whatever is beautiful, and in harmony with good taste and common sense. We would not decorate a pavilion with hanging men or beheaded women; neither would we embellish a dining-room with mummies, to carry out Egyptian or any other kind of architecture; nor would we place the most delicate of Grecian pediments in front of a jail or police station, skull-bones or buzzard-looking animals we consider more appropriate.

1876 E.W. Godwin, “Mantelpieces,” *Architect* [London] 15 (3 June 1876), 353:

This is all very well for a palace, but in the small everyday rooms of the middle and lower-middle class house architectural masses of marble in pillar and cornice, however enriched, are inappropriate, more than ever inappropriate when, as is frequently the case, the rest of the room and, indeed, of the house is wholly unarchitectural and free from marble. The marble door-architraves and cornices of Italy we in this country have long since translated into wood for common use: the same can be done for the common mantelpiece without necessarily making it look like a cabinet with a stove stuck in the bottom of it....

…we might expect to find, each on its appropriate site, the following designs. The lodge should not be so large or conspicuous as to be mistaken for the mansion, but should be more simple in its architecture, although according sufficiently with it to show its relationship.


…let the walls of our cities assume new life and meaning by contrasting tints of various bricks, stones, and brilliant tiles. …But in the country, where growth of shapes and forms is unchecked by any consideration of economy of space, it seems almost superfluous to use decorative external color to any great extent—certainly, we think, never for its own sake, as in the town;…

1879  Leigh Hunt, *Table-Talk. To Which Are Added Imaginary Conversations of Pope and Swift* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1879), 14-15:

Anomalies of Dishes and Furniture, Etc. Among the customs at table which deserve to be abolished is that of serving up dishes that retain a look of ‘life in death’--codfish with their staring eyes, hares with their hollow countenances, etc. It is in bad taste, an incongruity, an anomaly; to say nothing of its effect on morbid imaginations. Even furniture would be better without such inconsistencies. Claws, and hands, and human heads are not suited to the dead wood of goods and chattels. A chair should not seem as if it could walk off with us; nor a table look like a monstrous three-footed animal, with a great flat circular back, and no head. It is such furniture as the devil might have had in Pandemonium--‘Gorgons, and hydras, and chimeras dire.’ A lady sometimes makes tea out of a serpent’s mouth; and a dragon serves her for a seat in a garden. This is making a witch of her, instead of a Venus or a Flora. Titania did not sit on a toadstool, but on a bank full of wild thyme and violets. This bad taste is never more remarkably exemplified than in the case of fountains….nobody,…(except Pope, by an implication), has protested against their impossible combinations and vomiting mouths;…A fountain should suggest…feelings of purity and freshness; yet they…seem to endeavor to make one sick.

1888  William Morris, *Hopes and Fears for Art* (London and New York: Longmans, Green, 1902), 11:
The land is a little land;...it is neither prison nor palace, but a decent home.

1888 William Morris, *Hopes and Fears for Art* (London and New York: Longmans, Green, 1902), 15-16:

To my mind it is only here and there (out of the kitchen) that you can find in a well-to-do house things that are of any use at all: as a rule all the decoration (so called) that has got there is there for the sake of show, not because anybody likes it. I repeat, this stupidity goes through all classes of society: the silk curtains in my Lord’s drawing-room are no more a matter of art to him than the powder on his footman’s hair; the kitchen in a country farmhouse is most commonly a pleasant and homelike place, the parlour dreary and useless. Simplicity of life, begetting simplicity of taste, that is, a love for sweet and lofty things, is of all matters most necessary for the birth of the new and better art we crave for; simplicity everywhere, in the palace as well as in the cottage.
Appendix C

Peacocks in Secular Interiors

The following list shows that peacocks have graced Western interiors since ancient times. In some cases, such interiors also happened to be dining rooms. In other cases the connection with dining is unmistakable but it is premature to summarize the historical development in essay form. It is also evident that the peacock is present in every medium in Western rooms from mosaics and paintings on walls, ceilings and floors, to all manner of decorative arts both hand-made and industrially produced. In Ancient Roman interiors the peacock was often a focal point when it appeared in a garden scene, as a purely decorative motif, or as part of a Dionysiac program linked to eating, drinking, and hospitality. Dionysus (Roman Bacchus) was the Greek god of drinking. He and his retinue, namely maenads and satyrs, are represented throughout the history of Western art with grapes, wine, and all manner of foodstuffs.
Unlike the interior decoration of Rome, secular Medieval interiors with peacocks are elusive. On the other hand, many peacocks decorate ecclesiastical buildings and interiors as resurrection symbols (not included in this secular study). In the Renaissance and Baroque periods, Dionysiac scenes occasionally resurfaced in Western interiors as so much of Classical Antiquity was revived. And the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century works listed below, at times, preserved the ancient connection between peacocks and dining despite new, industrial production techniques. This study does not go beyond the year 1877, when the Peacock Room was completed by Whistler, although ten notable examples have been included just beyond that date. Additionally, when numerous examples of a certain type of piece exist, such as porcelain peacocks, only one is listed as a representative from each major manufactory.

