THE ART-UNION AND PHOTOGRAPHY, 1839-1854: THE FIRST FIFTEEN YEARS OF CRITICAL ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN TWO CULTURAL ICONS OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY BRITAIN

Derek Nicholas Boetcher, B.A., M.A.

Thesis Prepared for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS

August 2011

APPROVED:

Denis Paz, Major Professor
Denise Amy Baxter, Minor Professor
Olga Velikanova, Committee Member
Richard B. McCaslin, Chair of the Department of History
James D. Meernik, Acting Dean of the Toulouse Graduate School

This study analyzes how the *Art-Union*, a British journal interested only in the fine arts, approached photography between 1839 and 1854. It is informed by Karl Marx’s materialism-informed commodity fetishism, Gerry Beegan’s conception of knowingness, Benedict Anderson’s imagined community, and an art critical discourse that was defined by Roger de Piles and Joshua Reynolds. The individual chapters are each sites in which to examine these multiple theoretical approaches to the journal’s and photography’s association in separate, yet sometimes overlapping, periods. One particular focus of this study concerns the method through which the journal viewed photography—as an artistic or scientific enterprise. A second important focus of this study is the commodification of both the journal and photography in Britain. Also, it determines how the journal’s critical engagement with photography fits into the structure and development of a nineteenth-century British social collectivity focused on art and the photographic enterprise.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapters</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. EARLY CRITICAL APPROACHES, 1839-1846</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. CREATING A PUBLIC FOR ART: PHOTOGRAPHY AND KNOWINGNESS, 1839-1846</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. PHOTOGRAPHY AS A TOOL FOR THE ARTIST: CRITICAL APPROACHES, 1846-1854</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. ART CRITICISM OF PHOTOGRAPHY, 1839-1854</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. CONCLUSION</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The year 1839 holds a significant place in the history of art for it witnessed both the announcement of the invention of photography—through the announcements of the Daguerreotype in France on January 7 and William Henry Fox Talbot’s photogenic drawing in Great Britain on January 31—and the first issue of Samuel Carter Hall’s monthly journal, *The Art-Union*, on February 15.¹ Photography had an immediate and enormous impact on the way the entire world viewed and imaged itself both in scientific and artistic terms. *The Art-Union* did not produce nearly the same overall cultural effect as photography, considering that it was intended solely as a vehicle for the promotion of British art. But to the British art world *The Art-Union*, according to Helene Roberts, was “the very voice of the Victorian art establishment.”² It will be a valuable endeavor to study how a journal interested only in the fine arts in Britain approached photography during the early years of both concerns.

It is particularly important to study photography in conjunction with *The Art-Union*, since, taking into consideration that both pursuits came about at essentially the same time, the journal had an obligation to engage with the developing photographic enterprise in some fashion. Hall did not believe that a specific part of the journal’s mission was to encourage or discourage the development of photography, but one part of the journal’s mission was “to obtain early and accurate intelligence upon all matters connected with Art abroad” as well as “in the provincial cities and towns of Great Britain.”³ Existing Victorian journals did not have a stated, or even

---

¹ Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre was a French artist, inventor, and photographer who developed the daguerreotype, a one-off process where images were captured on a silver coated copper plate. Talbot was a British inventor and photographer who developed photogenic drawing—also known by the name calotypes and eventually Talbotypes—which was a more easily reproducible image captured on a silver coated piece of paper.
³ *The Art-Union* 1 (February 1839): 1.
implied, desire to engage with art or photography—excepting photographic journals—in such a 
direct manner. They could choose either to discuss or ignore photography because their overall 
cultural reputations had likely already been built prior to 1839, and did not require them to turn 
their attention to a new and untested activity—regardless of its immediate potential to have a 
significant social impact in the world. Although The Art-Union could choose to actively ignore 
photography, Hall’s declaration seemed to guarantee that the journal will directly engage with it 
in some fashion.

Accordingly, this thesis analyzes the ways in which The Art-Union reported on 
photography within its pages. One particular focus of this study concerns the method through 
which the journal viewed photography—as an artistic or scientific enterprise. Although it is 
important to understand The Art-Union’s critical engagement with photography, it is necessary to 
determine how this relationship fit into the structure and development of nineteenth-century 
British society. Taking this into consideration, an important topic of examination that is 
explored throughout this study is the commodification of both The Art-Union and photography in 
Britain.

Before turning to the analysis of photography in The Art-Union it is necessary to lay out 
the contextual and theoretical frame for this thesis. Although the history of photography has 
typically been written about in much different ways than what is discussed in this study, it is 
important to first understand how this thesis fits into the scholarly engagement with photographic 
history. The second component of the framework for this analysis is to contextualize Samuel 
Carter Hall, who was the founder and editor of The Art-Union from 1839 to 1880. The third part 
of the framework is an explanation of commodification and commodity fetishism. Finally, the 
framework will conclude with an outline of what is examined in each chapter of this study.
The Art-Union is not the only representation of the struggle with defining the identity of photography, since much of the nineteenth-century British periodical press debated this issue at least in small part. Photography’s historians have also grappled with determining the identity of their subject, both, according to Geoffrey Batchen, “as a system of representation and as a social phenomenon.” The scholarly discourse has split into two main groups over the past few decades—the formalists and the postmodernists. This discourse will be examined to provide the reader with an understanding of the conception of formalism and postmodernism as applied to photography, the important historians, scholars, and critics involved in this discourse and which side of it they fall on, and finally a determination of where this thesis fits into the larger discourse.

Batchen’s examination of what he asserts “appear to be two opposing views of photography’s historical and ontological identity” results in his determination that the formalist and postmodernist critiques are not as different as they may initially seem. He concludes that “both share a presumption that, in the final analysis, photography’s identity can be determined as a consequence of either nature or culture.” Postmodernism and formalism, according to Batchen, form a binary opposition, since “each depends on defining itself as not-the-other, allowing neither to actually engage the logic of otherness itself.” Batchen argues that the postmodernists and formalists, “at least in their dominant photographic manifestations, both avoid coming to grips with the historical and ontological complexity of the very thing they claim to analyze,” and then determines that by rearticulating some of that complexity he will look for “the identity of photography in the history of its origins” to understand if it should be considered

---

5 Ibid., viii.
6 Ibid., 21.
7 Ibid.
a product of nature or culture.\textsuperscript{8} Although the trajectory that Batchen takes in his study of the origins of photography is different than the one pursued in this thesis, his work is important to it for two main reasons. First, his analysis of the formalist-postmodernist debate provides a good frame on which to understand how the history of photography has been discussed in prior studies. Second, Batchen’s synthesis of the implications of the formalist-postmodernist debate as an underpinning to his study—meaning that in this work he falls somewhere closer to the middle of the spectrum—is an approximate match to how this thesis should likely be viewed in this critical and theoretical range.

The main components that form the formalist-postmodernist debate are, obviously the critical schools of formalism and postmodernism. Formalism is the much older critical school. When discussing its application to photography, it was the primary critical school of the 1960s and 1970s, although, according to Batchen, “it was already well established as a way of talking about art in general through the formidable advocacy of critic Clement Greenberg.”\textsuperscript{9} Batchen points out that “Greenberg sought to render the history of modernism as a continual search for each art form’s fundamental, irreducible essence.”\textsuperscript{10} Batchen contends that André Bazin, the French film critic, also followed this argument in a similar manner as he attempted to define the supposedly objective character of photography in terms of how it captured an image as the distinguishing quality of realism between it and painting. Bazin determines photography’s essential character as “the photographic image is the object itself, the object freed from the conditions of time and space that govern it.”\textsuperscript{11}

\textsuperscript{8} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{9} Ibid., 12.
John Szarkowski, the curator at the Museum of Modern Art from 1962 to 1991, and Peter Galassi, his successor as curator, also are important figures in the formalist movement who analyze photography’s pictorial syntax and conceptual origins. Batchen asserts that these critics focus on photography as images, through which they identify it “with an artistic rather than a social, intellectual, or political ‘transformation.’”\textsuperscript{12} Szarkowski, according to Batchen, “presents the history of photography as an inevitable progression toward self-knowledge.”\textsuperscript{13} He has much company in writing histories of photography in this fashion.

In fact, Batchen contends that “most histories of photography are in fact art histories, faithfully following in the ruts of Beaumont Newhall’s influential \textit{The History of Photography} (which was first published as an exhibition catalogue for the Museum of Modern Art in 1937).”\textsuperscript{14} Newhall states that his analysis of photography “is a history of a medium, rather than a technique, seen through the eyes of those who over the years have struggled to master it, to understand it, and to mold it to their vision.”\textsuperscript{15} Newhall presents a narrative history of photography with a short focus on its precursors before turning to Daguerre as the acknowledged inventor of photography. Newhall does not solely analyze British photography in the nineteenth century, he discusses process development and its growth in society, in ways such as the invention, improvement, and use of daguerreotypes and Talbotype for taking portraits and recording architecture. This basic structure for discussing the history of photography—presenting a narrative history of the medium based on individual biographies and process developments, with particular emphasis on its origins and then great detail once it grows

\textsuperscript{12} Batchen, \textit{Burning with Desire}, 17.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 15.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
drastically in the 1850s as well as Batchen’s determination that it concentrates on “certain
endlessly reproduced masterworks, usually photographs that are exceptional rather than typical
of their genre”—is what is repeated constantly in art-historical studies following Newhall.¹⁶

Histories of photography by Gisèle Freund, Heinrich Schwarz, and Helmut Gernsheim
follow Newhall’s formalist art-historical model. Overall Freund presents a narrative history of
the development of photography that includes a discussion of the contemporary social structure.
Although she mainly focuses on France, she presents a short section on David Octavius Hill and
Talbot. Schwarz analyzes the art-science nexus of photography from a traditional art-historical
viewpoint. He focuses on the geographic, scientific, and artistic precursors in, particularly,
eighteenth-century European society that influenced the invention of photography. Gernsheim
presents a narrative history of photography with a particular emphasis on process development.¹⁷
Mary Warner Marien also presents a formalist narrative history of the development of
photography in her book, Photography and Its Critics: A Cultural History, 1839-1900, but her
work examines some material that is rarely approached in either formalist or postmodernist
studies. She actually devotes more attention to the development of photography in the 1840s
than most any other scholar or critic in the field, and she includes critical commentary from
contemporary writers, even if these examples are not from the nineteenth-century British

¹⁶ Batchen, Burning with Desire, 222n47.
¹⁷ See, Gisèle Freund, Photography & Society (Boston: David R. Godine, 1980); Heinrich Schwarz, Art and
Photography: Forerunners and Influences: Selected Essays, Edited by William E. Parker (Layton, UT: Peregrine
Smith Books in Association with Visual Studies Workshop Press, 1985); Helmut Gernsheim in collaboration with
Alison Gernsheim, A Concise History of Photography (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1965). Also see, Josef
Maria Eder, History of Photography, Translated by Edward Epstein (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945);
Mike Weaver, ed. British Photography in the Nineteenth Century: The Fine Art Tradition (Cambridge: Cambridge
University Press, 1989); Ian Jeffrey, Photography: A Concise History (London: Thames and Hudson, 1981); and
periodical press. Although her analysis is definitely formalist she is one of the few critics to use this approach to interconnect photography with its cultural surroundings.\(^\text{18}\)

Postmodernism is a newer critical theory, from particularly the 1980s and 1990s, that, according to Batchen, “has steadfastly opposed itself to the formalist agenda, seeing it as both intellectually fruitless and politically conservative.”\(^\text{19}\) Although many of these critics, such as John Tagg, Victor Burgin, Allan Sekula, Abigail Solomon-Godeau, and Amelia Jones, are opposed to taking a traditional art-historical approach to photography, they are particularly against John Szarkowski and his formalism.\(^\text{20}\) Whereas the formalists, as Batchen explains, “identify and value photography according to its supposedly fundamental characteristics as a medium,” the postmodern critics “argue that, because all meaning is determined by context, ‘photography and such’ has no identity and photography’s history has no unity.”\(^\text{21}\)

Batchen is careful to clarify his usage of postmodernism: “Although I use the term postmodernism here as a convenient rhetorical trope, postmodern criticism is by no means homogeneous in outlook, having been informed by a variety of sometimes competing theoretical models (Marxism, feminism, psychoanalysis, semiotics).”\(^\text{22}\) He contends that even with this understood multifaceted construction of postmodernism “a remarkably consistent view of the


\(^{19}\) Batchen, *Burning with Desire*, 12.


\(^{21}\) Batchen, *Burning with Desire*, viii-ix.

\(^{22}\) Ibid., 5.
photography has come to occupy the center stage of critical debate." This view, according to Batchen, is "that photography has no coherent or unified history of its own other than as a selective documentation of its various uses and effects." The individual photograph is similarly affected, since as Batchen declares, it is "entirely dependent on the context in which the photograph finds itself at any given moment. A photograph can mean one thing in one context and something else entirely in another." This potential shifting in the status of a photograph brings its identity into question. The postmodern critic Tagg addresses this issue:

Photography as such has no identity. Its status as a technology varies with the power relations which invest it. Its nature as a practice depends on the institutions and agents which define it and set it to work. Its function as a mode of cultural production is tied to definite conditions of existence, and its products are meaningful and legible only within the particular currencies they have. Its history has no unity. It is a flickering across a field of institutional spaces. It is this field we must study, not photography as such.

Therefore, Batchen argues, a photograph’s identity is not found within “some kind of inherent photographic qualities but with what that photograph actually does in the world.” Also, the postmodernist does not believe the real performance of the photograph in the world leads to a seamless, disinterested, and authoritative history; rather, Solomon-Godeau contends that the analysis of photography forms a history that is a “dense interweave of the social, the political, and the economic with the cultural in the production and reception of aesthetic artifacts.”

Although formalism and postmodernism seem to be radically opposed to each other as theoretical and critical approaches to photography, it has been shown earlier that Batchen believes they are not that different in their presumptions or in their mutual avoidance, in their dominant photographic manifestations, of “coming to grips with the historical and ontological

23 Ibid.
24 Ibid.
25 Ibid., 6.
27 Batchen, Burning with Desire, 6.
28 Solomon-Godeau, Photography at the Dock, xxii.
complexity of the very thing they claim to analyze.” He attempts to achieve some of that theoretical and critical complexity by synthesizing the two approaches in his examination of the origins of photography. A similar synthesis of formalist and postmodernist critical analysis informs the structure of this thesis.

Yet, this thesis is not concerned with the tension between identifying and valuing photography based on its existence as a medium and arguing that photography has no unified history and has an undeterminable identity. Instead, this thesis attempts to address a different gap in the critical history of photography that has existed for many decades. As photography started to mature and became more exposed to a larger viewing public in Great Britain, Europe, and the rest of the world in the 1850s, the discussion of photography by both contemporary commentators as well as current historians increased in detail and overall coverage. Although the early years of photography have been well recorded, particularly by twentieth-century historians, most of this work, as has been discussed above, is presented as narrative histories, focuses on developments and advances in equipment and image processing, or analyzes the origins of the photographic enterprise. What is definitely lacking in modern histories of photography is a detailed analytical commentary, whether formalist or postmodernist, of the critical approach toward photography between 1839 and 1854 in the contemporary periodical press—in this instance with specific interest in The Art-Union. This is important to the history of photography because there have been no extended analyses conducted of the critical relationship between the periodical press and photography, The Art-Union and photography, or a critical history of photography during its early years. Although this thesis looks primarily at the views of a journal exclusively interested in the arts, it shows that this periodical and thus this

---

29 Batchen, Burning with Desire, 21.
examination incorporates social, intellectual, and political elements as well as artistic ones in the
development of the discussion of photography during its first fifteen years.

It is up to the reader to decide where to place this study on the formalist-postmodernist
spectrum, but it should be understood that a synthesis of the two approaches is what is being
attempted with this work. Although the nature or culture debate is important to the history of
photography, there are other concerns with the larger postmodernist school of thought that need
to be addressed before conducting an examination of the first fifteen years of the photographic
enterprise. This is neither to say that this study should be categorized as formalist, nor is it
meant to deny the postmodernists’ work with the history of photography, for their theories and
perspectives definitely inform the underlying structure of this thesis. But, when textual
considerations of postmodernism are included, which they must be, since this is mainly a textual
as opposed to an image-based analysis, it is clear that the postmodernist is often concerned with
signs and semiotics to a point that the author is completely removed from the narrative—see
reader-response theory for one example. The analysis in this thesis, while filled with numerous
anonymous authors, is based on their writings in the nineteenth-century British periodical press.
Their work is crucial evidence for understanding how British society, particularly those sections
of society who read the weekly and monthly periodical press, were being informed of the growth
of art and photography during the late second quarter of the nineteenth century. This is not
meant to suggest that the current study intends to reconstruct history as it was at the time, since,
following the arguments of the postmodernists, there is no one single history to be told. Also,
the reader should not expect to encounter arguments suggesting that British society was
necessarily constantly and completely influenced by what was published in the periodical press,
since it is impossible to know what even a small percentage of their thoughts were at the time.
Instead, this study means to present the reader with one potential interpretation of the cultural and societal impact of the invention and growth of photography on nineteenth-century Britain as informed by contemporary thought and the periodical press, with particular emphasis on Karl Marx’s materialism-informed commodity fetishism and the material published in *The Art-Union*.

Although the readers of *The Art-Union* are presented mainly with anonymous writers, there is no question that they are constantly accompanied by the presence of its editor as they examine the journal’s material. Hall was the founder and editor of *The Art-Union* from 1839 to 1880, during which period he was very involved in guiding the journal on its mission to develop and foster the British art world. Although Hall is not a primary character in this text—partially due to the fact that this analysis focuses on the journal’s engagement with photography without giving particular focus to any specific person, and partially due to the fact that little is known of Hall’s day-to-day actions with the journal or in the artistic and cultural scenes of London and Great Britain—it is necessary to understand who he was as a man and an editor for, whether or not he was in the forefront of the textual published *Art-Union*, his presence was constantly informing this work.

Hall was born in Ireland on May 9, 1800 at Geneva Barracks, County Waterford. He grew up in the city of Cork, which according to Hazel Morris, was a center of intellectual and cultural distinction.\(^{30}\) It contained a library, the Royal Cork Institute, which was founded in 1807 and became the place where the city’s intellectual community was concentrated, and a Society for the Promotion of the Fine Arts, which was established in 1816. Growing up in such a society meant that Hall was surrounded by others who would achieve artistic and literary fame, such as, according to Morris,

\(^{30}\) Morris states that the city was called the “Athens of Ireland.” Hazel Morris, *Hand, Head and Heart: Samuel Carter Hall and The Art Journal* (Wilby, Norwich: Michael Russell, 2002), 17.
Daniel Maclise, who later made some charming drawings of Carter’s [Hall’s] wife; John Hogan the sculptor; the poets Jeremiah Callanan and John Augustus Shea; Francis Mahony, to become famous in *Fraser’s Magazine* for his monthly series ‘The Works of Father Prout’; William Maginn; and Thomas Crofton Croker who published *The Fairy Legends and Traditions of the South of Ireland* anonymously in 1825.  

After moving to Dublin for a time, Hall eventually arrived in London in the early 1820s filled with high aspirations. In 1823, he became a parliamentary reporter in the House of Commons. The next year, Hall became a law student. Even though he was called to the bar in 1841, Hall would never actually practice law. Hall eventually turned to the profession of editor in 1826, when he both founded and edited *The Amulet or Christian and Literary Remembrancer*. This periodical lasted for eleven years, but ceased being printed after the publishers, Westly and Davies, went bankrupt. The *Morning Journal* was Hall’s next editorship, and lasted from 1829 to 1830. During this same time period Hall wrote a history of France for Colburn’s Juvenile Library. *The Book of Gems: The Poets and Artists of Great Britain* was the next publication edited by Hall, which he did in 1836. Morris provides an interesting comment in her discussion of this collection of poems concerning the public taste in art during the early nineteenth century, when she claims that “the demand in England was for paintings of familiar scenes, certain aspects of history and illustrations to widely read authors.” This is an important preference in art to consider in greater detail when analyzing the reception of works displayed at major annual exhibitions, such as those held by the Royal Academy, as well as the eventual showing and consideration of photographs in an artistic gallery setting.

This first group of journals that Hall edited allowed him to gain exposure to some contemporary artists, but these periodicals were primarily concerned with literature, and were definitely minor entries both in the publishing world and in consideration of their social and

---

32 Ibid., 24.
cultural influence. Morris points out that the prestigious journals, and the ones that were significantly influential with the educated British public, during this period were the *Edinburgh Review*, its Tory competitor *Blackwood’s*, and the *Quarterly Review*. The *Quarterly Review* was the only one of these prominent journals to print an article on the fine arts in nearly every issue. The lack of a prominent voice on art during this time period seemed to open up a worthwhile opportunity for Hall. Morris argues that Hall was “astute. There were few writers on art at the time, and he saw how popular they could become, particularly among the new patrons of art, the owners of the mills and factories of the North and Midlands.”

Other important cultural figures were also beginning to show concern over the perceived need for a publication devoted exclusively to the fine arts in England—Hall, in his memoirs, notes that the Royal Academician and painter, Charles Landseer, at a dinner party in December 1838 argued for such a publication, and promoted the idea of Hall as being properly qualified to take on such a project. The publisher Hodgson of the firm, Hodgson and Graves offered to supply the capital for the journal if Hall would be editor. Hall initially turned down this offer, but eventually accepted after Hodgson pursued him for a second time. A major stipulation of Hall finally becoming editor of an art journal, was, according to him that Hodgson would provide him with a written guarantee not to interfere on any level with his duties as editor as well as not attempt to make him add any material of which he did not approve. Hodgson gave Hall this written promise, and the first issue of the *Art-Union* was printed on February 15, 1839.

