John Tenniel and Technology: Anachronism and Social Meaning

by

Grayson Carter Vignot Van Beuren

Thesis submitted to the faculty of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
In
Material Culture and Public Humanities

Bailey Van Hook, Committee Chair

Mark Barrow

Michelle Moseley-Christian

Matthew Goodrum

David Radcliffe

Nancy Metz

May 3, 2016
Blacksburg, Virginia

Keywords: John Tenniel, Punch magazine, Victorian England, Nineteenth century, technology studies, nostalgia studies
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Abstract

Sir John Tenniel worked for the Victorian magazine *Punch* for over fifty years, from 1850 to 1901, and served as head cartoonist for the latter thirty-seven years of his tenure at the magazine. Tenniel’s cartoons effectively became the heart of *Punch*’s visual lineup, and the sentiments expressed by these cartoons both reflected and influenced the opinions of the magazine’s vast middle class readership. However, they did not generally reflect the opinions of the cartoonist himself: Tenniel had little to no say in decisions regarding the content or stance of his cartoons. The artist ostensibly had no problem with this arrangement, once telling a historian, “As for political opinions, I have none… [I] profess only those of my paper.”

This project argues that the artist did indeed inject a degree of personal opinion into his work, albeit in hidden and unconscious ways. Instead of using the medium of cartoons as an overt vehicle for his opinion, Tenniel’s values and views come out in his use of iconography and his choice of models for his drawings. As a conservative Victorian man operating in the rapidly changing world of the latter nineteenth century, Tenniel used his drawings as a way to tap into the England of his youth and possibly reclaim the art world he originally studied to join as a young man. His iconography frequently looked back to medieval England, framing current events within these themes until the end of his career. Furthermore, Tenniel doggedly refused to update his mental drawing models for certain forms of technology, even when his depictions became obviously anachronistic. This thesis examines these tendencies through the threefold lenses of Material Culture Studies, Social Constructivism, and Nostalgia Studies in an attempt to link Tenniel’s treatment of medieval iconography and depiction of modern technology with the nostalgic past.
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1 – Introduction

In January 1893, the British humor magazine *Punch* published a cartoon that caused a minor commotion among readers (figure 1). The cartoon, titled “Shocking Trade Outrage,” depicted a young woman representing England’s trade interests lying stretched across a set of railroad tracks, directly in the path of an oncoming train. The cartoon comments on the disastrous effects of railway monopolies and trade, but this contentious topic was not the source of consternation among the interested readers of *Punch*. Rather, the outrage stemmed mainly from inaccuracies in the drawing itself. The train and tracks appear to betray a complete lack of understanding of railroad technology on the part of the artist, John Tenniel. The tracks make little sense: five are laid out equidistant from one another leaving the locomotive straddling two different sets of track at once. The woman seems to defy spatial logic, too: her relation to the gauge of the track on which she lays requires her height to surpass ten feet.¹

The last indignity (to the offended railroad enthusiasts who read *Punch*, at least) was Tenniel’s depiction of the train itself. Though the cartoon was published in 1893, the depicted locomotive huffs and puffs straight out of Tenniel’s youth: it is an anachronism from the early days of steam rail transportation.² Furthermore, this example of errant draftsmanship and anachronism, though one of the most prominent of his career and commented-on by later scholars, does not constitute a gross abnormality in Tenniel’s work. Tenniel produced a

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prodigious amount of work over the course of his career as an illustrator and cartoonist for *Punch*—estimates range from 2,000 to over 3,000 drawings as draftsman at the magazine—and his body of work is dotted with such examples of odd draftsmanship and anachronism, especially in relation to modern technology.\(^3\)

The problem of dealing with anachronism and error in visual culture lies in the fact that the most useful question to be posed is often not one of dry technical accuracy. The pertinent question for Tenniel’s popular critics like that mentioned above was “How is this locomotive/mechanical device wrong, and what parts of the locomotive/mechanical device were left out/in to produce this error?” but the scholar viewing the same image needs to look further and ask “Why did accuracy not matter here?” The answer to the latter question is a far more interesting and insightful one, and the one that informs this analysis of Tenniel’s work for *Punch*. Tenniel’s treatment of certain areas of iconography—most notably locomotives and bicycles—obviously received less care than others, judging by the artist’s refusal to update his models. This thesis looks at his treatment of steam locomotives and bicycles in relation to one of these “others” that received a great deal of attention: medieval iconography. Finally, this analysis of Tenniel’s work will attempt to dispel the possibility that his depictions of technology were shaped purely by artistic convention by comparing it to similar subjects depicted by his colleagues at *Punch*, Linley Sambourne and George du Maurier. Neither Sambourne nor du Maurier depicted anachronistic locomotives and bicycles in the same manner as Tenniel, despite producing cartoons contemporarily.

This thesis aims to suggest that these aspects of Tenniel’s work can be read as reflecting the artist’s distrust in nineteenth century societal change. This change includes the development of new technologies that encroached on his and others’ careers, such as those that incorporated photography in ways that pushed out professional wood engravers. This thesis will look at Tenniel’s use of two types of iconography, medieval iconography and images of modern technology, and attempt to draw a connection between his treatments of these areas of iconography and unwelcome change in Victorian society and Tenniel’s life. In accomplishing this goal, this thesis also aims to reach beyond Tenniel and provide an example framework for examinations of other artists’ work. Hopefully the methods employed here will be applicable to other subjects as well.

A threefold tack will be employed in its analysis, attempting to marry the methodological approaches of Social Constructivism, Material Culture studies, and Nostalgia Studies. First is that of social constructivism as applied to Technology Studies by Trevor Pinch and Wiebe Bijker in “The Social Construction of Facts and Artifacts,” published in Social Studies in Science in 1984. In their article, Pinch and Bijker advocate the application of Social Constructivism to the study of technology. Social Constructivism—a prevalent methodology in the field of History of Science—assumes that all knowledge is constructed by society, or at least can be treated as such for the purposes of analysis. The Social Constructivist framework allows the constricting categories of “right” and “wrong”—i.e. “good” and “bad” drawings of technology—to be

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discarded in order to get at the more salient (and less obvious) point: why Tenniel depicted technology in the manner that he did.

The framework of technology studies allows Tenniel’s anachronisms to be placed within the larger social web of Victorian society. This was the tack taken by Bijker in his 1995 book, *Of Bicycles, Bakelites, and Bulbs*, where he examined the development of each of the titular technologies in relation to how they affected their native social spheres instead of myopically limiting the scope to the inventors and researchers directly involved. Bijker explains the reason for this approach in his introduction:

> The final basic assumption in my theoretical project is that modern society must be analyzed as a seamless web. The analyst should not assume a priori different scientific, technical social, cultural, and economic factors. Rather, whatever creases we see are made by the actors and analysts themselves. Another way of expressing this idea is to recognize that a successful engineer is not purely a technical wizard, but an economic, political, and social one as well.

This approach is useful here, as it can also be flipped on its head and used to analyze members of the socio-political web other than the creators of technology. For instance, it can be applied to Tenniel’s selective attention to detail and anachronism: by themselves, Tenniel’s errors are simply *errors*; taken within the context of his life and surrounding culture, they take on more significant meaning.

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Secondly, this paper makes assumptions about the viability of reading objects as texts largely informed by the field of material culture studies, as put forward by the art historian Jules Prown in his seminal material culture essay, “The Truth of Material Culture: History or Fiction.” According to Prown, material culture—or “the manifestations of culture through material productions”—can be read and interpreted psychoanalytically and culturally as any other historical text. Pieces of material culture have their culture of origin built into their structure, and they can thus uncover unspoken truths for the analyst.

Prown uses the example of an American pewter teapot from the eighteenth century to illustrate how material culture can be read: the teapot’s physical structure reflects the aforementioned “hidden truths” of the early-United States society that created it. In this case, Prown links the teapot’s bulbous structure and sustenance-providing properties to the importance of the maternal in early American culture. Like Prown’s teapot, Tenniel’s locomotives were personal objects that unconsciously contain hidden information for the reader to interpret. However, quite unlike Prown’s teapot, Tenniel’s are creations on paper and not subject to material limitations. This type of analysis could also be achieved by looking at represented objects in Tenniel’s drawings simply as iconography—and to a certain extent this is necessary and occurs in this paper—but by also incorporating material culture studies, these aspects can be more fully drawn into the social web of technology and their place in Tenniel’s life and world understood better.

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Finally, this analysis uses elements of the literary critical field of nostalgia studies, especially that which applies to changing societies. This set of tools has already been applied quite successfully to the area of eighteenth and nineteenth century literature—especially that relating to romanticism and medievalism—and its emphasis on the tension between the desired past and reality lends itself nicely to this paper about anachronism as a means of holding on to the past. This paper largely pulls from Svetlana Boym’s *The Future of Nostalgia* and Judith Broome’s *Fictive Domains: Body, Landscape, and Nostalgia, 1717-1770.*\(^{10}\) Boym and Broome present a more nuanced view of the state of nostalgia than simply longing for childhood: nostalgia is a desire for an order, even when that order cannot exist. Broome elaborates on the mechanics of nostalgic work in *Fictive Domains,* too: in addition to being a general longing, nostalgia requires a degree of repetitive performative work to sustain itself.\(^{11}\) This work can be seen in Tenniel’s repetition of medieval iconography, as well as his continual use of an anachronistic locomotive model. Analysis within the framework of nostalgia is the subject of this paper’s final section.

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A note regarding terms used in this paper: in keeping with good historical practice, all printing and publishing terms used are accurate to the time period discussed. John Tenniel and his colleagues were frequently referred to as “Cartoonists” by the end of the nineteenth

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\(^{11}\) Broome, *Fictive Domains,* 17.
century—when Tenniel retired, contemporary sources reference how his colleague Linley Sambourne took over his duties as “First Cartoonist”—but the term did not see wide popular usage until the 1890s, well into Tenniel’s twilight years. Thankfully a less problematic alternative exists: the drawing staff at Punch were frequently called “draftsmen” throughout the magazine’s existence in the nineteenth century, and thus Tenniel is referred to as such in this paper.

Name of the practitioner notwithstanding, Tenniel’s drawings for Punch were definitely referred to as “cartoons” throughout his career and Tenniel himself used the term frequently in his personal correspondence with Punch engraver Joseph Swain. Interestingly, this iteration of the term was a relatively new one when Tenniel joined Punch. The term “cartoon” in the modern sense of “humorous drawing” actually itself arose from a Punch drawing, albeit one that appeared before Tenniel’s time at the magazine. In the original sense of the word, a “cartoon” was a painting made in preparation for a fresco or tapestry. Punch—lampooning the highfalutin efforts of the entrants to the 1845 contest for fresco commissions to decorate the interior of the new Westminster Hall—published its own take on the proper “cartoon” for such an undertaking.

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12 Google’s Ngram Viewer shows very little growth in the use of the word until the 1890s, and even then usage did not hit its peak until 1944. In his seminal history of Punch, Marion Spielmann does refer to Tenniel and his contemporaries at the magazine as “cartoonists” several times, and refers to Tenniel’s position as “First Cartoonist.” However, Spielmann is writing in 1895—right at the tail end of Tenniel’s career. Marion Harry Spielmann, The History of “Punch” (New York: Greenwood Press Publishers, 1969), 168-172.

(figure 2). From that point forward, all of Punch’s (and other such magazines’) comic “pencilings” became “cartoons” in the common parlance.\(^ {14}\)

Since this analysis largely operates within the larger category of “cartoon,” care has been taken to use the proper period terms when referring to the various specific types of cartoon that graced the pages of nineteenth century Punch. From 1864 onward, Tenniel was responsible for creating the “large cut,” or the main political cartoon of each issue.\(^ {15}\) This cartoon was always a whole page, and generally dealt with the most important recent political happenings. Prior to 1864, Tenniel often contributed to the numerous “initials” and various other small cartoons that filled the remainder of the magazine. “Initials,” as their name implies, were the initial letters of Punch articles. These were decorated in the tradition of illuminated medieval manuscripts. By the time Tenniel joined the magazine these initials tended to be fairly complex little drawings, it being normal to incorporate the letter into a small, humorous vignette. Besides initials, most issues had a “cartoon junior,” a secondary political cartoon that usually took up an entire page. Finally, each issue of Punch contained numerous small cartoons that took up a half page or less. Some of these became serialized, taking on a name particular to their subject matter. The “Essence of Parliament” cartoons that ran through the 1870s and 1880s, “Punch’s Fancy


\(^ {15}\) Rodney Engen uses the term “Big Cut” in his biography, as does Frankie Morris, who quotes Punch writer Henry Silver using the term. However, Tenniel himself used the term “Large Cut” (abbreviated to “L.C.”) frequently in his correspondence with wood engraver Joseph Swain, so “Large Cut” will be used in this paper. Engen, Sir John Tenniel, 46; HL 103, Tenniel to Swain, 188--; HL 107, Tenniel to Swain, 1 July 1880; HL 126, Tenniel to Swain, n.d.; Morris, Artist of Wonderland, 63.
Portraits” from the 1880s, and the female fashion cartoons of the 1860s exist within this category. However, the majority of the small cartoons did not develop into longer series

It should be noted that Tenniel is not described here as a “caricaturist,” for the simple reason that for the most part he was not one. Though he existed consciously within the British continuum of visual satire, Tenniel did not operate in the style of James Gillray, Thomas Rowlandson, or even Tenniel’s own contemporary George Cruikshank. Barring his very early formative work for Punch (and the very occasional Large Cut), Tenniel’s visual humor owed less to the purely grotesque and more to the theatrical, heavy-lined Teutonic style he developed as a youth and honed as an adult artist. Furthermore, Tenniel generally shied away from the caricaturist’s distortion of distinctive facial features. The closest he got to true caricature were the big-headed leaders in an 1869 Large Cut titled “Turkey and Grease” (figure 3), and even here Tenniel strongly implies that the overblown visages are masks. Tenniel much preferred more straightforward and respectful depictions of political figures, distinctly differentiating him from caricature.

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17 George Cruikshank (1792-1878) was really the true successor of the eighteenth century caricaturists’ tradition in England. His visual style—which highlighted the grotesque to a point of irreverence—was far closer to that of Gillray than that of Tenniel. M. Dorothy George, Hogarth to Cruikshank: Social Change in Graphic Satire (New York: Viking Books, 1967), 218-220.
18 Tenniel scholar Frankie Morris stipulates that Tenniel’s early grotesques may have endeared Charles Dodgson (pen name Lewis Carroll) to the cartoonist as a possible illustrator for his Alice books. Morris also points to a rare example of Tenniel’s use of the style in his main Punch work, an 1868 cartoon titled “The Turf Spider and the Flies,” depicting a giant spider made up entirely of horse riding and jockey gear moments away from devouring several figures stick in its web. This was definitely an outlier for Tenniel. Engen, Sir John Tenniel, 20; Frankie Morris, Artist of Wonderland: The Life, Political Cartoons, and Illustrations of Tenniel (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2005), 186-187; Spielmann, Punch, 463.
As late as 1929 the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (14th edn.) account of Tenniel gave only one sentence to his illustrations. It ignored the *Alice* books and echoed the solemn judgement of *The Times* and Tenniel’s biographer Monkhouse that the best illustrations Tenniel ever drew are in *Lalla Rookh* (1861).

Edward Hodnett, *Image and Text*.\(^{20}\)

Nowadays John Tenniel’s best-known work lies on pages between twin red cloth bindings.\(^ {21}\) Tenniel—on the admittedly rare evocation of his name today—is the “Alice” illustrator to most, his name inexorably linked with Lewis Carroll’s eponymous character of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There*. However, as illustrated by the above quote by scholar of English illustration, Edward Hodnett, during Tenniel’s lifetime (and indeed for a quarter century after his death), the artist’s fame mainly stemmed from the drawings he made for the magazine where he worked for fifty years, *Punch*. As head draftsman, Tenniel’s cartoons reached a vast audience of British middle class readers, many of whom were not interested in children’s literature and not disposed to picking up Carroll’s books.\(^ {22}\) However, by the latter half of the twentieth century, Tenniel’s place at *Punch* had left the public consciousness and he remained only as the illustrator of the *Alice* books. This


\(^{21}\) The decision was between red and green cloth. Carroll chose red, as it was “most attractive to childish eyes.” Morton N. Cohen, ed., *The Selected Letters of Lewis Carroll* (London: Macmillan Publishers Limited, 1982), 31.

\(^{22}\) Or more disposed to picking up any number of other books that Tenniel illustrated for older audiences.
reversal of notoriety is echoed in the candor of 1865 reviews for *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, which spent more time commenting on the work of the already-established illustrator and cartoonist, Tenniel, than they did dismissing the writing of the mathematics-lecturer-turned-children’s-book-writer, Lewis Carroll.23

Reflecting the steady increase in cultural interest that Lewis Carroll has garnered in recent decades, a vast and detailed literature exists on Lewis Carroll and his *Alice* books. The great majority do not address the books’ illustrator or, if they do, simply parrot well known facts about Tenniel. However, one book in this category bears mentioning as significant to Tenniel scholarship. This is *The Annotated Alice*, edited by mathematician and Carroll scholar Martin Gardner.24 Gardener addresses Tenniel’s illustrations as well as Carroll’s text in his notes, providing context for aspects of Tenniel’s illustrations, linking some with possible sources of iconography.