late 2nd - early 1st century BC
First Style monochrome panel painting with Victory leading a peacock by a cord
Pompeii VI, 14, 40 (illustration 14 in Roger Ling Roman Painting 1991)

80-60 BC
Lunette with pair of peacocks, House of the Griffins, Palatine, Rome

50-40 BC
Mural with peacock, Oecus 15, east wall, Villa of the Poppaei, Oplontis, Italy

ca. 25-50 AD
Ceiling painting with peacock feathers, Bedroom 2, House of the Wooden partition, Herculaneum (illustration 65 in Roger Ling Roman Painting 1991)

40-50
Tablinum with peacock feather design, south wall, House of L. Caecilius Jucundus, Pompeii V 1, 26 (illustration 59 in Roger Ling Roman Painting 1991)

ca. 50-75
Garden scene with Egyptian deities and peacock, east wall, House of the Amazons, Pompeii VI 2, 14 (illustration 161 in Roger Ling Roman Painting 1991)

ca. 70
Wall fragment with a peacock (possibly from a garden wall), Roman, Getty Villa Malibu, California (accession number 68.AG.13)

ca. 1st century
Mosaic floor with peacocks, House of Paquius Proculus (also known as the House of Cuspius Pansa), Pompeii (illustrations 244-245 in Marisa Ranieri Panetta Pompeii: The History, Life and Art of the Buried City 2004)
ca. 1st century Dining Room mural with peacocks, western section of residential complex Murecine (near Pompeii), Italy (illustrated on p. 20 Emidio de Albentiis Secrets of Pompeii 2009)

c.ca. 1st century Hercules and Dejanira mural with peacocks, House of Queen Caroline (lost; known today through a copy by C. Weidenmüller published in Fausto and Felice Niccolini Le case ed i monumenti di Pompei disegnati e descritti 1854)

c.a. 1st century Frigidarium mural with peacock, east wall, Stabian Baths, Pompeii (lost; known today through a copy by Giuseppe Abbate published in Fausto and Felice Niccolini Le case ed i monumenti di Pompei disegnati e descritti 1854)

c.ca. 1st century Ceiling fresco with peacocks, Private Buildings and Decorations, Pompeii (lost; known today through a copy by Vincenzo Loria published in Fausto and Felice Niccolini Le case ed i monumenti di Pompei disegnati e descritti 1854)

early 2nd century Mosaic of peacocks and amphora (with satyrs and maenads), Roman Villa, Sousse, Tunisia

100-200 Fresco Depicting a Woman (Maenad?) Holding a Dish; Peacock and Fruit Below, Roman, Getty Villa Malibu, California (accession number 83.AG.222.4.2)

c.a. 170 Peacock mosaic panel, Roman Villa, El Djem, Tunisia (illustration 68 in Christine Kondoleon Domestic and Divine: Roman Mosaics in the House of Dionysos 1995)

2nd century Peacock mosaic pavement (Roman), 50 & 52 Nicholas Street, Leicester, England (Leicester Jewry Wall Museum collection)

late 2nd century Vine carpet (mosaic with grape vines and peacock), Room 1 (triclinium), House of Dionysos, Roman Villa, Paphos, Cyprus (color plate 3 in Christine Kondoleon Domestic and Divine: Roman Mosaics in the House of Dionysos 1995)

late 2nd century Peacock floor mosaic, Room 3, House of Dionysos, Roman Villa, Paphos, Cyprus (illustration 64-65 in Christine Kondoleon Domestic and Divine: Roman Mosaics in the House of Dionysos 1995)

late 2nd century Peacock and thyrsus mosaic (Roman), Bir-Chana, Tunisia (Collection of the Bardo National Museum, Tunis, Tunisia)

ca. 3rd century Peacock mosaic panel, apsed hall, House of the Buffet Supper, Antioch, Turkey (illustration 67 in Christine Kondoleon Domestic and Divine: Roman Mosaics in the House of Dionysos 1995)

ca. 3rd century Peacock mosaics, Villa of the Birds (Kom al-Dikka), Roman, Alexandria Egypt
ca. 4th century? Peacock mosaic pavement (Roman), London, England (registration number 1858.0721.1, British Museum)