In his recollections of creating a journal interested solely in the fine arts, Hall stated, “It seemed a visionary scheme to issue a periodical that should be *only* a representative of art—depending for success on the support of artists, art patrons, and art lovers. But that such a

---

33 Ibid., 26.
publication was needed there could be no question.”³⁵ He contended that he “had to create a public for Art,” through which the journal would be assured success.³⁶ There was a section of society interested in art, but Hall argued that most existing British art patronage was focused on purchasing works by foreign artists. He considered it to be part of his mission to transfer this patronage to modern British art. The promotion of British art was the primary goal for Hall with The Art-Union. While other members of British society quite likely encouraged and sponsored domestic art and artists, Hall’s endeavor, according to Debra N. Mancoff, was novel because “in undertaking a policy of defining, defending, and promoting national art and native talent, Hall departed from the more traditional interests of connoisseurship and antiquarianism that characterized the editorial intentions of previous journals.”³⁷

The introduction to the first issue of The Art-Union consisted of Hall’s mission statement for the journal. After defining the need for the artist to have a proper channel of communication, which can be found in most every other profession, Hall pledged that the journal will work to provide information that will be of interest and use to young, less distinguished artists and experienced artists as well as the art-loving public. He acknowledged that even though he is not an artist, his “connexion with Art has been long and intimate,” so he can be relied on to be an editor possessing “experience, judgment, and integrity.”³⁸ Although neither Hall nor The Art-Union would be able to provide native artists with direct financial backing, he argued that the information provided within the pages of this publication would foster success in the British art world, such as “has been long and successfully done for the Artists of Germany, Italy, and

³⁵ Ibid., 196.
³⁶ Ibid., 197.
France.” The most important part of this opening editorial statement is Hall’s declaration of belief in the potential for British artists to compete against the artists residing on the Continent:

> Our estimate of British Art is, indeed, high; too high, perhaps, for those who over-rate ancient productions, and value a picture, as they do wine, in proportion to its age. We take it to be indisputable that the Artists of Great Britain greatly surpass the existing Artists of any other nation; and if, in some respects, they fall short of the power for which the Old Masters are so renowned, at least they paint more to the heart, and with greater certainty excite those sympathies, to produce and foster which is the noblest privilege of Art.

Hall, having put forth a strong declaration that the British art world—both artists and the public—would have a dedicated advocate in him and his journal, pushed forward with raising the status of art in Britain and on the Continent.

Hall introduced his journal with some rather bold statements, but he followed through with each subsequent issue. Although the various articles and editorials—including the recurring reviews of the major exhibitions—were rarely signed, Hall seems to have had a significant influence within all of this material, especially within the initial volumes of the journal. Mancoff declares that “every department in Hall’s Art-Union served the editorial aim of advocating and advancing the national status of fine arts.” British artists would be given practical advice that would assist in their development. Also, Hall took up a variety of issues that would benefit artists, such as working to get the amount of prizes awarded for competitions and exhibitions raised, and fighting to have British artists included in providing art for the new Houses of Parliament. The encouragement of British art would continue throughout the entire period of Hall’s editorship of The Art-Union, which lasted until he retired from the journal in 1880.

The engagement of The Art-Union with photography during their early years is not a simple narrative of an art journal’s attempts to report on the development of the photographic

---

39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
enterprise in Britain and Europe. Instead, Hall intended to use The Art-Union to foster the
growth of an art scene in Britain, where photography was just one aspect of it, which would be
recognized and respected throughout Europe and the world. The overall art scene, photography,
and the periodical press are all commodities, so the development of The Art-Union’s relationship
with the photographic enterprise can be seen as being based on the common concept of
commodification and commodity fetishism. Although the ideas of commodities and fetishism
pre-date the period of this study, this analysis is mainly informed by the theories and concepts of
Karl Marx. 42

The use of Marxian concepts, such as commodities and commodity fetishism, in this case
are not to be mistaken for their traditional usage in Marxism. The French philosopher Michel

42 The term fetishism, according to William Pietz, “was coined by the French philosophe Charles de Brosses, whose
Du culte des dieux fétiches ou parallèle de l’ancienne religion de l’Egypte avec la religion actuelle de la Nigritte introduced the term to the French intellectual community in 1757.” Pietz elaborates on the term fetish:
Fetish is a familiar word for an exotic thing. In ordinary usage everyone knows that it means an object of
irrational fascination, something whose power, desirability, or significance a person passionately
overvalues, even though that same person may know very well intellectually that such feelings are
unjustifiably excessive.
The word commodity was introduced into the English language in the fifteenth century; its original usage is based in
Latin. Paul Wood describes a commodity as
something which is exchanged in the market for money or other commodities. It is usually manufactured
or subject to some kind of productive labor or singling out and is produced for exchange before its ultimate
consumption. Production for private consumption is not commodity production; ‘commodity’ is the term
given to products when the process of production is centered upon market exchange.
Also, it is important to understand that, according to Marx, every commodity is composed of a twofold aspect—use-
value and exchange-value. The commodity is the direct unity of these two values, and, according to Marx, “at the
same time it is a commodity only in relation to other commodities.” These concepts will be discussed in greater
detail later in this chapter and throughout this study. Although Marx’s early works overlap the period being studied,
much of his main ideas on commodities, commodity fetishism, and values are found in Das Kapital, which was not
published until 1867—a date outside of the purview of this study. These concepts are still relevant for this analysis
because in this case they will be shown to be mature manifestations of his ideas on the economic, political, and
cultural aspects of society that he developed throughout his career. See, William Pietz, “Fetish,” in Critical Terms
Economy, Translated by S. W. Ryazanskaya, Edited with an Introduction by Maurice Dobb (London: Lawrence &
Wishart, 1971): 27, 41; Karl Marx, Das Kapital: Kritik der politischen Oekonomie (Hamburg: O. Meissner, 1867) or
Karl Marx, Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, translated by Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling, edited by
Frederick Engels, revised by Ernest Untermann (New York: Charles H. Kerr & Company, 1906). For more
information on the concept of the fetish and fetishism see, William Pietz, “The Problem of the Fetish, pt. 1,” Res 9
Henry explains that “Marxism was constituted and defined in the absence of any reference to Marx’s philosophical thought and in total ignorance of it. Plekhanov, Lenin, Stalin and so many others had no knowledge of the 1844 Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts, nor in particular of The German Ideology, which were not published until 1932, that is to say at a time when ‘dialectical materialism’ had already been presented as a finished doctrine.” Henry argues that Marx’s philosophical thought is the unifying basis of all his works, and he believes that the “successive set of concepts and, even more so, the set of themes which are displayed there, can only be explained on the basis of this fundamental project and as the mode of its gradual realization.” Marx’s philosophical project, according to Henry, concerns a theory of praxis where Marx replaced the traditional modern philosophical conception of an individual defined by its consciousness with the contention that the person lives, produces, and consumes in a concrete social context. This is a significant shift in perspective, since Henry, according to Tom Rockmore, is arguing that “the usual depiction of Marxism as an economically oriented analysis of social reality oriented toward revolution” should instead be viewed that “Marx’s position is, in the final analysis, a metaphysics of the individual.”

---

44 Ibid., 12.
45 Ibid., ix. Marx, in the preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, declared:

The general conclusion at which I arrived and which, once reached, became the guiding principle of my studies can be summarised as follows. In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness.

46 Henry, Marx, x.
The individual in this analysis is based on a person’s being or essence. Marx considered the essence of the individual not to be a physical construction, but to be his or her social quality. Although the social aspects of the individual would ultimately seem to inform his or her political essence and the affairs of State, Henry contends that through Marx “the political significance of an individual’s activity no longer consists in his participation in ‘specific affairs,’ in a ‘single, political act,’ but instead it characterizes his individual activity as such, his daily activity, both personal and professional.” The social sphere, therefore, is not simply penetrated by and informed by the political element, it is at the center of Marx’s thought. This concept of the social is extended by Marx to the object. Henry declares that “to say that the object is social means that it carries this origin in itself, that it comes from the other for me and from me for the other. In this origin lies the object’s ‘social and human nature,’ which is nothing but the objectification and realization of man’s social nature.” The social, according to Marx, incorporates more than just direct activity into its definition:

Social activity and social consumption by no means exist solely in the form of a directly communal activity and a directly communal consumption, even though communal activity and communal consumption, i.e. activity and consumption that express and confirm themselves directly in real association with other men—occur wherever that direct expression of sociality [Gesellschaftlichkeit] springs from the essential nature of the content of the activity and is appropriate to the nature of the consumption. But even if I am active in the field of science, etc.—an activity which I am seldom able to perform in direct association with other men—I am still socially active because I am active as a man. It is not only the material of my activity—including even the language in which the thinker is active—which I receive as a social product. My own existence is social activity. Therefore what I create from myself I create for society, conscious of myself as a social being.

---

48 Ibid., 49.
49 Ibid., 62.
The artist, like the scientist, typically works in isolation from the rest of society during the creation process, yet the art which is created is ultimately meant for and received as a social product.

Individuals, whether artists, scientists, or some other profession, may work in isolation, but those individuals in living their daily lives still are parts of the larger society, they are socially determined. A social determination, though, does not, according to Henry, “signify that it therefore is or can be the determination of a single individual. Quite the opposite, a determination is social, belongs to a class, defines it and constitutes it only if it is lived by several, by ‘many individuals.”’

It is the immediate living activity of these many individuals, the reality in their social activity, not ideology, that was important to Marx’s thought. Henry emphasizes this point, “The determination of reality is the central theme of Marx’s thought, his primary and exclusive preoccupation.”

Although Marx’s problematic eventually takes the economy as its theme in his attempt to analyze, as Henry puts it, “the activity of individuals and their actual life-process, in their opposition to ideal schemata under which speculation attempts to subsume them,” it must be understood that Marx was not constructing a science of economy analysis. Instead, Marx

---


52 Henry also determines that “it is in light of this impasioned search for what truly exists that Hegelianism is rejected in favor of Feuerbach’s anthropology.” Ibid., 118.

53 Ibid., 190. Pietz argues that Marx conceived “human being as an essentially active, material being, one whose objects are sensuous objects and whose bodily life and personal self are ‘produced’ in a single process: labor as praxis.” He points to Marx’s “Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts” as the site where Marx best articulated his “materialist-phenomenological conception of the human subject as a sensuous, active, objective, desiring being:”

To say that man is a corporeal, living, real, sensuous, objective being with natural powers means that he has real, sensuous objects as the object of his being and of his vital expression, or that he can only express his life in real, sensuous objects. To be objective, natural and sensuous and to have object, nature and sense outside oneself, or to be oneself object, nature and sense for a third person is one and the same thing. Hunger is a natural need; it therefore requires a nature and an object outside itself in order to satisfy and still itself. Hunger is the acknowledged need of my body for an object which exists outside itself and which is indispensable to its integration and to the expression of its essential nature. The sun is an object for the plant, an indispensable object which confirms its life, just as the plant is an object for the sun, an expression of its life-awakening power and its objective essential power.
looked to reality, economy related to praxis and its actual realization, to understand how a
capitalistic economy was possible, and what elements and factors in history permitted the
production of something like exchange.\textsuperscript{54} The relationship between exchange and the market
economy seems to present issues to Marx’s theory of praxis, since he seems to critique the
market economy as a transitory mode of social praxis. Henry elucidates the transcendental,
universal, significance of exchange by declaring:

But it is not exchange as an historical phenomenon, its emergence in the distant past, its
development and its generalization in capitalism, and its demonstrated or prophesied
demise in the near future which constitute the ultimate object of Marx’s reflection, but
the possibility of exchange and, consequently, the possibility of a market economy in
general. This is why \textit{Capital} is not restricted to the study of a given economic system but
is presented from the outset as a transcendental investigation. Exchange is no doubt a
transitory phenomenon, and the system that rests upon it is destined to be a part of
history, but the possibility of exchange is a pure essence, even if there had never been and
never would be any actual exchange on the face of the earth.\textsuperscript{55}

\textsuperscript{54} Henry, \textit{Marx}, 191.

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid.
Therefore, Henry contends that “in Marx, transcendental philosophy ceases to be a philosophy of transcendental consciousness in order to become a philosophy of reality.”\textsuperscript{56} It is in \textit{Capital}, according to Henry, that Marx offers “the transcendental genesis of the reality of exchange and of the social praxis which rests upon it and not simply that of the political economy.”\textsuperscript{57}

The transcendental possibility of exchange is contingent on exchange being perceived as a problem, and it is necessary to understand that this is not a theoretical but a practical question. Its resolution is found in actual exchange, which has existed as exchanging products between men for as long as commerce has existed. Marx approaches exchange as a philosophical concept, as Henry states, “as a transcendental concept of the possibility of exchange,” for the first time in \textit{Capital}.\textsuperscript{58} As such, Henry contends, “\textit{Capital} is a philosophy of the economy, not a theory of political economy.”\textsuperscript{59}

This analysis of Marx’s construction of a philosophy of the economy is important for understanding how he approaches exchange, and why the possibility of exchange poses a problem. Exchange is problematic, since the commodities that will be involved in this process are qualitatively different, both in their material nature and in their use-value.\textsuperscript{60} A use-value, as Marx defines it, is an aspect of the commodity that “coincides with the physical palpable existence of the commodity.”\textsuperscript{61} He asserts that “a use-value has value only in use, and is realised only in the process of consumption. One and the same use-value can be used in various ways. But the extent of its possible applications is limited by its existence as an object with distinct properties.”\textsuperscript{62} A use-value can only be a commodity if it is consumed by someone else as a

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 192.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{61} Marx, \textit{A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy}, 27.
\textsuperscript{62} Ibid.
means for that person to satisfy a need, and the commodity can only become a use-value when it encounters the exact need which it can satisfy. Use-values are also, according to Marx, “the material depositories of exchange value.” To allow for these products to be exchanged a common factor needs to be identified, and this instrument of equivalence relies on exchange-value. Henry determines that “it is precisely the exchange-value of a commodity that determines the proportional relation that it carries into exchange, namely the quantity of this commodity that must be supplied in order to obtain a given quantity of some other commodity.” The equivalent is established through the amount of labor required to produce a commodity, but it is important to understand, as Jack Amariglio and Antonio Callari assert, that the value of a commodity is determined not as a magnitude simply of labor time, “but of labor time deemed socially necessary to the production of the commodity.”

Labor’s basis in the commodity consists in two different forms—real labor and abstract labor. Henry explains these two terms: “Real labor produces the real object, the commodity in its materiality and as a use-value. Abstract labor, which is the pure representation of this real labor, is in its turn represented in the commodity as its exchange-value, which is thus nothing other than the objectification in the product of the prior objectification of real labor in abstract labor.” Real labor does not allow for exchange, since it is tied to the qualitative properties of

---

63 Ibid., 42-43.
64 Marx, Capital, 43.
65 Henry, Marx, 193.
66 Jack Amariglio and Antonio Callari, “Marxian Value Theory and the Problem of the Subject: The Role of Commodity Fetishism,” in Fetishism as Cultural Discourse, edited by Emily Apter and William Pietz (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993): 198. Marx elucidates this concept in Capital: “The labour-time socially necessary is that required to produce an article under the normal conditions of production, and with the average degree of skill and intensity prevalent at the time.” Marx, Capital, 46.
67 Abstract labor is also considered to be social labor.
68 Henry, Marx, 208. It is necessary to view labor, which is manifested in many different forms for different individual commodities, as a uniform quality differentiated only by quantity. This is accomplished by reducing different kinds of skilled and unskilled labor to a uniform, homogeneous, simple labor. Henry notes, “this typical labor necessary for producing a specific object is dependent on the capacities of the individual, but of the individual in general and not of this or that particular individual. It is an average labor adapted to an average individual, an
the product. A commodity is purely a product of labor, which means that every real property is stripped from it so that it is abstracted into a pure meaning. The abstraction process produces a quantifiable item even though it has lost all of its reality, yet, according to Henry, “this substantial reality, this irreality is, however, neither empty nor undetermined; it is precisely a meaning, that of being a ‘product of labor.’ A meaning such as this is nothing other than value.”

Commodities, therefore, are not placed into relation with each other as a relation between things. Instead, as Henry demonstrates, they are “in reality a relation between the different kinds of labor that produced them and, consequently, between the individuals who performed this labor.” Thus, the economic relation of exchange-values is a social relation ensconced in a relation between things. But it must be understood, as Marx explains, “Since the producers do not come into social contact with each other until they exchange their products, the specific social character of each producer’s labor does not show itself except in the act of exchange.”

The exchange of commodities is the result of real action. Henry contends that “reality is the movement of life transforming nature in order to satisfy its need; it is praxis. It is what Marx, after The German Ideology, calls production; it is what Capital names the labor-process.” Although the name of the process changes, Marx continually views it as constituting reality—a reality that, according to Henry, “found and determines every form of society,” and should by no means be considered economic. Reality, being based in the labor-process, and thus, in the definite social relation between producers, is often confused by them as being an economic form.

---

69 Ibid., 201.
70 Ibid., 211.
71 Marx, Capital, 84.
72 Henry, Marx, 224.
73 Ibid.
or as Marx argues, it assumes “the fantastic form of a relation between things.”

In order, therefore, to find an analogy, we must have recourse to the mist-enveloped regions of the religious world. In that world the productions of the human brain appear as independent beings endowed with life, and entering into relation both with one another and the human race. So it is in the world of commodities with the products of men’s hands. This I call the Fetishism which attaches itself to the products of labour, so soon as they are produced as commodities, and which is therefore inseparable from the production of commodities.

Marx is critiquing not only contemporary Christian religions in this statement, he is more importantly, in terms of fetishism, referring to the primordial forms of religion analyzed by Charles de Brosses. These religions were viewed by de Brosses as completely nonallegorical, nonuniversal, and materialist. This materialist form of religion was named fetishism by de Brosses, since, as William Pietz explains, it involved “the direct worship of particular earthly material objects as themselves endowed with quasi-personal intentionality and divine powers capable of gratifying mundane desires.”

Marx, in his early career, called this sort of materialist religion the religion of sensuous desire. According to Pietz, Marx understood that the primordial religion of sensuous desire and the contemporary belief in political economy were informed by the same logic. Pietz explains the mechanics of this logic: “If primitives irrationally overvalued the desire-gratifying powers of mistakenly divinized material objects, so moderns falsely looked to capitalized economic objects as the magical source of wealth and value.”

Pietz importantly points out that “the new critics of political economics turned an idea used by the civilized to distinguish themselves from primitives back onto those who identified themselves as

---

74 Marx, *Capital*, 83.
75 Ibid., 83.
77 Ibid., 310. For a similarly elaborated view of the twinning of the primitive fetishist and the industrial proletarian also see, Pietz, “Fetishism and Materialism,” *Fetishism as Cultural Discourse*, 141.
nonfetishists.” 78 Fetishism of the economic element is based on a mystification; Marx analyzes and clears up this mystification not through an economic analysis, but through a philosophy of the economy as radically determined by the noneconomic reality of the labor-process, by life. Ultimately, the movement of commodities, while an act based on abstract labor, is grounded in use-value and its creation process of useful labor, for, as Henry argues, “the movement of commodities is governed by their destination, by the fact that they continue to pass into the hands of those for whom they are useful.” 79

Art is useful to society, but art—and the sphere of cultural production—when viewed through the concept of the commodity embodied in its two distinct value forms, use-value and exchange-value, encounters difficulties. Artworks, as Paul Wood explains, “are a special kind of good. But this does not mean that they are not produced and exchanged, only that their modes of production and exchange are specialized forms of a more general condition.” 80 Therefore, art is produced under the condition of commodification, which ties directly into commodity fetishism—a development that will be explored in detail in subsequent chapters.

In general this thesis analyzes the ways in which The Art-Union—and other contemporary periodicals—approached, discussed, and thought of photography between 1839 and 1854. Although each chapter progresses chronologically so that readers are able to understand the development of the relationship between The Art-Union and photography during each given period, the overall study does not begin in 1839 and advance through each chapter

---

78 Pietz, “Fetish,” Critical Terms for Art History, 310. Hal Foster, in his analysis of Dutch still life art, sees a closer tie between religious fetishism and commodity fetishism: As religious fetishism was suppressed, a commercial fetishism, a fetishism of the commodity, was released; the Dutch denounced one overvaluation of objects, only to produce another of their own. For Marx commodity fetishism is analogous to religious projection. I want to argue one step further, that commodity fetishism partly replaced religious fetishism, or at least compensated for its partial loss. Hal Foster, “The Art of Fetishism: Notes on Dutch Still Life,” in Fetishism as Cultural Discourse, edited by Emily Apter and William Pietz (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993): 255.

79 Henry, Marx, 232.

until ending in 1854. Instead, the individual chapters are each sites in which to examine multiple theoretical approaches to The Art-Union’s and photography’s association in separate, yet sometimes overlapping, periods. What is common to each chapter is that the analysis of The Art-Union’s discussion of photography is primary, and the concept of commodity fetishism is found within each one, although it is not always the main theoretical focus. Ultimately, the chapters in this thesis are intended to bring readers a much greater understanding of how the nineteenth-century British periodical press, led in this case by the art driven The Art-Union, approached photography during its early years as well as showing the development of the photographic enterprise during a period that has received little extended critical analysis.

Chapter 2 examines the commodification of both photography and the periodical press in nineteenth-century Britain. Beginning in 1839 with both the acknowledged invention of photography by Daguerre and the publishing of the first issue of The Art-Union, an analysis is conducted of how both these enterprises became fetishized commodities. Inspired by the work of Henry, as detailed above, this chapter focuses on the social and material formation of the commodification of photography during a period in which readers of the periodical press could only be influenced by text and not images. While conducting this study of commodity fetishism, the chapter also attempts to provide an understanding of how The Art-Union approached photography during both of their early years—as art or as science. The Art-Union may have been the only contemporary British journal to discuss nothing but art, but it was not the only journal to pay attention to photography at the time. Although few other journals provided much coverage to photography during its early years, the material on it published in the Athenaeum, Literary Gazette, and Punch will be considered. The period in this chapter concludes in 1846 with the publishing of a Talbotype in The Art-Union. The analysis contemplates the implications
that these Talbotypes as well as the contemporaneous publication of Talbot’s *The Pencil of Nature*, both image-based items that provide readers with a more direct engagement of the photography process, have for the development of photography and the periodical press as fetishized commodities in nineteenth-century Britain.

Chapter 3 looks at the period from 1839 to 1846 from another theoretical perspective. Commodity fetishism continues to be important to the frame of this chapter’s narrative, but it is much more in the background of this particular examination. The basic structure of the chapter, which begins with the commencement of both photography and *The Art-Union* in 1839 and ends with the publication of a Talbotype in the journal in 1846, obviously mirrors that of the previous chapter, but the development of reading and art audiences, as informed by Gerry Beegan’s conception of knowingness and Benedict Anderson’s imagined community is the primary theoretical approach applied to this material. Another important component to this chapter is an examination of Hall’s stated mission to promote the production and purchase of British art, and his belief that he had to create a public for that art in Britain. Although this chapter also examines how these concepts apply to the way in which the *Athenaeum, Literary Gazette*, and *Punch* affected the formation and composition of audiences and imagined communities, it must be noted that during this period *The Art-Union* did not have to confront much in the way of competing voices for a community focused mainly on photography.