Tenniel himself has garnered his own body of literature. The earliest literature on Tenniel appears either in the artist’s latter years or soon after his death in 1914. Marion Harry Spielmann

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23 “Lewis Carroll” was the nom de plume of the Reverend Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, mathematics teacher at Christ Church, Oxford. Though he later wrote several more, less famous nonsense works for children, at the time of the publication of *Wonderland* his only other publications consisted of textbooks on mathematical logic. A popular story tells of Queen Victoria, delighted upon reading *Wonderland*, wrote asking for the rest of the author’s works only to receive copies of Dodgson’s logic textbooks. This tale is almost certain to be apocryphal, however; the story existed during Dodgson’s lifetime, and the conservative author is on record attempting to dispel the irreverent rumors. Dodgson, *Symbolic Logic*, Post-Script; Engen, *Sir John Tenniel*, 83.

devoted a section to Tenniel in his 1895 book, *The History of Punch*, the first appearance of the artist in the scholarly literature.\(^{25}\) Spielmann’s account of Tenniel was published within his lifetime and includes personal interviews with Tenniel himself. Spielmann, writing an account of Tenniel’s employer, couches Tenniel’s interviews within the context of *Punch* magazine. For this reason, Tenniel’s section in Spielmann’s book reads mostly as a biographical career sketch. Despite the brief time spent on only one aspect of Tenniel’s life, Spielmann does add much to a hitherto almost nonexistent literature on the artist. For one, Spielmann was the first to pin the habit of anachronism to Tenniel, primarily in his recounting of the locomotive story discussed in this paper’s introduction. In addition, Spielmann recounted a similar story of drafting error regarding a cartoon featuring bicycles.\(^{26}\)

Publication on Tenniel were scarce until the first half of the twentieth century, when two short biographies on Tenniel as well as the first iconographical analysis of Tenniel’s work appeared. The first of these, William Cosimo Monkhouse’s monograph, *The Life and Work of Sir John Tenniel, R.I.*, appeared in 1901 to commemorate Tenniel’s retirement from *Punch*. As such, it provides a more complete account of the artist’s career than Spielmann’s. However, the artist’s recent retirement may have put Monkhouse in a venerating mood, and the volume is written in a highly laudatory tone towards Tenniel. He frequently glosses over shortcomings in Tenniel’s work, and his writing is punctuated with hyperbolic compliments.\(^{27}\)

\(^{27}\) At one point Monkhouse refers to Tenniel as the “greatest living master” of pencil, and at another Tenniel’s appointment to the *Punch* staff takes on the character of myth: “‘Cincinnatus taken from the plough to command his country’s forces scarcely experienced a more violent change in the direction of his life than Tenniel.” Monkhouse, *Life and Works*, 10.
Several aspects of *Life and Work* make it very useful for the Tenniel scholar. For one, Monkhouse interviewed Tenniel himself, the book appearing thirteen years before Tenniel’s death. Secondly, Monkhouse draws connections between Tenniel’s early work and that of the Nazarenes, an early nineteenth century group of Romantic artists; as well as suggesting possible models for the artist’s early *Aesop’s Fables* animal drawings (and by extension, the animal drawings that cropped up frequently in his *Punch* and illustrative work for the rest of his career).²⁸ It is also helpful as a general biographical resource as Monkhouse gained most of the information in the book through interviews with Tenniel himself. Interestingly, Monkhouse’s book firmly establishes how perceptions of Tenniel have changed since the Victorian era. The author’s discussion of Tenniel’s *Punch* career spans several chapters, whereas he shoves the *Alice* illustrations in with the discussion of the rest of Tenniel’s book illustration work in the last chapter. Furthermore, he lists Tenniel’s illustrations for a now forgotten book called *Lalla Rookh* as Tenniel’s greatest work.²⁹ Monkhouse’s monograph and Spielmann’s *Punch* chapter form much of the basis for later biographies of the artist.

A second biography of Tenniel appeared in 1948, authored by Francis Sarzano. Simply titled *Sir John Tenniel*, it is the first complete account of Tenniel’s life. It is, however, a very short volume, containing only thirty-seven pages of text. The book’s short length belies its valuable analytical content, and Sarzano succeeds in several places Monkhouse did not. For one, Sarzano—writing after Tenniel’s death, unlike Monkhouse—does not overlook Tenniel’s faults as an artist. Instead Sarzano treats Tenniel as a talented, yet very flawed illustrator. Case in point is Sarzano’s description of Tenniel’s misunderstanding of his own wood-block medium.

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According to the author, Tenniel simply “had not a craftsman’s understanding of the possibilities and limitations of the wood-block” and “his work suffered badly in reproduction.”\textsuperscript{30} One finds a similar frankness in Sarzano’s discussion of how Tenniel’s habit of only drawing from memory caused his work to suffer:

> It is fatally easy to record what is remembered without suspecting what has been forgotten, and often Tenniel draws, as it were, the features of things without their personality. The essential quality eludes him. He remembers how a wall is built or how a sleeve falls, but the stoniness of stone and the silkiness of silk have slipped unnoticed from his mind.\textsuperscript{31}

Sarzano adds to the list of Tenniel’s stylistic and iconographical influences. He points out the influence of fellow \textit{Punch} cartoonist John Leech as well as that of Richard Doyle, Tenniel’s predecessor at the magazine. Sarzano tackles early influences too. He recognizes the effect of Romantic painter John Martin on a young Tenniel’s inclination to draw.\textsuperscript{32} Additionally, Sarzano connects Tenniel’s very early fresco work stylistically to the German Nazarene painter Peter Cornelius.\textsuperscript{33}

Between the biographies of 1901 and 1948, the first true scholarly monograph on Tenniel’s work appeared. This was Marguerite Mespoulet’s 1934 book, \textit{Creators of Wonderland}.

Mespoulet was the first to explore \textit{in-depth} sources for Tenniel’s iconography. Mespoulet attempts to tie Tenniel’s cartoon and illustration work to the caricatures of the

\textsuperscript{30} Sarzano, Francis, \textit{Sir John Tenniel} (Great Britain: Shenval Press Ltd., 1948), 14.
\textsuperscript{31} Sarzano, \textit{Sir John Tenniel}, 15.
\textsuperscript{32} The Tenniel and Martin families were neighbors and friends during John Tenniel’s childhood. More on this in section 3, “John Tenniel’s Life and Work.” Sarzano, \textit{Sir John Tenniel}, 9.
\textsuperscript{33} Sarzano, \textit{Sir John Tenniel}, 10.
\textsuperscript{34} Marguerite Mespoulet, \textit{Creators of Wonderland} (New York: Arrow Editions, 1934).
eighteenth century French draftsman Jean Ignace Isidore Gérard, more commonly known under the pseudonym Jean-Jacques Grandville. Much of *Creators* is composed of a biographical character study of Grandville, in order to set up a link between his use of anthropomorphized animal grotesques in his work for French humor magazine, *Le Charivari*, and Tenniel’s own use of the motif in *Punch*.

Mespoulet’s analysis appears to have some merit. Grandville’s animals bear striking resemblance to the anthropomorphized denizens that frequently appeared in Tenniel’s cartoons and illustrations. A particularly striking example of artistic convergence between the two appears during Mespoulet’s tangent on frogs in Grandville’s pictures: among Grandville’s numerous grotesque drawings of frogs are several that look very much like Tenniel’s later depiction of Carroll’s frog footman in *Alice in Wonderland*, including a literal frog footman that appeared in *Le Charivari*.\(^{35}\) Furthermore, Grandville’s involvement with *La Charivari* makes it highly plausible Tenniel was familiar with his work: the French magazine was well known in England and spawned many imitators, including the magazine *Punch*.\(^{36}\)

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\(^{36}\) During *Punch* magazine’s early years of publication (1840s and 1850s), it sported the tagline, “The London Charivari” in the masthead.
area of Tenniel literature concerned with the *Alice* books. Placing Tenniel within the continuum of Victorian book illustration, Hodnett is concerned only with the ninety-two illustrations Tenniel produced for *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There*. His analysis of the illustrations goes through each book chronologically, addressing them chapter-by-chapter in the order in which they appear. Hodnett agrees with Mespoulet’s assertion that Tenniel pulled heavily from J.J. Grandville.

Michael Hancher’s 1985 work, *The Tenniel Illustrations to the “Alice” Books*, continues the thread of Hodnett’s chapter in its interest in the *Alice* illustrations. However, Hancher’s treatment of those illustrations differentiates his book from Hodnett’s chapter. Instead of placing Tenniel’s illustrations simply within the bounds of Victorian illustration, Hancher’s analysis of the *Alice* illustrations also places them next to his *Punch* cartoons in an attempt to draw iconographical lineage between the two. Hancher’s analysis is far reaching, drawing ties between Tenniel’s use of every type of iconography, from anthropomorphic food *à la* George Cruikshank to the Shakespearean straw-in-hair motif to Lewis Carroll’s own influence on Tenniel’s illustrations. Furthermore, Hancher addresses anachronisms in Tenniel’s work not previously discussed, including the “skeleton suit”—an outdated type of children’s clothing—and the “chartist’s armor” of pots and pans. However, Hancher does not take this observation any further than Spielmann, nor does he connect Tenniel’s clothing anachronisms with other aspects of his work.

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39 Hancher, *Tenniel Illustrations*, 4-7.
Rodney Engen’s *Alice’s White Knight*, published in 1991, remains the definitive biography on Tenniel, despite the subsequent publication of several other books on the artist. Engen takes a broad chronological approach to Tenniel’s life, taking the reader through his childhood, young adulthood, career, and finally retirement. Engen’s biography is extremely well documented, well written, and thorough; he leaves little unexamined in the artist’s life. Engen also calls into question the validity of claims made by sources in the literature before him. He mentions his skepticism of a theory by earlier Tenniel scholar Marguerite Mespoulet that Tenniel pulled from the cartoonist Grandville in his illustrations:

A recent critic has explored the visual similarities at length between Grandville and Tenniel’s Alice drawings. But, unlike the clear evidence that exists that artists like Richard Doyle borrowed from Grandville, there is no such evidence for Tenniel, and the critic could only offer intriguing conjectures.

The mention of evidence that Richard Doyle pulled from Grandville is interesting, however, considering Doyle was Tenniel’s predecessor and a definite influence on Tenniel.

Roger Simpson’s book, *Sir John Tenniel: Aspects of His Work* appeared in 1994. This book joins Mespoulet’s *Creators of Wonderland* in its framing methodology: Simpson looks at only one small part of Tenniel’s overall oeuvre—his early, medieval-themed work. He expands previous scholarship on this area considerably, placing Tenniel’s early aspirations within a detailed social and personal context. Simpson builds his analysis of Tenniel’s medieval themes

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42 Also interesting (though much less relevant) is Engen’s reference to Mespoulet as a “recent critic.” Mespoulet’s book on Tenniel was written almost sixty years before Engen’s. Engen, *Sir John Tenniel*, 73-74.
around the various institutions that influenced the artist: the gothic revival, the Westminster fresco contest, the persistent Royal Academy, the prevailing Medievalist feeling that pervaded the early Victorian period, the German illustration style. In regards to the final influence on the list, Simpson draws strong connections between Tenniel’s line-heavy style of draftsmanship and the Teutonic Nazarene-inspired style of illustration favored in 1830s and 1840s Munich.\textsuperscript{44} Also, strengthening the stylistic connection made by Sarzano and Engen before him, Simpson links the medieval-manuscript style of Tenniel’s early \textit{Punch} initials to his cartoonist predecessor Richard Doyle.\textsuperscript{45}

The year 1994 also saw the publication of Jack Simmons’s “A Powerful Critic of Railways: John Tenniel in Punch,” in his book \textit{The Express Train and Other Railway Studies}.\textsuperscript{46} Simmons, a prominent British railroad scholar, presents an account of the opinions expressed toward railroads and steam travel in \textit{Punch} cartoons over the course of the nineteenth century. Simmons’s chapter is unique in the Tenniel literature in that it places \textit{Punch} material within the context of railroad history, something not done by Tenniel or \textit{Punch} scholars before.

Unfortunately, Simmons’s chapter suffers from several problems, including multiple counts of artist misattribution. In one place in the chapter, Simmons fails to recognize an early Tenniel and erroneously attaches Tenniel’s name to a cartoon by John Leech.\textsuperscript{47} Later, Simmons attributes a Linley Sambourne cartoon to his colleague Harry Furniss.\textsuperscript{48} These errors are perhaps

\textsuperscript{44} Simpson, \textit{Aspects}, 33.
\textsuperscript{45} Simpson, \textit{Aspects}, 77-78.
\textsuperscript{46} Jack Simmons, “A Powerful Critic of Railways: John Tenniel in Punch,” in \textit{The Express Train and Other Railway Studies} (Great Britain: David St John Thomas Publisher, 1994), 133-147.
\textsuperscript{47} Two forgivable mistakes: neither image sport their respective monographs. Simmons, “Critic,” 140-141.
\textsuperscript{48} This misattribution is less forgivable than the first two; typical of his later cartoons, “Linley Sambourne” is scrawled across the bottom of the image in his distinctive lettering. Simmons, “Critic,” 151.
excusable, however, since the article really focuses on the opinion of Punch’s editorial board—
i.e. the party who actually set the subject of each week’s Large Cut, not the artists themselves. In
this concession lies the major criticism of the chapter: Simmons assumes Tenniel and the other
artists of Punch to have more agency in their cartoon subject choices than they actually did, an
error in judgment stemming from Simmons’s incomplete understanding of the nineteenth century
publishing world. While it is true that Tenniel probably did harbor misgivings toward the
railroad, this sentiment cannot be read in his choice of railroad disasters as subject matter, as he
lacked the power to choose his subjects.

The most recent book on Tenniel, Artist of Wonderland: The Life, Political, Cartoons,
and Illustrations of Tenniel by Frankie Morris, appeared in 2005.49 Morris’s book is both
biographical and analytical, representing the product of over a century of Tenniel scholarship
grappling between these two methodological approaches. Morris deals with Tenniel’s Punch
work and Alice illustrations in equal measure, placing each within the context of Tenniel’s life
and career. Morris begins his book with a biographical sketch that lays the required contextual
foundation, followed by a discussion of Tenniel’s methods of producing his wood engravings.
Morris ends Artist of Wonderland with twin discussions of Tenniel’s Alice and Punch material.

Morris’s book often feels like it is moving through well-trodden territory—especially in
the biographical sections—but several additions make it unique in the Tenniel literature. Morris
includes a chapter on Tenniel’s cartoons covering the American Civil War, territory not so well
trodden in a field dominated by Anglophiles.50 Morris also includes a list of Tenniel’s unsigned

49 Frankie Morris, Artist of Wonderland: The Life, Political Cartoons, and Illustrations of Tenniel
(Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2005).
50 Morris, being an American, was perhaps closer to the remnants of the Civil War both culturally and
physically than other Tenniel scholars.
Punch work in the book’s Appendix, invaluable considering Tenniel only started using his monogram consistently in 1862. Between the years 1850 and 1862, Tenniel only sparing used the distinctive “JT” monograph, making the task of parsing out Tenniel’s work from that of John Leech and other early Punch artists difficult without a discerning eye.\textsuperscript{51}

This literature review illustrates that the various points of this thesis are not necessarily new. Tenniel’s frequent use of medieval imagery, errors in draftsmanship, use of mental models only, and dislike of locomotives are all well documented by his biographers. However, no one has pulled these disparate parts together as has been done here. Spielmann (and Engen through him) both point to locomotives and bicycles as objects that drew Tenniel’s ire, but no connection is made beyond that. Sarzano comments on the downsides of Tenniel’s use of mental models as his sole source of drawing material, but offers no analysis. Simmons writes about Tenniel’s dislike of the locomotive, but no explanation is given outside of generational bias. With these various observations and analyses come cursory explanations, but nowhere is nostalgia evoked. The following thesis is intended to fit into this hole in the literature.

\textsuperscript{51} Morris, \textit{Artist of Wonderland}, 337-341.
John Tenniel started life in 1820, born to a middle-class family in the Bayswater suburb of London. Tenniel’s birthplace would become the first aspect of his life to change due to Victorian societal forces; by the time Tenniel had reached young adulthood, the almost-rural Bayswater area had been engulfed by neighboring London as urbanization spread. Tenniel ultimately lived in the English capitol for the rest of his life, only travelling outside its borders a handful of times. Tenniel would later tell Punch historian Spielmann in 1889 that in the thirty years prior to their conversation, “I have hardly left London for more than a week; yet I enjoy wonderful health.” Tenniel was ever defiant in the face of industrial London.

The Tenniel family had recently moved to the Bayswater area from Liverpool at the time of young John’s birth. Tenniel’s parents, John Baptist and Eliza Marie, were French Protestants firmly established within the growing English middle class. John Baptist made his living as a dancing instructor for other middle and upper middle class families, supplementing his repertoire by teaching fencing, rowing, and other sports. The Tenniel family comprised three brothers and three sisters, and father John Baptist taught them in addition to his other tutor charges. The younger John picked up the love of horse riding, rowing, and fencing which he would carry into adulthood during these early years practicing with his father.