4th century Peacock mosaic panel, House of the Peacock, Dermech, Carthage, Tunisia (illustration 69 Christine Kondoleon Domestic and Divine: Roman Mosaics in the House of Dionysos 1995)

4th century Apse mosaic with peacocks (Roman), Bignor, Sussex, England (illustration 10B in Anne Rainey Mosaics in Roman Britain 1973)

c. 4th century Orpheus floor mosaic with peacock, Roman Villa, Woodchester, England (illustration 29 in Keith Branigan The Roman Villa in South-West England 1977)

c. 4th century Floor mosaic with peacock, Roman Villa, Keynsham, England (illustration 30 in Keith Branigan The Roman Villa in South-West England 1977)

c. 325-330 Roman mosaic pavement with peacocks, Constantinian Villa, Daphne, Antioch, Turkey, Louvre Museum, Paris, France

late 4th century Peacock fresco, imperial official tomb (Roman), Silistra, Bulgaria (illustration 109 in Eve D’Ambra Roman Art 1998)

4th-5th century Mosaic pavement with Peacock (Roman), Carthage, Tunisia (registration number 1967.0405.12, British Museum)

526-540 Mosaic with peacocks, grape vines, roosters, goats, and other animals, House of the Bird Rinceau, Daphne, marble and limestone tesserae (fragment at the Worcester Art Museum, 1936.23; other fragments at Baltimore Museum of Art, Saint Louis Art Museum, Princeton University Art Museum, and Louvre; see cat. 96 and cover illustration of Christine Kondoleon, Antioch: The Lost Ancient City, 2000)

15th century Textile fragments with lions and peacocks, Italian (collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 09.50.995, 09.50.1009, and 09.50.1010)

1465-74 Andrea Mantegna, ceiling of the Camera Picta (also known as the Camera degli Sposi) with peacock present in the trompe l’oeil oculus, Palazzo Ducale, Mantua, Italy

1517-19 Raphael and his workshop, Feast of the Gods, pendentive with Juno and peacock, and ceiling fresco with Juno and peacock, Villa Farnesina Loggia, Rome, Italy

late 16th century Long Gallery with carved wood peacocks and boar’s heads in the frieze, Haddon Hall, Bakewell, Derbyshire, England (although these are festive animals decorating an entertaining space, in this instance, the peacocks and boars were
chosen, at least in part, because they were in the arms of the Manners and Vernon families who were joined by marriage and were the owners of the estate in the sixteenth century), (http://www.haddonhall.co.uk/)

1678 Antonio Verrio, Banquet of the Gods (ceiling painting with peacock at bottom center), King’s Dining Room, Windsor Castle, Windsor, England

c. 1690-1705 Beauvais Tapestry Manufactory; after designs by Guy-Louis Vernansal, The Return from the Hunt from The Story of the Emperor of China Series, French, Beauvais, Getty Center, Los Angeles, California (accession number 83.DD.340)

c. 1690-1730 Guy-Louis Vernansal, designer; Jean-Baptiste Monnoyer, designer, The Camel tapestry (also with peacock), French, Getty Center, Los Angeles, California (accession number 2003.3)

c. 1690-1730 Guy-Louis Vernansal, designer; Jean-Baptiste Monnoyer, designer, The Offering to Pan tapestry (with peacock), French, Getty Center, Los Angeles, California (accession number 2003.2)

c. 1700 Pair of Firedogs with peacock, gilt bronze, French, Paris, Getty Center, Los Angeles, California (accession number 93.DF.49)

18th century Charles-Antoine Coypel, Don Quixote, through Sancho, Asks Permission of the Duchess to See Her, The Priest and the Barber Meet Dorothy Disguised as a Shepherd, Don Quixote and Sancho, Mounted on a Wooden Horse, and Don Quixote, Deceived by Sancho, Mistakes a Peasant for Dulcinea, (tapestries from the Don Quixote series), woven at Gobelins Manufactory, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond (accession number 64.48.3-6)