Chapter 4 combines the concepts of commodity fetishism and the imagined community based on knowingness to facilitate the analysis of *The Art-Union*’s critical approach to photography from late 1846 to 1854. Particular attention is given to the shift in *The Art-Union*’s method for promoting and discussing photography once Robert Hunt started to write for the journal, from considering photography on its own merits to being simply a tool for the artist to
produce better paintings. Also, this chapter examines if this shift in critical discourse is emulated by the *Athenaeum*, *Literary Gazette*, and *Punch* as well as other journals that were established during this period, particularly *The Leader* and *The Journal of the Photographic Society of London*. The launching of *The Journal of the Photographic Society of London* introduced a voice on photography that *The Art-Union* did not have to be challenged by in the previous period from 1839 to early 1846. This competing voice on photography in the early 1850s presents a potential crisis for *The Art-Journal* formed community concerned with the photographic enterprise as well as the commodification of this art journal and the commodity fetishism of photography by its readers. The effect *The Journal of the Photographic Society of London* had on *The Art-Journal* as a voice for the imagined community interested in photography is considered.

Chapter 5 examines the entire first fifteen years of the photographic enterprise, from 1839 to 1854 to understand how the first exhibitions devoted solely to photography—in 1853 and 1854—were reviewed in *The Art-Journal* as well as other representatives of the contemporary periodical press. This analysis is particularly focused on how *The Art-Journal* approached photography as they both entered their second decade—as a scientific enterprise, as merely a tool for the artist, or as an object and method that contains its own artistic qualities. The critical language that *The Art-Journal* uses in these exhibition reviews is part of a larger appraisal method that was developed in nineteenth-century Britain, so to frame analytical style the chapter includes a study of the growth of art criticism from the second half of the eighteenth century to the early 1850s. Using the criteria and language for appraising art during this period, the chapter pairs *The Art-Journal*’s evaluation of the photographic exhibitions with its approach to assessing annual exhibitions that focused on painting—primarily those staged at the Royal Academy of
Arts and the Society of British Artists. This analysis demonstrates whether or not the photographic exhibitions were being gauged according to the evaluation criteria for the plastic arts or if a new critical language and approach was being produced for photography. Although the period studied in this chapter extends from 1839 to 1854, not every single exhibition in The Art-Journal or any other contemporary periodicals are analyzed. Taking into consideration that how the reviews are written is more important than what is said about most individual artworks this moves the examination away from redundancy and allows it to concentrate on the critical discourse that was applied to the annual art exhibitions as well as the early photographic enterprise.

There is no particular reason to end this study in 1854, since nothing momentous occurred in photography or in the discourse about photography in contemporary journals during that year—unlike the noticeable break between 1846 and 1847 with The Art-Union’s publication of a Talbotype in each issue, and the journal’s direction in the following years to promote photography as a tool for the artist instead of an art form in itself. But the choice of 1854 is not completely arbitrary. Although it can be argued that the next logical ending point is at the beginning of 1853 with The Art-Journal’s review of the photographic exhibition, by extending the study another year it allows for the analysis of more than one exhibition review. This analysis of multiple reviews provides the opportunity for exploring the development of criticism in the nineteenth century and how its application to photography compared to the critical discussion of painting. Also, ending in 1854 as opposed to 1846 or 1853 allows for the analysis to comprise a 15 year period. This is both a good concise period and provides enough time to show the definite early development of The Art-Union’s and other contemporary periodicals’
discourse when applied to photography before the explosion of photography’s popularity in society and the press in the mid-1850s.
The Art-Union brought photography to the attention of its readers in its second issue (March 1839). In a short article the journal announced the discovery of photography or “sun-painting,” which, according to the reporter, was “producing prodigious excitement in France and considerable sensation in England.”¹ This excitement leads the reporter to make a bold prediction: photography allows one to create pictures of any object, “which Nature presents to the eye; taking the pencil out of the hands of all classes of artists, except it may be the historical painter, and away from the engraver altogether!”² In general the article does not present much information about photography other than to declare that Daguerre was the first to announce his discovery, followed by Talbot and other recent Europeans.

Thus, with this animated report, began the commodification of photography in Britain.³ Although photography cannot yet be considered a commodity since only the invention had been announced—no photographs were yet available for consumption—it is understood that it will become a consumable item in the near future. This announcement also portrays the social activity of individuals, such as Daguerre and Talbot, in line with Marx’s thoughts on social activity and social consumption, since their creations, while not yet available through direct communal activity or direct communal consumption, are material products created for society

---

¹ The Art-Union 1 (March 1839): 24.
² Ibid.
³ This statement is not intended to lay claim for The Art-Union as being the individual catalyst for starting the commodification process of photography, since it was neither the only periodical that announced the invention of photography nor was it the first—periodicals such as The Athenaeum and the Literary Gazette printed reports about photography’s inception in issues published in January 1839. What is the aim of this statement is purely that this is the beginning of photography’s commodification process in the pages of The Art-Union, so it is important to single out and discuss the impact of this moment in the journal. See, Literary Gazette no. 1147 (12 January 1839), 28; The Athenaeum no. 587 (26 January 1839), 69.
through their existence as social beings. The reporter points out some potential use-values of photography by declaring that it will allow people to take pictures of any object as well as offering different opportunities for artists by making the use of drawing and engraving materials for the creation of images nearly, if not completely, obsolete. While this speaks to the potential amount of labor necessary for producing a photograph, therefore informing photography’s exchange-value, it does not address it in detail. Instead, this report is more important for posing photography as a significant value-bearing object, which instantly fetishizes it; the journal’s excited announcement of its discovery forms it into an object of desire based merely on its potential market value.

The Art-Union does not discuss photography again until a comment on it appears in a July 1839 article on a new discovery in engraving. Excitement over photography, which was rather apparent in the March announcement of its discovery, is now replaced with a more cautious, if not skeptical approach to its continued development. The reporter makes this clear after declaring that innovations in art should be approached with caution because they were becoming as “plenty as blackberries in September”:

Although it is summer, the sun appears to have been asleep; of the wonder-working Daguerreotype, which was to send a host of engravers to parish workhouses, we have of late heard nothing; and we fancy, for all that was said, they may not be justified in meeting starvation half-way. There is a chance of employment for the burin for a few years to come, and possibly the great luminary will permit our artists to have food as well as plates.

---

4 See, Marx, “Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts,” 350.
5 To pose photography as an object of desire, and thus, as a fetishism informs its value within society. Joseph Leo Koerner and Lisbet Rausing contend that this is tied to a positive, material reality: “To explain our culture’s overvaluation of art as fetishism is not to criticize it as false, but simply to trace it back to the underlying structures of want, loss, and exchange that, as Georg Simmel argued in The Philosophy of Money (1900), establish the idea of ‘value’ as alone commensurate with that of ‘being.’” See Joseph Leo Koener and Lisbet Rausing, “Value,” in Critical Terms for Art History, edited by Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003): 433.
6 The Art-Union 1 (July 1839): 106.
This is an interesting statement for two reasons. First, considering that photography had been announced to the world only half a year before this article, the journal seems to show a bit of impatience in expecting that further major breakthroughs, if not constant developments, should be announced in such a short period. Second, this can be seen as a purposeful attempt to reduce photography as a value-bearing object in the eyes of the British art world. But this tactic should not be seen as an attempt by *The Art-Union* to harm the fetishized value of photography as a commodity; rather, the journal was striving to protect its commodified position in British society as well.

*The Art-Union* should be considered a fetishized commodity, since it was a value-bearing object for the British art world. This value was informed by both its use- and market-values. The journal possessed a use-value because many of its articles provided advice to artists who were one of the primary groups intended to consume the commodified publication. Hall, as editor, and the anonymous writing staff of *The Art-Union* produced the material object of the periodical and its use-value for the individual artists who consumed it. Artists who followed the advice doled out by the journal raised the potential for producing artworks possessing increased use-value for someone else to consume, thereby satisfying a need, as well as simultaneously increasing the exchange-value of these works when the individual artist offered them on the market. Also, the overall art market in Britain could see an increase in its value, since a rising middle class—driven by newly wealthy factory owners in the North and Midlands—had a place to turn to for information about what were the more desirable objects deemed worthy of buying and collecting by a recognized authority on art. This created desire for both British art and *The Art-Union* produced an environment where the increased valuation of these objects led to a fetishism of the British art world. Koerner and Rausing point to the specific view for Marx that
fetish is a function of sight, which in their determination displays “the efficacy of fetishism for defining value as a properly critical term for the history of art.” Marx elaborates on sight’s role in the fetishism of commodities:

    This is the reason why the products of labour become commodities, social things whose equalities are at the same time perceptible and imperceptible by the senses. In the same way the light from an object is perceived by us not as the subjective excitation of our optic nerve, but as the objective form of something outside the eye itself. But, in the act of seeing, there is at all events, an actual passage of light from one thing to another, from the external object to the eye. There is a physical relation between physical things. But it is different with commodities. There, the existence of the things qua commodities, and the value relation between the products of labour which stamps them as commodities, have absolutely no connection with their physical properties and with the material relations arising therefrom. There it is a definite social relation between men, that assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things.  

Thus, the visual art image, whether it be a painting, photograph, or some other artistic object, and the textual image offered up in this case in The Art-Union are viewed by the people who desire them as sensuously material objects that become for them an almost magical source of wealth and value. 

    Another important reason The Art-Union was a desired commodity in Britain is that it was typically considered to be a conservative voice for an art public that, according to Morris, was often offended by contemporary works, such as “William Etty’s sensual and glowing nudes.” Hall promoted British art by trying not to upset the Victorian public. He also felt a

---

7 Koerner and Rausing, “Value,” 433.
8 Marx, Capital, 83.
9 Pietz expands this concept of the successfully fetishized commodity to its logical extreme and demonstrates its potential power in guiding society’s actions:

    The object that had been an accidental means to achieving some desired end becomes a fixed necessity, the very embodiment of desire, and the effective, exclusive power for gratifying it. The human truth of capital is that, as a means that has become an end, it is a socially constructed, culturally real power-object: it is the instrumentalized power of command over concrete humans in the form of control over their labor activity through investment decisions.

Therefore, by promoting a desire for The Art-Union, British art, and essentially British influenced photography, Hall has the potential to have a real effect on the development of art in Britain at the very least. William Pietz, “Fetishism and Materialism: The Limits of Theory in Marx,” in Fetishism as Cultural Discourse, edited by Emily Apter and William Pietz (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993): 147.
10 Morris, Hand, Head and Heart, 12.
mission to educate people about art—not necessarily members of the middle classes who already frequented exhibitions or collected art works, but the masses who were rising in affluence and desiring to find entrance into the art world. It was common for a person at this time attempting to gain entrance to higher social and economic class ranks in Victorian Britain to believe that it was necessary to understand and collect the works of the Old Masters and other established and traditional art forms and artists—not necessarily speculative or avant-garde art. The Old Masters were exclusively foreign artists, and Hall wanted to direct the public away from such interests. Although the commodification of British art was likely to be affected by a continued interest in purchasing the Old Masters, Hall had a more practical reason for not promoting this foreign art—most of the works were fakes. Hall explained his crusade against these works in his memoirs:

Collectors—wealthy merchants and manufacturers—did indeed buy pictures as befitting household adornments, but they were “old masters” with familiar names; canvases that had never been seen by the artists to whom they were attributed; copies or imitations by “prentice hands,” that were made to seem old by processes which I persistently exposed—printing, month after month, the Custom-House returns of pictures imported, and showing that a larger number of Titians, Raphaels, and Rubenses paid duty in a year than those masters had produced during their lives. On the other hand, I made manifest the policy of buying only such pictures as could be readily identified—certified by the artists who were living; urging the probability that they would increase and not decrease in value, while it was almost certain that so-called “old masters” would ultimately be worth little more than the value of the panels and frames.\(^\text{11}\)

Hall’s drive to educate the British public about various forms of false art is tied to his overall stated duty to use The Art-Union “to blend information and instruction with interesting and useful intelligence.”\(^\text{12}\) Although the concept of fake foreign photographs likely did not exist in 1839—such a concept is problematic when referring to photography—these considerations are important for understanding why it was necessary for the journal in July 1839 to pull back from

\(^{11}\) Hall continues on to explain that he was ultimately successful in achieving his goals: “I convinced those who desired to purchase pictures. I destroyed, by conclusive evidence and continual exposure, the extensive and nefarious trade in ‘old masters.’ I have lived to see such ‘old masters’ valued according to their worthlessness, and a thorough transfer of patronage to modern Art.” Hall, Retrospect of a Long Life, 197.

\(^{12}\) Ibid.
its earlier bold and excited statements about the prospects for photography. Also, if an art form, movement, artist, or critic were to fail after receiving exaggerated statements of support from The Art-Union, it could lead to the journal losing its desired and respected position in the British art world, which would ultimately result in the reduction of its value as a commodity.¹³

The Art-Union approached photography throughout the remainder of 1839 from a variety of standpoints that furthered the commodification of both the photographic enterprise and the journal. In August and September articles appeared announcing the award of an annual pension to Daguerre, and discussing the process he used to create daguerreotypes. This is the first in a number of articles, letters, and commentary printed in the journal over the next few years that presented the reader with information concerning photographic process and various improvements to it. While this fulfilled one part of the journal’s mission—that being to impart knowledge to artists and other interested members of the British art world—it also engaged photography in its early years more as a scientific activity than an art form. Photography is not the only art form in which improvements in equipment or technique have been made over time. The difference though is that The Art-Union addressed both improvements and individual works of art in other forms of artistic pursuit.

Articles in the journal on developments in photographic process concerned not only image and equipment quality, but were also used to promote the adoption of photography by British society by showing how easy it was to use. A short note in September 1839 quoted a Paris paper:

We can conscientiously declare that there is not a lady who has not a hundred times executed more delicate operations, to remove a stain from a valuable dress, than the

¹³ Hall contends that his task “was to make the work respected as well as popular,” and to give The Art-Union “rank among the higher and better periodicals of the time and country.” Ibid.
daguerreotype requires; and many of our dandies bestow more care and pains upon the
tying of a cravat than are necessary to obtain a photogenic drawing.\textsuperscript{14}

Now, not only are members of the British art public meant to desire to take photography because
of its ease of use, they are also encouraged to see it as a value-bearing object that is comparable
to the clothing upon which they placed so much concern and care. This one small entry in \textit{The
Art-Union} had the potential to solidify photography’s place as a desired and fetishized
commodity in Victorian Britain.

Yet, \textit{The Art-Union} seems to have decided that by the end of the first year of the
introduction of photography to the world that the British were not adopting it fast enough or in
the proper ways. In December 1839 a short article states that “the foreign journals supply us
with accounts of experiments in abundance, purporting to be improvements on the discovery of
Daguerre,” and offers examples from France and Brussels as evidence.\textsuperscript{15} The article then
complains that other than some lectures that had been delivered in London very little had been
accomplished in Britain concerning the development of any practical applications for the
photographic enterprise. It seems that the journal was not above attempting to goad the British
art community into taking steps toward gaining a prominent and respected position in
comparison to the Continent when the simple promotion of photography was not accomplishing
its goals.

\textit{The Art-Union}, although not yet possessing a prominent place in Victorian society, was
one of the few journals to take the lead in discussing, analyzing, and promoting photography in
Britain. Many important journals that were published contemporaneously to \textit{The Art-Union} did
not discuss photography during this period, including the \textit{Illustrated London News}, \textit{Tait’s
Edinburgh Magazine}, \textit{The Quarterly Review}, and \textit{Fraser’s Magazine}. Other journals, such as

\textsuperscript{14} \textit{The Art-Union} 1 (September 1839): 139.
\textsuperscript{15} \textit{The Art-Union} 1 (December 1839): 185.
The Foreign Quarterly Review, The Westminster Review, and The Edinburgh Review each seem to have carried only one small article on photography that did not provide any particularly unique information about the engagement with it in Victorian Britain. The Mirror of Literature, Amusement, and Instruction printed a series of articles discussing the daguerreotype in 1839, but these focused on explaining how to capture a photographic image while simultaneously incorporating some descriptions of the paths taken by Niepce, Daguerre, and Talbot in arriving at a reliable system for fixing these images on either plates or paper. Punch devoted little attention to the developing photographic enterprise between 1839 and 1846. In fact, the three short articles on photography that appeared in the journal during this period are satirical accounts of Americans “having applied the art of Daguerreotyping to the forgery of notes and bonds: the imitations being in every respect the same as the originals,” and suggestions for photographing political figures to show how much their appearance changes with each ensuing year. It is interesting to note that Punch, well-known for its illustrations, does not enter into any discourse stating concern about how the photograph soon would replace engraving, as was put forward excitedly by The Art-Union reporter in March 1839. The only journals other than The Art-Union that paid any considerable amount of attention to photography

16 Notes and Queries, The Leader, The Journal of the Photographic Society of London, and the British Journal of Photography were not published until 1849, 1850, 1853, and 1854.
17 The first article on political photography recommends that photographs should be taken of Statesmen at political appearances, since by constantly appearing with new faces, “it is really impossible to catch the various aspects under which they, from time to time, present themselves.” Also, the writer of the article contends that these photographs would show Sir Robert Peel as much different looking than the previous year, since “a photographic likeness of him, taken even at that comparatively recent period, would startle those who have only seen him in recent character.” The second article discussing political photography points out that recent improvements in photography by Richard Beard have produced much better images of people sitting for portraits, since their complexion is no longer hardened as was previously seen when “the face was ploughed up into furrows and fearfully slashed by the Daguerreotype, while the cheeks presented as many lines as might have been seen traced on a map of projected railways during the recent mania.” See Punch, “The Arts in America,” 5 (July to December 1843): 246, Punch, “Political Photography,” 10 (January to June 1846): 209, and Punch, “Political Photography,” 10 (January to June 1846): 229.
during its early years were the *Athenaeum* and the *Literary Gazette*. Overall these two journals focused on process development, with much more coverage being given to photography’s scientific aspects than did *The Art-Union*.

Although photography—particularly improvements in the process of taking pictures—received a fair amount of attention in *The Art-Union*, the *Athenaeum*, and the *Literary Gazette*

---

18 The *Literary Gazette* was a weekly literary review that was founded by the publisher Henry Colburn. The first issue was published on 25 January 1817. William Jerdan, a journalist and antiquary, assumed the editorship with issue 25, and would stay in that position until he retired from the journal in 1850. The *Athenaeum* was a weekly periodical that focused on the arts and sciences, and did not write about politics and religion. It was established by James Silk Buckingham, and was first published on 2 January 1828. Buckingham only owned and edited the journal for a few weeks before he sold it to John Sterling. After a year of struggling to make the journal profitable, Sterling sold it to a group that included Charles Wentworth Dilke. Dilke took over as editor, a position that he held until 1846, and built the *Athenaeum* into an influential and respected periodical. The *Literary Gazette* gave notice of the first issue of *The Art-Union* in February 1839. The article declared that *The Art-Union* was the first monthly journal to be solely dedicated to the fine arts. It judged that the periodical was a good example of an arts journal, but that none of its similar predecessors had yet been successful. The article contended that the reasonable price for *The Art-Union*—8s. per annum—might give it a greater chance at long-term success. But, with that being said, the reporter presented a negative overall assessment of the contemporary British art scene, and its potential for gaining a respected position in the world:

> The introduction says, ‘Artists are compelled to labour in comparative seclusion: to them reposes brings the only serviceable excitement; they can rarely mix in general society; and, consequently, know little of what is passing around them, even concerning matters upon which it is essential they should receive early and authentic information.’ Now, it has long been our contention, that to this very plain state of the case is to be traced much of that inferiority which consigns so many artists, old as well as young, to inferiority, or to be at best *imitatores servum pecus*. It is nonsense to tell us that, with the ease and trifling expense at which information the most useful to them may be acquired, they cannot procure it. The fact is, they won’t spare the time or take the trouble to read, and store their minds, not simply with intelligence relating to their own peculiar profession, but such as interests the general world, and would furnish ideas and hints for their practice in art. They fancy they are becoming mighty painters by continually daubing canvass after canvass, and in utter ignorance of all other things. There never was, and never will be, a great artist of this school; and when half a dozen of the poorest that ever took up a brush might, by clubbing a halfpenny or penny a week each, and allowing themselves leisure to read a single journal, become better informed in three months than they now are during their whole lives, we cannot but think that the fault and error is their own, and that they can never reach the excellence which merits public encouragement whilst they take so dark a road to travel towards it. To become eminent in art, a man must know more than how to imitate the disposition of a group, lay on a few colours, or splash in an effect.

the photograph as an artistic object—whether individually or as a part of an exhibition—is rarely a topic of exploration in these journals.\textsuperscript{19} It is unknown why these journals did not provide their readers with detailed analysis of this or any other exhibitions.\textsuperscript{20} Such exhibitions were rare during this period, but at least six major expositions occurred between 1839 and 1846.\textsuperscript{21} Groups such as the British Association, the Royal Scottish Academy, and the Royal Polytechnic sponsored them; they included works by well-known contemporary photographers, such as Daguerre, Talbot, and Antoine Claudet. The Athenaeum, in the “Our Weekly Gossip” section of its March 16, 1839 issue, mentions that “specimens of photogenic drawing, by Mr. Fox Talbot

\textsuperscript{19} The Art-Union discusses in its March 1841 issue an exhibition at the Royal Polytechnic Institution of proof-impressions made from daguerreotype plates by Dr. Christian Joseph Berres (1796-1844) of Vienna. Berres, professor of anatomy in Vienna, researched and published works on microscopic anatomy, including blood vessels, nerves, and tissue. In 1840, Berres as well as “the Viennese physical scientist Andreas Ritter von Ettingshausen produced wonderfully sharp daguerreotype images of microscopic cross-sections of botanical specimens.” Berres was also interested in photography. He was a member of the Fürstenhofrunde, which was a club of photographic pioneers that existed from 1840 to 1842, and is traditionally viewed as “the earliest association which centered on the application of photography in Austria.” Berres succeeded in converting the “daguerreotype image into a printing plate suitable for intaglio printing” through either “direct chemical action, or by electro-chemical processes in engraving these plates.” He was the first person to publish a work containing these etched daguerreotypes, Phototyp nach der Erfindung des Prof. Berres in Wien (Vienna, 1840). It contained five photomechanical heliogravures—plates from daguerreotypes, etched with nitric acid—and was an early example of photographic illustration accompanying printed text. plates created by the etching of daguerreotype plates with nitric acid. The Art-Union article describes the works as having been made by chemically engraving the plates, which gave them an appearance of aqua-tinting as they hung framed in the gallery. No individual works are noticed, and instead of assessing the exhibition’s overall artistic quality, the article states that these proof-impressions are “curious and interesting specimens of recent progress in the science of metallurgy.” The Athenaeum noted merely that the same exhibition had opened whereas the Literary Gazette gives no mention of this event. But, the Literary Gazette did provide an example of a review of a single photographic image in 1842, which was something that neither The Art-Union nor the Athenaeum did until their reviews of Talbot’s The Pencil of Nature from 1844 to 1846. The Literary Gazette offered a review of Claudet’s daguerreotype of Queen Victoria’s favorite horse, “Snowdrop”: “The likeness is most perfect. A glance will convey the knowledge that “Snowdrop” is a dapple-grey, and a horse of fine form. Saddled and bridled, and martinged, held by a groom, he is taken as ready for his august rider.” The Art-Union 3 (March 1841): 49; Athenaeum no. 699 (March 20, 1841): 227; John Hannavy, ed., Encyclopedia of Nineteenth-Century Photography (New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 2008): 1097, 1118, 1120, 1286; Historischen Kommission bei der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie, Vol. 2 (Leipzig: Duncker & Humbolt, 1875): 507; Literary Gazette no. 1318 (23 April 1842): 284.