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54 Spielmann, *Punch*
55 Tenniel’s siblings are not often discussed by early sources, nor by the artist himself. Neither of his brothers followed John into the world of art. One became a dancing instructor and the other gave up London completely and became a rural farmer. One of Tenniel’s sisters married the son of painter John Martin. Engen, *Sir John Tenniel*, 2-3.
Tenniel’s instruction in art began from an early age. Down the road from Tenniel’s childhood home lived the Romantic painter John Martin and his family. The young Tenniel studied art with the Martin children, those lessons possibly representing Tenniel’s first formal forays into art. These early years also contained Tenniel’s first outright encounters with historical subject matter: the art lessons sometimes relocated to the Print Room of the British Museum. Tenniel took a particular liking to studies of historical costume and armor he encountered at the British Museum, an affinity that followed him into his professional career and personal life. More immediately, Tenniel’s interest in history led him to classic literature at a young age. At private school, Shakespeare became Tenniel’s favorite subject of study.

As Tenniel reached early adulthood, his studies took a serious turn. Tenniel’s initial aspirations were to the “high arts,” focusing on history painting in particular. He cultivated these aspirations by following the track of the most reputable English history painters of the previous two centuries and enrolled in the prestigious Royal Academy Schools in 1842. However, Tenniel soon became disillusioned with the school due to the utter lack of formal art instruction. For new students, Royal Academy classes amounted to expensive sketching sessions.

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56 Not insignificant that Tenniel’s earliest art lessons brought him in contact with the Romantic Movement. Martin, whose paintings were often biblically-inspired, also pushed the young Tenniel toward religious and moralistic subjects early on. Engen, *Sir John Tenniel*, 4; Morris, *Artist of Wonderland*, 19-20.

57 It is hard to say (as few records exist) whether John Tenniel received any art instruction from his father. In any case, the Martin lessons were among the earliest.


59 Engen, *Sir John Tenniel*, 4-5.

60 Nineteenth century academic painting was divided into a hierarchy set in the early modern period, with history painting—depictions of dynamic narrative moments in myths or history intended to carry a moral—at the very top. Tenniel often poked fun at his early lofty goals later on at *Punch*, periodically lampooning famous paintings in his cartoons. Tenniel returned to painting during his twilight retirement years, but he never returned to the “high arts” in any professional capacity. Engen, *Sir John Tenniel*, 8, 152-153.
Students sketched classical statuary in the National Gallery for hours with no instruction or supervision. Even after a student had exhibited skills enough to warrant moving on to more advanced study, instruction lectures were done on a rotating basis, which deprived students of a single coherent set of lessons.\textsuperscript{61}

Instead of continuing with the pointless, aimless lessons, Tenniel decided to move forward in his studies outside of the Academy.\textsuperscript{62} Tenniel left the Academy classes in “utter disgust” and joined the Artists’ Society Clipstone Street Life Academy in the 1840s. Artists convened at Clipstone Street on Fridays to sketch together in an environment of mutual assistance.\textsuperscript{63} Additionally, Tenniel spent this period of his early adulthood sketching on his own. The artist pulled from historical material in the National Gallery, British Museum, and Tower of London, where he enjoyed copying from medieval costume studies and sketching arms and armaments of the Middle Ages.\textsuperscript{64}

Tenniel also built his drawing repertoire by sketching live subjects. The theater provided Tenniel with one source of drawing subjects, and the artist and his colleagues often camped out in the pit during various performances sketching the actors.\textsuperscript{65} Tenniel also took particular pleasure in visiting the London Zoological Gardens in Regent Park with his sketchbook. Many of the animals that appear in Tenniel’s illustration and \textit{Punch} work later stem from Tenniel’s time spent at the zoo, including the lion in his famous 1857 cartoon “The British Lion’s Vengeance on

\textsuperscript{61} Engen, \textit{Sir John Tenniel}, 5-9; Morris, \textit{Artist of Wonderland}, 34-35.


\textsuperscript{64} Engen, \textit{Sir John Tenniel}, 8-9.

\textsuperscript{65} Morris, \textit{Artist of Wonderland}, 40-41.
the Bengal Tiger” (figure 4).66 Tenniel later told *Punch* historian Marion Spielmann, “I never use models or Nature for the figure, drapery, or anything else,” a partial untruth as he actually relied on the mental models he accumulated during his time sketching as a young man.67 Tenniel simply never updated those models as a professional artist.68

In addition to sketching, Tenniel continued to submit paintings to the Royal Academy during this time, despite not attending the School. Tenniel’s short-lived early career as a painter had a major high point in the 1840s: in 1845, he submitted a proposal to the government contest to grant fresco commissions to decorate the new Westminster Hall after the old building famously burned down in 1835. Titled, “The Spirit of Justice” (figure 5) Tenniel’s proposal was intended to decorate an arch in the Lords’ Chamber. The composition heralded the body of medieval-inspired *Punch* work he would produce in the future, depicting the figure of Justice. Tenniel did not get his desired fresco commission, but he was given a niche in the Upper Waiting Hall of the House of Lords to paint.69 During this time Tenniel also made one of his few trips outside of England during his life, travelling to Munich to study fresco techniques. While in Germany, Tenniel encountered the work of the Nazarenes, a group of romantic medievalist artists whose stark-line Teutonic style Tenniel incorporated into his own. Tenniel also encountered the work of the German Renaissance artist Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528) during his time in Munich, another influence apparent in Tenniel’s later work.70

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69 As Simpson points out in *Aspects*, the entire contest was a badly organized affair. Engen, *Sir John Tenniel*, 20; Simpson, *Aspects*, 32-33.
Tenniel’s career as an illustrator began after taking several book commissions during the 1840s as a means of earning money on the side while pursuing painting. Tenniel’s first commission came in 1842, when he was hired to produce illustrations for a book of medievalist poetry. Commissions came steadily to Tenniel through the 1840s and 1850s. His illustration work ultimately paid off more than his painting ever did. One of his commissions, an 1848 printing of *Aesop’s Fables* for publisher John Murray and printers Bradbury and Evans, got the young illustrator a job working for the weekly humor magazine *Punch, or the London Charivari*.

The *Punch* opportunity was extremely fortuitous—both in the sense that it aided Tenniel as a young illustrator previously at the mercy of commission work, and that it came about almost completely by chance. In October 1850, illustrator Richard “Dicky” Doyle resigned his place as draftsman on the staff of *Punch*, the openly Irish Catholic Doyle citing longstanding misgivings with the magazine’s polemical anti-Catholic political stance. Then-editor of *Punch* Mark Lemon found himself in a bind: Doyle had left right before the holiday season when the magazine published its annual Almanack. Lemon, desperate to find a replacement for Doyle who could finish the Almanack work in time, had received a copy of *Aesop’s Fables* with Tenniel’s illustrations and hired him based on the quality of his drawings. Supposedly Tenniel, upon

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72 Supposedly Tenniel’s childhood connection to John Martin contributed to this set of happenstance, too: Martin’s son, Leopold, introduced Tenniel to John Murray, leading him to later give Tenniel the commission. Balston, *John Martin*, 168; Engen, *Sir John Tenniel*, 24-26.
73 Reportedly, an “anti-papist” polemic by resident Anglican firebrand Douglas Jerrold (who probably gave Mark Lemon Tenniel’s *Aesop’s*, too) added the final straw to Doyle’s proverbial camel’s back.
hearing Lemon’s offer, stated his disbelief: “do they suppose there’s anything funny about me?”

Tenniel ended up working for *Punch* for almost fifty years, from November 1850 until January 1901. Early on Tenniel worked as a secondary illustrator, producing mostly initials, filler cartoons, Almanack calendar drawings, and the occasional Large Cut under head draftsman John Leech. Tenniel’s drawings during this period of his career borrowed heavily from the medieval manuscript tradition. This can be especially seen in his initial work: one from July 1857 (figure 6) depicting a knight caught in vines evokes the swirling pen of the medieval illuminator, while another from 1855 (figure 7) drops some of the stylization of the first in favor of narrative, but retained the illuminating style in the treatment of the “T.”

Tenniel also borrowed from the style of his predecessor at *Punch*, Doyle. Richard Doyle favored busy compositions filled with multitudes of figures, as seen in an 1846 frontispiece Doyle produced for the eleventh volume of *Punch* (figure 8). Doyle’s style set the visual candor of *Punch* during its early years and Tenniel, daunted at the prospect of following a popular illustrator, picked up Doyle’s style in his own early work.

Besides the momentous career development of his being hired by *Punch*, the 1850s brought changes in Tenniel’s personal life as well. In 1854, the artist married and he and his new wife, Julia Giani, moved to a house on Maida Hill. Tenniel would spend the rest of his life in this house, but unfortunately much of it would be spent without Julia. The couple spent one happy

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75 This story may apocryphal, but it does fit Tenniel’s personality. Spielmann, *Punch*, 466.
78 More on the stylistic connection between Tenniel and Doyle in Section 5, “Tenniel and Medievalism.”
year together before Julia began to show symptoms of tuberculosis. She died a year later.\textsuperscript{79}

Tenniel’s sister Victoria moved into the Maida Hill house shortly after and acted as his housekeeper until well into his retirement. He did not move again until 1909.\textsuperscript{80}

Tenniel was promoted in 1864 after another tragic and untimely death, this time of the previous head draftsman John Leech.\textsuperscript{81} Taking Leech’s old position, Tenniel became solely responsible for each issue’s main political cartoon, or Large Cut. The process of creating a Large Cut was a weekly cycle that rarely changed. It started every Wednesday at the weekly \textit{Punch} dinner attended by the editors and draftsmen, where Tenniel received the week’s subject. Thursday was spent planning; Friday spent drawing into the evening when a messenger arrived to take the sketch to the wood engravers. The engraving took all of Saturday so that the blocks would be ready for the Sunday printing.\textsuperscript{82} Tenniel held this position at \textit{Punch} until his retirement in early 1901, when he passed the title on to his colleague Linley Sambourne.\textsuperscript{83}

By the time he became head draftsman at \textit{Punch}, Tenniel had become highly proficient in producing work tailored to the requirements of the wood engraving printing process.\textsuperscript{84} Wood engraving was the predominant printing technique used for book and magazine publication in Britain during the middle of the nineteenth century. The process required a second individual, a

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{79} Engen, \textit{Sir John Tenniel}, 33-34.
\bibitem{80} Engen, \textit{Sir John Tenniel}, 155-156.
\bibitem{81} Engen suggests that Tenniel may have been set to replace Leech even if the head draftsman had not died; Leech had been showing the signs of gross overwork and desire to change employment at the time of his death. \textit{Punch} editor Mark Lemon wrote about Leech’s poor health shortly before the artist’s death, stating that the man had developed “a palpitation of the heart…a form of \textit{angina pectoris}.” Engen \textit{Sir John Tenniel}, 46-47; Spielmann, \textit{Punch}, 439-440.
\bibitem{82} Spielmann, \textit{Punch}, 464.
\bibitem{83} Engen, \textit{Sir John Tenniel}, 54-55.
\bibitem{84} In addition to his \textit{Punch} work, all of Tenniel’s book illustration work was wood engraved save one commission, the illustrations for Shirley Brooks’ \textit{The Gordian Knot} (1860), which were steel engraved. Edward Hodnett, \textit{Image and Text: Studies in the Illustration of English Literature} (London: Scolar Press, 1982), 169.
\end{thebibliography}
highly trained engraver, to translate the artist’s sketch to the final wood block. Developed by book printer Thomas Bewick in the late eighteenth century, wood engraving was essentially a refined version of the relief woodcut process that had existed since the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. However, the difference lay in the tools and type of wood used. Woodcuts had the stigma of being crude and unwieldy since the cutter generally used a knife to cut into the side-grain of a soft wood to produce the image. The wood engraver, by comparison, used a tool very similar to the metal engraver’s “burin” or “graver” to gouge out material from the end-grain of a block of boxwood or other hard wood. The graver allowed the creation of fine lines while the hard end-grain allowed those lines to be printed without cracking under the press.

Wood engraving was a relief printing process and the wood engraver worked dark to light—all removed areas of the block became white and vice versa—meaning a great deal of effort was required to produce the black line/white background typical of Punch cartoons.

Considering the small scale of the work and the fine tooling required, a wood engraver had to be a highly skilled to translate the artist’s image to a wooden block. Spielmann characterizes the wood engraver’s task of producing printing blocks from drawings as “interpretation” rather than “facsimile,” the latter being the ultimate unattainable goal to which a highly skilled engraver could get very close. Needless to say, the engraver had a great deal of control over the illustration’s success and shared much responsibility for the ultimate appearance

86 “Wood engraving” is somewhat of a misnomer. It gets its name from the tool used, but is otherwise not related to regular engraving, an intaglio process where the practitioner gouges out lines in a copper or steel plate. Michael Twyman, *Printing 1770-1970: An Illustrated History of its Development and Uses in England* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1970), 21-23.
of the final piece, despite rarely sharing credit with the artist. The role required a great deal of skill and finesse, and artists (Tenniel included) often formed close bonds with the wood engravers they entrusted to translate their work.\footnote{89}

Wood engraving lost popularity starting in the 1880s when new printing techniques stemming from photography became cheap enough for economic integration into the printing industry. First came the “Photomechanical Process” (known as the “Process” in the industry) in the 1880s, which allowed a drawing to be transferred from paper to block photographically. Before the Process, artists drew their sketches directly on the block to be carved and consequently the original was destroyed in engraving. Process allowed the artist to make their sketch on a white piece of paper that was then photographed and transferred to the block.\footnote{90}

There were drawbacks, however: Process printing required the use of pen instead of pencil, a switch the stalwart Tenniel resented so late into his career.\footnote{91} After the introduction of the Process came improvements to halftone printing, which allowed the transfer of images from paper to block automatically without the need of an intermediary wood engraver. Though good for the overall accuracy of illustrations in printed media, it essentially shut down the entire wood engraving business. Many of the wood engravers with whom Tenniel maintained working and friendly relationships found themselves unemployed, their livelihoods outmoded.\footnote{92}

\footnote{89} The lack of credit afforded wood engravers was unfortunate considering the amount of time and effort that went into producing a block for publishing. It was so time and labor-intensive that prominent nineteenth century art critic John Ruskin denounced the process of wood engraving as akin to slavery. Tenniel’s personal favorite wood engravers were the Dalziel Brothers and the Swain family, who engraved his book illustration work and Punch work, respectively. Engen, Sir John Tenniel, 61; Hancher, \textit{Tenniel Illustrations}, 107.


\footnote{91} Engen, Sir John Tenniel, 102.

\footnote{92} Some wood engravers survived the transition between printing methods by branching out in the printing business. The Brothers Dalziel, Tenniel’s go-to wood engravers for his book illustration work, managed
For his own part, Tenniel was highly resistant to these newer printing processes. His misgivings long delayed *Punch*’s adoption of new types of printing. He delaying *Punch*’s switch to faster and cheaper “Process” printing until 1889, much to the chagrin of fellow cartoonist Linley Sambourne who wrote about his dislike of drawing on wood in his diary. It is not hard to imagine Tenniel’s dissatisfaction with these unwelcome and destructive changes in his life and the lives of the engravers he came to work with and trust.

It is, however, quite difficult to definitively pin such viewpoints to Tenniel. Tenniel was absolutely private over the course of his life, rarely talking to interviewers and reluctant to leave anything in the way of personal correspondence. His dedication to taciturnity is illustrated in an anecdote from his youth. As a young man Tenniel regularly practiced fencing with his father. One day the elder Tenniel accidentally swiped his son’s right eye with the tip of his foil. John Tenniel was blinded in one eye from that point on, but supposedly kept this information from his father out of a desire to spare his feelings. With such an unwillingness to express anything personal, the only other viable primary source becomes the artist’s work.

Even here Tenniel refrained from outright personal expression: the subjects and political stances expressed in his *Punch* cartoon reflected not the artist’s opinions, but the opinions of his editors who gave him subjects and captions readymade at the magazine’s weekly meetings. Thus to stay in business in this manner. The forward-looking Dalziels opened their own printing agency in 1857 to produce gift books as a means to increase their profit margins. Their venture, “Camden Press,” was still in operations as of 1901 and allowed the Dalziels to remain in the printing industry after the decline of wood engraving. However, not all engravers were so lucky. George Dalziel, *The Brothers Dalziel: A Record of Fifty Years’ Work in Conjunction with Many of the Most Distinguished Artists of the Period 1840-1890* (London: Methuen and Co., 1901), 352; Twyman, *Printing*, 32-33.


the only remaining outlet for Tenniel’s personal expression in his *Punch* work was the particular imagery he decided to use to convey the week’s topic. By placing Tenniel’s imagery in its societal and personal context, it may be possible to unlock the artist’s opinions hidden in drawing choices made both consciously and unconsciously. Two such areas of personal choice were Tenniel’s conscious use of medieval imagery and his unconscious errors of anachronism.

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95 Spielmann, *Punch*, 463.
Tenniel used medieval iconography very frequently throughout his career. His was a political and aesthetic medievalism that pulled from the vision of the medieval in early nineteenth century Britain. Consider a typical medievalist cartoon from Tenniel, published at the height of his career in 1879 and titled “Á Outrance!” (figure 9). His use of medievalism is both political and moralistic: the pre-tilting scene engages the viewer politically in its depiction of a Parliamentary election as feudal ritual, and moralistically in the implication of chivalric honor inherent in tournament and government. The variety of medievalism that culminated in the variety that Tenniel tapped into to produce “Á Outrance!” developed out of a trend of looking towards the past that originated in the eighteenth century. The intense cultural interest in the mediaeval past that marked Tenniel’s generation came out of the marriage of the gothic literary genre and a renewed interest in the feudal system of social order that arose in the face of the rapid change of the latter eighteenth and early nineteenth century.