1720-30 Hard-paste porcelain peacocks, Meissen Manufactory, Germany (collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 64.101.23 and 24)

c. 1745-50 Soft-paste porcelain peacocks, Villeroy, France (collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1974.356.593 and 594)

c. 1756 Soft-paste porcelain peacocks, Chelsea Porcelain Factory (collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 64.101.481)

c. 1760 Soft-paste porcelain peacocks, English (Bow) (Collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 64.101.726)

1777-1781 James Cox (London), The Peacock Clock (Collection of the State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia)

c. 1780 Réveillon, Paris, block-printed color arabesque panel of wallpaper with peacocks;
similar Réveillon papers with peacocks also dating from ca. 1780 decorate the dining room at Moccas Court, Herefordshire, England, and another room at the Château of Frucourt, Somme, France (illustrations 102-104 in Lesley Hoskins *The Papered Wall* 1994)

1789 Réveillon, Paris, arabesque wallpaper panel on light blue ground with central peacock; the same design on a white ground was used in the entrance hall of the Phelps-Hatheway House, Suffield, Connecticut in the late eighteenth century (collection of the Musée du Papier Peint, Rixheim, France; also illustrated on p. 150 of Carolle Thibaut-Pomerantz *Wallpaper: A History of Style and Trends* 2009)

1790 Réveillon, Paris, À l’éventail (in a fan) arabesque wallpaper panel with peacock feathers (Collection of the Musée du Papier Peint, Rixheim, France; also illustrated on p. 66 in Carolle Thibaut-Pomerantz *Wallpaper: A History of Style and Trends* 2009)

1803 Samuel Pepys Cockerell, Peacock feather-shaped window arches, Sezincote (an Indian-style country house), Goucestershire, England

1807 Thomas Hope, Indian Drawing Room (lost; illustrated in plate 6 of Thomas Hope *Household Furniture and Interior Decoration* 1807)

1812 Charles Percier and Pierre Fontaine, One wall of Mme. G’s Bedroom, Paris, with peacocks in the freize (plate 37 in Percier and Fontaine’s *Recueil de decorations intérieures*)

ca. 1840 Woven Coverlet with peacocks in each of four corners, Pennsylvania (collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 14.22.2)

1849 Eugène Ehrmann, Georges Zipélius, and Joseph Fuchs for Zuber, ‘Eldorado’ block-printed, color, scenic wallpaper including peacock (illustration 146 in Lesley Hoskins *The Papered Wall* 1994)

1855 Auguste Clésinger for Desfossé, *L’Automne*, or *La Bacchante Endormie*, scenic wallpaper panel with peacock and sleeping Bacchante, shown at the Exposition Universelle held in Paris in 1855 (Collection of the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris; also illustrated on pp. 125-126 in Carolle Thibaut-Pomerantz *Wallpaper: A History of Style and Trends* 2009)

1862 Joseph Fuchs for Desfossé, ‘Le Brésil,’ preliminary study for scenic wallpaper design including peacock and other birds in a jungle setting (illustration 137 in Lesley Hoskins *The Papered Wall* 1994)

1867 B.J. Talbert, Cabinet with pairs of confronted peacocks on two door panels (Plate 4 in B.J. Talbert’s *Gothic Forms* 1867)

c.a. 1869  E.W. Godwin, Design for dining room sideboard surmounted by peacock, Dromore Castle, County Limerick, Ireland (known today only through Godwin’s drawing in the British Architectural Library Drawings Collection, RIBA, London, Ran 7/B/1 (73))

c.a. 1869  E.W. Godwin, Design for whatnot surmounted by peacock, Dromore Castle, County Limerick, Ireland (known today only through Godwin’s drawing in the British Architectural Library Drawings Collection, RIBA, London, Ran7/B/1 (51))

1870  Pier Glass surmounted by a peacock (Frances Lichten’s *Decorative Art of Victoria’s Era* 1950)

1872  William Burges, designs for marquetry panels (one with peacock) for the Winter Smoking Room in the Clock Tower, Cardiff Castle (Collection of the Cardiff City Council, Wales; also illustration A.49 in J. Mordaunt Crook *The Strange Genius of William Burges ‘Art-Architect,’ 1827-1881* 1982)

c.a. 1872  E.W. Godwin for Jeffrey and Company, London, design for ‘Peacock’ wallpaper (Trustees of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, E.513-1963; the full design of the wallpaper was published in *Architect and Building News* 21, May 8, 1874, p. 492; also illustrated in plate 20 of E.W. Godwin *Art Furniture* 1877; and a piece of the actual block-printed wallpaper is in the collection of the Manchester City Art Galleries, 1934.22/19iii)