\textsuperscript{20} It is difficult to speculate why this was the case.

\textsuperscript{21} The Encyclopedia of Nineteenth-Century Photography claims that the first exclusively photographic exhibition was not held until 1852. A database maintained by De Montfort University lists examples of photographic exhibitions from 1839 forward, but the exhibitions held prior to 1852 also contained equipment displays, and as such, were unlike a purely artistic gallery exhibition. For more information on photographic exhibitions in Victorian Britain, see John Hannavy, ed., Encyclopedia of Nineteenth-Century Photography (New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 2008), 508-509, and Roger Taylor, Photographic Exhibitions in Britain 1839-1865: Records from Victorian Exhibition Catalogues (Leicester, England: De Montfort University, n.d.), http://peib.dmu.ac.uk/index.php (accessed September 15, 2008).
and Sir John Herschel, were exhibited on the occasion” of the first soirée held by the new president of the Royal Society, the Marquis of Northampton, but does not provide any detail on the individual images or the ways in which they were displayed. The *Literary Gazette* did not report on any British photography exhibits in 1839, but in July of that year it did publish a reprint from *La Quotiedienne* that reviewed an exhibition of Daguerre’s work in Paris at the Chamber of Deputies. The French had a history, since the early eighteenth century, of a much greater critical engagement with art than did the British, so it is informative to note that *La Quotiedienne* assessed specific images. The article states that the exhibit consisted of “views of three of the streets of Paris, of the interior of M. Daguerre’s studio, and of a group of busts from the Musée des Antiques.” These images were judged to have reproduced nature “with incredible exactness” and “wonderful truth,” such as “the slightest accidental effects of the sun, or boats, the merchandise on the banks of the river, the most delicate objects, the small pebbles under the water, and the different degrees of transparency which they imparted to it.” In August 1839, Talbot, along with giving a speech at the British Association, exhibited, according to H.J.P. Arnold, “a total of ninety-three specimens comprising negative copies of botanical specimens, positive copies of engravings and solar microscope views together with positive prints and a negative of Lacock Abbey made in the camera.”

*The Art-Union* continued to focus on process development after 1839. It routinely commented on improvements in photographic portraiture, especially Richard Beard’s experiments with creating color images, and an improved camera invented by Richard Willats that produced, according to the article, pictures that are “most perfect, even to the minutest

22 *Athenaeum* no. 594 (March 16, 1839): 204.
23 *Literary Gazette* no. 1173 (July 13, 1839): 444.
24 Ibid.
detail.” Although Beard and Willats were both British, and so could be expected to receive attention from *The Art-Union*, somewhat surprisingly neither Talbot nor the Talbotype were discussed much in the journal at first. In fact, when improvements in the Talbotype process were discussed in the May and June 1845 issues of the journal, the articles referred to work that had been accomplished by Claudet—a Frenchman living in London who was one of the first people in England to capture daguerreotypes there. It is understandable that *The Art-Union* would continue to take a cautious approach to the commodification of photography during the early years of its development. Many of the articles and notes on photography during this period that were published in *The Art-Union* as well as the *Athenaeum* and the *Literary Gazette* reported process developments and image exhibitions by individuals who were active on the Continent. Even though British photographers such as Beard, Willats, and Talbot were active in creating photographs and driving improvements in photographic process—much of this work comprised significant elements of the larger field of early photography, including, but not limited to Talbot’s *The Pencil of Nature*, as will be seen—*The Art-Union* seems to have concluded that Talbot and other British photographers had not yet been successful in exposing their work to a wide-ranging section of the British art public.

26 *The Art-Union* 6 (August 1844): 222.
27 This is a curious occurrence, since Hall and Talbot personally knew each other, as will be seen when Talbot provides Hall with several thousand photographs to be incorporated into an issue of *The Art-Union*, although it is unknown at what date they commenced their acquaintanceship. In fact, Hall wrote in his memoirs that he was well connected to the British art world: “It is unnecessary for me to say that all the artists of the earlier half of the century have been my personal acquaintances; I have known them all, and it seems to me that I might write something of each that could not fail to interest a reader.” See, Hall, *Retrospect of a Long Life*. 3, 422.
28 The *Athenaeum* and *Literary Gazette* did not provide the reader with a much greater amount of material discussing photographic development by British photographers than *The Art-Union* during this period. But, it is noteworthy that Talbot was much more present and active in the *Literary Gazette* than the other journals. One potential reason for this, at least in comparison to *The Art-Union*, is that the *Literary Gazette* reported on the sciences in much greater detail than would have been expected in the page of an art journal. Therefore, photographic development and Talbot’s experiments and activities in the field were accorded a reasonable amount of attention in the *Literary Gazette*. Talbot also published letters in the *Literary Gazette* in which he argued for his primacy in inventing photography, explained the calotype process, described his efforts toward improving the photographic process for ease of use and quality of image, and argued for the mass use-value of photography:
The Art-Union supports this contention: “Every means has been employed in propagating a knowledge of the Daguerreotype, and its merits have done the rest. On the other hand, the Talbotype has been hitherto only circulated in private societies, and is, consequently, less generally known.”

Talbot exhibited his works at places like the British Association for the Advancement of Science in Birmingham, and presented large numbers of photogenic drawings to Queen Victoria over the years, starting in 1839. A limited portion of the British public viewed these photogenic drawings, which restricted Talbot’s ability to gain widespread influence for his work as a valued commodity. Even the various installments of The Pencil of Nature did not reach enough of the public to cause a general desire for this imaging process. Another issue Talbot experienced is that his work was not as highly valued at first because it both came out after Daguerre announced his photographic developments, the early process of capturing a photogenic drawing was lengthy, and the paper on which he captured his images did not produce as sharp of pictures as Daguerre’s metal plates. These last two issues caused many early adopters of photography to use the daguerreotype process to take portraits, which was the largest revenue gainer in terms of early photography.

I think that art has now reached a point which is likely to make it extensively useful. How many travellers are almost ignorant of drawing, and either attempt nothing, or bring home rude unintelligible sketches! They may now fill their portfolios with accurate views, without much expenditure of time or trouble; and even the accomplished artist will call in sometimes this auxiliary aid, when pressed for time in sketching a building or a landscape, or when wearied with the multiplicity of its minute details.

Also, in May 1840 the Literary Gazette reviewed some of Talbot’s work and announced a planned exhibition of his photography at the Graphic Society. It is not definitively known why Talbot had such a relationship with the Literary Gazette, but it is likely due to personal relationship more than any professional considerations. Talbot may have been friends with the Literary Gazette’s editor William Jerdan or its publisher Henry Colburn, and these relationships may have made him feel comfortable enough to promote his cause within the journal’s pages. This is not to say that Talbot did not know Hall—he definitely did, as will be seen, since Hall received 7,000 Talbotypes from Talbot to publish in The Art-Union in 1846. What cannot be convincingly argued is when and how well Talbot knew any of these individuals or whatever other considerations may have gone into the Literary Gazette providing him greater attention during these early years of photography. See Literary Gazette no. 1160 (13 April 1839): 235-236; Literary Gazette no. 1217 (16 May 1840): 315-316; Literary Gazette no. 1256 (13 February 1841): 108; Literary Gazette no. 1258 (27 February 1841): 139-140; Literary Gazette no. 1277 (10 July 1841): 445.

29 The Art-Union 8 (June 1846): 144
29 Tagg, The Burden of Representation, 37, 43.
Although *The Art-Union* does not discuss in detail the popularity of photographic portraiture, Tagg argues that “to ‘have one’s portrait done’ was one of the symbolic acts by which individuals from the rising social classes made their ascent visible to themselves and others and classed themselves among those who enjoyed social status.”31 In fact, Tagg contends that the daguerreotype process used for portraiture exploded in growth, since, “by 1842, exposure times had been reduced to between forty and twenty seconds, and portrait studios began to open everywhere.”32 Tagg continues,

It is estimated that more than ninety per cent of all daguerreotypes ever taken were portraits. In a ‘daguerreotypemania’, the middling people flocked to have photographs made, soon outnumbering the factory owners, statesmen, scholars, and intellectuals amongst who photographic portraiture was first established. Shopkeepers, lesser functionaries, officials and small traders of all kinds—these were the sectors of the middle class which found in photography a new means of representation commensurate with their economic and ideological conditions. By their numbers, they created for the first time an economic base on which a form of portraiture could develop that was accessible to a mass public.33

The portrait was not simply the photographic form the rising social classes used to expose their social status to a developing mass public, it was the main form of photograph that most people would have seen or possessed during the period of 1839 to 1854.

Only a few portrait studios existed in Europe in the few years after photography was invented in 1839, starting with Richard Beard’s, which, according to Gernsheim, “opened on 23rd March 1841 on the roof of the Royal Polytechnic Institution in London.”34 In June 1841, Claudet opened the second photographic portrait studio in Europe. His public studio was in a

---

31 Ibid., 37.
32 Ibid., 43.
34 Gernsheim and Gernsheim, *A Concise History of Photography*, 62
glass-house erected on the roof of the Royal Adelaide Gallery. Gernsheim notes that portrait photography was introduced in France “after Claudet’s communication to the Académie des Sciences on 7th June 1841 of his accelerating process (details of Goddard’s having been kept secret by Beard).” N. P. Lerebours, who Gernsheim describes as “an enterprising Parisian optical instrument maker,” likely opened the first public portrait studio in France, and by the end of 1841 had produced about 1,500 portraits. Although individual cities, such as London and Paris, had only a few photographic portrait studios in 1841, by the mid-1850s these establishments were found throughout Great Britain and France. John Hannavy contends that “from the two studios which opened in London in 1841, over two and a half thousand photographers had advertised their services in the capital alone by the end of the century.” Jim Dyos and Michael Wolff state that “the census returns show an increase in the number of professional photographers in Britain from a mere 51 in 1851 to 17,268 by 1901.” The photographic portrait studio is a particularly important element in the process of commodifying British photography, since the mass public became aware of portrait photography through exposure to it being displayed in gallery windows.

35 Ibid., 66.
36 Ibid., 74.
37 Ibid., 72, 74.
40 See Freund, Photography & Society, 46-47.
Although the price of photography originally meant that only the upper classes could afford to adopt it, technical improvements lowered both the cost of producing and purchasing an image and exposure times for sitters. From 1839 to 1842 the required sitting time for a photographic portrait went from fifteen minutes in full sunlight to twenty seconds or less.\textsuperscript{41} The middle and lower classes were eventually able to afford to purchase photographic portraits, but this did not occur until Disderi introduced the carte-de-visite to the market in 1852 and 1853.\textsuperscript{42} This small-sized portrait photograph, which measured approximately 2 ½ by 4 inches was produced on a single negative with a dozen identical exposures. Freund notes that these images were produced for one-fifth of the usual cost.\textsuperscript{43} According to Freund, “by effecting this change in size and price, Disderi made photography accessible on a broad scale. Portraits were suddenly available to the lower middle class.”\textsuperscript{44} These portraits were not only images of members of the lower middle class, but of friends and celebrities, such as royalty and actors that could be purchased at low costs. People would then either trade individual portraits with others or place these images in albums for their own personal consumption or to display and share with guests. Thus, Freund asserts, by 1855, “photographic studios now sprang up everywhere in France, especially in Paris. Photography attracted men from all walks of life who left their professions to become photographers in the hope of making a vast fortune.”\textsuperscript{45}

The carte-de-visite entered Britain by 1857, and had a similar impact on the British market. Even before the introduction of the carte-de-visite in Britain, the demand for cheap portraits had grown so much by the early 1850s that, as Newhall contends, “the daguerreotypists

\textsuperscript{41} See Ibid., 30.
\textsuperscript{42} Prior to these years the public could not afford many artistic objects or photographic images. Freund declares that “the buying power of this public, however, was as small as its understanding and appreciation for the new art was great. Generously Le Gray gave away his photographs to favorite visitors.” Freund, Photography & Society, 47.
\textsuperscript{43} She declares that Disderi “charged 20 francs for twelve photographs. A single print had previously cost anywhere from 50 to 100 francs.” See, Ibid., 56.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 58.
and calotypists could hardly keep up with it.” In fact, Newhall points out that “in a price war operators offered the public daguerreotypes at 50 cents, at 25 cents and finally at 12 ½ cents—made ‘two at a pop’ with a double lens camera. In picture factories division of labor was said to have speeded up the work to a production of ‘300, 500, and even 1000 daily.’” These photographs were seldom good quality images that delighted the paying customers, but, as Newhall notes, “prospects streamed up the stairs to the skylight and the cash rolled in.”

Talbot was unable to drive a significant commodity fetishism for his photogenic drawings not only as a result of exposing his work to a limited viewing public and having a photographic process that was not well adapted to the capturing of portrait images, but also by reason of his use of patents. Talbot applied for a patent of his “Calotype Photographic Process” on February 8, 1841. Arnold considers this action to be based on the desire for exploiting a commercial product, and not as “a form of revenge by Talbot for the relative lack of attention given to

---

46 Newhall, *The History of Photography*, 47.
47 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
49 Talbot did not patent his process for photogenic drawing, but through the introduction of gallic acid to the process he significantly improved the ability of fixing the image to paper. He decided to patent this new process. André Jammes contends that Talbot made the move to patent his “Calotype Photographic Process” because Six months after Daguerre’s triumph, Talbot found himself in the strange position of a scientist who, although he had developed an excellent and extremely promising technique, had nevertheless found neither recognition nor the possibility of utilizing his invention. His rival had succeeded in showing the public some immediate results—even if they were on a restricted scale. Talbot was convinced that the Daguerreotype had no future, and he was thoroughly aware of the almost inexhaustible possibilities of his own process, but he did not enjoy even a fraction of the fame which surrounded Daguerre. Thus the generosity of this Englishman—who had, after all, informed the French academicians of his methods and published the basic essentials—of his process—turned to mistrust. He surrounded himself with patents. That which he had previously given freely to the public for sake of a vestige of fame, he now took pains to protect with all the legal means at his disposal—almost to the point of meanness. Talbot applied for his patent on February 8, 1841. It was eventually registered on August 17. Yet, instead of the daguerreotype having no future, Talbot quickly realized that he was losing ground to the French imaging process on another front—it, according to Jammes, was “admirably suited to portraiture.” In fact, Jammes suggests, the daguerreotype’s “exceptionally sharp contours produced on the silver plates and the relatively short exposure length proved extremely profitable to a great number of artists all over the world.” This popular and lucrative photographic process was quickly adopted for taking portraits in England, and set back Talbot significantly in the promotion of the Calotype process. Jammes, *Talbot*, 11, 13; Arnold, *Talbot*, 128-138.
Arnold rightly points out that “photogenic drawing did receive a good deal of attention but Talbot was the first to realize and to state that it needed improvement. This he achieved and the simple fact is that with the evolution of the Calotype system he realized that he had a commercial product and decided to exploit it.”

Arnold also argues that “commercial exploitation in fact—no matter how inadequately handled by Talbot subsequently—seemed to be the main intention behind all of his patents.” He defends Talbot’s actions by asserting that “despite the sharp comments from his critics about a wealthy man demeaning himself as a philosopher by seeking financial gain, Talbot saw no reason why he should not seek material reward for his many hours of work and subsequent discoveries.”

Although he mishandled his defense of taking out and holding patents on his photographic inventions, Talbot hampered his ability to make his photographic process more popular by charging rather high rates to potential licensees as well as persistently prosecuting anyone who infringed his copyright—effectively keeping most of them from adopting the Talbotype process instead of taking daguerreotypes.

It is difficult to develop the fetishistic desire of a thing unseen, so The Art-Union once again seems to have been cautious in its promotion of the photographic enterprise in Britain. Also, if the British art world perceived that photography was more foreign than British it would have been harmful to The Art-Union as a commodity to the British art world to create a fetish for

---

50 Arnold, Talbot, 181.
51 Ibid., 182.
52 Ibid.
53 Ibid. Tagg points out that “even after relinquishing certain controls in 1852, he kept to himself the right to license the taking of portraits for profit which remained the most lucrative use of photography. Only in Scotland did these patents not apply, and it was in Scotland that the only extended success with calotype portraiture was achieved by the painter David Hill and his assistant Robert Adamson.” See, Tagg, The Burden of Representation, 45.
a non-British type of art. Taking this into consideration, it was better for the journal to continue to report on improvements in photography—favoring the scientific perspective—until it could somehow be recognized and promoted as a desired British object.

The commodification of photography as a desired British object began to gain strength in The Art-Union in 1844. In the August issue the journal printed its review of the first number of Talbot’s The Pencil of Nature. The review discusses in detail Talbot’s prefatory material in which he describes his experiments and the route he took to developing his form of photography. Although the reviewer readily admits that Daguerre succeeded in being the first person to publicly announce the successful results of his photographic process, he makes it clear to the reader that Talbot had spent a number of years experimenting with photography simultaneously, but independently from his French counterpart. Reading this review it is obvious that Talbot is presented as having attained an advanced stage in his imaging process, but was concerned that he should not make his work public until it was in a more perfect state. By 1834, Talbot was experimenting with paper coated with a solution of nitrate of silver that would capture images when exposed to sunlight. The reviewer explains that this technique worked well when items such as “leaves, lace, and other flat objects” were spread upon this coated paper once it was dry, pressed down tightly under glass, and exposed to sunlight. But, the reviewer states that

55 André Jammes provides a good short description of Talbot’s early attempts at promoting photography through publications being offered by his Reading studio:

The first installment of The Pencil of Nature appeared in an edition of approximately two hundred copies, but the number of subscribers dwindled in the course of publication due to the high price, the delay in delivery, and the instability of the pictures. Parallel to The Pencil of Nature, Talbot published a collection of photographs of views of Scotland, made famous by the writings of Sir Walter Scott. Sun Pictures in Scotland appeared in the autumn of 1845, prior to the publication of the final installment of The Pencil of Nature, and consisted of twenty-three pictures without accompanying text. The fact that this collection appeared before the completion of The Pencil of Nature gives rise to the supposition that Talbot felt it necessary to try and improve his reputation, which had suffered due to the lack of stability of the Pencil prints. The circulation of these Scottish views was smaller than that of The Pencil of Nature, but nevertheless remarkable for such a primitive studio.

Jammes, Talbot, 12.
when the prepared paper was placed in a camera-obscura, with a view to obtaining a
delineation of a building, it was found that the effect produced upon the paper was by no
means so satisfactory as had been expected. The parts in opposition to the sky were
sufficiently marked, but the details were not well made out, and the parts in shade were
left blank. Thus the preparation of the paper was as yet imperfect, inasmuch as it was not
yet sufficiently sensitive. After experimenting with the iodide of silver, Mr. Talbot says
that, during the brilliant summer of 1835, he resumed his attempts to obtain pictures of
buildings with the camera-obscura, having devised a process by which the sensibility of
the paper was improved, viz., by giving it repeated alternate washes of salt and silver, and
using it in a moist state. Thus the time of obtaining an image with the camera was
reduced to ten minutes. These results were, however, only miniature: larger pictures, it is
ture, were procurable by lengthening the time, but it was difficult to keep the apparatus
steady sufficiently long. The three following years added but little to previous
knowledge, and Mr. Talbot contemplated the publication of his discovery even in its
imperfect state. In the year 1838, however, he observed the effect of light on the iodide
of silver; and in January, 1839, M. Daguerre announced the discovery of his photographic
process, called the Daguerreotype.  

Daguerre, by proclaiming his developments first, was accorded all of the credit for bringing
photography to the world. The reviewer is perplexed by the exclusivity of the credit given to
Daguerre, and lays out a short argument that attempts to present the case for Talbot being viewed
on an equal plane with the Frenchman. In this argument, the reviewer claims that the public is
led to the observation that Niepce and Daguerre were experimenting on light before Talbot—as
early as 1814 in Niepce’s case—and that “they laboured assiduously until the year 1839, when
they proclaimed their discovery; but the process was a profound secret until purchased by the
French Government.” He asserts that “we are led to these observations by the sounding parade
and disingenuous reclamations of foreign journals, which, with the most absurd assumption,
demand for their scientific men the homage due to exclusive and unparticipated discovery.”

The reviewer then puts forth an example of a British scientific discovery that has acknowledged

---

56 The Art-Union 6 (August 1844): 223.
57 The Athenaeum and the Literary Gazette also presented arguments promoting Talbot’s position as an inventor of
photography. See, Athenaeum no. 588 (2 February 1839): 96; Literary Gazette no. 1150 (2 February 1839): 72-75;
Literary Gazette no. 1158 (30 March 1839): 202-203; Literary Gazette no. 1160 (13 April 1839): 235-236.
58 The Art-Union 6 (August 1844): 223.
59 Ibid.
German elements of discovery. This one example presents to the reader the idea that exclusive discovery is not always a reasonable assertion as well as that photography has much greater British ties than previously acknowledged, therefore setting it down a much stronger path of commodification as a British object.

This review in *The Art-Union* not only attempts to build the commodification of British photography through a promotion of Talbot’s experiments in photographic process, but by also engaging with the compositional and aesthetic qualities of individual photographs within *The Pencil of Nature*. The reviewer seems to struggle with how to assess the images—as art or as a nearly exact imaged representation of a physical object. Although the reviewer discusses only four plates, this critical tension is quite noticeable within his analysis. He argues that a photograph of a part of Queen’s College, Oxford—a structure made of soft stone that “presents a very broken and weather-worn appearance”—is represented as perfect in conception, so much so that “the minutest detail is given with a softness that cannot be imitated by any artistic

---

60 The reviewer states, “The discovery of the electrotype is properly due to British science. The process was suggested by the operation of Professor Daniell’s constant battery; the hint was immediately acted upon by two experimentalists—one in Germany, the other at Liverpool, Mr. Palmer—and the German has, in the eyes of Europe, the credit of the discovery.” *The Art-Union* 6 (August 1844): 223.