European medievalism began before the word “medieval” existed (the term first appeared in 1827). English interest in the Middle Ages began in the seventeenth and eighteenth century with the rise of antiquarian societies. These societies promoted research into the medieval period on the grand scale, but this research—undertaken by interested gentlemen—was often driven by emotion and was not systematic. On the popular culture front, the renewed interest in the past

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96 John Tenniel, “Á Outrance!” in Punch, Vol 77, 19 October 1879.
97 Chandler, Order, 25.
was largely embodied in the gothic literary genre, which used the medieval world as a means of examining themes of death and mortality. Medieval ruins and graveyards often formed the backdrop of these moody gothic works, their purpose more fantasy-oriented than didactic. This enthusiasm was cathartic, but in a way largely devoid of the overt politicization that would appear later. As historian Alice Chandler states in *A Dream of Order*: “This literary medievalism…helped in its turn to build up a generally accepted sense of what the Middle Ages had been like and established the past as an imaginative entity with a life of its own. The existence of this imagined world…provided a new area for romantic role-playing.” Though this “role-playing” may have been devoid of political impulse at the time, it established the Middle Ages as an ideal to be tapped into later on.

As industrialism began to change the social fabric of Europe more obviously in the early nineteenth century, there developed a corresponding rise in interest in the medieval social order that had largely disappeared. This social brand of medievalism—one that existed mainly in the upper-middle and upper classes—was invested in presenting medieval systems of social order as models to be emulated by modern society. Sir Walter Scott was the author most associated with the early manifestations of this movement, his books intended as overt signposts to guide society back to its proper feudal order.

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100 Chandler, *Order*, 18.
103 It should be noted that this sketch of English medievalism is more accurately a sketch of the medievalism that permeated Tenniel’s life. This should not be taken as a survey of how the interest in the medieval impacted the lower classes, as Tenniel did not exist within that social sphere. Though he drew for a middle class audience, his were conservative, upper-class-leaning sensibilities.
Writing in the early nineteenth century, Scott revived the genre of chivalric romance, grafting it to the emotionally-inspired brand of medieval research promoted by the antiquarian societies. The result was a highly popular variety of historicized fiction which was heavy on chivalric moralizing.\textsuperscript{104} Scott’s writing successfully combined the “role-playing” of the earlier Romantic gothic literature with moralizing that had political implications: Scott combined “eighteenth-century concern for the freedom of the past with nineteenth century interest in its security and order” and in doing so, he “turned the Middle Ages into a mythical kingdom whose laws and customs could legislate for the present,” in the words of Chandler.\textsuperscript{105}

Scott’s novels presented medieval worlds built on chivalric honor and unspoken feudal ties that contrasted with the social problems of the overwhelmingly capitalist nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{106} In the words of historian Raymond Chapman, “the past seemed to contain more real humanity, in which better personal relations were possible than in the age of the ‘cash nexus.’”\textsuperscript{107} These were powerful ideas in a century that began with widespread dissatisfaction among the poor that culminated in 1830s Chartism on the political front and the “Hungry Forties” on the economic.\textsuperscript{108} Scott’s novels presented a noble class who upheld their feudal responsibilities to the common people, and a common people who respected their own place in that order.

\textsuperscript{104} Alexander, \textit{Medievalism}, 30-31.
\textsuperscript{105} Chandler, \textit{Order}, 25.
\textsuperscript{106} Though the social order was often changing in Scott’s novels, a sense that adherence to the old chivalric feudal relationships would bring society back to balance generally pervaded. Chandler, \textit{Order}, 35.
Regardless of the historical validity of this vision (for one, it ignored much of the harsher realities of the Middle Ages), it proved to be very attractive to early nineteenth century British who saw their own social order crumbling.\footnote{Chandler, \textit{Order}, 51.}

Though Scott paved the way in literature, medievalism overtly spread from literature into politics through the person of pamphleteer William Cobbett. A self-described “yeoman” and grandson of a farm worker, Cobbett was a polemic proponent of Parliamentary reform and used appeals rooted in medievalism to protest a multitude of abuses he saw occurring in the British government, a list ranging from rotten boroughs to the Corn Laws. Cobbett turned his ire particularly frequently on the evils of industrialism and urbanization, advocating a return to cottage industry and the centrality of the town as primary solutions to Britain’s societal ills.\footnote{Chandler, \textit{Order}, 78.}  

However, Cobbett was disinterested in the actual history of medieval England beyond a cursory level. Unlike other medievalists like Walter Scott, Cobbett had no background in medieval literature and art.\footnote{Chandler, \textit{Order}, 59, 62.} Instead, Cobbett’s appeals to the past were inspired by his personal experience living in the English countryside. Not surprisingly, his works on English history contained little in the way of actual historical fact and were nearly nonsensical in their overt bias.\footnote{Cobbett’s harshly anti-Reformation, \textit{A History of the Protestant Reformation}, suffered from this problem. So convinced was Cobbett that the entire English population had decreased since the introduction of Protestantism—thus explaining the declined rural population of his time—that he completely ignored other writers who had established that rural decline was due to immigration to urban areas. Cobbett called anyone who disagreed “down-right idiots” in his book. Chandler, \textit{Order}, 69-70.} Nonetheless, his writings permeated the political world—and with them his agrarian, feudalistic leanings.\footnote{Chandler, \textit{Order}, 78-79.}
By the middle of the nineteenth century medievalism had firmly established itself in the political world, a phenomenon most clearly illustrated by the rise of the Young England movement. The Young Englanders, a short-lived group in Parliament that included politician Benjamin Disraeli that was active in the late 1840s, generally held to the same medievalist desires articulated by Cobbett and Scott before them: aid the working class and improve society through reinstating and strengthening the vestiges of feudal England. The Young Englanders were especially interested in reinstating the significance of monarchical ceremony and tradition. The mantra of medievalists before them was again repeated: bring back the traditions of the medieval period, bring back the chivalric order with its unspoken ties, and a happy contented Britain will again materialize.

British medievalism was by no means limited to the spheres of literature and politics. By the mid-nineteenth century, medievalism had been firmly integrated into the world of British visual arts as well. This is most clearly seen in the work of the mid-century Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and the Arts and Crafts movement of the late nineteenth century. Both groups looked primarily to the middle ages rather than the Academy for their visual and thematic models.

Similarly to how the Nazarenes became enamored with medieval and Renaissance art in Germany, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (PRB) developed with the aim to produce art in the

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The PRB started with three Royal Academy students—Dante Gabriel Rossetti, William Holman Hunt, and John Everett Millais—who experienced disillusionment with the Academy reliance on copying from classical and idealized subjects and left the institution in 1848. Instead, Rossetti, Hunt, and Millais wished to produce naturalistic art that pulled from the overtly religious subjects explored in medieval art.

As such, PRB subjects tended to be medieval or biblical in origin, as seen in early compositions like Rossetti’s *Ecce Ancilla Domini* (figure 10), painted 1849 to 1851. Rossetti recalls the story of the Annunciation—already a frequent subject in medieval art—and does so using iconography connected with medieval depictions of the scene, most notably the lily that Gabriel offers to Mary. Millais’s 1849 painting *Christ in the House of His Parents* (figure 11) exists in the same vein as Rossetti’s work: instead of presenting Jesus in the idealized manner taught at the Royal Academy, Millais chooses to depict him and his family as rustic.

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116 It may seem problematic to the modern scholar that the PRB considered art before Raphael to be “medieval,” since in modern art historical surveys he is preceded by the Renaissance for several centuries. However, this distinction reflects the understanding of art history that existed in mid-nineteenth century Britain. The “Renaissance” in the modern historical sense was not established until after the 1850s when the term was used by the French historian Jules Michelet. Furthermore, the Brotherhood painters had little actual access to examples of art from the period they emulated. Reproductions of anything but the most well-known paintings from Italy were rare in England, and even these only provided a black and white image from which to work. These same restrictions and different distinctions applied in large part to Tenniel as well, hence his conflation of Albrecht Dürer’s prints with the medieval. To Tenniel, there existed no difference between early Renaissance and medieval styles. Alexander, *Medievalism*, xxvii, 134-135, 138-139.


118 Again, this reflects the assumptions of medieval art held at the time more than it does a modern art historical timeline.

Even when their subject matter was not overtly tied to medieval themes, the Pre-Raphaelites reveled in moralizing subjects, placing them in line with the other cultural manifestations of medievalism explored in this thesis. This can be seen in William Holman Hunt’s 1853 painting, *The Awakening Conscious* (figure 12). Hunt’s scene of a young woman’s moral awakening is definitely set in the modern day, but the Christian message fits with the Pre-Raphaelite agenda.121

The original Brotherhood only lasted until 1853, but the PRB social circle continued into the 1850s and 1860s and inspired a subsequent generation of artists to take up the medievalist theme.122 This generation included architect and designer William Morris (1834-1896) and painter Edward Burne-Jones (1833-1898). Morris especially is considered the progenitor of the Arts and Crafts movement, a socialist artistic movement active in the 1890s and early 1900s that celebrated the decorative arts. In particular, the movement celebrated decorative arts produced outside of systems of industrial mass-production as industrialism was seen as harmful to society. Morris himself was an ardent socialist, whose political aims included returning England to medieval forms of craftsmanship that favored the working man.123

**Tenniel and Medievalism**

By the time Tenniel joined the art world professionally in the middle of the nineteenth century, medievalism had firmly pervaded the fabric of British culture. As detailed above it

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120 Millais was heavily criticized for this painting at the time of its exhibition, among the most vehement critics being none other than author Charles Dickens. Alexander, *Medievalism*, 136-137.
122 Alexander, *Medievalism*,
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existed on both the artistic level and on the political. Tenniel overtly reacted to both of these areas of British medievalism through his work.

Even before he joined the world of art, Tenniel had ties to medievalism. Tenniel, like many other young people in his generation, read and internalized the writings of Sir Walter Scott in his youth.\(^{124}\) His affinity toward the medieval in the visual arts started from an early age, too. As mentioned in section three, Tenniel’s early artistic lessons with John Martin and the Martin children often took the group to the print room of the British Museum where he studied medieval manuscripts and copied from costume studies. Later, as a young artist, Tenniel would return to the British Museum print room to sketch. This love of medieval costume fostered at this point of Tenniel’s career bled into his personal life, too: the artist maintained a collection of medieval armor in his waning years and he remained generally interested in the English Middle Ages and Tudor period for the rest of his life.\(^{125}\)

The artist’s earliest professional work overtly harkened to the medieval, linking the interests of the young student to the style of the adult artist. His cartoon for the Westminster Hall contest, “The Spirit of Justice” (figure 5), fell firmly within the category of medievalism, with the central figure holding a great sword and its allusion to Raphael in the knight sitting bottom right.\(^{126}\) After gaining his commission, Tenniel travelled to Munich to study at the Nazarene school of fresco led by painter Peter von Cornelius. In Germany, Tenniel added to his medievalist repertoire.\(^{127}\)

\(^{124}\) During Tenniel’s time at the Royal Academy Schools, scenes from Scott’s books were very popular as history painting subjects. Engen, *Sir John Tenniel*, 6, 9.

\(^{125}\) Engen, *Sir John Tenniel*, 4-5, 8-9.


The Nazarenes, or Brotherhood of St. Luke, was a group of German Romantic artists that coalesced in Rome in the first decade of the nineteenth century over their shared interest in the medieval period. The Nazarenes were known for their biblically inspired and overtly Renaissance compositions, as seen in Friedrich Overbeck’s *Portrait of Franz Pforr*, painted in 1810 (figure 13). Overbeck depicts his friend and fellow brotherhood member in the manner of a Italian Renaissance portrait, complete with the surrounding religious imagery, figures, and townscape. By the 1840s, the Brotherhood had established a fresco school in Munich led by Nazarene leader Peter von Cornelius, where Tenniel went to learn proper fresco techniques. Tenniel picked up the medieval tendencies of his Nazarenes teachers during his time in Munich, though this was not the only influence that he experienced in Germany. Tenniel also encountered the heavy-line Germanic style of printing through copies of Albrecht Dürer’s “Triumph of Maximilian” woodcuts. The Dürer prints Tenniel encountered put great emphasis on line-work with minimal hatching within figures.

In addition to his painting, Tenniel’s early book illustration work pulled heavily from the medieval. His earliest book commission, S. C. Hall’s *Book of British Ballads* published in 1842, had Tenniel illustrating various medieval ballads. His designs for the ballad “King Estmere” (figures 14 and 15) were typical of his work for the book, which allowed Tenniel to display his historical chops quite early in his career.

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130 Tenniel also encountered one of Dürer’s copies of “Knight, Death, and the Devil” at one point, as evidenced by a *Punch* cartoon parody of the print Tenniel produced in 1887 titled “The Knight and His Companion.” Engen, *Sir John Tenniel*, 20; John Tenniel, “The Knight and His Companion,” in *Punch*, Vol 92, 5 March 1887.
131 It is interesting to note that, contrary to the customs of mid-nineteenth century book publishing, Hall bothered to list both the illustrator (or “designer”) and the wood engraver in the list of illustrations.
By the 1840s and 1850s, Tenniel had moved away from his earlier high art aspirations of fresco and other forms of painting, and pragmatically turned his attention to illustration—and cartoons after 1850—full time. However, Tenniel’s turning away from the so-called “high arts” by no means diminished his attachment to medieval imagery. The body of work Tenniel created during this mature phase of his career still contained a great deal of the Middle Ages: a very conservative estimate puts the number of Tenniel’s large cut political cartoons using medieval imagery at one hundred twenty-five. This figure contains only the political cartoons the artist produced as head cartoonist between 1864 and 1901; Tenniel also produced a great many unsigned medieval initials and small cartoons during his early years at *Punch* (1851 to early 1864), putting the true total of Tenniel’s medieval-themed work at a much higher figure.

The high degree of medievalism present in Tenniel’s *Punch* initials could have something to do with his predecessor, the artist Richard “Dicky” Doyle. Doyle was a well-known illustrator of his time and he had worked as a cartoonist for *Punch* since nearly the magazine’s beginning; he joined the staff of *Punch* only in its second year of publication, 1843. Tenniel’s first year on the *Punch* staff, 1850, was Doyle’s last. The events were very much related: Dicky, a Catholic from a Catholic family, found himself at odds with *Punch*’s staunch pro-Protestant, “anti-papist” views. A particularly vehement anti-Catholic John Leech cartoon and accompanying article by

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132 It should be noted that medievalism was not the only historicizing influence on Tenniel’s work. The artist also produced an overwhelming amount of material pulling from classical antiquity, especially relating to “Britannia,” the Greco-Roman goddess symbolizing Great Britain. However, due to research time constraints, this analysis will only address the medieval side of Tenniel’s historical iconography.

133 In fact, Tenniel’s small cartoons and initials contain more medieval imagery per capita than his later large cuts, which scholar Michael Hancher attributes to how close initials were to the practice of medieval manuscript illumination. Hancher, *Tenniel Illustrations*, 46; Simpson, *Aspects*, 114-121.

Douglas Jerrold finally prompted Doyle to tender his resignation on November 27, 1850. Tenniel was hired shortly thereafter.¹³⁵

Doyle may have left the magazine, but he left behind an iconographic style that his young replacement, Tenniel, quickly picked up. Possibly as a result of his Catholic heritage or just because medievalism was so popular at the time, Doyle’s *Punch* initials and small cartoons—not to mention his illustration work outside of *Punch*—pulled heavily from medieval iconography. This style had brought Doyle a popular following: as Rodney Engen points out, readers had come to expect Doyle’s “endearingly boyish…storybook” medieval images. Adopting Doyle’s established style provided new cartoonist Tenniel with two-fold benefits: he had an easy means of endearing himself to Doyle’s former audience, and it allowed him to work with a subject matter where he already felt very comfortable, the Middle Ages.¹³⁶

And work he did. Though Tenniel did eventually break away from close emulation of Doyle’s particular style, he did not break away from medieval subjects.¹³⁷ While his *Punch* initials frequently pulled from the iconography of the Middle Ages, Tenniel also went beyond this purely decorative medieval illuminative style, and often entered the realm of playful humorous narrative. This theme can be seen throughout his initials: two “T” initials from 1856

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¹³⁵ Rodney Engen points out in *Richard Doyle* that the reasons for Doyle’s leaving *Punch* were less devoutly religious (Engen quotes Doyle’s flip reply to being asked why he was Catholic: “Because I possess but little religion, so that what I have must be of the very best possible quality”) and more socially-minded than the contemporary sources would suggest. Doyle’s decision made him a polarizing figure in the press, the episode a microcosm of the constant tension between Catholics and Anglicans in Victorian Britain. Engen, *Doyle*, 89-91; Engen, *Sir John Tenniel*, 24-26.

¹³⁶ Engen, *Sir John Tenniel*, 27.