1872-1873  George Aitchison, Design for the Front Drawing Room (with peacock frieze by Albert Moore) at 1 Berkeley Square (Collection of the British Architectural Library, RIBA; in addition, a cartoon for Moore’s peacock frieze is in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, D.262-1905)

1873  E.W. Godwin, chair designs for Collinson and Locke stand at the Vienna Universal Exhibition 1873, chair on left shows peacock with outstretched wings similar to Godwin wallpaper designs (National Trust, Ellen Terry Memorial Museum, Smallhythe Place, Kent, D.24)

1873-74  E.W. Godwin for Collinson and Lock, interior decoration including peacock wallpaper, ante-room, Grey Towers, Nunthorpe, south of Middlesbrough, England (illustration 24 in Susan Weber Soros *The Secular Furniture of E.W. Godwin* 1999; also, a similar design was published in plate 10 of E.W. Godwin *Art Furniture* 1877)
ca. 1875-76  Attributed to Walter Crane and the students of the Royal School of Art Needlework, London, screen with peacocks, wool thread on cotton silk, Collection of Paul Reeves (figure 3.20 in Doreen Bolger Burke, and others, *In Pursuit of Beauty: Americans and the Aesthetic Movement* (1986))

ca. 1876  Walter Crane, screen with peacocks, satin woven cotton, applied linen, embroidered with crewel wools, edged with glued on silk braid, lined with silk repp, framed in gilt (collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum, T.774 to D-1972)

1876  William Morris and Philip Webb, *Peacock and Vine* embroidered hanging (with central peacock surrounded by grapevines), executed by the Royal School of Art Needlework, exhibited at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition in 1876 (collection of the William Morris Gallery, Walthamstow; illustrated in plate 13 of Linda Parry *William Morris Textiles* (2013))


1876-1881  E.J. Poynter, Grill Room (now the Poynter Room) with peacock frieze of plaster, Victoria and Albert Museum, London

1877  E.W. Godwin, design for dining room sideboard containing pleated fabric with addorsed peacocks covering two open compartments (plate 5 in E.W. Godwin *Art Furniture 1877*)

1877  E.W. Godwin, design for “Stained and Painted Glass” with peacock in lower right corner (plate 18 in E.W. Godwin *Art Furniture 1877*)

1878  Walter Crane, “Peacocks and Amorini” frieze wallpaper manufactured by Jeffrey and Company (agriculture is referenced by the peacocks and the single-bladed scythes in the hands of the amorini), embossed and bronze gilded (collection of the Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, 1955-144-10)

1878  Walter Crane, “Peacocks and Amorini” fill wallpaper (color wood block print version and embossed and gilded leather version) manufactured by Jeffrey and Company (includes putti, peacocks, cornucopias, grapes and wheat among arabesque decoration), (collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum, E.4048-1915 & E.14-1945)

1878  William Morris, Peacock and Dragon textile (collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 30.95.52)
ca. 1878  William Morris, Brass peacocks with jeweled necks (lost), Kelmscott House dining room (noted in Fiona MacCarthy’s *William Morris: A Life for Our Time* (1995), p. 396)

1881  Robert Edis, A Drawing Room Corner (design for a drawing room with peacock), frontispiece for Edis’s *Decoration and Furniture of Town Houses* (1881)

1883  Arthur Heygate Mackmurdo, title page with peacocks for *Wren’s City Churches* (1883)

1886  Christopher Dresser, design for frieze with peacock and grapes (wall decoration), plate 27 (top) published in Dresser’s *Modern Ornamentation* (1886)


ca. 1895  Walter Crane, “Peacock and Fig” block-printed wallpaper manufactured by Jeffery and Company (collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum, E.2325-1932, and E.1765-1914)

1901  C.R. Ashbee, watercolor showing the dining room in the Magpie and Stump (with peacocks), made for *Kunst und Kunstwerke*, 1901, vol. 4, p. 464, possibly drawn by Fleetwood Varley (collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum, E.1903-1990)
Appendix D