61 The reviewer also attempts to dismantle the argument that Niepce and Daguerre were exclusive inventors of photography by questioning how they came to be “prosecuting similar inquiries”:

But what, we may inquire, turned the attention of these gentlemen to the subject? Was it the experiments of Mr. Wedgwood and Sir H. Davy, as recorded in the “Journal of the Royal Institution” in June, 1802? If not, from what source did the suggestion arise? for two experimentalists, be it observed, were simultaneously at work, who united their fortunes on learning that the object of their pursuit was identical. The inclusion of two British men, Thomas Wedgwood and Sir Humphry Davy—the former a chemist and the third and youngest son of Josiah Wedgwood, and the latter a chemist and inventor—not only shows precursors in experimenting with imaging processing, but brings a strong British foundation once again to photography. In fact, the success that Wedgwood and Davy displayed in developing the nascent photographic process through the publication of their 1802 paper, “An Account of a Method of Copying Paintings upon Glass, and of Making Profiles by the Agency of Light upon the Nitrate of Silver” had the potential to push back the announced invention of photography by almost forty years, if not for the problem that these two men were unable to produce a method that would make the pictures permanent. *The Art-Union* 6 (August 1844): 223. For more information on Wedgwood and Davy see, Richard Buckley Litchfield, *Tom Wedgwood, the First Photographer: An Account of His Life* (London: Duckworth and Co., 1903); Barbara Wedgwood and Hensleigh Cecil Wedgwood, *The Wedgwood Circle, 1730-1897: Four Generations of a Family and Their Friends* (Westfield, NJ: Eastview Editions, 1980); Humphry Davy, Sir, *The Collected Works of Sir Humphry Davy*, 9 vols., Edited by John Davy (London: Smith, Elder, 1839-40); Harold Hartley, *Humphry Davy* (London: Nelson, 1966); David M. Knight, *Humphry Davy: Science & Power* (Oxford, UK; Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1992); C. E. K. Mees, *The Fundamentals of Photography* (Rochester, NY: Eastman Kodak Co., 1921).
manipulation; there is nothing in it like what we call touch; the whole is melted in and blended into form by the mysterious agency of natural chemistry."

Although the reviewer assesses this image as a highly aesthetic piece, he does not claim it as art. Instead, it is something more than art—a meta-art that is supposedly an almost exact representation of nature. Creating an image that was deemed to be truthful to Nature was important during this period, and obviously was expected of photography as well.

Yet, for all the high praise of the first image, this positive commentary is not unendingly continued for the discussion of the other three pictures. There is most definitely a positive view of these photographs, but the reviewer points out negative aspects of the compositions as much as the exemplary elements. The reviewer expresses the limitations of the photographic process as represented in these images, partially in an attempt to show where the picture is not truthful to Nature, but more so to express under what physical conditions the optimal photographs can be produced. The reviewer states that the second image—“a view of the Boulevard at Paris, taken from one of the upper windows of the Hotel de Douvres, situated at the corner of the Rue de la Paix”—will surprise “persons unacquainted with the nature of photography” because this typically crowded street is completely devoid of human life in the picture. The reviewer points out that photography is limited by its inability to represent a moving object, and that people need to become acquainted with that limitation. The third plate that is reviewed shows a setting of

---


61 Tagg notes:
The assimilation of photographic practices to ‘Fine Art’ models was fraught with difficulties, and that precarious generalisation Photography did not sit well in the modern museum of Art. The history of photography stands in relation to the history of Art as a history of writing would to the history of Literature. It cannot be reduced to a unity and assimilated to the very canon it has, practically and theoretically called into question.

A more detailed discussion of this desire to have the truth of Nature in art during the nineteenth century, and the critical tension in evaluating photographs, is found in Chapter 5.

64 *The Art-Union* 6 (August 1844): 223.
China and glass. The reviewer asserts that the china is “depicted with wonderful perfection” because its white composition makes it easily photographed, and the glass “is described with inimitable truth” even though its material properties are not as easily represented on the photographic plate. The differing material properties of these objects presents another limitation of early photography, since, according to the reviewer, “they cannot be well represented at the same time, because the picture of the china, from its superior brightness, is completed before that of the glass is well begun.” The last reviewed image is a bust of Patroclus. The reviewer claims this to be “an excellent subject for photography, in consequence of the whiteness of the material.” He contends that this material makes any cast or bust a superb object for representing in a picture. The reviewer considers this photograph with as much admiration as the first plate in this part of *The Pencil of Nature*. He appraises the bust as “a most beautiful reflection, the shadows are finely transparent, and the whole singularly soft, round, and substantial.” A photographer, by reading this commentary and putting its suggestions into practice, would be able to produce pictures that best represent the objects, and so attain a higher level of artistic quality. What is particularly noteworthy within this commentary is that even though *The Art-Union* has up to this point criticized the lack of improvements in the photographic process in Britain, in this case the journal is promoting image enhancements by suggesting that photographers work on capturing pictures based on what already works instead of pushing for further process development that would allow for a wider range of objects to be photographed. This attitude may be a result of the reviewer struggling with finding the best way to assess photography, but its status as a desired commodity is made tenuous by this uncertainty.

65 Ibid.
66 Ibid.
67 Ibid.
68 Ibid.
In an attempt to reassure the reader that the prospects for photography look bright, the reviewer ends his commentary on the first part of *The Pencil of Nature* with this sentiment: “The art is still in its infancy; it is open to many improvements, some of which we confidently look forward to in future numbers of the work.”

The reviewer in the assessments of the second, third, and fourth numbers of *The Pencil of Nature* approached Talbot’s work from a similar perspective as in the first review. It is interesting that praised images are not recognized as compositionally and aesthetically good representations of the photographed object, they are perfect copies of Nature. The reviewer describes the tenth plate, an image of a haystack, as “represented with a truth which never could be expected by any skill or trick of Art.” A photograph copying a French lithograph entitled “Les Grimaces,” is appraised as “nothing can exceed its precision.” In the review of the third number of *The Pencil of Nature*, the reviewer expresses surprise that Talbot includes a note expressly stating that the plates in his work are actually photographs, not engravings. Challenges to the authenticity of Talbot’s images could significantly harm its status as a desired commodity, so the reviewer, in support of both Talbot’s work and *The Art-Union’s* mission, contends, “We know not what manner of engraving this could be mistaken for—what kind of engraving could, with such inimitable harmony, render effect and detail as we see them here given.” Once again, in the review of the fourth number, the reviewer appraises photography as something that essentially transcends art. He declares that the most striking element in the first plate of this number, “The Cloisters of Lacock Abbey,” is the ivy. This ivy, according to the reviewer, is shown where “nothing in Art can equal the beauty and truth of this representation—the foliage

---

69 Ibid.
70 *The Art-Union* 7 (March 1845): 84.
71 Ibid.
72 Ibid.
being most perfect in character, dense, abundantly luxuriant, and well rounded in its masses, which are brought out by deep shadows inimitably liquid and transparent." The reviewer reiterates his contention that no artist using either a pencil or an engraving tool could even approximate the detail contained within the image and its truth to Nature.

The *Athenaeum* and the *Literary Gazette* also each printed a series of reviews between 1845 and 1846 that evaluated the six parts of Talbot’s *The Pencil of Nature*. The reviewer in the *Athenaeum* commented on the aesthetic qualities of the individual plates determining the Talbotype to contain artistic elements while not being true to Nature:

The view of Lacock Abbey, although pleasing, and possessing to the artist many points of interest, has the defect of all photographic landscapes. The trees, the grass on the lawn, and the plants growing on the edge of the river, are produced by the want of any chemical action over those parts of the paper on which their shadows fell.

Creating an image that was deemed to be truthful to Nature was important during this period, and obviously was expected of photography as well. The reviewer in the *Literary Gazette* seems to find no flaws in Talbot’s ability to represent an image that is true to nature in his photography:

The Tower of Lacock Abbey is a rich and picturesque subject; upon which the distribution of light and shadow is curiously natural, and very striking as a truth, if we might say so, beyond the conceptions of imitation. It is difficult to explain this—it consists in the faintest gradations of light throughout, not only the broader masses, but the most minute parts of the picture, and sinking into a darkness almost complete, but nevertheless not black. It must be carefully examined to have this remarkable quality fully understood and appreciated.

While it is significant that these reviews address the compositional and artistic qualities of the photographic plates within *The Pencil of Nature*, it is even more interesting that the *Athenaeum* finally approaches individual works of photography in a similar way to its Royal Academy.

---

73 *The Art-Union* 7 (October 1845): 325.
74 This is from the reviewer’s comments on “Lacock Abbey in Wiltshire”—originally published as Plate XV in Part 3 of *The Pencil of Nature*. Also, the reviewer asserts that daguerreotypes are superior to Talbotypes because they present a sharper outline. The Talbotype is artistically inferior to the daguerreotype, according to the reviewer, since any photographic process that relies on paper produces an image that “detracts from [its] truth to Nature.” *Athenaeum* no. 920 (June 14, 1845): 592.
75 *Literary Gazette*, no. 1512 (10 January 1846): 38.
Exhibition reviews. But the significant difference remains that the first time a Victorian journal critically assesses individual photographic works they are not similarly framed and hung in a gallery space like the paintings at the Royal Academy, even though it has been shown that this was occurring at the time; rather, they exist within the much more intimate and confined space of a text.  

This opportunity finally occurred in 1846 when a Talbotype was included in the June issue. Heinz K. Henisch and Bridget A. Henisch, in their book *The Photographic Experience 1839-1914*, declare that the inclusion of a Talbotype in this issue was “the key event which stimulated public interest in the illustrative potential of photography.” The accompanying article comprises two full-pages of the journal, and mainly presents a history of Talbot’s experiments with perfecting the process of creating these works. It is a very positive piece, and

---

76 The reviewer in the *Athenaeum* also critically addressed the incorporation of photographs into a text in the conclusion to the assessment of the third number of *The Pencil of Nature*:

> Although Mr. Fox Talbot’s specimens are of a very interesting character, we are not yet satisfied that the problem of photographic publication is solved. The irregular appearance of ‘The Pencil of Nature,’ the small number of pictures those parts contain, and the high price at which they are sold, all prove that the labour consequent on the production of photographs is too great to render them generally useful for the purposes of illustration.

*Athenaeum* no. 920 (14 June 1845): 593.

77 This was a significant event because it was the first time a photographic image had been published in a journal. Although it is known that each June 1846 issue of *The Art-Union* did not include the same Talbotype, no reliable data has been found that elucidates just how many different Talbotypes were created and used. Henisch and Henisch state that *The Art-Union* had 7,000 subscribers at this time. Samuel Carter Hall simply states in his memoirs—giving the wrong year of the transaction—that “in 1847, Fox Talbot, whose name designated the process known as ‘Talbotype,’ gave me seven thousand impressions to introduce into *The Art Journal.*” Although it commonly took a significant amount of time and effort to create photogenic drawings during this period it seems likely that this significant number of individual works were produced for this issue. H.J.P. Arnold explains that “in his photographic patent of 1843 it will be recalled that Talbot described a system for the production of photographic prints for publication. A few months later he began to put the plan into effect when he sent Nicholas Henneman to Reading to take charge of what was to be the world’s first mass-volume photographic-print production facility.” Henneman was tasked with producing over 4,300 prints for Talbot’s *The Pencil of Nature*, but Arnold argues that the addition of B. Cowderoy—an accountant from Reading—to the Reading staff between 1845 and 1846 was the stimulus for increasing the facility’s production levels: “Cowderoy’s stay at Reading was the only period during the existence of the establishment when there was a sense of commercial purpose and drive.” In fact, Arnold suggests “it may be that Cowderoy played some part in proposing the distribution of 7,000 Talbotypes with the 1 June 1846 number of *Art-Union* as a promotion.”

was likely published with the Talbotypes as a way to promote Talbot’s work to a larger audience—particularly a public interested in art, and the growth of British art. This commentary extended the positive reviews of the previously released installments of *The Pencil of Nature*, but it has a greater impact, not just on Talbot’s career but on the commodification of photography in Britain since each subscriber now possessed their own Talbotype—a British product—that they could share with anyone with whom they came into contact. If a broader group of individuals were now able to not just read about the development of British photography, but to actually see the products of this particular photographic process, the desire to more directly engage with and likely possess such images would grow along with the increased value of British photography as a commodity.

Now that a truly British alternative to the daguerreotype had attained a stage of development that would allow for its presentation as an important object to the larger art world, *The Art-Union* could intensify the enthusiasm it displayed toward photography. Talbotypes are formed into a definite value-bearing object when the article declares that “photogenic drawings are not extensively known in proportion to the importance of the discovery.”78 This in turn further commodified photography and *The Art-Union* in potentially not only the British art world, but Victorian culture as a whole. The reason given for including a Talbotype with this issue lends support to this claim:

> The picture which accompanies this number of the *Art-Union*, as an example, will, to those to whom the art is entirely new, afford some idea of the style in which these productions are brought forward, and will, at the same time, support the observations we have already made on the subject.79

It is interesting to note that the article makes it explicit that photography in this case is considered to be art, not science. An informed reader of the journal should have been attuned to

---

78 *The Art-Union* 8 (June 1846): 143.
79 Ibid.
this type of declaration, and understood that the Talbotype was now to be viewed as a highly
desired object. *The Art-Union* enhances this drive to further commodify photography—now
seen from a British perspective—through two other important assertions. First, the journal
declares that these works are nearly as beautiful as Nature, since they are an almost perfect
imitation of it. Second, it contends that the Talbotype is superior to the daguerreotype, since it is
produced on paper, not plates of polished silver, and is “fully equal to it in power of detail.”

What can ultimately be understood from this study of how *The Art-Union* approached
photography during both of their early years is that there was a difficulty in figuring out how to
discuss the photographic enterprise—from a scientific or artistic perspective—as well as
significant attempts to protect the economic and cultural interests concerning both sales and
reputation of the journal and British artists. *The Art-Union* was not merely analyzing a new art
form in photography; it was helping to create a commodity fetishism for British photography,
which, therefore, helped to advance the capitalistic enterprise of Great Britain in the nineteenth
century.

---

80 The report also contends that the Talbotype had “through the unremitting labours and research of its inventor,
been wonderfully improved.” This is unlike the daguerreotype, which was “matured at its announcement.” The
reporter states that one way these improvements had made the Talbotype superior to the daguerreotype was by
revealing its valuable capabilities, such as “that of increasing ancient and valuable drawings upon the material
whereon they were originally made, and so fitting them for the portfolio.” The reporter provides more detail of this
example earlier in the article:

In the sixth number of the “Pencil of Nature,” a plate is published to show another important application of
the photographic art. This is a repetition of a sketch of ‘Hagar in the Desert,’ by Francesco Mola, which
has been taken from a facsimile executed at Munich: hence we are furnished with indubitable proof that by
this means can original sketches of the old masters be illimitably multiplied, with a nicety of execution
surpassing any imitative effort of the human hand.

This favorable opinion of the Talbotype soon experienced some damage, since the photographs distributed with the
journal subsequently faded. Samuel Carter Hall discusses the lack of longevity in these Talbotypes in his memoirs:
“I have been examining some of these lately; they are faded and gone—pieces of slurred paper, nothing more.”*
The Art-Union* 8 (June 1846): 144; Samuel Carter Hall, *Retrospect of a Long Life: From 1815 to 1883* (New York: D.
Appleton and Company, 1883), 3.
CHAPTER 3
CREATING A PUBLIC FOR ART: PHOTOGRAPHY AND KNOWINGNESS, 1839-1846

The Art-Union developed more than a critical relationship with photography during both of their early years of existence. Between 1839 and 1846 the journal also engaged with the British art public, which as will be seen helped it to become a crucial site of communal development in nineteenth-century Britain. Yet, the advance of the art world in Britain into a British community was not an instant success. Hall worked hard to promote this British artistic identity from its lowly position prior to 1839.

“*I had to create a public for Art.*”

Hall, in his recollections of creating a journal interested solely in the fine arts, used this statement to argue that the artists, art patrons, and art lovers of Britain were not being properly served by a publication that could develop them into a coherent and real community. Hall viewed his mission with this journal to be the production of British art. He wanted to wean the public away from exclusive interests in imported—and often fake—foreign art in order to promote new young British artists as well as established ones. The Art-Union devoted its entire content to the discussion of Art. This, according to Hall in the introduction to the first issue of The Art-Union, was unlike other contemporary newspapers and periodicals, since they were “compelled to consider the subject only as one among the many matters that claim their attention. It is usually the least pressing.”

Hall used his journal to report on all forms of art in Britain and Europe that were of interest to the British art world. One topic discussed within the pages of the journal was photography, of which the invention by both Daguerre and Talbot was also announced in 1839. The near simultaneous creation of both entities seemed to guarantee that the nascent British art public would desire to directly engage

---

2 *The Art-Union* 1 (February 1839): 1.
with the developing photographic enterprise resulting not only in the transmission of information, but also the fostering of a community. This chapter examines how photography was discussed within The Art-Union during the early years of both concerns, and provides one important example of how the members of the British art world were able to conceptualize their community.

Although Britain was home to many artists and people interested in art, Hall’s declaration of a need to create an art community suggests that a social collective identity did not exist in the country. Hall’s belief that an art community needed to be created in Britain was both deceiving and accurate. This is a deceptive statement, since it seems to suggest that Hall deemed there to be absolutely no community interested in, and organized around, art in contemporary Britain. But an art community has definitely been shown to have existed at the time, with a particularly important component of that grouping being the Royal Academy.

The main issue with this art community, and the reason why Hall concluded he needed to promote an art public was that many of the people living in nineteenth-century Britain were not interested in British art—particularly contemporary British art. Hall intended to make The Art-Union into a primary site of communal development for not just the art world in mid-Victorian Britain, but for the advancement of a particularly British art community that held in high esteem the conservative values of the Royal Academy, regardless of what genre was discussed.

---

3 Not only was the Royal Academy an important institution for the development and celebration of art in Britain, its exhibition and classes provided members of society opportunities to experience art as at least one focal point around which to cultivate an art community. Also, as stated in the Introduction, the Royal Academician is credited as having been instrumental in promoting the need for a publication devoted exclusively to the fine arts in England. See, Introduction, 13.

4 Although the term Britain is used it is difficult to know just how widespread the influence was of The Art-Union within London, England, or Britain. The journal had a circulation of 750 for its first issue, and was reported to have averaged a monthly circulation of nearly 3,000 copies by the end of 1839. The stated monthly circulation was 7,000 by 1846 and throughout the later 1840s, but these figures do not suggest how often issues were shared and read between people. Hall and his journal were definitely London-based, but The Art-Union would report on art events and developments in Scotland, Ireland, and the provincial cities of England. This suggests that there was at least
The development of this British art community in the nineteenth century is important to understand for its effects on the growth of the presumably smaller group of people interested in photography. The transformation from an unstructured group of individuals who share similar interests into a definite community proceeded along many of the same lines, regardless of those people being interested in art, British art, or, more specifically in this case, photography. But, taking into consideration that photography is only one genre in the larger art world, its communal formation, particularly encouraged in the textual form of a journal, has some issues that are much more concentrated than the structuring of the larger overall art community. This is not to suggest that these are necessarily two separate collections of people who are interested in disconnected types of art. It is likely that many people who were interested in art became interested in photography or the reverse. Also, the boundaries of these art communities often shifted as the interest levels of members ebbed and flowed over time. However, by analyzing how The Art-Union fostered the development of the larger British art community, the chapter offers a structural theoretical framework from which to interrogate the advancement of a photographic art community in the late second quarter of nineteenth-century Britain.

Before turning to an examination of how The Art-Union helped to foster a British art community interested in, specifically in this case, photography, it is necessary to understand how such groupings came to be formed in nineteenth-century Britain. To grasp this process fully it is crucial to understand the concept of the individual reader, and that person’s relationship to larger social collectivities. The developments of the reading audience and the public sphere in the eighteenth century are two other central elements to this analysis, particularly since they are typically viewed as foundational aspects for the development of the imagined community in the

some level of provincial art community in Britain, but when it emerged as a viable and sustainable community of its own right is difficult to determine. See, Hall, *Retrospect of a Long Life*, 3, 195; “Preface,” *The Art-Union* 1 (1839): iii; and Henisch and Henisch, *The Photographic Experience 1839-1914*, 318.
nineteenth century. After determining the characteristics of the imagined community the concept of knowingness is examined and applied to this communal formation. Therefore, this chapter synthesizes these various theoretical constructs to aid in uncovering how seemingly disconnected members of society develop strong communal relations and affiliations to form large collective identities.

The contemporary periodical press is of paramount importance to the development of the imagined community in nineteenth-century Britain. Readers formed, as Gerry Beegan asserts, “complex and meaningful” relationships with a periodical by inserting themselves into it and using it to “conceptualize their society.”\(^5\) Beegan argues that this conceptualization develops into “a collective identity that has to be actively imagined, rather than something that is pre-existing.”\(^6\) Although Beegan is correct in his contention that an imagined community must be actively constructed, his assertion that this grouping does not have a pre-existence is inaccurate. Some members of this community may eventually join it without any prior interest in the cultural discourse that acts to organize these readers, but in order for it to be originally constructed there must be people—writers, practitioners, or patrons—who desire to assemble with other people of similar interests—a grouping of people who may have already been meeting in coffee houses or pubs to discuss and debates these subjects. The development of the periodical press in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries helped to facilitate the growth of these likeminded communities beyond the immediate locality of the coffee house or pub.

Although the pre-existing collection of individuals interested generally in art is important to this analysis, it is the reader who is interested particularly in photography that forms the foundation of this study of the nineteenth-century British audience and imagined community.

---


\(^6\) Ibid.
The isolated, textual reader is an individual who has come to be, according to Jon P. Klancher, “historically detached from his audience.”\textsuperscript{7} Klancher argues that the reader and the audience “have come to mean, in post-Romantic critical discourse, two wholly contradictory and seemingly irreconcilable intellectual frameworks: the one hermeneutic or ‘critical,’ the other empiricist or ‘sociological.’”\textsuperscript{8} He determines that the reader has become detached from the audience in this discourse as a result of the contention that the intellectually wealthy individual will “have severed all one’s ‘real connections’ to the social audience from which one has been raised up.”\textsuperscript{9} This concept goes against Marx’s belief that “the real intellectual wealth of the individual depends entirely on the wealth of his real connections.”\textsuperscript{10} Klancher attempts to restore the relationship between the reader and the audience by first contending that “the intense cultural politics of the Romantic period obliged writers not only to distinguish among conflicting audiences, but to do so by elaborating new relations between the individual reader and the collective audience.”\textsuperscript{11} Although the Romantic period writers created a relational split between the reader and the audience, Klancher asserts that the connection between these two entities should be re-established “for a reader is just as surely constituted among audiences when he is apparently abstracted from all audience-belonging as when he is firmly embedded within it.”\textsuperscript{12} It is crucial to understand that while a reader exists as a member of an audience, even at times when the reader seems to be acting as only an individual, that, as Klancher suggests, this reader,

\textsuperscript{8} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{9} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{11} Klancher, \textit{The Making of English Reading Audiences}, 11.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid.
while being “constructed within a certain audience does not mean he becomes an automaton.”\textsuperscript{13} Instead, Klancher importantly argues, the reader’s “encounter with colliding social languages, like the writer’s, demands choice.”\textsuperscript{14} This notion of choice in the act of reading, whether by individual readers or an entire audience, is discussed in greater detail later in this analysis.