¹³⁷ Engen gives the first major political cartoon created for *Punch* as the point Tenniel broke away from Doyle, “Lord Jack the Giant Killer” published February 1, 1851. Though a distinct departure from Doyle’s pro-Catholic stance (Tenniel came from a Huguenot family after all), it still used overt medieval imagery to convey its point. Engen, *Sir John Tenniel*, 27; *Punch*, Vol. 20, Feb. 1, 1851.
(figure 16) and 1857 (figure 17) depict jaunty medieval figures, a subject continued throughout 1857 with two “M” initials (figures 18 and 19) and an “A” (figure 20).  

Medievalism encroached into other areas of Tenniel’s early work. As one of the draftsmen on staff, his duties often had him producing material for the annual *Punch* Almanack. Like initial-work, Almanack-work demanded the artist to fill space with light narrative decoration and Tenniel’s choice for that decoration often harkened to the medieval. Tenniel’s Almanack Calendars illustrate this propensity on the part of the artist. Consider the artist’s Almanack for 1855 (figure 21): Tenniel peopled the borders of his calendar with a crazy tableau of medieval figures, from the wizard Mr. Punch in the bottom left, a medieval love scene in the top right, and various comedic scenes from the Middle Ages down the bottom right side. Tenniel’s calendar from the next year (figure 22) continued the theme in its progression of tiny knights.

Early Tenniel initials were generally playful in theme, but the artist’s medievalism assumed a more serious political tone in his later large cut political cartoons. By the time he took on the responsibilities of head cartoonist after John Leech’s death in 1864, Tenniel had dropped a much of the playful narrative attitude that had pervaded his initials. His Large Cut cartoons took on a classical sobriety. However, these later cartoons retained Tenniel’s affinity for medievalism in their representation of political happenings in the visual language of the Middle Ages.


139 In fact, this was Tenniel’s *first* assignment upon joining the magazine in 1850. See section 3, “John Tenniel’s Life and Work.”


A recurring theme in Tenniel’s cartoons reframed Parliamentary procedure in the language of medievalism. An early example of this variety of medievalism appeared in 1866, in a cartoon titled “Derbye Hys Straite Fytte” (figure 23). “Derbye” depicts the then-Prime Minister Edward Smith-Stanley, Fourteenth Earl of Derby, with his squire “Dizzy,” the Chancellor of the Exchequer Benjamin Disraeli. Tenniel captures the Conservative Lord Derby in the process of donning his ill-fitting armor, representing the (disappearing) protection afforded by politically old-fashioned “Tory Measures” and the support of the London Standard.142

The political medieval metaphor appeared throughout Tenniel’s career. A common theme in Tenniel’s cartoons found William Gladstone—on-and-off Liberal Prime Minister, political opponent of Disraeli, and Tenniel favorite—as the chivalric defender of Britain, as seen in “Twelfth-Night at St. Stephen’s,” published in 1881 (figure 24). “Twelfth-Night” depicts Gladstone clad in armor, leading a procession of caricatures and personified political parties all celebrating Twelfth Night.143 This link between Gladstone and the medieval reappears in “The Broken Covenant,” published in 1885 (figure 25) which repeats the Gladstone as knight motif, albeit with a more serious subject than Twelfth Night revelry. Gladstone, nearing the end of his second tenure as Prime Minister, expresses his disapproval of Russia’s recent belligerent actions in Afghanistan, known as the “Penjdeh Incident.” The stern-faced, armor-clad P.M. holds out his broadsword and looks away from a tome inscribed with “Penjdeh Covenant.”144 Gladstone fills the role of representative of British interests in the world sphere by embodying the chivalric associations inherent to the medieval knight. “Unarming” from 1894 (figure 26) marks the last

143 John Tenniel, “Twelfth-Night at St Stephen’s,” in Punch, Vol 80, 8 January 1881.
time Gladstone appeared as the P.M. knight. Appearing just after Gladstone was voted out of office for the last time, Tenniel depicts the politician in the same medieval costume seen in “Broken Covenant.” However, instead of upholding British interests through chivalric leadership, Gladstone is pictured halfway through the process of removing his armor and hanging up his sword.¹⁴⁵

Another iteration of this motif recast the democratic voting process as a medieval tournament, possibly as a means of injecting excitement into a really quite dull affair for Punch’s middle class audience. Two cartoons from 1868 characterize the Parliamentary election in this manner. The first, from November 21, is titled “Before the Tournament” (figure 27) and shows the two candidates for Prime Minister—William Gladstone and Benjamin Disraeli—as knights in full tilting gear sizing each other up on horseback. Behind each contender can be seen their respective Parliamentary supporters on horseback.¹⁴⁶ Seven days later, after the election, the corresponding cartoon appeared in Punch: “In the Mêlée” (figure 28), depicting Gladstone and Disraeli mid-tilt. Gladstone has gained the upper hand, hitting Disraeli in the chest with his lance, symbolizing Gladstone’s success over his rival.¹⁴⁷

Tenniel’s work also often contained subtler shades of medievalism than the overt seen in his depictions of Parliamentary knights. Some of his work harkened to medieval forms of composition or used subtly medieval constructions. The latter is seen in a large cut produced for the January 16, 1869 issue of Punch titled “Justice for Ireland” (figure 29).¹⁴⁸ The cartoon references a turbulent episode in British and Irish history: the question of the Irish Catholic

Church and the associated revolts perpetuated by the Fenian Brotherhood and affiliated Irish separatist groups. At first glance the cartoon is grounded in classical imagery—the composition is, after all, dominated by the looming seated form of Blind Justice clad in the classical chiton receiving a burnt offering.

However, the exact nature of the pictured offering brings a subtle touch of medievalism to the cartoon: a kneeling William Gladstone offers a tiny model of an Irish Catholic church to the looming goddess. This construction—a figure offering a small version of a church building—was one popular during the medieval and Renaissance periods as a means of indicating the patron of a work of art. It can be seen in the early Renaissance artist Giotto’s *Last Judgment*, painted in Padua’s Scrovegni Chapel in 1305. Directly underneath the vacated cross of Jesus Christ can be seen patron Enrico Scrovegni presenting a tiny version of the chapel to the Three Marys (figure 30). In its capacity as an offering of construction, Giotto’s tiny church serves a different function than Tenniel’s burnt offering of destruction, but the iconography of micro-representing-macro remains similar. Another example of this motif (albeit one that Tenniel was less likely to have seen, though it illustrates its popularity and versatility) can be found in the Basilica of San Vitale in Ravenna, Italy. In this example, the figure of Bishop Ecclesius of Ravenna appears in a section of the sixth century ceiling mosaic handing a small version of the basilica itself to the seated figure of Jesus Christ (figure 31). Similarly to Giotto’s small chapel (and Tenniel’s tiny Irish church), the model basilica functions as an offering.  

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149 It is interesting to see Gladstone associated with even the subtler touches of medievalism.  
Besides containing subtle aspects of medievalist imagery, “Justice for Ireland” is compositionally medievalist as well. Compare the layout to that of the *Santa Trinita Maestà* (figure 32), painted in the late thirteenth century by the Florentine painter Cimabue. Cimabue’s icon of the enthroned Virgin Mary holds the infant Jesus Christ flanked by angels and positioned over Old Testament prophets.\(^{151}\) In Tenniel’s version, Mary is replaced by the figure of Justice and Jesus Christ with the goddess’s accouterments of sword and scale. This analysis fits well with the previously mentioned church offering, too: by occupying the compositional place of the Virgin Mary, Justice becomes the appropriate figure to receive the offering. Furthermore, the layout allows Gladstone to occupy the role of “prophet” below Mary, a clever twist fully in line with Tenniel’s admiration for the politician.\(^{152}\)

Tenniel used the composition seen in “Justice for Ireland” elsewhere, too.\(^{153}\) A cartoon that appeared in *Punch* the year previous, “Viva La Libertád” from October 10, 1868 (figure 33), uses a similar format, this time to illustrate the results of the Glorious Revolution in Spain which had culminated in the deposition of Queen Isabella II the previous month.\(^{154}\) Another version of the composition appeared in 1880, in a cartoon titled “Imperium et Liberas!” (figure 34). This time the “Mary” figure is Russian Tsar Alexander II, who is being warned of the February assassination plot by three masked furies while said plot unfolds below his dais.\(^{155}\)

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\(^{151}\) This composition was more-or-less standard in early Renaissance Italy, the most famous other example being Giotto di Bondone’s *Madonna Enthroned*. Eugenio Battisti, *Cimabue* (University Park and London: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1967), 63.

\(^{152}\) Engen, *Sir John Tenniel*, 113-115.

\(^{153}\) Though it was not a *Punch* drawing, Tenniel’s submission to the Westminster contest in 1845, “The Spirit of Justice,” followed this composition, too. See figure 5.


\(^{155}\) While the February 1880 plot against the Tsar’s life detailed in Tenniel’s cartoon failed, another the next year would succeed. John Tenniel, “Imperium et Libertas!” in *Punch*, Vol 78, 28 February 1880.
These examples serve to illustrate the importance Tenniel placed in the medieval image. This area of imagery allowed Tenniel to tap into an already existing nostalgic font in Victorian society. Not only did medieval iconography already have political and literary associations attached, it had artistic associations, too. Furthermore, it could possibly be read as meaningful for Tenniel personally, too. The artist exhibited an attachment to medieval subjects from an early age, an interest that is documented to have followed him into his adult life.\textsuperscript{156} It seems likely that Tenniel’s medieval cartoons must have been at least somewhat a result of his personal attachment to the era. This line of reasoning requires Tenniel to have inserted his own personal preferences into his work, a practice that the taciturn artist never confirmed outright. However, by looking at another area of imagery where Tenniel appears to have been influenced by personal experience, the case that Tenniel’s \textit{Punch} work was influenced in this manner can be strengthened. This other area of imagery is his depictions of technology, especially railroad technology and bicycles.

\textsuperscript{156} I.e., frequent trips to the British Museum to study costume as well as his extensive arms and armor collection. Engen, \textit{Sir John Tenniel}, 8.
5 – Railroad Technology and Victorian Society

They come! the shrieking steam ascends,
   Slow moves the banner’d train;
They rush! the towering vapour bends –
   The kindled wave again
Screams over thousands, thronging all
To witness now the funeral
   Of low-created pain.

For mind shall conquer time and space;
   Bid East and West shake hands!
Bring, over Ocean, face to face,
   Earth’s ocean-sever’d strands;
And, on his path of iron, bear
Words that shall wither, in despair,
   The tyrants of all lands

From Verses on the Opening of the Sheffield and Rotherham Railway, 1840.157

The intense interest in the medieval past that pervaded Victorian society belied rapid technological changes occurring simultaneously during the period. Nineteenth century England is sometimes stereotyped as a stagnant time, but this characterization could not be further from the truth. In reality, the Victorian era was a period of great technological and social change. This change began even before Queen Victoria ascended the throne in 1837. The Reform Bill of 1832, which greatly increased the number of eligible male voters in England, moved the country in the direction of democratic government. The next few years saw the passage of laws to protect factory workers and the beginnings of welfare programs to help the poor.158 The Victorian

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technological front was dominated by the idea that “progress” was leading toward a better society.\textsuperscript{159} For example, at the beginning of the nineteenth century the limiting factor of how fast a person or message could travel was the speed of a horse. By the end of the Victorian Era, the steam locomotive made the transport of goods and people cheap and fast, and the telegraph and telephone allowed messages to travel at the speed of light.\textsuperscript{160} Tenniel and his contemporaries lived during a truly liminal, transitional period.

A complete survey of the social and technological change that occurred during the nineteenth century would fill several volumes. However, one can achieve something of an understanding of the change propagated in Victorian Britain by looking at a selective and highly visible area of rapid change: the implementation of steam locomotion. Few areas of nineteenth century technology have been analyzed as frequently or as readily as the steam-powered railroad system. Steam power was a highly discussed contemporary issue, too, adding to its analytical usefulness. Finally, steam locomotion offers a uniquely visible continuum of change, in contrast to other processes reforming English society. The images of the noisy, smoky locomotive and the giant construction projects that laid the track for said machines offer a much more visible emblem of change than the quieter, though arguably equally impactful, legislative changes to social policy occurring simultaneously. Even other areas of drastic technological change like the implementation of the telegraph were less visible.\textsuperscript{161}

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\textsuperscript{160} Mitchell, \textit{Daily Life}, 1-15.
Looking at Tenniel’s depictions of technology is a particularly useful approach for several reasons. For one, it forces selectivity in examples: technology appears so sparingly in his work—especially when compared to the relative glut of historical imagery—that the examples that do exist stand out and can be easily compared to one another. This also has the added benefit of highlighting the presence (or lack thereof) of the evolution of drafting models over time. With generally large temporal gaps between examples, differences and similarities that would indicate an artist keeping up with technological change stand out starkly.

Secondly, the aforementioned technological change is very well documented in History of Technology literature, giving the researcher access to a historical background more complete than other areas of iconography. The forms of technology examined here evolved, and did so in a widely recorded and verifiable way. Though, as mentioned in the introduction, this project does not aim to point out how Tenniel got so-and-so flange wrong in so-and-so depiction of such-and-such train—a boring and not terribly useful approach—it is useful to have a well-documented backdrop against which to verify the validity of labelling something as “anachronism.” Furthermore, in certain areas the corresponding techno-historical backdrop has the capacity to serve as more than just a simple comparison point, and actually can contribute to an understanding of the reasons behind the way technology was depicted. For instance, the development of the bicycle and its changing interaction with pre-existing transportation methods

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such as horse riding can help illuminate certain drawing choices made by Tenniel. This particular example will be explored below. Before delving into the particulars of John Tenniel’s attitudes toward the train and other technologies, he must be placed within the context of his native era.

The Railroad in Art, High and Low

Continuing with the thread of “visibility,” a good place to start building an understanding of the Victorian view of steam technology is to investigate how it appears in visual culture. The artists of Tenniel’s generation often viewed steam technology through an apprehensive or at least gloomy lens. J.M.W. Turner’s well-known 1843 painting, *Rain, Steam, and Speed: The Great Western Railway*, (figure 35) represents the artist’s feelings of the loss of “Old England” to steam power. Turner’s painting depicts an idyllic English landscape that has been disturbed by unwelcome presence of a railroad bridge and steam locomotive. Subtle visual puns like the hare dashing along the locomotive accentuate the theme of old notions of “speed” versus new technology.\(^{163}\) A similar comparison between the old and new worlds of speed is apparent in Turner’s decision to include an old footbridge in the distance, a faint and receding emblem of a disappearing past.\(^{164}\)

A more overtly damning (literarily) depiction of the locomotive in art can be found in the Romantic painter John Martin’s *The Last Judgment*, painted in 1853 (figure 36). Typical of

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\(^{163}\) This is a somewhat contested reading of the painting, but it does fit with other contemporary treatments of steam locomotion. Turner reportedly considered the locomotive to be quite ugly. Ian Carter, *Railways and Culture in Britain: The Epitome of Modernity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 52; Ian Kennedy and Julian Treuherz, *The Railway: Art in the Age of Steam* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), 47.

Martin’s work, The Last Judgment is biblically inspired, the center panel of a triptych detailing the events of the final days of Earth. The form of the painting is typical of the genre: the left side depicts the Saved and the white city of heaven, while the right shows the horrible fate of the damned being sucked into the Earth. Martin has updated the damned parties compared to earlier Judgments, however, and has included a full locomotive with passenger cars driving headlong into Hell. According to art historians Ian Kennedy and Julian Treuherz, the painting is emblematic of popular perceptions of the railroad: “Martin’s painting makes no bones about the apprehension the railway could inspire in the early days, as something not just new and disturbing but uncontrollable and cataclysmic.”

As mentioned previously, Tenniel’s earliest art instruction came from Martin, the painter’s Romantic sensibilities possibly contributing to Tenniel’s view of railroads later in life.

The theme of railroads and steam trains as “ruiners” of British culture and landscape was not limited to the purviews of “high art;” steam travel appeared frequently in popular visual culture as well. The theme appeared aplenty in cartoons from the early Victorian period as well. Take work produced by prominent Punch cartoonist and contemporary to Tenniel, John Leech, for instance. Leech’s “Railway Juggernaut” from 1845 (figure 37) depicts a locomotive labeled “speculation” destroying the families of the men kneeling in front of it.

Another Leech, “A Dangerous Character” (figure 38) from 1847, shows an anthropomorphized train locomotive

165 Kennedy and Treuherz, The Railway, 47-49.
166 The approach to portraying locomotives taken by Martin and Turner—that is, the choice to hide the mechanical reality of the machine behind billowing smoke and steam—would be repeated by the Impressionists in 1860s and 1870s France. Claude Monet in particular tended to shroud the form of the locomotive in steam when they appeared in his paintings, as seen in Train in the Snow at Argenteuil (1875), Le Pont du chemin de fer à Argenteuil (1873), and The Saint-Lazare Station (1877). T.J. Clark, “The Environs of Paris,” in Critical Readings in Impressionism and Post-Impressionism, ed. Mary Tompkins Lewis (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 128-129.
representing the fraudulent “Railway King,” George Hudson, being led away by a policeman. Again the theme equates railroads with ruin.\textsuperscript{168} Finally, a George Cruikshank cartoon titled “The Railway Dragon” from 1845 (figure 39) plays on the theme of railroad speculation as a destroyer of families by turning a steam engine into a fire-breathing monster bursting on a family at dinner. The engine, with eyes of flame, chugs out its mantra: “I come to dine, I come to sup, I come I come...to eat you up!”\textsuperscript{169} It is clear that early Victorian artists and cartoonists neither liked nor trusted the steam locomotive.