Decorous Designs by E.W. Godwin


1861-1864  Northampton Town Hall, England, numerous Decorous elements including:
            --eight large sculptures of kings and queens on façade
            --seven narrative reliefs that show local and national historical events in the tympanums of the ground floor above the windows
            --six tympanum scenes in the vestibule show historical events
            --shields in relief that show local trades, ground floor façade (at eye level)
            --various interior capitals that show local trades like shoemaking
            --at each end of the Great Hall, “large semicircular paintings, . . ., of Moses, symbolizing the law-giving function of the building, and of Alfred the Great, another reference to Northampton’s ancient origins,” by R.T. Bayne.\textsuperscript{151}

1864-1867  Congleton Town Hall, Cheshire, England, according to Reid, “a pared-down version of Northampton” with three sculptures on the façade: Queen Victoria, Henry Lacy “a local medieval worthy”, and Edward I.¹⁵²

ca. 1865  State Chair/Magistrates Chair with carved finial figures of Justice and Mercy as well as coat of arms with lion and unicorn (collection of the Northampton Guildhall [formerly Northampton Town Hall] illustrated in Soros, *Secular Furniture* [1999], cat. no. 103, p. 84).

1868-71  Lion and Hart (stag) tile designs for Dromore Castle, County Limerick, Ireland (the lion and hart were part of the Limerick family arms), (drawing in an album belonging to Lord Limerick; illustrated in Arbuthnott, *E.W. Godwin Aesthetic Movement Architect and Designer* [1999], fig. 11-13, p. 305).

ca. 1869  Design for a chess table for Dromore Castle with the central panels on each side showing animals from the Limerick family’s coat of arms (lion and hart), (collection of the British Architectural Library, RIBA; illustrated in Soros, *Secular Furniture* [1999], cat. no. 209, p. 145).

ca. 1869  Design for lost dining room sideboard with Limerick family coat of arms and surmounted by peacock, Dromore Castle, known today only through Godwin’s drawings in the British Architectural Library Drawings Collection, RIBA, London, Ran 7/B/1 (73) and a scrapbook belonging to the Earl of Limerick; both illustrated in Soros, *Secular Furniture* (1999), cat. nos. 313-313.1, p. 193.

ca. 1869-1870  Two textile designs for Dromore Castle with birds and lions from the Limerick family coat of arms (British Architectural Library Drawings Collection, RIBA, Ran 7/B/1 [90-91]; both illustrated in Soros, *E.W. Godwin Aesthetic Movement Architect and Designer* [1999], fig. 7-7 and 7-9, pp. 192-193).


1877  Starry ceiling with blue (sky) background for Midland Grand Hotel (now Saint Pancras Chambers) and heraldic shield mural with arms of cities on the Midland railroad and a Wyvern (a beast that was the symbol for the

(illustrated in Soros, *E.W. Godwin Aesthetic Movement Architect and Designer* [1999], fig. 7-29 and 7-30, pp. 204-205).


1878 Butterfly Cabinet, created in collaboration with James McNeill Whistler, displayed as drawing room furniture (Decorous because of the lighter color scheme of golds and yellows), (collection of the Hunterian Art Gallery, Glasgow, Scotland, cat. no. 46396; illustrated in Soros, *E.W. Godwin Aesthetic Movement Architect and Designer* [1999], fig. 8-45, p. 255).

1881 Head of a deer with antlers mounted on the wall of the dining room illustration of the “Shakespeare Dining Room Set” (published in the Nov. 11, 1881 issue of *Building News*; illustrated in Soros, *Secular Furniture* [1999], cat. no. 176.1, p. 130).

1881 Fine Art Society façade (lost) with identifying inscription of “Fine Art Society.” Surviving sketches by Godwin and Thomas Raffles (Godwin’s sketch is in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum, E.254-1963: 42, and Raffles’s sketch was published in the *British Architect* 16 [December 16, 1881]: 632; both illustrated in Reid, *E.W. Godwin Aesthetic Movement Architect and Designer* [1999], fig. 6-61 and 6-62, p. 171).


1884-1885 Oscar Wilde’s house (lost), 16 Tite Street, Chelsea. Oscar’s bedroom was painted blue while his wife Constance’s room was painted pink.\(^{153}\)

The drawing room copied the light color scheme of Frances Leyland’s portrait by James McNeill Whistler (the setting for this portrait was Whistler’s drawing room at 2 Lindsey Row and the room was white, yellow and flesh-toned), (James McNeill Whistler, *Symphony in Flesh Colour and Pink: Portrait of Mrs Frances Leyland*, 1871-1874, the Frick Collection, acc. no. 1916.1.133).^{154}

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