As important as the individual reader is to the formation of an audience and an imagined community, it is necessary to understand, as Klancher asserts, that “audiences are not simply aggregates of readers.”\textsuperscript{15} Instead, he argues, “They are complicated social and textual formations; they have interpretive tendencies and ideological contours. Studying them requires us to ask what kind of collective being they represent and how an individual reader becomes aware of belonging to a great social audience.”\textsuperscript{16} The periodical press and its writers were critical to the construction of these audiences, since, as Klancher contends, these works aided in “evolving readers’ interpretive frameworks and shaping their ideological awareness.”\textsuperscript{17} This conception of audiences is not meant to suggest that they occupy “distinct sectors of the cultural sphere.”\textsuperscript{18} Instead, Klancher suggests that these audiences are produced based on an awareness by its members of belonging to specific publics that exist with relational differences from other collective formations.\textsuperscript{19} The writers and editors of the periodicals are critical in displaying this otherness to the audience.

Audiences were defined, shaped, and related to other audiences with the development of the periodical press, which, as Klancher states, was “first formed in the second half of the

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 12.  
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 6.  
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 4.  
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 12.  
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
seventeenth century.” He declares that “the periodical was the cultural contemporary of the English postal service and the London coffeehouse,” and that the purpose of both the periodical and the coffeehouse was to “assemble men from disparate social ‘ranks,’ writers with their patrons and potential readers, publishers with their suppliers, politicians with their critics.” The periodical was important to the development of audiences and communities for two main reasons. First, as Klancher asserts, it “bound a group of writers to a certain set of readers.” Second, Klancher argues, the periodical, which was published in serial form at regular weekly, monthly, or quarterly intervals, developed a “continuous relationship between mutually identifiable readers and writers over time.” This association, which was formed with a textual language specific to the readers and writers of a journal, helped to not only bring about a united community of discourse between the various members, but aided in defining this group from that of other audiences. Klancher suggests that the diversification of the larger public into smaller audiences could easily be witnessed by surveying the constantly growing array of journals at a bookstall or coffeehouse. He contends that “this contradictory role—cementing the small audience while subdividing the larger public—made the periodical a singular but socially

20 Ibid., 19.
21 Klancher also states that “this is why the periodical seems to have formed the textual institution of what Peter Hohendahl and Terry Eagleton, following Jürgen Habermas, have called England’s ‘public sphere’ in the eighteenth century.” The concept of the public sphere will be discussed below. Klancher, The Making of English Reading Audiences, 19. Also see, Peter Uwe Hohendahl, “Critical Theory, Public Sphere, and Culture: Jürgen Habermas and His Critics,” New German Critique 16 (1979): 89-118; Peter Uwe Hohendahl, The Institution of Criticism (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982); Terry Eagleton, The Function of Criticism: From the Spectator to Post-Structuralism (London: Verso, 1984); and Jürgen Habermas, The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society, Translated by Thomas Burger with the assistance of Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1991); as Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit, Darmstadt and Neuwied, Federal Republic of Germany: Hermann Luchterhand Verlag, 1962.
23 Ibid.
24 Ibid.
unstable institution for defining, individualizing, and expanding the audiences who inhabited the greater cultural landscape.”25

Although these various audiences definitely had pre-existing interests that sustained communal discourse in the pubs and coffeehouses as well as informed the publication of new journals, there was no guarantee that these individuals would engage constantly with the periodical press. Klancher argues that for the periodical press to succeed, “readers are made, created as a public through a network of circulatory channels and the writer who consciously directs the reader’s ‘habitual energy of reasoning.’”26 The development of such a reading habit is not informed by ideology or content as much as it is the promotion of, according to Klancher, “a framework of reading, a habitual energy, a mode of reception and comprehension. That mode must be inscribed in language as well as in social relations, in prose style as well as in publishing institutions.”27

As the periodical press began to grow and mature in the later eighteenth century and early nineteenth century the various journals would not, according to Klancher, “simply ‘represent’ a given social group or reflect it back to itself; now they would embody a principle, become actively ideological, and reshape the very contours and self-definitions of the readerships they addressed.”28 This concept can be seen in The Art-Union, since it exemplified a conservative ideology focused on supporting the development of British art. Hall was intent on attracting readers interested in art, which would have likely included the newly wealthy factory owners of the North and Midlands who were interested in improving their social position by collecting art, and then shaping this audience to the periodical’s conservative viewpoint and promotion of

---

25 Ibid.
26 Ibid., 33.
27 Ibid.
28 Ibid., 40.
British art. Although Hall definitely appealed to the newly wealthy members of the middle classes as readers, it was important for The Art-Union as well as any other contemporary periodical to, as Klancher asserts, “make one’s intended reader potential, not already well-defined, prior to the journal’s own discourse.” Hall addressed artists and those interested in art in the introduction to The Art-Union, yet he did not assign the readership a specific rank or social order. This, according to Vanessa R. Schwartz, was because the developing periodical press “aimed to reach as broad and diverse a constituency as possible and was designed to address an imagined ‘universal’ reader.” However, this imagined universal reader was typically a middle-class one. An important way to limit the audience of a given journal was based on its price. The cost of a monthly issue of The Art-Union was eightpence, which would likely eliminate most of the working classes from purchasing the journal.

It is also important to consider that the periodical press was by the second quarter of the nineteenth century, when The Art-Union was established, a site of knowledge that was becoming distanced from the audience. Klancher argues that “no longer a society of readers and writers, the journal represented itself as an institution blending writer, editor, and publisher in what could only appear to be an essentially authorless text.” Although it seems that Klancher is suggesting that readers came to associate a journal with the style of its writing as opposed to identifying with specific authors who had become part of an anonymous impersonal text, many Victorian

29 Ibid., 50.
30 See, Ibid.
32 Although members of the working classes would attend exhibitions, such as the Royal Academy Exhibition, if the entrance fee were low enough, it is questionable how many people in these classes were interested in reading about art on a regular basis. Klancher provides another example of issue price as an economic limiter: “The quarterlies cost four to six shillings each, monthly magazines two to three shillings. Even if workingmen had joined together to buy a copy at these prices—even if they had been faintly interested in what Blackwood’s had to insinuate about them—such reading matter would have cost a member of the ‘lower orders’ an unthinkable full day’s pay.” Klancher, The Making of English Reading Audiences, 50.
33 Ibid., 51.
readers were very interested in knowing who authored specific articles in the various journals. 34 These readers were often attracted to a journal if they thought a particular author was writing for it. However, by conceptualizing the nineteenth-century British periodical as an anonymous text, it should not be viewed as becoming distanced from its audience. Instead, it opens up a textual space in which readers, to a certain extent, become the writers of the journal through their ability to choose how they consumed its material. 35 Beegan points out that “readers made decisions about which magazines they read, what they read within the magazines they bought, and how they used the texts they consumed.” 36 The journal may have offered readers an extensive space within which to negotiate their own readings and interpretations, but its intended messages ultimately limited just how far they could push this consumption of the text. 37 These limits aided in diffusing a shared, contemporary knowledge to the journal’s audience. The gathering of this shared knowledge through a reader’s consumption of the magazine, was, according to Beegan, a nonlinear process, since “the reader turns the pages backward and forward, glancing rather than

34 Klancher contends that “knowing readers might infer the identity of the writer by his ‘style,’ but playing this game of authorship meant that what is at stake is not the author of the discourse, but the position it occupies on a diverse discursive landscape.” According to Klancher, “One can determine authorship only by the text it secretes. The importance ‘style’ itself assumes in the nineteenth century owes partly to this impersonality of the public text. Style becomes a sign, a market of the (always inferred) relation of the audience to the writer hidden behind the corporate text.” See, Klancher, The Making of English Reading Audiences, 51.

35 It can be argued that readers also have the ability to write their own text and their own meanings in a work by a named author, but the contention here is that the theoretically anonymous text offers them no distractions in their consumption of the work. Instead, they are reading a text that is presented to them in the acknowledged style of the journal, not the personal perspective of a specific author, so they are able to produce their own overall meaning from it based on the way in which they approach the material. 36 Beegan, The Mass Image, 7.

37 It is not the intention of this analysis to attempt to determine at any level the composition of these readers’ negotiations with the text, since that is an unfeasible act of historical recovery based on unrecoverable readings and interpretations by these people. Klancher articulates this difficulty in approaching the nineteenth-century British reader:

To the largest questions—how did readers understand the texts they read? how were those texts used?—historical evidence offers few and scattered answers. These cultures remain, despite their occasional similarity to reading cultures of our own time, distinctly opaque insofar as we cannot penetrate the minds of all those readers who left no mark of their understandings, no trace of the doubtless ingenious ways they must have recombined, retranslated, or simply resisted the interpretive and ideological patterns framed by their texts.

Instead, this study presents ways in which readers could have approached the contemporary periodical press and how those methods of consuming the text facilitated the formation and growth of audiences and imagined communities. See, Klancher, The Making of English Reading Audiences, 174.
studying." Margaret Beetham agrees that readers of the periodical press “can to a unique degree construct their own text from the printed version.” She points out that “the form invites us to flip through, read in any order, omit some sections altogether and read others carefully.”

Although mass-produced images, such as drawings, engravings, or photographs, were slowly incorporated into *The Art-Union* as the years passed and the journal’s finances improved, the inclusion of such illustrations provided the reader with further impetus for skipping through the text looking for something that initially caught their eyes before slowing down to read a particular article. Beegan argues that it is the physical structure of the journal that “allows readers to construct their own order, starting and ending where they wish.”

The internal way in which the journal’s articles, notes, advertisements, and illustrations were arranged and formatted was not the only set of devices that allowed readers to approach its material from their own unique perspective. Beegan points out that “the serial nature of the magazine meant that material in any one issue related to previous and subsequent issues of the magazine. Periodicals offered readers ‘simultaneity,’ a cluster of texts to be consumed in relation to each other.” The implications for readers of *The Art-Union* based on its serial arrangement will be discussed below. What is crucial to understand at this stage of the analysis is that these tools for reading the periodical press were not just to be consumed in individual isolation; rather, these members of a larger audience often engaged with a journal’s content in a communal environment, such as the coffee shop, pub, or especially the reading room.

---

40 Ibid., 13.
42 Ibid., 26.
43 These reading rooms, when presented in the form of the commercial lending library, were created by middle-class philanthropists for a working-class audience. Also, reading rooms for working-class audiences were attached to mechanics’ institutes. It is unknown whether or not *The Art-Union* was available in the working-class reading room.
Yet, reading a periodical such as The Art-Union in private can be, according to Beegan, “always in some sense a public act.”44 It is the perception of private reading being a shared experience that makes this action public. Hall addressed this concept in his introductory statement to the journal by arguing that artists, who are typically “compelled to labour in comparative seclusion” often find that they are unable to interact with general society.45 Without the aid of a regularly published work singularly devoted to art, the artist, Hall argued, would “know little of what is passing around them, even concerning matters upon which it is essential that they should receive early and authentic information.”46 In an effort to foster the development of a British art community Hall declared that The Art-Union will be used “to supply to Artists accurate and useful information upon all subjects in which they are interested, and to the Public the means of justly ascertaining and estimating the Progress of Art both at Home and Abroad.”47

This communal consumption of the periodical, whether by the perceived community consisting of individual readers interested in the same topics or the direct action of several audience and group members discoursing in close physical proximity to each other at a coffee house or pub, extends beyond the audience to the concepts of the public sphere and the imagined community. Although the public sphere and the imagined community share some of the same elements, the public sphere will be shown to have possessed a finite lifespan. But it is important

45 The Art-Union 1 (February 1839): 1.
46 Ibid.
47 Ibid.
to understand the contours and limitations of the public sphere to best comprehend how the audience and imagined community relate to each other.

The bourgeois public sphere, according to Jürgen Habermas, emerged in Great Britain in the middle of the seventeenth century. He argues that it “may be conceived above all as the sphere of private people come together as a public” who eventually claimed “the public sphere regulated from above against the public authorities themselves, to engage them in a debate over the general rules governing relations in the basically privatized but public relevant sphere of commodity exchange and social labor.”48 The development of the bourgeois public was a critical transformation in British society, since all the members of a public were supposed to be social equals. Habermas contends that within the public sphere the orientation of art “became manifest in the assessments of lay people who claimed no prerogative.”49 These socially unified members were formed originally into a public in the coffee houses and salons where they engaged in a rational-critical debate. Terry Eagleton argues that the bourgeois public sphere should not be seen as “a single homogeneous formation, but as an interlaced set of discursive centres.”50 These public spheres eventually expanded to the periodical press, where not only did wide publics of readers engage directly with the text, but these privatized individuals, as Habermas suggests, came together to form publics that “also reflected critically and in public on what they had read, thus contributing to the process of enlightenment which they together promoted.”51

The configuration of the bourgeois public sphere eventually disintegrated. Habermas suggests that as capitalism became ‘organized,’ the boundaries between the public and private

48 Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 27.
49 Ibid., 40.
51 Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 51
spheres dissolved, since “while it penetrated more spheres of society, it simultaneously lost its political function, namely: that of subjecting the affairs that it had made public to the control of a critical public.”52 Eagleton determines that capitalism and its market forces drove products, such as art, to no longer be the result of ‘taste’ and ‘cultivation’ being the “fruits of civilized dialogue and reasonable debate.”53 Cultural determinations, according to Eagleton, were “being set from elsewhere—from beyond the frontiers of the public sphere itself, in the laws of commodity production of civil society.”54 The public becomes the object of artists or writers rather than their co-subjects. Also, Eagleton contends that the decline of the bourgeois public sphere was a political one, since like all ideological formations it could only thrive “on a necessary blindness to its own perimeters.”55 Whereas Eagleton seems to view the dissolution of the public sphere as something that occurred only because the correct factors in society developed to actually bring about its demise, Klancher asserts that the public sphere “was deeply compromised from the start.”56 He claims that the public sphere quickly became aware of its own perimeters, since no sooner was it “projected than transformed into an image to consume by readers who did not frequent it.”57 Klancher believes that this happened because the journal displaced the public gathering place, such as the coffee house or pub, and as it allowed people sitting in their own homes to feel engaged with the wider discourse of a public sphere, it simultaneously became a “representation instead of a practice” that, by the 1790s, was “an image losing much of its force.”58

52 Ibid.
54 Ibid.
55 Ibid., 35.
57 Ibid.
Although the bourgeois public sphere came to an end in the nineteenth century, the periodical press, while aiding in its demise, also, according to Klancher, helped to represent the public sphere as “a space without social differences.” Klancher points out that this accomplishment of the periodical press is important as a way “to cement an audience of divergent social ranks as equal interlocutors, and to galvanize a new audience previously unrepresented in the universe of public discourse.” Also, the periodical provided what came to be viewed as an imagined gathering place that supplied individuals with better links and connections than could the public sphere centered on the physical locations of the coffee house or pub. Schwartz determines that by gathering together in person the audience gained a collective identity. This is a reasonable assertion, but these small, shifting audiences constructed of individuals who together attended the coffee houses, lectures, or photographic exhibitions to view and discuss art and photography became detached again once they individually left these venues or once the events were over. The periodical, as represented by The Art-Union, provided these individuals with a more permanent site to which they could continually return and be comforted in the knowledge that they were always potentially joined at the same moment by many like-minded people collectively interested in art and photography.

This collective of people interested in similar subjects and topics moved from a public sphere to what can be termed the mass. Patricia Anderson defines this grouping as a cross-section of the population—a “large and socially diverse group of men and women of varying ages: working people, and members of the middle class—all of whom together came from farms,

---

59 Ibid., 24.
60 Ibid.
61 Schwartz, Spectacular Realities, 44.
villages, towns, and cities throughout Great Britain.”62 She contends that these people “not only bought magazines and books, but also read these publications, looked at their images, discussed their stories and articles in booksellers’ shops, at home, and in coffee-houses and pubs.”63 Through these joint interactions a mass culture emerged in nineteenth-century Britain. Although these people understood that there was a mutual relationship with other interested members of this community, based on their personal dealings in the coffee houses and pubs, they also were aware that they were not the only people who were attracted to the same material in the periodicals they read.64 This is an interesting issue, since, as Beegan suggests, while “in one sense the audiences for mass-produced magazines were addressed very much as individual consumers, in another sense these magazines could never be read individually.”65 The mass, according to Raymond Williams, began perhaps in the 1840s, and is “a particular kind of impersonal grouping, corresponding to aspects of the social and industrial organization of our kind of capitalist and industrialized society.”66 This impersonal grouping is one of the important factors that inform the larger social collectivity, defined by Benedict Anderson as an imagined community, as it engages with the periodical press to gain, as Beegan asserts, “a common identity and a shared set of values.”67

Benedict Anderson, in Imagined Communities, suggests that the readers of a mass-produced commodity, such as a periodical, are fully aware that the information they are

---

63 Ibid., 193.
64 Although the lending libraries and reading rooms were important sites of communal reading in nineteenth century Britain, Anderson, Beegan, and the other scholars discussed in this chapter mainly situate their readerships in coffee houses and pubs. Beegan also gives consideration to reading sites, such as public transportation, that have more impact on communal readership in the late nineteenth century than they do in the second quarter of the century.
consuming on a regular calendrical schedule is being simultaneously processed by thousands of other fellow-members of their community and nation that they will likely never meet or have any direct knowledge of, yet “in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.” It is crucial to understand that it was the development of the bourgeoisie through capitalism that led to strong imagined collectivities, not just an understanding by diverse and geographically scattered audiences of the periodical press that there were other like-minded readers concurrently consuming the same information, which Anderson explains:

The pre-bourgeois ruling classes generated their cohesions in some sense outside language, or at least outside print-language. If the ruler of Spain took a Malay noblewoman as a concubine, or if the King of England married a Spanish princess—did they ever talk seriously together? Solidarities were the products of kinship, clientship, and personal loyalties. ‘French’ nobles could assist ‘English’ kings against ‘French’ monarchs, not on the basis of shared language or culture, but, Machiavellian calculations aside, of shared kinsmen and friendships. The relatively small size of traditional aristocracies, their fixed political bases, and the personalization of political relations implied by sexual intercourse and inheritance, meant that their cohesions as classes were as much concrete as imagined. An illiterate nobility could still act as a nobility. But the bourgeoisie? Here was a class which, figuratively speaking, came into being as a class only in so many replications. Factory-owner in Lille was connected to factory-owner in Lyon only by reverberation. They had no necessary reason to know of one another’s existence; they did not typically marry each other’s daughters or inherit each other’s property. But they did come to visualize in a general way the existence of thousands and thousands like themselves through print-language. For an illiterate bourgeoisie is scarcely imaginable. Thus in world-historical terms bourgeoisies were the first classes to achieve solidarities on an essentially imagined basis. But in a nineteenth-century Europe in which Latin had been defeated by a vernacular print-capitalism for something like two centuries, these solidarities had an outermost stretch limited by vernacular legibilities. To put it another way, one can sleep with anyone, but one can only read some people’s words.

But, this strictly imagined collective structure was definitely strengthened by actually encountering other members of the community. Readers of The Art-Union, by observing other

---

69 Ibid., 76-77.
people in public settings reading similar issues of the journal were, as Anderson contends, “continually reassured that the imagined world is visibly rooted in everyday life.”

It is important to remember that the audience of a journal did not solely create and develop an imagined community; rather, using Hall and The Art-Union as an example, the desire to both inform the British art world as well as encourage a community corresponds to Beegan’s contention that “the press did not merely address these groups, they had a stake in bringing them into being.” Beegan also asserts, in a statement that echoes Anderson’s analysis, that a community such as that of the British art world was formed and sustained through a regularly and timely published periodical by an audience of individual’s gaining “a sense of collective identity via the mutual knowledge provided in the magazine.”

Although the regular and timely production of a journal was important to fostering the development of an imagined community that possessed similar overall reading habits and interests, the texts within the periodical also were crucial sites for cultivating a collective audience. Klancher argues that “what ultimately must circulate is a discourse that can create patterns of reception in the minds of its social readers. Here circulating seems to involve both the way writing is distributed within an intricate, systematic social network and the way it is produced by the writer.” This circulating, which Klancher describes as “repeated acts of certain kinds of writing and reading” are, he contends, how “a public is shaped to read discourses in deliberate, directed ways.”

These patterns of reception depend on repetition. Although Jennifer Wicke’s concern in her study, Advertising Fictions: Literature, Advertisement, & Social Reading, is the development

70 Ibid., 35.
72 Ibid.
74 Ibid.
of meaning, both semantic and social, through advertisements, this work has a relation to readers who were interested in the burgeoning photographic enterprise. She argues that viewing a single ad “is not sufficient to establish any process of signification.” According to Wicke, it is not enough to view this ad more than once, but that other versions of the advertisement must be viewed over time:

No one definitive reading event can ever be said to take place: advertising has to make a repeated world for its productions to inhabit the campaign. ‘One’ ad makes no sense—not because of commercial considerations, although these are affected, but because of the ontology of the advertising text, which can only be made up of repeated instances, instances that have no meaning attached to them until the whole parade of repetitions has been grasped.

When applied to The Art-Union’s reporting on photography, the repeated instances through which meaning is gained by its readers are not based on a slogan; rather, readers had to develop the ability to notice and comprehend at a glance repeated textual clues that presented themselves while these audience members flipped, scanned, and read through the journal’s articles and notes. Illustrations did not accompany the articles discussing photography in The Art-Union, but, even without the aid of illustrations as a visual braking device for its readers, the journal

---

76 Ibid.
77 Beegan would consider this ability to recognize important information at a glance as superficial knowledge, and he believes that this is a critical element of knowingness. He defines this superficial knowledge as something that was required of city dwellers and was “diffuse rather than deep.” Beegan contends that “superficial categorization, based on surface appearance, allowed the inhabitants of the metropolis to navigate the fleeting, anonymous encounters of economic and social life.” Marshall Sahlins also recognizes the glance’s value for apprehending situations, objects, people, or items of interest, but he considers that this action “works on an unconscious level.” Sahlins determines that society attempts to gain cohesion by depending on the glance, but this dependence on the glance suggests the presence in the economic and social life of a logic completely foreign to the conventional ‘rationality.’ For rationality is time elapsed, a comparison: at least another glance beyond, and a weighing of the alternatives. The relation between logics is that the first, the symbolic, defines and ranks the alternatives by the ‘choice’ among which rationality, oblivious of its own cultural basis, is pleased to consider itself as constituting.