The Railroad and Society

The world of art reflected the complicated and often negative societal feeling towards the railroad present during the early nineteenth century. On the one hand, the railroad brought speed in transportation and communication. On the other hand, steam locomotion required its users to drastically change their basic perceptions about travel, time, and space.

By the 1830s, it was becoming clear that the Golden Age of Coaching was nearing its end, and that steam-powered railroads were on their way to becoming the predominant form of long-distance travel in Britain. Historian Asa Briggs gives the figures for the rapid growth of the British railroad network in The Power of Steam: “Between 1825 and 1837…500 miles of railway tracks were opened. By 1844 there were 2,000 miles of track and by 1852 over 7,500 miles.” The 1830s and 1840s also saw rampant railroad speculation, which provided the backdrop for the

Leech and Cruikshank cartoons previously discussed.\textsuperscript{170} Railroads also prompted the development of entirely new ways of thinking about travel. Compared to coach travel, railroads presented the traveler with entirely different set of sensations and perceptions than they were used to. In particular, the train afforded travel at speeds most people had never experienced. This new form of high-speed travel led to an “annihilation of space and time,” as one observer put it.\textsuperscript{171} The railroad’s increase in speed shrank the travel time between destinations by at least two-thirds compared to coach travel, making the world smaller in the process.\textsuperscript{172}

The changes in perception continued beyond the sense of distance: because the train moved at speeds too fast to allow close examination and enjoyment of passing scenery, railroad travel inherently separated the traveler from the landscape. Instead of the three-dimensional, multi-sensory experience afforded by travel by coach or on horseback, the railroad journey was a relatively two-dimensional and visual one. For this reason, railroad travel was seen by some as boring, leading art critic John Ruskin to remark, “travelling becomes dull in exact proportion to its rapidity.”\textsuperscript{173} It is no coincidence that railroad travel—the journey made dull—coincided with the rise of a new travel activity: reading.\textsuperscript{174}

\textsuperscript{171} Historian of technology Wolfgang Schivelbusch quotes this early nineteenth century observer of railroad technology in The Railway Journey. Schivelbusch, Railway Journey, 41.
\textsuperscript{172} Schivelbusch, Railway Journey, 41.
\textsuperscript{173} Schivelbusch, Railway Journey, 60.
\textsuperscript{174} Recognizing a brand new market, booksellers in England had established shops in railroad stations by the 1840s. This trend was not limited to the railroad: the early nineteenth century saw the democratization of literacy in British society. Reading spread in other areas of Victorian life, too, until it was a nearly ubiquitous activity in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Richard D. Altick, The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), 4-5; Schivelbusch, Railway Journey, 66.
In the face of the new paradigm of the railroad journey, popular perceptions of the railroad harkened back to the earlier era of coach travel. The nineteenth century language of railways often pulled from the familiar language of the road and canal. As suggested by the moniker “railroad,” railways were merely familiar roads with the addition of rails. Railroads took on the associations of regular roads, too: it took some time for the notion that railroads could not function without monopolies on certain lines to percolate into society. If roads and canals allowed personal conveyance, why not railroads?¹⁷⁵

The impulse to link the railroad to earlier modes of transportation is most clearly seen in the design of the European railroad car. The earliest railroad cars were simply modified stagecoach carriages linked together in series (figure 40).¹⁷⁶ Later cars preserved this anachronistic design by dividing up available space into coach-sized compartments. These railroad compartments positioned the passengers facing each other, similar to how passengers sat in stage coaches a generation before. Yet in preserving this old order, coach-style compartments also added a level of tension to railroad trips. Unlike coach travel—where the long journey time was passed through conversation with fellow travelers and active engagement with the slowly passing landscape—railroad passengers generally spent their time reading or watching the landscape rapidly pass. The compartment created an environment conducive to conversation where none was expected or wanted. Thus the configuration of European railway travel brought with it earlier expectations of behavior which did not fit the new transportation paradigm.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁵ Schivelbusch, Railway Journey, 28-35.
¹⁷⁶ Ellis, Lore of the Train, 46-47; Schivelbusch, Railway Journey, 75-80.
¹⁷⁷ Not surprisingly, lack of conversation among modern travellers was a common complaint among those nostalgic for the old days of coach travel. Schivelbusch, Railway Journey, 77.
The engrained associations of coach travel appear most obviously when the vestiges of the earlier mode of transportation were removed from railroad travel, as in the case of American railways. The United States had a much less well-established coach system compared that which existed in Britain, and as a result the American railway did not develop with the coach paradigm in mind. Consequently, American railroad cars had no compartments, just open spaces with benches or berths. These open cars made European visitors uncomfortable, a feeling visualized in a drawing made by a French visitor to the United States in 1848 (figure 41). The image shows the interior the car to be much larger than in reality and correspondingly empty, an unconscious visual embodiment of their discomfort without the partitions of the compartment. These images are significant beyond simply showing European attachment to the compartment, too: not only were trains represented overtly negatively in popular culture, discomfort appeared in subtler unconscious ways as well. This is similar to the manner in which Tenniel’s animosity toward the railroad appeared in his work, as covered in the next section, “Technological Anachronism in Tenniel’s Work.”

Stagecoach-esque railroad cars notwithstanding, transportation and society had irreconcilably changed due to the railroad. The multi-sensory, active travel style of the coach journey had given way to the passive mode of railway travel. The realities of railroad travel also produced new, serious maladies in passengers, produced by sensations and eventualities not

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178 According to Schivelbusch, American railroad cars may have been designed with the riverboat cabin in mind as the model. The boat was a much more important method of transportation than the coach in American history. Schivelbusch, *Railway Journey*, 102-103, 108-109.
180 It is interesting to note that the desire to reconcile old forms of travel with new was not a problem faced by the lower class. Coach travel had been too expensive for anyone but middle and upper class customers, so the lower class—suddenly able to afford travel via third class tickets—was unencumbered with past associations of travel and consequently accepted the paradigm quicker. Schivelbusch, *Railway Journey*, 70.
widely experienced before. The most traumatic of these health problems came from the ever-present possibility of calamity on the railroad. The railway accident—even at its most minor—introduced the common person to the condition of shock, something previously only experienced by soldiers engaged in battle.  

However, even the most mundane and uneventful trip would still subject the traveler to the vibration of metal wheels on metal track. If subjected to this sensation over long periods of time, as contemporary medical sources pointed out, the traveler would begin to show the signs of railroad fatigue: “The eyes are strained, the ears are dinned, the muscles are jostled hither and thither, and the nerves are worried by the attempt to maintain order, and so comes weariness.”  

To the early nineteenth century traveler, railroad travel represented something new, strange, and potentially harmful.  

The changes brought on by the railroad informed and colored society’s perceptions of travel during the early nineteenth century. Tenniel started life just after the wane of the Golden Age of Coaching—he never experienced the coach network at its height—but he did grow up immersed in backwards looking “coach-nostalgia” which possibly colored his own opinions on railroad travel. Just as his early love of the medieval greatly impacted the themes he explored in his professional work as an artist, Tenniel’s early experiences of locomotives (and their connection to the past) appears to have influenced the manner in which he portrayed this form of technology in his *Punch* work. In particular, he seems to have held the locomotives of his own youth as nostalgic models in his work throughout his adult career, possibly as a way of negating the changes that occurred since then.

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6 – Technological Anachronism in Tenniel’s Work

Railways proved another stumbling block for Tenniel. He preferred to rely upon his memories of those early and long out-moded trains he had studied as a student in London, adding to them what he thought were appropriate new “bits of metal”; as one surprised observer noted, the result was nothing more than “a bit of ironmongery that came into his mind.

Rodney Engen, *Sir John Tenniel: Alice’s White Knight*\(^\text{183}\)

Tenniel’s attitude toward the steam locomotive manifested itself in his depictions of this form of technology in his *Punch* work. Both Spielmann and Engen point to the example detailed in the introduction: the public outcry caused by Tenniel’s depiction of an early steam locomotive in his 1893 cartoon “Shocking Trade Outrage!” (figure 1), long after trains had drastically changed form. According to Spielmann, “the Flying Dutchman was running when Sir John’s locomotive still had the odour of Puffing Billy about it.”\(^\text{184}\) “Puffing Billy” was an early locomotive created in 1813 to haul coal in Northumberland. The “Flying Dutchman” was an express train between London and Exeter. Spielmann is being somewhat facetious here: Tenniel would not have encountered Puffing Billy and his depictions of locomotives do not incorporate elements of Billy’s distinctive design. Spielmann’s facetiousness is used for hyperbolic effect here: Tenniel’s pictured locomotive may not have been as old as “Billy,” but it certainly did not

\(^{183}\) Engen, *Sir John Tenniel*, 105.

\(^{184}\) Spielmann, *Punch*, 471.
reflect the locomotives of the 1890s. Furthermore, it is not an isolated case. When one looks at the continuum of Tenniel’s cartoons for *Punch*, it is evident that this is hardly the only example of such an anachronism in the artist’s work, either. When Tenniel depicted a British locomotive, he inevitably depicted one from his youth. This rule becomes evident when locomotives from earlier cartoons are compared with those that appeared later. Such an analysis reveals that Tenniel obviously cared very little about keeping his portrayal of trains up to date.

Tenniel’s depictions of locomotives did not evolve over the course of his career at *Punch*. The examples of trains that appear in his early work mirror those seen later on, sometimes with Engen’s “new ‘bits of metal’” but otherwise identical. Consider two locomotives that appear in early Tenniel cartoons from 1857, one from the Almanack Calendar heading for that year (figure 42) and the other from the July nineteenth issue of *Punch* titled “The Patent Safety Railway Buffer” (figure 43). Both drawings show different angles of the same locomotive, with its distinctive U-shaped front, wooden slat boiler, and flaring regulator valve behind the smokestack. That same design appears in two cartoons from the 1860s. The first, published in March 1867 and titled “A Block on the Line” (figure 44), shows a locomotive with the same slatted boiler and U-shaped front. The second appeared in August 1868. Titled “The Modern Dick Turpin; or, Highwayman or Railwayman” (figure 45), the cartoon depicts a railway director riding a locomotive racing the famous eighteenth century highwayman Dick Turpin on ghostly

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187 This cartoon contains another error in draftsmanship: Tenniel depicted the right rail as nearly perpendicular to the plane of the locomotive. John Tenniel, “A Block on the Line,” in *Punch*, Vol 52, 2 March 1867.
horseback. The railway director’s “steed” is almost identical to that seen in “A Block on the Line,” exhibiting the same U-shaped front and slatted boiler.188

Two final examples establish the continuity of Tenniel’s locomotive into the 1880s and 1890s. A cartoon from October 1882 depicting “The Parliamentary Armoured Train” (figure 46) contains the ubiquitous slatted boiler and flared regulator. The bottom half of the locomotive is mostly hidden by cart and steam, but the top hints at the same U-shape seen in previous examples.189 Finally, Tenniel’s locomotive form appears in a cartoon from the very end of the artist’s career. “The Fight for the Foot-Plate” (figure 47) appeared in 1899 and depicts the U-shaped front and flared regulator valve.190

Comparing Tenniel’s early locomotives to others that appear contemporarily in the work of his colleagues reveals some striking similarities. A pair of locomotives that appear in an 1858 cartoon titled “The Rival Curtii” (figure 48) by occasional Punch contributor Captain Henry R. Howard bear similarity to Tenniel’s standard model.191 Another, a John Leech that appeared in 1856 titled “Russia’s Difficulty” (figure 49), depicts the Tsar Alexander II playing with a set of tiny model steam locomotives (figure 50). Despite the small size of the locomotives relative to the image, Leech has taken care to include the same slatted sides and short engine length seen in Tenniel’s drawings.192 These similarities suggest that Tenniel’s locomotive model had some

190 This example lacks the slatted sides seen in previous examples, but this could easily be the result of omission during the wood engraving stage since the locomotive sits in the shadowed background. It could also illustrate Tenniel employing Engen’s “bits of ironmongery,” i.e. Tenniel making small changes to a model that stayed fundamentally the same. The same could be said for the single large driving wheel that appears and disappears in his drawings, without regard for when contemporary locomotives actually exhibited this feature. John Tenniel, “The Fight for the Foot Plate,” in Punch, Vol 116, 15 March 1899.
presence in reality and were not simply a product of Tenniel’s imagination. The train in question looks to be a product of the 1840s or 1850s, possibly a Crampton (figure 51) or Stephenson engine (figure 52). This fits with the timetable of Tenniel’s life and career: the 1840s were Tenniel’s years of study and the time he picked up his other mental models of armor, costume, and animals that he used for the rest of his career. If Tenniel was building his iconographical repertoire in these areas, it seems likely that he would have done the same in the area of technology, too.

Tenniel and the Bicycle

Along with locomotives, bicycles were a technology that Tenniel seemed to have no interest in depicting accurately or consistently. However, before diving into the particulars of Tenniel’s reception and treatment of bicycles, one must look at the presence of this technology in nineteenth century society. The “vélocifère,” or “hobby horse” as it was called in England, had existed since the late eighteenth century, but it did not begin to catch on as a means of transportation until the middle of the nineteenth century. The adult Tenniel lived through much of the patchwork of fads that ultimately ended with the familiar “safety bicycle.” Bicycles were thus not an inherent part of Tenniel’s world from a young age, and he was subject to (and participated in) the societal reaction to adaptation of this machine.

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195 The idea of a two wheeled machine goes back even further: designs for a bicycle-like machine exist in Leonardo Da Vinci’s notebooks. However, there is no evidence that anything of that type was actually built until the 1790s. Wiege E. Bijker, *Of Bicycles, Bakelites, and Bulbs* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1995), 20-21.
The earliest popular two-wheeled vehicle was the “Draisienne” (figure 53), built by Karl Friedrich Christian Ludwig Freiherr Drais von Sauerbonn in Mannheim (commonly known as Karl von Drais) in 1817. The Draisienne was a Laufmachine, or “running machine,” and featured no pedals or steering column. The user pushed the machine along with his feet in a straight line, stopping to physically turn the entire contraption if a change in direction was required. The Draisienne was initially popular as a curiosity in Karl von Drais’s native Germany, but became virtually unused there by 1830. Before it disappeared, however, the Draisienne had been seen by some as a possible replacement for horses. Blacksmiths and veterinarians particularly feared this replacement, and accounts exist of Draisienne sabotage perpetuated by these interested parties.\(^{196}\)

Though the Draisienne had become passé in continental Europe, it remained popular in England—where it became known as the “velocipede”—throughout the early nineteenth century. The velocipede received the addition of front pedals in the 1840s, and by the 1860s various builders had added simple brakes and saddles with springs for a smoother ride.\(^{197}\) The 1860s also saw an increase in velocipede sporting clubs in England; the machine was a popular hit among racing enthusiasts. This was the avenue by which the bicycle entered English culture. As Wiebe Bijker characterized it: “Whereas skiing began as a way of hetting about and evolved into a sport, bicycling began as a sport activity and evolved into a means of transport.”\(^{198}\) In the pursuit


\(^{197}\) Air-filled tires had not been invented yet, and the typical velocipede wheel had much in common with the carriage wheel. Bijker, *Bicycles*, 27.

\(^{198}\) Bijker, *Bicycles*, 37.
of faster speeds (and in the absence of gearing), velocipede front wheels increased in size, culminating in the “high-wheeled Ordinary bicycle” of the 1870s (figure 54).\textsuperscript{199}

The Ordinary was a highly dangerous device physically. Cyclists of the big-wheeled Ordinary were often pitched over their handlebars, resulting in a condition colloquially called “bicyclist’s face.” To some, it was also a dangerous device socially: bicycling became associated with social movements in the 1860s and 1870s. The activity became a harbinger of modern times and progress, ideas that brought with them associations of women’s movements and revolutions. The result was that the rise of bicycles during the middle of the nineteenth century also produced a corresponding rise in those against the machine. Bicyclists of the nineteenth century could expect both verbal and physical attacks from pedestrians, to which the police often turned a blind eye.\textsuperscript{200}

The bicycle’s role as a symbol of social change can be seen in an anonymous poem published by \textit{Punch} in 1899 titled “The Decoy Bike.” The poem details the efforts of the owners of an unpopular roadside pub to increase business by placing two step-through-framed bicycles outside (the titular “decoy”) to insinuate the presence of women inside. The scheme, according to the unnamed poet, was successful:

\begin{quote}
A pair of female bikes he hired, \\
And left outside his door; \\
No further outlay was required \\
His fortunes to restore
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{199} The “Ordinary” would take on the name “Penny-Farthing” after 1900, long after the popularity of the style had waned and models had fallen in price. It became the bicycle of choice for the lower class at this point due to its low price. Bijker, \textit{Bicycles}, 29-31, 41.

\textsuperscript{200} Bijker, \textit{Bicycles}, 38-42.
The cycling crowd that passed his porch

The coy machines espied;

Dismounting where they used to scorch,

They thought to flirt inside.201

In this example bicycles do not simply indicate the presence of nearby women to male cyclists, they indicate these women are of ill repute, willing to engage with men in the pub setting. Despite appearing at the very end of the nineteenth century, “The Decoy Bike” responds to popular associations between women and cycling. The social implications (and associated backlash) of the bicycle as instrument of female liberation were far-reaching and longstanding.