Although Beegan deems this “broad, though shallow information” as increasingly important to urban residents in nineteenth-century Britain, he gives this concept too much weight. Superficial knowledge has only a limited usefulness to readers of the periodical press, and that is primarily as a tool they can use to recognize important or interesting words or phrases encouraging them to stop and thoroughly read a particular note or article. See, Beegan, The Mass Image, 22; and, Marshall Sahlins, Culture and Practical Reason (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1976), 203-204.
included textual markers that allowed people to search through the pages in order to find articles on specific topics. This is where the discussion of photography within *The Art-Union* is relevant, especially because in its early years the newly emerging art form was not reported upon on a regular basis. Readers interested in photography would have found the original discussion of it in the March 1839 issue under the heading, “Sun-painting.” This was the only time that the journal referred to photography in such a way. The next two articles on photography, found in the July and August 1839 issues of the journal, were titled “New Discovery in Art” and “The Daguerreotype.”

It is obvious that readers who became interested in consuming articles on the new invention of photography were required to be willing to work to find them—at least initially. After the first article in *The Art-Union* with daguerreotype in the title appeared in 1839, discussions of photography over the next seven years typically included the word daguerreotype, photography, or photographic in its heading. Some notes on photography within the journal were found under the titles of “The Talbotype” or “M. Claudet,” but any reader who had been following the developing discussion of photography during its early years would have been alerted by those words, since they were topics that had been discussed within the text of previous articles.

It is important to understand that a person who was primarily interested in reading about photography in *The Art-Union* was a part of both the larger British art community and a group whose main concern was the development of this new art form, since the British art public was not a monolithic entity. Yet, whether the discussion is directed at the artistically global or the topically local, a group or community in the British art world was created because the knowledge that was gained by individual readers through the diffusion of information in *The Art-Union*
helped to form a shared, contemporary awareness that Beegan calls “knowingness.” But this knowingness was not achieved merely within the pages of the journal where it produced an impersonal and detached community that may or may not have ever physically encountered each other. Instead, Beegan considers that this knowledge was also circulated by means of interactions between people. Although it is difficult to find material discussing where the information published in The Art-Union was communicated outside of its pages, such as at coffee houses, pubs, and exhibitions, or within a person’s home, an understanding of the communal level of the journal’s knowingness can be gained by reading its printed letters. Often the writers of these letters are not only discussing or critiquing the various articles or issues published in the journal, they also will make statements about their various interactions with other people about these subjects.

Only one letter concerning photography was published in the correspondence in The Art-Union between the years 1839 and 1846, yet the discussion within this communication provides a good example of the development of knowingness through the Victorian periodical press. In a letter titled “The Daguerreotype” from the December 1840 issues of the journal, the unknown author—named only “An Amateur”—details his experiences in attempting to produce daguerreotype images as directed by a translation of Daguerre’s pamphlet, which contain “his directions for producing the photogenic drawings.” The majority of the letter is concerned with the author’s experiments with the process of capturing images, which he reports in great detail. Anyone who had been keeping track of the development of photography was instantly connected in a pleasurable way to the material in this letter through knowingness. The sense of membership in a communal group through knowingness is heightened when the reader

---

encounters the author’s discussion of his interaction with other artists through the presentation of his photographic work to them. The author states,

Several artists, to whom I showed some of the full lengths which I have done, have expressed their admiration of this part of the portrait. There is an abandon, a *je ne sais quoi* in the figure which is most difficult for the pencil to lay hold of, and which the Daguerreotype renders to perfection. I am told that M. Daguerre takes likenesses, in Paris, in less than a minute. I have never seen any of them. An American amateur has, according to his account, succeeded in taking likenesses in a most perfect manner.  

This comment also displays that the author has discussed not only his own work, but the work of others, with interested members of the art community. These personal interactions are a crucial way in which knowingness was expressed and communicated beyond the knowledge gathered from the periodical press.

The social relations between members of the British art community interested in photography, particularly those members intent on taking photographic images, are informed by Marx’s concept of commodity production, which is represented as praxis in material activity. Commodity production aids in the development of knowingness, since Marx, according to Sahlins, believed that “knowledge of the world is gained by action in it, especially by transformation of it impelled by necessity (i.e., production).”  

This concept of necessity seems to conflict with the production of art, since it is a material process that is not crucial to a person’s physical existence. Yet, Sahlins argues that art does occupy a commodified position of necessity in society, by determining that Marx “taught that men never produce absolutely, that is, as biological beings in a universe of physical necessity.”  

Marx’s line of reasoning on this concept is found in an important passage in *The German Ideology*: “This mode of production must not be considered simply as being the production of the physical existence of the individuals. Rather it

---

80 Ibid., 188.
81 Sahlins, *Culture and Practical Reason*, 130.
82 Ibid., 168.
is a definite form of activity of these individuals, a definite form of expressing their life, a
definite mode of life on their part.” Sahlins points out that, according to Marx, “men produce
objects for given social subjects, in the course of reproducing subjects by social objects.”

These social relations of production are informed by exchange, particularly through the
object’s use-value. Sahlins acknowledges that a use-value becomes a commodity through the
fulfillment of another person’s need, but he pushes this notion beyond the position of needs:

Without consumption, the object does not complete itself as a product: a house left
unoccupied is no house. Yet use-value cannot be specifically understood on the natural
level of ‘needs’ and ‘wants,’—precisely because men do not merely produce ‘housing’ or
‘shelter’: they produce dwellings of definite sorts, as a peasant’s hut, or a nobleman’s
castle. This determination of use-values, of a particular type of house as a particular type
of home, represents a continuous process of social life in which men reciprocally define
objects in terms of themselves and themselves in terms of objects.

Therefore, according to Sahlins, production, “is something more and other than a practical logic
of material effectiveness. It is a cultural intention.” Sahlins declares that through this cultural
objective “the material process of physical existence is organized as a meaningful process of
social being—which is for men, since they are always culturally defined in determinate ways, the
only mode of their existence.” Thus, the production of art, such as photographic images, does
fill a need meaningful to the cultural existence of people, and in doing so, facilitates the
improvement of the social collectivity expressed through knowingness.

Knowingness, in its relationship to the advancement of the social collectivity, contains
several features. Beegan emphasizes the pleasurable aspects of knowingness. This is a valid
point of importance for understanding the prominence of knowingness applied to the illustrated

83 Marx and Engels, The German Ideology, 42.
84 Sahlins, Culture and Practical Reason, 168.
85 Ibid., 169.
86 Ibid.
87 Ibid.
Victorian journal, and it does apply to the community of readers of *The Art-Union*. Yet, experiencing pleasure through the knowledge that an individual person shared similar interests with a larger like-minded community was not the primary reason why artists, art patrons, and enthusiasts were meant to read a journal. Instead, the intention was to use the development of an art community that was respected and venerated in Britain as well as the Continent as an element in strengthening British nationalism. This purpose is unequivocally expressed by Hall in his introductory statement to the first issue of the journal, when he states, “We take it to be indisputable that the Artists of Great Britain greatly surpass the existing Artists of any other nation.”  

Through the reading of this positive and supportive statement, the developing British art community entered into the regularly issued art reporting of this journal with a constructive and affirmative attitude involving their outlook for British art. But the encouragement of British art and the formation of a positive and knowledgeable British art public were at times presented in a much more subtle manner. Once again, the way that the development of photography was discussed within *The Art-Union* can be used as an important example of how British nationalism was fostered in relational opposition to any nationally communal feelings of the nations on the Continent.

It has been previously noted that photography was brought to the attention of the readers of *The Art-Union* in its second issue, which was published in March 1839. In a short article the journal announced the discovery of photography or “sun-painting,” which, according to the reporter, was “producing prodigious excitement in France and considerable sensation in

---

89 *The Art-Union* 1 (February 1839): 1.
90 This is not to suggest that there was one monolithic audience and imagined community of *The Art-Union* that was always in complete agreement with every subject that the journal was promoting. Instead, it must be understood that the various community members who were interested in art and photography shifted over time—the ranks of this group was not always static, growing, or shrinking. Also, these individuals did not always agree over every issue or embrace every process development, yet, ultimately, overall this imagined community could be expected to support the promotion of British art in general, and British photography in particular.
England.” The article explains that photography was invented in France by Niepce, and was considerably improved upon by Daguerre. A declaration of the invention of photography was a necessarily important statement to be made within The Art-Union regardless of the country of its origin. But the journal, in an early attempt to influence the development of a British community based on an interest in photography, made sure to announce that Talbot, “our own accomplished countryman,” was close behind Daguerre in the announcement of his discovery, which was named “Photogenic Drawing.”

Overall, The Art-Union focused on presenting the reader with information concerning photographic process and various improvements to it over the next several years. This group of articles and notes in this journal worked to connect individual readers upon the common core of photographic development. A short article notified the reader of an opportunity to personally witness the process of creating a daguerreotype as well as viewing a finished image at an exhibition of work by St. Croix at the Adelaide Gallery, and that John Thomas Cooper, Jr. was at the Polytechnicon giving lectures on the same subject three times a week. By attending these exhibitions, the reader could gain a deeper understanding of the photographic process and its development in the early years of photography.

---

91 The Art-Union 1 (March 1839): 24.
92 Ibid.
93 The Adelaide Gallery was intended as a place to present, for free, public exhibitions of discoveries in natural philosophy, new inventions, and other mechanical objects of general utility. Richard Altick states that the Adelaide Gallery “in fact, was the first direct English progenitor of the modern science and technology museum with its working machines and models and its visual dramatization of elementary scientific principles.” Altick declares that the Adelaide Gallery was important during the earliest days of English photography, and that in October 1839 it housed “a display and a daily demonstration of the art of picture-taking.” He asserts that “the exhibitor, M. de St. Croix, was almost immediately put out of business by an injunction obtained by Antoine Claudet, a London importer and dealer in sheet and ornamental glass, who had bought a license direct from Daguerre to sell pictures and picture-making apparatus at his shop in High Holborn. Claudet succeeded St. Croix at the Adelaide Gallery, erecting on its roof a studio where he took portraits.” After this incident, St. Croix seems not to have been discussed again in terms of the history of photography other than some information concerning his traveling to Birmingham at the end of October 1839 to demonstrate the technique. R. Derek Wood provides some information on John Thomas Cooper, Jr. in his essay, “Fourteenth March 1839, Herschel’s Key to Photography, the Way the Moment is Preserved for the Future”: “John Thomas Cooper, Jnr., was born in 1815 but date of death and obituaries have not been found.” Cooper’s father, John Thomas Cooper [Senior] (1790-1854) was also a chemist. Wood contends that “especially because of the long chemical expertise of J. T. Cooper senior, it seems reasonable to assume that both father and son could have been involved in the production of the ‘Photogenic Drawing paper’ and Hypo (‘Cooper’s Preserving Liquid) in 1839.” Also, Cooper declares that “there is no historical work that specifically deals with Cooper’s daguerreotype experiments in the autumn of 1839,” but states that “an anonymous description of one of Cooper’s
events, the knowingness of the British art community was strengthened because of an increase of current knowledge being shared throughout the group, even though the process and images that were experienced were basically French. This positive constructive form of building knowingness in the British art public was also combined with a tactic in *The Art-Union* that can be viewed as an attempt to goad the British into taking steps toward gaining a prominent and respected position in comparison to the Continent when the simple promotion of photography was not accomplishing its goals. In December 1839 article states that “the foreign journals supply us with accounts of experiments in abundance, purporting to be improvements on the discovery of Daguerre,” and offers examples from France and Brussels as evidence. The article then complains that other than the aforementioned lectures concerning the daguerreotype very little had been accomplished in Britain concerning the development of any practical applications for the photographic enterprise.

It can be argued that *The Art-Union* took a fairly cautious approach to developing the British art public before 1846, since until that point in time photography was still viewed primarily as a French enterprise. Even though British photographers such as Beard, Willats, and Talbot were active in creating photographs and improving the photographic process, *The Art-Union* did not report about their accomplishments in a manner that provided distinct separation between them and their French counterparts, and by not doing so, the journal did not create a

---


94 *The Art-Union* 1 (December 1839): 185.
specifically British site of knowingness. It is difficult to know what the intention was for not better promoting early British photographers over their French or American counterparts, but this tactic still aided in audience formation based on otherness. It may have been the case that The Art-Union had at least partially succeeded in its mission to develop an audience interested in British art, but in this case, instead of promoting British accomplishments it presented the readers with an understanding, both explicitly displayed when publishing articles on French photographic advancements and implicitly demonstrated by keeping silent on similar photographic improvements that were announced in other journals, such as the Athenaeum or the Literary Gazette, that there were other audiences who contemporaneously existed. This knowledge, according to Klancher, assisted The Art-Union’s audience to shape its identity, since it had become “aware of the pressure of other audiences, interpretively and socially competing for position in cultural and social space.”

However, otherness, as an important component of audience and community formation, had limited impact during the first seven years of photography’s existence, since few contemporary journals wrote about photography at this time. The Athenaeum and the Literary Gazette were two of the only exceptions, but their main focus was on the scientific details of photographic process development. These articles, if noticed and consumed by The Art-Union’s readers, had the potential to encourage the growth of these readers’ knowingness, since it offered them textual material which was different from that found in The Art-Union based on the varying levels of scientific information presented on photography. The Art-Union did not typically offer an extensive amount of scientific discourse on photography in these early years,

---

95 Klancher, The Making of English Reading Audiences, 38.
96 Punch published only a few short notes discussing photography between 1839 and 1846. Journals devoted to photography, such as The Journal of the Photographic Society of London and the British Journal of Photography were not published until the 1850s.
but it did provide its readers with information on process development that included commentary concerning its artistic qualities. This style of reporting on photography in The Art-Union can be seen in an article from June 1843, in which the writer, who gave an account of Beard’s improvements in photographic portraiture, comments that while Beard had adjusted the light on the subject there was “generally a want of pictorial effect in these portraits, which might, we are persuaded, be remedied by graduating the light to various degrees of force upon the sitter.”97 Although a short note in the 1 April 1843 issue of The Athenaeum comments that Beard “has discovered a mode of colouring daguerreotypes, which has a very pleasing effect,” it was much more common for the journal to report on the precise elements of photographic development.98 For example, in the 20 August 1842 issue, Sir John Herschel details how to replicate some of his recent photographic experiments by offering information such as “the preparation of the chrysotype paper is as follows: dissolve 100 grains of crystallized ammonio-citrate of iron in 900 grains of water, and wash over with a soft brush, with this solution, any thin, smooth, even-textured paper.”99 Although The Art-Union’s imagined community was presented with the ability to strengthen its composition through this comparative otherness to contemporary journals, this comprehension lacked a tangible connection, since it was based on textual information.

The British art community was given a concrete site of knowledge when the June 1846 issue included a Talbotype. Although it is known that each June 1846 issue of The Art-Union did not include the same Talbotype, it is not the specific image that increased knowingness; rather, it is the fact that the reader now had the ability to view an actual photograph, and could be reassured in the fact that this experience was being shared with thousands of other members of

97 The Art-Union 5 (June 1843): 150.
98 The Athenaeum no. 805 (1 April 1843): 313.
99 The Athenaeum no. 773 (20 August 1842): 748.
the British art public. 100 This was an important event, since the shared knowledge of a Talbotype among only several thousand members of the British community provided them with the ability to fill in gaps of information, and, as Peter Bailey asserts, to “complete the circuits of meaning, thus flattering them in the sense of their own informed and superior worldliness.” 101 The specific photographic image that the reader was viewing was not as important as the fact by being one of a limited group of people who originally witnessed this work achieved an intimate level of knowingness, according to Bailey, “by pulling the crowd inside a closed yet allusive frame of reference, and implicating them in a select conspiracy of meaning that animates them as a specific audience.” 102

The inclusion of a Talbotype in The Art-Union could also be viewed as an important moment, since it was the first time any photographic image had been published in a journal. The journal reinforces the British significance of this event by declaring the Talbotype to be a superior object to the daguerreotype. The Art-Union found the Talbotype to be “fully equal to it in power of detail,” but possessing a great amount of future practical applications. 103 Now, finally, not only was there an art public focused on photography firmly developed in Britain, it was also a specifically British community. Bailey asserts that “in this way, knowingness projected a sense of identity and membership as the earned return on experience, which engaged more than a simple generic literacy or the recognition in common of a particular way of life.” 104 Ultimately, a sense of national pride could be attached to photography from this moment on in Britain.

100 Refer to chapter 2, footnote 77.
103 The Art-Union 8 (June 1846): 144.
104 Bailey, Popular Culture and Performance, 149.
CHAPTER 4
PHOTOGRAPHY AS A TOOL FOR THE ARTIST: CRITICAL APPROACHES, 1846-1854

*The Art-Union* entered the second half of 1846 in a strong position in the British art world. By including a Talbotype in the June 1846 issue, the journal had solidified the commodification of British photography for a specifically British social collectivity. Although Hall had definitely succeeded in his mission to create an art public, he could not relax from continuing to develop and strengthen this British community. *The Art-Union* was one of the few voices before 1850 discussing and analyzing the development of photography, so Hall, in pursuing his ambition, had also accomplished making his journal into a fetishized commodity. But, *The Art-Union* faced increasing competition from other commentators on photography in the 1850s, especially that of *The Journal of the Photographic Society of London*. Thus, in its endeavor over the next seven years to protect its commodified position in British society *The Art-Union* continued to promote art and photography, particularly the British practitioners and developers of the photographic enterprise. This chapter examines the critical discourse *The Art-Union* used for analyzing photography between 1846 and 1854 to see if it experienced a shift in method, and how the applied approach impacted the commodification of the journal, the commodity fetishism of the photographic enterprise, and the continued conceptualization of a British collective identity. Also, this chapter analyzes how other literary, general, and photography journals addressed the photographic enterprise during this period to see if they followed a similar critical trajectory to that of *The Art-Union*.

Photography was declared to be an art form in the article which accompanied the Talbotype in the journal, but the art-science debate that informed *The Art-Union*’s approach to
the photographic enterprise during its first seven years was far from settled.\textsuperscript{1} In fact, in its July 1846 issue \textit{The Art-Union} printed an article titled “The Application of the Talbotype,” in which the writer disputes the notion that photography is an art.\textsuperscript{2} Instead, this author, in promoting the British Talbotype over the French daguerreotype declares that “there is no reason to fear that either invention will supersede the labours of the artist.”\textsuperscript{3} The writer’s reasoning for this argument was that “in spite of all the optical and chemical aid we can afford him, the Sun will continue to be a very bad painter, too literal in his details, and at the same time too false in his proportions.”\textsuperscript{4} The Talbotype, rather than being the artistic product of a photographic artist, was now to be considered as a tool to be used by the painter for producing better compositions. This contention represents a shift in \textit{The Art-Union}’s critical approach to photography after the middle of 1846. Although the majority of \textit{The Art-Union}’s analysis of photography during the first seven years of both enterprises focused on photographic process and various improvements to it, with little attention being giving to its artistic qualities, the journal refrained from interrogating the possible applications for the medium; rather, it seemed to consider photographs as aesthetic images that perfectly represented nature and were being refined by photographers into artistic items. By suggesting that photography was a merely a scientific invention that was best used as an aid to the artist, \textit{The Art-Union} explicitly rejects it as an art form.

This unequivocal declaration by \textit{The Art-Union} risked harming photography’s recently acquired commodified status in the British art world as well as this community’s sense of identity. Yet, the writer, in altering the discourse toward viewing photography as an aid to the artist, while sustaining a continued art-science debate, actually encourages strengthening its

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{1} See, \textit{The Art-Union} 8 (June 1846): 143-144.
  \item \textsuperscript{2} See, \textit{The Art-Union} 8 (July 1846): 195.
  \item \textsuperscript{3} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{4} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
position as a fetishized British commodity.\(^5\) Rather than promoting the photograph as a desired object, the writer’s declaration shifts the fetishization to the act of capturing an image. This image is not to be viewed as an aesthetic object in its own right, but simply as the result of a process as well as a product that is intended as an aid in the creation of paintings.

The author strongly advocates that artists adopt photography “as a faithful assistant, ready to aid their studies and facilitate their labours, but without the slightest chance of ever coming into competition with either.”\(^6\) The artist, according to the author, should not only view photography as a useful tool in creating paintings, but should stop scrutinizing it with scorn and distrust. He asserts that artists have historically used aids to smooth the progress of producing their artworks. By incorporating photography into their creative process, the author declares that it is

not as a substitute for their pencil, but as an aid in the use of the pencil; not to supersede the sketching-book, but to add to the richness of its contents; not to check the play of fancy, but to supply fancy with new starting-points for fresh excursions; not to limit imagination, but to afford the basis on which the imaginative power may erect its creations.\(^7\)

This persuasive argument had the potential to raise the photographic process into a desired commodity for the British art community.

Photography also was a desirable practice, according to the author, since it was not only applicable to the fine arts but to the manufacturing arts. He suggests that its value for various modelers and manufacturers was its ability to produce “faithful rather than artistic delineations of

---

\(^5\) This debate, which Gisèle Freund describes as the contention over whether photography “was simply a technical instrument capable of mechanically reproducing what the lens saw, or whether it could be used in the expression of an individual artistic sensibility,” will be argued in greater detail later in this period—particularly in response to the staging of photographic exhibitions and the creation of the Photographic Society. See, Freund, *Photography & Society*, 69.

\(^6\) *The Art-Union* 8 (July 1846): 195.

\(^7\) Ibid.
objects.” He argues that the outlines in the books of patterns “which they transmit are too frequently neither the one nor the other.” Also, the author considers that photography’s worth for artists of architectural or other monuments was its ability to provide them with sufficient information to guide their creation of these works. Instead of producing a poor copy of an ornament from a sketch, the Talbotype gives the artist “all the details in the most minute perfection, and enables him to determine by what variation of these details the general effect may be strengthened and improved.” The author points out that these are only a few suggestions of valuable applications for photography, yet his position for promoting its wider practical use in supporting the arts is obvious.

Although during this period *The Art-Union* shifted its main approach to photography as an examination of its practical applications, it still discussed the progress of the photographic enterprise. The critical discourse in *The Art-Union* continued to reveal a struggle with the art-science debate as its writers examined the development of photography, but this is the case throughout the entire period of 1839 to 1854. It is valuable to understand how rapidly the journal went from declaring the June 1846 Talbotypes an art, since they were almost perfect representations of nature, to complaining less than a year later about photography’s definite lack of precision. In a March 1847 article the author declares that after almost ten years of existence photographs, “with respect to the means of commanding perfect success, they are still as indefinite as at first.” Of course, according to the author, “the invention, in its crudest state and with all its imperfections, could not be otherwise than hailed as a boon to Art, and a wonder in

---

8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
Yet, he considers that “those ameliorations which ensue in cases of other inventions have not attended in this case the labours that have been exerted with that view.”