The salient point to be made in relation to Tenniel here is that during much of his adult life, two and three wheeled transportation—the menagerie of Draisiennes and hobby-horses, vélocifères, velocipedes, Ordinaries, tricycles, quadcycles, aellopodes, et cetera ad infinitum that roamed London—were continually in flux (thus not a set part of society), a continual nuisance for pedestrians and equestrians, and symbolic of other disruptive social change. Tenniel was an equestrian from an early age and rode weekly with friends and Punch colleagues in a group called the “Two Pins Club.” He certainly harbored no love for the socially and physically disruptive machine that commandeered roads and footpaths at the expense of their previous occupants.202

Tenniel’s animosity toward the bicycle appeared most famously in an incident recorded by Marion Spielmann. Similarly to the “Shocking Trade Incident” detailed in the introduction, another drawing published in 1893 drew the ire of Punch’s readership. A cartoon from December of that year titled “A Bicycle Made for Two” (figure 55) prompted a reader to write to the editors complaining about the utter impossibility of Tenniel’s machine. According to the detractor, the bicycle—which was composed of an amalgamation of bicycle parts from different decades—lacked a saddle for the front rider, placed too much weight on body tubing that was far too skinny, and the pedals resembled “gaucho’s stirrups” more than any example found on a bicycle in reality.203 The letter went on, complaining about the dire situation of the passenger:

Nor has the lady—riding behind, instead of in front, better accommodation, being in suspension over a frame that lacks a backstay, and above a wheel that buckles under her weight; while the handles are thrown up instead of down, and their bars so slender that they must inevitably break.204

Another cartoon, albeit one from earlier in Tenniel’s career, shows the shortcomings depicted in “A Bicycle Made for Two” were long in coming. “A Perilous Passage” (figure 56), published in 1869, depicts Emperor Napoleon III riding a tightrope above rocks and rapids labeled “revolution.”205 The bicycle in “Passage” is a different type than Tenniel’s later example—indicating that more evolution occurred in his bicycle than his locomotives—but many of the problems remain. Tenniel’s tubing is once again too small a gauge to sustain the rider’s weight and his handlebars are once again slender enough to invite breakage. Were Napoleon III literally,

203 Spielmann, Punch, 471-472.
204 Spielmann, Punch, 471-472.
rather than metaphorically, situated atop Tenniel’s bicycle, he would not have made it as far across the rope as pictured.

Two cartoons from 1869 illustrate differences between Tenniel’s approach to bicycles and those of his colleagues. Both present a premise based on a similar question: what if bicycles replaced horses completely, taking their already existing encroachment on horse paths to its logical end? Tenniel’s *Punch* colleague George du Maurier published a cartoon in August 1869 tackling that premise with respect to horse-drawn carriages. His cartoon, titled “A Novel Idea: To Brighton and Back in No Time” (figure 57), presents a fundamentally optimistic vision of the bicycle’s new place as successor of the horse: Du Maurier’s carriage is pulled by four cyclists who present a faster means of transportation than the horse previously afforded. In other words, Du Maurier’s bicycle is a successful replacement for the horse. Compare this to Tenniel’s own drawing of the same scenario, “Fun With a Rantoone” (figure 58) from the 1869 *Punch* Almanack. “Spriggins,” Tenniel’s poor rider atop his “Rantoone” (a type of tricycle), attempts to join a foxhunt populated by riders perched atop much taller horses. Much to Spriggins’s chagrin, the challenging terrain of the hunt—though easy for horses to traverse—proves disastrous for his flimsy machine. Tenniel’s version of the scenario is pessimistic about the fate of bicycles and tricycles, though optimistic for horse riders: he affirms that cycles cannot replace horses in every niche.

Tenniel’s disregard for bicycles is significant. Here is an example of the artist’s disregard for an object that actively impacted his life negatively: a disruptive, dangerous machine that took

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space on footpaths previously reserved for pedestrians and horse riders. It suggests that Tenniel’s feelings about certain changing aspects of his life did come out in his work through his treatment of certain niches of iconography.

Counterpoint: Tenniel’s Selective Attention to Detail

Considering the examples discussed previously in this section, one might be tempted to dismiss Tenniel’s anachronistic tendencies as the result of an artist with scant attention to detail who cared little about the contents of his drawings. However, this would be a mischaracterization, as Tenniel did exhibit great care and attention to detail in other areas of his draftsmanship. One of these has already been explored at length: Tenniel’s ardent study of the costume of the Tudor period and Middle Ages and his frequent use of the medieval in his Punch work. Several more examples serve to solidify the artist’s care in certain areas of his work.

One example comes (somewhat unexpectedly) from the pool of Tenniel’s locomotive depictions. Tenniel’s carelessness in depicting steam engines apparently only applied to British-made locomotives. In the very rare instances where Tenniel depicted aspects of the North American railway, he seems to have been more careful with the details. A cartoon from 1887 titled “The New North-West Passage” (figure 59) depicts one such engine gliding by in the background. Though (perhaps purposefully) lacking in fine detail, Tenniel’s locomotive here is distinguished by more than just the “appropriate new ‘bits of metal’” afforded by Engen. In particular, Tenniel has included a cowcatcher and ember trap—two components absent on British locomotives but conspicuously present on North American trains. Tenniel also rightly

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208 See section 4, “Tenniel and Medievalism.”
depicted the American machine with a longer, thinner boiler than found on its British counterparts.\(^{210}\) There was obviously a limit to how far Tenniel was willing to rely purely on his memory, and this type of locomotive—a variety he would probably not have encountered as a young man—passed that limit. This example serves to illustrate that Tenniel had the *talent* and *capacity* to bring mechanical authenticity to his British locomotives, but chose not to.

Tenniel also tended to focus his attention to detail when dealing with subjects close to him personally. This care extended to his hobbies. Tenniel’s equestrian tendencies are unsurprising to the viewer familiar with his drawings of horses and use of horse riding in his cartoons. Case in point: a cartoon that appeared in July 1869 titled “Easing the Curb” (figure 60). Here Tenniel depicts a horse hitched up to a carriage, being tended to by the then-leader of France, Emperor Napoleon III. However, the French leader is hardly the most important figure in the scene from a compositional point of view: the horse dominates the center of the frame and Tenniel has taken great care in depicting the animal’s musculature.\(^{211}\) Another example, this one from the 1880 frontispiece for *Punch* Volume seventy-eight (figure 61), shows Tenniel showing off his drawing chops: instead of providing a typical (and much easier) depiction of the racehorse from the side, Tenniel has deigned to produce a foreshortened view of the animal and jockey—the famously big-headed Mr. Punch—racing toward the viewer head-on.\(^{212}\) It seems only natural that an artist who was so invested in the world of horse riding would put an equal amount of care into his depictions of the horse.

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Tenniel’s attention to detail appears in another area of sport too, rowing—incidentally another hobby of the artist. Tenniel, a rower from an early age who enjoyed watching the rowers on the Thames as an adult, took special care to represent the sport correctly in his Punch work.213 Ironically, this tendency appears most starkly in the case of a cartoon not represented correctly, albeit for reasons outside the artist’s control. A cartoon from March 1883 titled “The Old ‘Stroke’” (figure 62) depicts P.M. Gladstone preparing to board a racing skiff to join his Cabinet members who are seated and ready to disembark. Tenniel has left one seat empty for Gladstone in the skiff, but the oarlock—contrary to typical racing procedure—has been tied (i.e. closed) without an oar. (The correct untied configuration appears in a cartoon published in 1869, titled “Well Rowed All!” [figure 63].)214 This error apparently was not original to Tenniel’s sketch (which presumably contained a proper untied oarlock) and was added by wood engraver Joseph Swain while cutting, to the utter chagrin of the artist. The annoyed Tenniel wrote Swain after publication to admonish him for his alteration, with the request that he “not make alterations without, at least, consulting me.”215

These examples illustrate that Tenniel’s disregard for models extended only to certain areas of iconography—locomotives and bicycles—and not others, specifically those areas he

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213. Engen, Sir John Tenniel, 3.
215. Another example exists of Tenniel sending a letter to Swain about an error in his work, though Tenniel was at fault in this second instance. An undated letter sent by Tenniel to Swain inquires about the possibility of correcting “County Councilor” to “Parish Councilor” in a cut. Seemingly minor, but significant to Tenniel—the artist was not uncaring about details. HL 104, Tenniel to Swain, 20 October 1883; HL 128, Tenniel to Swain, n.d.
cared about personally. They establish the artist as highly selective in terms of where he put his attention, not simply and indiscriminately uncaring overall.216

216 Technology was not the only area of Tenniel’s iconography where anachronism appeared. Michael Hancher points out that Tenniel also often depicted school children in an outfit called a “skeleton suit,” which had been popular in his school days, but long since fallen out of favor by the time Tenniel worked for Punch. The outfit was immortalized by Tenniel in his illustrations for Through the Looking-Glass in his portrayal of the twins Tweedle-Dum and Tweedle-Dee, who both appear dressed in the suit. Hancher, Tenniel Illustrations, 3-5.
Two figures contemporary to Tenniel can serve as foils to the artist’s sensibilities in the areas of medievalism and technology. These two figures are Walter Crane, a painter and children’s book illustrator active in Romantic circles for much of the latter nineteenth and early twentieth century, and Linley Sambourne, fellow Punch cartoonist alongside Tenniel. Both Sambourne and Crane used similar styles and iconography as Tenniel, yet differed in terms of execution. In addition, both figures were much more forthcoming in providing the historian with their personal opinions than Tenniel, making them especially useful as points of comparison.

Walter Crane

Walter Crane lived from 1845 until 1915 and was an active artist from the early 1860s until his death. Like Tenniel’s, Crane’s training started early in life with tutelage from his Royal Academy-trained father. Crane became enamored with Medievalism early in life too—a subject which permeated many of his later illustrations—and he even picked up the same heavy line-based Teutonic style as Tenniel. Crane was more involved in the particulars of wood engraving than Tenniel ever was, having spent time during his youth learning the trade as an apprentice.

Crane apprenticed for three years in the wood engraving office of W. J. Linton, starting in January 1859. In his autobiography, Crane describes Linton’s office:

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His office was a typical wood-engraver’s office of that time, a row of engravers at work at a fixed bench covered with green baize running the whole length of the room under the windows with eyeglass stands and rows of gravers. And for night-work, a round table with a gas-lamp in the centre, surrounded with a circle of large clear glass globes filled with water to magnify the light and concentrate it on the blocks upon which the engravers (or “peckers,” or “woodpeckers,” as they were commonly called) worked, resting them upon small circular leather bags or cushions filled with sand, upon which they could easily be held and turned about with the left hand while being worked upon by the tool in the right.219

Crane’s autobiography also makes it clear that he developed deep friendships with his fellow wood engravers during this time in his life, referring to the engraver under which he worked as an “excellent friend to me” and expressing amazement at the skill of the other engravers.220

Crane’s professional work was similar to Tenniel’s in many ways. In fact, Crane looked up to the Punch draftsman as a young man, stating in his autobiography that he was one “whose work [he] greatly admired.”221 The young Crane also trod in some of Tenniel’s familiar sketching haunts, making frequent trips to the Zoological Gardens to draw the animals.222 As an adult artist, Crane pulled heavily from the medieval in his illustration work. Consider a Crane illustration from Queen Summer or The Tournament of the Rose (figure 64), published in 1891. Two medieval footmen clad in flowers herald the coming of the titular Queen in Crane’s

219 This type of office would have disappeared completely from London by the time Crane was writing in 1907. Walter Crane, An Artist’s Reminiscences (London: Methuen & Co., 1907), 48.
220 Crane, Artist’s Reminiscences, 48.
221 Crane, Artist’s Reminiscences, 50.
222 Crane, Artist’s Reminiscences, 56-59.
The ties between Crane and Tenniel’s styles are evident here: not only does Crane use medievalism (down to the lettering that appears top left), his style uses heavy line in the same Germanic way. Another Crane illustration, from a series titled “Cartoons for the Cause” which appeared between 1886 and 1896 (figure 65), shows the intersection of Crane’s professional and political life. Crane produced this and other cartoons in the series for various socialist periodicals. Like *Queen Summer*, Crane relied on medieval imagery and Teutonic heavy-line technique in “Cartoons for the Cause.” Political theme notwithstanding, Crane’s style and theme again bear similarity to Tenniel’s in its medievalism and line technique.

Considering the two artists’ temperamental similarities, Crane serves as a sort of “super-Tenniel.” It is much easier to connect Crane’s art to his personal views. Crane was both highly invested in medievalism, and was an artist with obvious ties to the wood engraving profession. Like Tenniel’s, Crane’s work dealt primarily in the historical and, very often, the medieval. Furthermore Crane was more politically active than Tenniel ever was, though on the left of the political spectrum to Tenniel’s right. Crane was an ardent socialist and proponent of Aestheticism, a mid to late-nineteenth century movement that reacted against the Victorian notion of “art for art’s sake” by promoting the utilitarian value of the decorative arts. In both these capacities, Crane’s sensibilities have links to medievalism and wood engraving: the artist devoted himself politically and artistically to the plight of the working class by way of the vision of medievalism. Like Tenniel, Crane had close ties to wood engraving as a practice as well as the

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225 Walter Crane and William Morris were friends, and embraced socialism around the same time. Crane details his friend’s movement deeper into socialist theory in his *Reminiscences*: “Morris was first, of course, and I recall the period of his earlier lectures and addresses, which show his gradual conversion from his earlier attitude of ‘the idle dreamer of an empty day’ to an ardent and active Socialist.” Crane, *Artist’s Reminiscences*, 249–338, 253; O’Neill, *Crane*, 142–143.
working class practitioners of the wood engraving process. However, where Tenniel’s ties to these areas of his life are merely suggested in his cartoons, Crane’s personal and political ties appeared overtly in his work.

Linley Sambourne

If Walter Crane serves as a “super-Tenniel,” fellow *Punch* artist Linley Sambourne serves as the man’s foil. Sambourne was almost diametrically opposed to Tenniel in his opinion of changing technology, a difference that came out quite clearly in Sambourne’s work. *Punch* chronicler Marion Spielmann wrote that Tenniel’s “indifference to that ‘actuality’ which is the characteristic of Mr. Sambourne has often raised the howl of the specialist.”226 Tenniel cared not for the particulars; Sambourne cared much. This makes sense when taking into account Sambourne’s entry into the world of drawing: he almost was one of those howling specialists.

Sambourne entered the art world from a completely different direction from Tenniel and Crane: through the field of engineering drafting. Sambourne’s introduction to professional drawing came during his apprenticeship at the engineering firm John Penn & Son, where he was placed in the drawing office.227 Sambourne’s work as an engineering apprentice influenced his drawing interests for the rest of his life, and the echoes of this early technical training exist quite plainly in his work for *Punch*, especially in the artist’s attention to mechanical detail.

Sambourne’s drawings for *Punch* reflected his interest in machines, and were often impeccably mechanically accurate—a trait in which Sambourne took great pride. Sambourne achieved his high degree of mechanical precision by way of his extensive library of photographic

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reference material, which he himself mostly produced. Sambourne had taken up photography in 1883 as another pet technology and quickly incorporated it into his *Punch* workflow, often beginning his sketches for cartoons by tracing photographs from his library.\(^{228}\)

Sambourne’s interest in mechanical accuracy was aided by his tendency to be an early adopter of technology, in markedly stark contrast to Tenniel. He did not shy away from new technologies and frequently jumped at the chance to test new inventions. Though initially wary of the bicycle for many of the same reasons as Tenniel, Sambourne eventually became an avid cyclist and used (always accurately drawn) bicycles as a recurring theme in his work.\(^{229}\) Sambourne also rode the novel “electric tube” underground train soon after its opening in 1900 and later in life became an avid fan of “motor tours” around England conducted on the newly invented automobile.\(^{230}\) The numerous differences between Tenniel and Sambourne’s relationship with the changing world and technology is apparent when the latter’s work is compared to the former.

Looking at Sambourne’s depictions of steam locomotives, it is obvious that the man took great care to keep his drawings up-to-date. Consider an initial “A” published in 1868 (figure 66), Sambourne’s second year on the staff of *Punch*.\(^{231}\) Here Sambourne depicts two steam locomotives as the steeds for two jousting knights. Compare this 1868 initial to a cartoon of Sambourne’s titled “St. Gothard’s Tunnel” (figure 67), published fourteen years later in June 1882.\(^{232}\) Besides being a more adept example of draftsmanship, Sambourne’s 1882 cartoon

\(^{228}\) Ormond, *Linley Sambourne*, 102-103, 105.


\(^{231}\) Sambourne’s initials frequently used medieval imagery, same as Tenniel. Linley Sambourne, “Initial ‘A,’” *Punch*, Vol 55, 8 August 1868.

\(^{232}\) Linley Sambourne, “St. Gothard’s Tunnel; or, See the Conquering Engineer Comes!,” *Punch*, Vol 82, 3 June 1882.
depicts a noticeably updated steam engine. Unlike the Spartan 1868 example, the 1882 locomotive sports external cylinders, light box, and front boiler access hatch complete with securing levers—a far cry from Tenniel’s updated “bits of ironmongery.” Sambourne’s interest in presenting accurate drawings comes through when consciously depicting historical locomotives, too. A *Punch* illustration published in July 1881 titled “Punch’s Fancy Portraits. — No. 38” (figure 68) places Sir Edward Watkin on an early steam locomotive, a symbol of Watkin’s instrumental place in the spread of railroads around Britain. True to early nineteenth century locomotive design, Sambourne’s engine sports a short boiler, two sets of wheels, an open engineer’s compartment, and cylinders meeting the driving wheels at an angle.\(^\text{233}\)

In the same vein as his locomotive images, Sambourne never had the same issues depicting accurate bicycles that plagued the staunchly anti-bicycle Tenniel—possibly owing to bicycling’s place as one of Sambourne’s personal hobbies.\(^\text{234}\) Sambourne actually disliked the machines at first, joining Tenniel in his disapproval of “the spreading craze” that “disrupted his equestrian rides, either blocking the path or brushing past and frightening the horse.” However, Sambourne’s opinion changed over time, and by 1895 he had purchased a bicycle of his own.\(^\text{235}\)

Cartoons featuring bicycles that Sambourne produced for *Punch* reflect both his enthusiasm for the machines and his adherence to technical accuracy in his drawing. His earliest depictions of bicycles appear in the 1860s, within the first few years of his joining *Punch*, and are the invariably front-pedaled velocipedes popular at that time.\(^\text{236}\) Three examples from 1869

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\(^\text{233}\) Ellis, *Lore of the Train*, 33-35.
\(^\text{234}\) Mirroring his early adopter tendencies in the world of technology, Sambourne was something of a Jack-of-all-trades in the sphere of sport, too. “I have seen something from most sports…hunted-yachting cruises-fishing-cycling, golf and [shooting],” Sambourne once confided in *Punch* historian Spielmann. Ormond, *Linley Sambourne*, 40.
\(^\text{236}\) Woodforde, *Bicycle*, 24-25.
all depict this same type of machine: “Hints for Conversation” from January (figure 69), “Oh ! Then, This is what we may Expect to see this Season” from May (figure 70), and “Call it a toy indeed” from August (figure 71). All three velocipedes are accurate to the time, and none suffer from the structural difficulties that drew reader ire in the case of Tenniel’s drawings. Another Sambourne cartoon shows the variability of his bicycle models. “Herr Wagner” (figure 72), published in 1882, shows the eponymous figure leaning against an accurately drawn Ordinary bicycle. Finally, a bicycle that appeared in an 1899 Sambourne cartoon titled “Shall I Be Popular, Then?” (figure 73) shows the artist’s willingness to change models as technology changed. In the cartoon, Sambourne depicts a tiny bicycle and rider floating above the head of perplexed Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Michael Hicks Beach. Sambourne’s bicycle is clearly a diamond-framed Safety, the dominant bicycle type of the very late nineteenth and earlier twentieth century.

Sambourne’s adherence to accuracy remained even when the artist committed artistic blunders: a cartoon published in 1903 titled “The Race of Death” (figure 74) received reader complaints for depicting a family automobile instead of a race car. However, though Sambourne used the wrong type of car as a model, his drawing was still accurate enough that someone easily recognized the type.

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237 The last example further illustrates Sambourne’s mechanical propensity: in addition to depicting the velocipede’s mechanical workings accurately, the draftsman has added cranks and drive belts to produce the fantastic—yet completely mechanically feasible—breakfast-making contraption. Linley Sambourne, “Hints for Conversation,” in *Punch*, Vol 56, 23 January 1869; Linley Sambourne, “Oh ! Then, This is what we may Expect to see this Season,” in *Punch*, Vol 56, 15 May 1869; Linley Sambourne, “Call it a toy indeed,” in *Punch*, Vol 57, 28 August 1869.


Unlike Crane, Sambourne harbored no special ties to the working class or socialism, and unlike both Tenniel and Crane he developed no special relationships with his wood engravers. As such, Sambourne had no qualms with the changes in printing technology that so vexed Tenniel. In fact, as previously mentioned in this thesis, Sambourne quite resented Tenniel’s reluctance to adapt to new printing technologies. Corresponding with Sambourne’s attitudes toward printing and wood engraving, he had no problems depicting modern technology accurately, even relishing the task. Like Crane, Sambourne’s example serves as a counterpoint to Tenniel: if Sambourne’s love of the mechanical manifested itself so blatantly in his work, so too could Tenniel’s dislike.

Crane and Sambourne represent two polar opposites on a continuum of artistic temperament, sitting on either side of Tenniel himself. At the risk of generalizing, they serve here to represent the two directions in which Tenniel and Victorian society in general found themselves pulled: forward under the banner of “progress” and backward under the banner of medievalism. Tenniel is somewhere between, a man very invested in the past and wary of change yet existing within flows of change at both the micro level (as an illustrator in a changing printing industry) and the macro level of nineteenth century society. The desire to structure these circumstances with regard to Tenniel’s *Punch* work—both his adherence to historical themes and his persistent inclusion of anachronism—requires some additional methodological glue: nostalgia studies.
8 – Conclusion: Nostalgia Studies and Tenniel

This analysis has been based on the assumption that a careful viewer of Tenniel’s (or any artist’s) work can read into hidden intentions. Tenniel’s love and incorporation of medievalism coupled with the lack of care he put into keeping his technological drawing models up to date seems to suggest an individual dissatisfied with modern change. However, the famously taciturn Tenniel never stated his opinions outright as a rule, and never recorded dissatisfaction in personal writings or correspondence. After all, this was an artist who kept his blindness in one eye from his father out of love and respect.\textsuperscript{241}

There are also additional uncertainties inherent in the view that Tenniel’s anachronism indicated the artist’s attitude toward his changing world. For instance, what if Tenniel’s errors in draftsmanship are simply that: errors made by an artist operating on a strict weekly deadline? Tenniel also had his habit of refusing to use models, much preferring to draw from his photographic memory. For instance, when Tenniel took on the commission to do the illustrations for Lewis Carroll’s \textit{Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland}, he absolutely refused all the author’s suggestions for models for the titular character. Carroll commented on the issue in a letter to a friend: “Mr. Tenniel is the only artist who has drawn for me, who has resolutely refused to use a model, and declared he no more needed one than I should need a multiplication table to work out

\textsuperscript{241} Tenniel kept no diary or journal, and destroyed all his papers regularly leaving no body of personal correspondence behind when he died. Some letters from Tenniel to others exist, but are scattered across institutions found in the United States and England. The artist left little in the way of personal material behind.
a multiplication problem!" Teniel’s peculiar drawing habits provide a completely plausible source for his anachronism and drawing errors.

However, to acknowledge these susceptibilities and thus read Tenniel’s errors simply as products of pure chance would be superficial and naïve. It is true that Tenniel’s compressed schedule and memory-based practices added to his error-rate, but it is also possible that they made his work more susceptible to unconscious suggestion. In this way, his cartoons can be seen as a reverse Rorschach test, the artist forming the inkblot in ways that reveal hidden personal meaning. The field of nostalgia studies may provide a methodological lens through which to focus this meaning.

Nostalgia is an interesting phenomenon. The word first appeared in in the late seventeenth century in a dissertation by Johannes Hofer, a Swiss medical student. Hofer coined the word—a combination of the words “nostos” and “algia,” “return to home” and “suffering or grief”—to describe a peculiar medical condition in young Swiss soldiers. Upon leaving their homes for the first time, these soldiers fell ill to a mysterious wasting disease that sometimes ended in death. In one of several case studies that he presents in the tract, Hofer describes a man originally from the city of Berne but living in the Swiss state of Basel as a student. After a protracted time in Basel, the man fell into sadness and developed a fever that only abated after he was ordered to return to Berne. Hofer concluded that such fevers appear most commonly in young people who are separated from their homelands.

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243 “Nostalgia” was one of several possible terms Hofer coined for the condition; among the alternatives Hofer suggested were “pathopatridalia” and “nosomania.” Carolyn Kiser Anspach, Johannes Hofer, “Medical Dissertation by Johannes Hofer, 1688,” in *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 2 (1934), 381; Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), xiii, 3.
244 Hofer, “Medical Dissertation,” 382.
Since the early modern period, the conception of nostalgia has changed considerably from disease of the body to artifact of the mind to societal force. Hofer’s notion of the young as sole sufferers of the disease has also given way to a wider age range of “patients,” though the places of one’s youth do remain significant. In more recent years, nostalgia has been used as a tool in the fields of history and literary criticism.

Writer Svetlana Boym uncovers the phenomenon of nostalgia in her book, *The Future of Nostalgia*. Boym writes from the perspective of an immigrant to the United States from Soviet Russia, putting her in the position of having a very personal (and very painful) connection to the condition of nostalgia. Nostalgia is more than a desire for home, according to Boym, and it even goes beyond a simple desire to return to the past. At its core, nostalgia represents a desire for stability, or as Boym puts it “nostalgia is a rebellion against the modern idea of time, the time of history and progress.” Thus, crucial to Boym’s understanding of nostalgia is its inherent impossibility: the nostalgic individual deep down knows the irretrievability of the perceived early stability, yet the wish remains. Conversely, the nostalgic society performs much of the same work: the nostalgic zeitgeist looks back to a time of stability, where often none actually existed.

The idea of the “nostalgic society” is very applicable to British society of the turn of the century. Literary scholar Judith Broome ties the language of nostalgia studies to the world of eighteenth century British society in her book *Fictive Domains*. According to Broome:

Nostalgia emerged as a cultural construction at a time of accelerated social change and increasing social instability, as a response to the anxiety produced by such social transformations. The appropriation of a new term created a distinguishing category that allowed social and aesthetic value to be attached to the past and to the present that seemed in jeopardy.²⁴⁸

Though Broome is referring to the rapidly changing eighteenth century, her assertions apply to the equally rapidly changing nineteenth century. As discussed previously, the early nineteenth-century British were obsessed with their own medieval past, and this fixation had a great deal to do with the changes brought on by industrialism.²⁴⁹

Later Broome clarifies the process of imbuing “nostalgia.” According to Broome, nostalgia is more than just a state of mind. It is also a powerful performative process: “Nostalgia, imbued with supportive illusions, is a self-constituting performance that needs to be constantly repeated. Nostalgia has only an imagined referent; the lack of any historical referent is concealed by the repetition of a performance in and by nostalgic cultural products.”²⁵⁰ Applying this to British medievalism of the nineteenth century, it is easy to see the nostalgic performativity inherent in the actions of people like William Cobbett, Sir Walter Scott, and Benjamin Disraeli. The “historical referent” to which all three figures look as their guide—the chivalrous, orderly England of the Middle Ages—never really existed, but it also never really needed to exist. Cobbett’s consistent appeals to the better days of the “yeoman farmer,” Scott’s feudalistic novels, and Disraeli’s Young Englanders all contributed to the creation of the referent in their

²⁴⁹ Broome, *Fictive Domains*, 105.
²⁵⁰ Broome, *Fictive Domains*, 17.
own time, their performative actions making any necessity for the actual existence of the “happy England of yore” moot.

Within this framework, Tenniel’s use of medieval imagery and his anachronisms can be seen as connected through the web of nostalgic performance. This is most overt in Tenniel’s use of medievalism; after all, Tenniel’s cartoon fell within the purview of popular culture and mirrored the existing nostalgic medievalism that pervaded his native society. It is no accident that later examples of Tenniel’s use of medieval imagery in *Punch* revolve around the application of this trope to political themes. Medievalism was already part of the political framework of Britain—from Cobbett’s moralizing against Parliamentary abuses to Disraeli’s strengthening of medieval monarchical tradition—and Tenniel’s cartoons of Parliamentary procedure plainly tap into this font of national nostalgic feeling.251

Societal political associations aside, medievalism held nostalgia power for Tenniel on a personal level, too. As discussed previously, his early studies took him to the British Museum print room and Tower of London to copy historical costume, imbuing the artist with a life-long personal love of the medieval rooted in the experiences of his childhood.252 In his continual return to the subject as an adult artist, Tenniel can be seen as repeating the cultural performance required to maintain the referent of his early study days—simpler times compared to those he experienced later in his career. In this way, medieval imagery produced a double referent for Tenniel: it allowed him to tap into the larger nostalgic Zeitgeist of the Victorian age while simultaneously returning him to the personal world of his youth.

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251 It is interesting to see Gladstone in the place of chivalric defender of England in so many Tenniel cartoons considering Disraeli’s overt connection to medievalism.
252 Engen, *Sir John Tenniel*, 4-5.
The presence of anachronism in his work fits within this framework, too. As in the case of his personal connection to the medieval, Tenniel uses repetition of a theme here to produce his referent: again his days studying as a youth. By repeating his use of the same basic locomotive design, Tenniel again performs the nostalgic work of maintaining the lost time when these locomotives were common. His work is similar to the skeuomorphic design connections between early passenger trains and stagecoaches (figure 40). In both cases a new technology is couched in elements of an old for reasons of familiarity. However, the two examples differ in their referents: early passenger car designers looked to the previously-popular stagecoach as model; Tenniel looked to the era of previously-popular locomotives as his referent.

The same analytic framework holds in the case of his depictions of bicycles. Tenniel’s repeated unwillingness to depict bicycles that reflected those that actually existed at the time could be seen as Tenniel’s rejection of their acceptance as a part of society. Thus the repetition of ridiculous bicycle models in Tenniel’s work represents nostalgic work meant to evoke a time when they lacked firm societal affirmation and did not clog Tenniel’s horse paths. On the whole, the nostalgic work Tenniel exhibits in his work suggests an overarching affinity for the past over the present. Some of the change that affected his work is obvious—Tenniel famously disliked bicycles—but some may be more hidden.

One major negative change Tenniel experienced over the course of his career was the movement away from the wood engraving process, a change that proved detrimental to both the artist himself and the wood engravers he worked with closely. New technologies in the printing industry threatened to push Tenniel’s beloved wood engraving out of the publishing sphere, specifically the movement away from pure wood engraving to photographic processes over the course of the 1880s and 1890s which culminated in the switch to completely mechanical halftone
printing in the very late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These changes not only affected
Tenniel himself by requiring him to alter his long-established workflow and use different
materials, they drastically affected the employment opportunities of the wood engravers with
whom he maintained close professional relationships. \(^{253}\) Railroads—powerful and very visible
symbols of technological progress to both advocates and detractors—represented an area of rapid
societal change to Tenniel, and it is very possible that he linked the locomotive subconsciously
with other unpleasantly fast moving areas of his life like the professional changes in the printing
industry. This, coupled with his more overt nostalgia tied up in medieval imagery and the
knowledge of disruptions Tenniel experienced late in his career, seems to paints a picture of an
artist and man dissatisfied with modern change.

* * *

The introduction of this thesis set up a threefold methodological and analytical
framework to examine the work of John Tenniel employing Social Constructivism, Material
Culture Studies, and Nostalgia Studies. These three methodologies were deployed to accomplish
various tasks. Social Constructivism was useful as a way to look at Tenniel’s locomotives as
vessels of meaning rather than simply “incorrect,” as Engen and Spielmann had done. Material
Culture Studies provided a framework for treating Tenniel’s depicted technologies as objects that
could be read to understand and uncover obscured meaning. Finally, Nostalgia Studies provided
the connection between perceived old and new in Tenniel’s life and Victorian society.

\(^{253}\) Engen, \textit{Sir John Tenniel}, 140.
Ultimately the goal of employing these varied methodologies was to answer the question: “Did Tenniel’s depictions of locomotives and bicycles reflect his dissatisfaction with change and his desire to return to the simpler times of his youth?” More simply put, the goal was to determine if Tenniel’s early life guided his later career decisions. For the most part, the three employed methodologies contributed to the possibility of there being a connection. The Social Constructivists outlook suggested Tenniel’s construction of locomotives went beyond simply being “erroneous” and contained meaning connected to society. Jules Prown’s approach to Material Culture Studies gave credence to Tenniel’s locomotives and bicycles containing meaning connected to Tenniel’s inner state.

Lastly, Nostalgia Studies revealed the underlying tensions that existed at the macro level in Victorian society and the micro level in Tenniel’s life. Medievalism, prevalent in both Victorian society and in Tenniel’s personal development, profoundly affected the imagery and compositions he employed later in life. In the same way, nostalgia for his youth and the days before change set into his professional life could be seen as having driven his unwillingness to depict modern bicycles or locomotives. In this light, Tenniel’s medievalism and his mild “Ludditism” are two sides of the same nostalgic coin: the historical referent of his youth exists in both of them.

Unfortunately, however plausible the connection between Tenniel’s cartoons and his personal opinions on change may seem, an absolutely definitive answer to the posed question is probably impossible. Without Tenniel’s own voice on the subject, a conclusive answer is impossible. A researcher could probably get closer to an answer given a deep analysis of Tenniel’s entire body of work. Examination of the areas of Tenniel’s work not explored by this thesis—e.g. his body of book illustrative work and his use of imagery from classical antiquity in
his cartoons—could add to the evidence suggesting a connection, but ultimately without
Tenniel’s own recorded thoughts these would remain suggestions.
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**Primary source abbreviations:**

HL – Houghton Library, Harvard University

BC – Berg Collection, New York Public Library

SD – Linley Sambourne diary


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Grayson Van Beuren
Thesis – Material Culture and Public Humanities
John Tenniel and Technology: Anachronism and Social Meaning