Here again, The Art-Union seems to be threatening to harm the position of photography as a desirable commodity for the British art world—a standing that the journal helped it achieve. But, this critique of photography’s inability to progress to a point of producing images that are perfect representations of nature, and thus, better than the comparable plastic arts, again supports the journal’s new critical course of promoting the photographic enterprise as a tool to be applied in a practical manner by the artist. In fact, the relationship between artist and photography that The Art-Union started to endorse was not only one in which photography was an aid to the laboring artist, but one where the photographer was a person who had experience with the plastic arts. An article in The Art-Union contends that better photographs are produced when taken by an artist, yet there is no discussion of how this person can create a more artistic image or at least one that will aid in the creation of a better painting. Instead, the article notes examples of calotype portraiture by William Collie, “an artist of repute.” The author of the article declares that Collie’s calotypes “are wonderfully accurate: each may be indeed a model for a painter: proving how emphatically Art may be assisted by Nature.”

---

12 Ibid., 110.
13 Ibid.
14 The Art-Union 9 (June 1847): 231.
15 According to Ian Sumner, “William Collie was born in Skene, Aberdeenshire, Scotland in October 1810 and like many other early photographers, started his professional life as a portrait painter.” He lived at St. Helier on Jersey in the Channel Islands, operating from Belmont House, where until 1841 he had a portrait business, and then, until 1872 where he operated as a photographer. Sumner asserts that “Collie was not merely a provincial studio portrait photographer.” His photographic portraits of French and Jersey Market-women were praised in The Art-Union, since their “expressions, countenances, and picturesque costumes, are well suited for the purpose.” The critic contends that Collie’s photographs were surpassed by no one else’s work, except those of David Octavius Hill (1802-1870). See, Ian Sumner, “Collie, William (1810-1896),” Encyclopedia of Nineteenth-Century Photography, Edited by John Hannavy, Vol. 1 (New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 2008):313.
16 The Art-Union 9 (June 1847): 231.
This consideration relates Collie’s work to *The Art-Union*’s July 1846 argument that photography is well-suited for working with art, since “in both cases we have proof how greatly this interesting art may be improved in the hands of artists.”

Although *The Art-Union* presented readers with a changing perspective on photography as it attempted to locate the enterprise within either aesthetics or practically applied science, the journal continued to be a leading critical voice promoting its development and success in Britain. The *Athenaeum* and *Literary Gazette* maintained their place in the periodical press as journals that devoted considerable attention to photographic process development with a particular focus on its scientific aspects. *Punch* printed only a few more notes on photography before 1854. Yet, whereas *The Art-Union* encountered few other voices on photography before 1846, the late 1840s and early 1850s saw the introduction of several other journals that discussed its development, and in two important cases—*Notes and Queries* and *The Journal of the Photographic Society of London*—devoted a considerable amount of attention to not only photographic process development but photography’s place in contemporary society.

Despite *The Art-Union*’s seemingly total rejection of the photograph as an artistic object comparable to a painting, these images continued to receive some consideration as aesthetic forms in the inconstant and developing discourse of the contemporary periodical press. The *Literary Gazette* presents an interesting article in which it acknowledges that a combination of science and art have led to photographs progressing to a point of being considered artistic objects. Having inspected Claudet’s collection of daguerreotypes and his mode of operation the reviewer states that “Claudet appears to have pursued the art with much careful study, and to

---

17 Ibid.
18 Ibid.
have been greatly successful in his efforts to overcome the practical difficulties of the process.”¹⁹ The main difficulty surmounted by Claudet was the achievement of obtaining the true focal distance for capturing “the most perfect photogenic image.”²⁰ The result of these efforts, the author asserts, is that Claudet’s photographs are more true to nature, so “we no longer see the flat unmeaning faces, with outline correct, but features confused or distorted. Scientific adjustment and artistical treatment have obviated this; and the productions are now in higher relief, and with the lights and shades of nature.”²¹

Yet the journal is not fixed in its promotion of the photograph as a fine art object. Although the Literary Gazette asserts that “Daguerreotyping and Talbotyping have been gradually assuming more and more importance in a fine-art point of view,” it details the various deficiencies of the processes for producing proper portraits and landscapes.²² The article acknowledges that a daguerreotype provides the artist with “the general effect and details of dress and other minutiae requisite for a finished picture,” but that these photographic portraits typically have an “exaggerated look of the features, more especially of the nose and mouth, two rather expressive ones.”²³ The article declares that these issues are likely unavoidable, which means “that there is little chance at present of the noble art of portrait painting being forsaken.”²⁴ The Athenaeum reflects this viewpoint concerning portrait painting. It notes that an oil painting portrait of Jenny Lind displays the “disadvantages which the mechanical process presents.”²⁵ Instead, the Literary Gazette promotes the aspects of the Talbotype that are appropriately useful

---

¹⁹ Literary Gazette no. 1537 (4 July 1846): 601.
²⁰ Ibid.
²¹ Ibid.
²² Literary Gazette no. 1771 (28 December 1850): 976.
²³ Ibid.
²⁴ Ibid.
²⁵ Athenaeum no. 1125 (19 May 1849): 521.
to the painter, such as providing proper form and detail, especially in architectural pictures. But, according to the article, while the Talbotype

seems peculiarly adapted for assisting artists in obtaining studies of trees, weeds, stones, and ground, though of course the painter who studies these with his palate in the open air, as they appear in colour and moving form, will derive a fund of knowledge always most useful and applicable in his works.  

The *Athenaeum* also reiterates this notion of a better painting resulting from a painter experiencing nature as opposed to viewing it in a photograph, since

had the painter been allowed sittings immediately from nature, the result, from his well-known talents, would have been a more certain likeness—and there would have been probably no reason to lament a hardness and severity which are foreign to the features of the original.

Robert Hunt, writing for *The Art-Union*, disputes these arguments, since while

it is true that the pictures which we obtain are either the mere contrast of black or brown and white—the charm of colour is wanting—but the delicate gradations of light and shade almost supply this want, and the linear perspective is so perfect, that they are amongst the most perfect studies the artist can obtain.

Yet, Hunt’s main assertion in this article is not that photography should be viewed as trending toward fine art in its own right, but that it is an excellent aid to an artist who is attempting to create a work that shows a complete fidelity to nature. Ultimately, even the *Literary Gazette*’s promotion of the photograph as fine art falls short.

It is noteworthy that overall *Punch* does not attend to the artistic or practical uses of photography or the artistic qualities of the image that has been generated. Instead, in two separate short notes the journal critiques the durability of the photographic image. The first article appraises how quickly some forms of photography fade, particularly cheaply produced

---

26 *Literary Gazette* no. 1771 (28 December 1850): 976.
images. It compares how long a photographic image lasts to the duration of a person’s feelings toward another: “It may be a strong recommendation of cheap photography, that its pictures will last as long as the ordinary run of small affections, and, indeed, a superior specimen of the art may be warranted to retain its outline throughout a flirtation of an entire month’s durability.”

The article is accompanied by an illustration detailing the progression over two weeks of how a recent photograph had faded from new, to one week, to two weeks. The second article suggests that “the motto for Photographic Portraits should be ‘Light come, light go,’ for as they are taken by the means of light, so they disappear, simila similibus, by the same agency.” The author of this article states that a correspondent “assures us, that of his portrait, which was only taken ‘a little month’ ago, there is not a single feature left, excepting half a whisker, and that is gradually melting away into thin hair.”

These articles suggest that consumers need to be discerning in their pursuit of desired commodities, since the consumption of a quality product—in this case a long-lasting photographic image—results in a more durable value-bearing object.

The production of sturdy, dependable photographic images had implications for its practical usage as well. The Art-Union, in its earlier promotion of the application of photography for industrial or modeling purposes, also supported its beneficial value to travelers, explorers, and surveyors. The Art-Union suggests that a person traveling to the African rivers would be better served by photographs than written descriptions identifying spots to avoid that are “fearfully infected by miasmata and malaria.”

It is crucial for these photographs not to fade if they were to be value-bearing objects to these people. These were not the only situations when legible, lasting photographs held practical value. In a short note in October 1847, the writer

---

29 Punch 12 (January to June 1847): 143.
30 Ibid., 264.
31 Ibid.
33 Ibid.
remarks that “among the more recent applications of this process to practical purposes we may mention that of Mr. Brunel.”

Isambard Kingdom Brunel was an important engineer in nineteenth-century Britain, who was particularly involved in the design and construction of railways. The writer declares that Brunel “receives every week daguerreotypes of his railway works constructing for the Italian and Austrian Railway Company, from Florence to Pistoja.”

These daguerreotypes enabled Brunel, the author contends, “to ascertain precisely the progress of his workmen and the exact state of the works at the time of his correspondent’s writing, so as to be enabled to give his directions accordingly.”

Brunel would have found little value in these photographs if they had significantly faded during their transport to him whether he was located in Britain or some other site in Europe.

Another instance in which it is important to produce a durable and legible image is expressed in Punch’s only article during this period discussing the practical use of photography. In a humorous article titled “The Detective Daguerreotype” a correspondent named Able Handy states that he has invented a new way to take daguerreotypes, which “will prove as useful, as the electric telegraph itself.”

He argues that he has modified the daguerreotype to make it “so sensitive as to be affected by the faintest candlelight, and to be capable of producing a perfect picture when subjected to the agency of a dark lantern.” The application he suggests for this new invention is to use it as a security camera to watch over things like a strong box or a pantry. Although the camera will not prevent theft, Handy contends, it will capture a correct portrait of the thief. He believes that this invention will be of great use to the Detective Police, as well as jealous ladies and gentlemen. Of course, these images are useful commodities only if they are

34 The Art-Union 9 (October 1847): 362.
35 Ibid.
36 Ibid.
37 Punch 13 (July to December 1847): 189.
38 Ibid.
legible. Thus, by promoting the scientific development of photography over its potentially artistic merits the periodical press advanced the fetishistic adoption of the practical usage of the photographic enterprise as a commodified process.

Although the periodical press had been supporting, and continued to encourage individual photographers and researchers to develop and improve photographic processes, these journals also deemed that the formation of a group devoted to these pursuits was crucial for the photographic enterprise’s success in Britain. In 1848, *The Art-Union* noted that a photography club made up of about a dozen “gentleman amateurs have for some time been combined, with the view of carrying out the practice of Photography in its more important applications.”39 The members of this group resided in various places in England, not just in London, and, according to *The Art-Union*, gathered together to pursue the “practice of the Art from pure admiration of the process and the Beautiful, by truthful representations which it enables them to obtain.”40 The *Athenaeum* mentioned that these men were “pursuing their experiments in this art-science (we scarcely know the word fittest completely to designate it).”41 This group was an important precursor to the Photographic Society, but it was a private gathering that met once or twice a month at a member’s house. A small society of photographers did not necessarily have much potential impact on the commodification of photography in Britain. However, both the *Athenaeum* and *The Art-Union* observe that this photography club’s undertakings were beneficial to photography as a value-bearing process for the artist. The *Athenaeum* contends that “the operations of this Society may be regarded as yet in their infancy; but they are destined to confer no small advantages on Art—by recording for the landscape and building painter more accurate

---

39 *The Art-Union* 10 (April 1848): 130.
40 Ibid., 131.
41 *Athenaeum* no. 1051 (18 December 1847): 1304.
and finished studies than his time or inclination would enable him manually to make.”

The *Art-Journal* explicitly asserts that the Photographic Club had created a fetishized desire for pursuing photography as an aid to the artist. The journal claims that the meetings of the club have “created a great interest, and the expressions of delight, more particularly by some of our most eminent landscape painters, at the aid given them by the copies of nature produced by the photographic processes, sufficiently mark the value of the Club.”

Eventually, in 1852, a proposal to create a Photographic Society was printed in the advertisements section of the periodical press. *The Art-Journal* observed that the objective of the proposers of the Photographic Society was “to collect around one common centre all the practitioners of this Art.” The formation of such a society offered the possibility of developing a strong social collectivity based on photography throughout Britain, which *The Art-Journal* notes is crucial, since “it will form a focus towards which will converge all the discoveries or improvements made by individuals in all parts of the country, and which now are exposed to be lost, or at best to become only partially known.” The development of a more closely connected photographic community presented the opportunity for the photographic enterprise to gain strength in Britain as a commodified process. *The Art-Journal* considers that the increased communication between the society’s members will stimulate manufacturers to produce quality, affordable equipment, chemicals, and paper. Also, photography students will be able to gain instruction about the medium’s processes. The journal states that “considerable progress has been made towards the establishment of the Society, and that its success may now be considered

---

42 Ibid.
45 Ibid.
as certain.” The article suggests that artists should work to qualify to join the society, since gaining knowledge and experience with photographic processes will “put into their hands a key by which they may unlock the hidden mysteries of Art.”

Although the proposed photographic society had the potential to promote the development of photography throughout Britain, Notes and Queries had been disseminating practical advice concerning the photographic enterprise to its readers for three years. Hugh W. Diamond was an important contributor to Notes and Queries who wrote a series of articles detailing photographic processes and their application to archaeology. The editor William J. Thoms, in introducing this series of articles in an August 1852 issue, suggested that photography may be well applied by “all people interested in antiquarian pursuits.”

Thoms’s reasoning for applying photography to archaeological studies was that they “are at once the least remunerative and the most expensive; for in many of the most important

---

46 Ibid.
47 Ibid.
48 Notes and Queries was first published on 3 November 1849 under the editorship of W. J. Thoms. According to Alvin Sullivan, three years earlier Thomas “had begun in the Athenaeum a column of folklore items submitted by readers of the magazine.” This column became so popular, and so many items were submitted by readers, that regardless of how short Thoms kept the individual entries, they soon required more space than The Athenaeum could provide. Sullivan notes that “Thoms then established Notes and Queries as vehicle for these and other short notes, using the Somerset House Gazette (1823) as a model.” Sullivan states that folklore and collections were the primary focus of the journal, but many subjects were discussed in its text. The journal published almost 200 items discussing photography, but many of these notes offered practical advice for readers concerning how to create their own images, detailed photographic process and equipment development, or were queries from readers who wanted to know further information about photographic or equipment development. Sullivan asserts that “Notes and Queries helped many among the rapidly growing reading public who did not have access to large libraries or distant sources of information.” See, Alvin Sullivan, British Literary Magazines. The Victorian and Edwardian Age, 1837-1913, vol. 2 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1984): 281-282.
49 In 1809, Dr. Hugh Welch Diamond was born in Norwich. He studied to become a medical doctor, and between 1848 and 1858 he held the position of residential superintendent of the female department of the Surrey County Lunatic Asylum at Springfield. Also, he was active in London antiquarian circles, and he became a member of the Photographic Club. He is best remembered for his portraits of the insane, which were noteworthy as being the first systematic use of photography in the history of psychiatry. He died on 21 June 1866 at his home, Twickenham House. For more information see, Carolyn Bloore, Hugh Welch Diamond: 1808-1886: Doctor, Antiquarian, Photographer (London: Orleans House Gallery, 1980); Sander L. Gilman, The Face of Madness: Hugh W. Diamond and the Origin of Psychiatric Photography; Hugh W. Diamond, On the Application of Photography to the Physiognomic and Mental Phenomena of Insanity [Abstract] 8 (Proceedings of the Royal Society of London, 1856-1857): 117.
branches of archaeology, illustrations and drawings become essential, while the cost of money and time is often too great to admit of their being procured.\textsuperscript{51} It was not Thoms’s intention to suggest that taking photographs of archaeological sites or objects was an artistic endeavor, since an archaeologist’s illustrations and drawings were used to record antiquities as technical parts of their studies. Photography in this instance is intended as a copying device, since as Thoms argues, it will, “with a truthfulness which the most skilful artist would in vain attempt to rival, enables the antiquary to fill his portfolio at small expense and with little labour.”\textsuperscript{52} This article advanced photography as a value-bearing object to a sector of British society that already valued archaeological illustrations and drawings as functional, if not artistic, items. This group of people may not have considered photography’s relevance to their purposes, but Thoms explains that “the purpose of this communication is simply to direct the attention of antiquaries more generally to a matter which, if properly taken up by them, must lead to the preservation of many a pictorial record which will be invaluable to those who come after us.”\textsuperscript{53} By endorsing photography as possessing both practical possibilities, and as producing important historical objects, Thoms significantly strengthened the commodification of photography, not just for antiquarians, but for the larger British collectivity.

\textit{Notes and Queries} had a very active correspondence with its readers, since that was an important reason for its founding. This discourse aided in the formation of a social collectivity, in this case interested in photography, based around the journal. A reader using the pseudonym, Philophotography, expresses a desire for raising the photography community’s level of knowingness by suggesting that Thoms have \textit{Notes and Queries} become a medium for photographers:

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid.
By this I mean not only that he should afford them an opportunity of pointing out difficulties they may have encountered in the practice, and asking for advice and instruction upon them, calling attention to unrecorded phenomena, or of announcing new discoveries, but also that he should give those resident in one part of the kingdom, and who may have taken and printed views of objects of interest in their immediate neighborhood, an opportunity of exchanging copies of them for views taken by brother antiquaries in other parts.  

Thus, by using *Notes and Queries* as a site of personal interaction between interested members of the antiquarian community, both through encountering material in the journal that attracted their mutual, albeit disconnected, attention and swapping objects and information outside of the journal even if they had never met, Philophotography demonstrates how an imagined community is created and cultivated.

Although an important part of The Art-Journal’s mission was to provide timely knowledge to artists and other interested members of the British art world, it did not give mention in its discourse to the competitive advice on photography that *Notes and Queries* gave to its readers.  

It is likely that Hall did not view other journals providing advice to British photographers as something detrimental to The Art-Journal; rather, it is probable that he welcomed such guidance, since all of it worked together to advance the position of British art in the world.  Also, photography was only one topic in a diverse range of subjects that were discussed in The Art-Journal, so even if competing voices on a single topic drew those audience members away from Hall’s journal, its wider appeal should have protected its overall commodified position in nineteenth-century British culture.  It is unknown how much overlap

---

54 *Notes and Queries* 6, no. 154 (9 October 1852): 347.
55 The Art-Journal only mentions two journals with regard to photography, and offers positive commentary on both of them. In announcing the publication of The Photographic Art-Journal, a photograph journal in America, The Art-Journal declares, “The science of photography has excited such general interest in America as to lead to the publication of a journal devoted exclusively to its interests.” The Art-Journal comments that The Journal of the Photographic Society of London “has reached its Second number, and will be found to afford much valuable information to those interested in the advance of Photography.” The Athenaeum comments on Notes and Queries, but does not seem to view it as a rival. It declares that its “contemporary, Notes and Queries, seems to be making itself the special organ of photographic discussion and intelligence.” See, The Art-Journal 14 (January 1852): 36; The Art-Journal 15 (May 1853): 139; Athenaeum no. 1410 (4 November 1854): 130.
there was in the readerships of the two journals, if any, but it is possible that numerous people read both journals. Regardless, these two journals were not set up as direct rivals, and even had they been, *The Art-Union’s* commodified position in the nineteenth-century British art world was well established by this time. In fact, Hall, while recalling the development of *The Art-Journal* declared, “I had little to fear from opposition: inducements to rivalry were not strong; for nearly forty of its forty-two years I claimed for the *Art Journal* that it was ‘the only journal in Europe that adequately represented the fine arts and the arts of manufacture.’”

Hall may not have viewed *The Art-Journal* as having any rivals that could harm its commodified position in British society, but the critical discourse in his journal and other contemporary members of the periodical press did identify an issue that they believed was harming the commodification of British photography, both in Britain and throughout the world. These journals expressed concern over what they viewed were the detrimental effects of Talbot’s patents. Although it has been argued that Talbot took out his various photographic patents for the purpose of financial gain, which evoked criticism that a wealthy scientist should not demean himself for commercial exploitation, the majority of the critical attention that he received from *The Art-Journal* during this period was concerned with these patents hampering the progress and commodification of British photography.

---

56 Hall, *Retrospect of a Long Life*, 204. Also, Hall acknowledges several favorable situations that combined to assist him in achieving his goals:

First the growing wealth and intelligence of British merchants and manufacturers. Next, the influence of some of the picture-dealers in the manufacturing districts, who created a desire, if not a *taste* (that was the gradual result of persevering zeal), in prosperous Manchester and its rich locality. Next, by the always admirable working of the Art Union of London, under the judicious direction of George Godwin, F. R. S., and Lewis Pocock, F. S. A., and its secretary, Mr. Watson. Next, the great increase of provincial Schools of Art, of which in 1840 there were three; in 1880 there are one hundred and fifty, hardly a provincial town of note being now without this value auxiliary to Art knowledge, Art study, and Art practice. Next, in 1849, came the invaluable co-operation of Mr. Vernon, who, before he presented his great gift to the nation, gave to me the right to engrave and publish the whole of his collected pictures.


57 See Chapter 2, p. 43-45.
The Art-Union, in its original notice of the Photographic Club, commented upon some calotypes that had been exhibited at its most recent meeting. They were considered to be a nearly perfect combination of detail, broad general features, and “the magic beauty of light and shadow.” Yet, nothing more could be done with these photographs than exhibit them at the private gatherings of the club unless the photographers wished to purchase expensive licenses from Talbot to allow them to sell these images to the public. The article argues that “it is to be regretted that so beautiful an Art should be shackled, as it is, by the extreme illiberality of the Patentee, whose productions are left far behind by the labours of these gentlemen.”

Another way in which the journal examined the progress of British photographic processes in relation to Talbot’s patents was to print the abstracts of his new patents and then critique them. In an 1850 article, The Art-Journal declares that Talbot’s newest patent is not very original or appropriate for him to receive:

The images on oiled paper are said to be exceedingly good, and this may be a valuable suggestion; but it should never have entered into this patent, seeing that varnished paper has been used for other purposes for a great many years, and Mr. Talbot can no more patent a right to tracing paper, than he can to writing or other paper, for receiving photographic images. The issue here seems to be not so much that Talbot is pursuing financial gain for his work with advancing photographic process development, but that he is becoming petty about the lengths to which he will go to claim these advances as his own.

Hunt observes that Britain had entered a period where few strictly British improvements had been made in photography. He states that “the processes on paper are originally English, and, up to a certain point, we have done much with them; but we have not advanced, even with

58 The Art-Union 10 (April 1848): 130.
59 Ibid.
these, in the way in which the French and Americans have done.”61 This lack of specifically British progress in photography threatened its status as a value-bearing commodity for the British public. Hunt determines this to be the fault of two main issues in British society. First, he argues that there is a lack of scientific knowledge in Britain, which impedes process development, since “it is not possible to advance far in an art which deals with the most delicate chemical combinations, and the most subtile of physical powers.”62 Second, and even more importantly, Hunt censures Talbot, since the check that has been placed on photographic process development is due to “the clogs of two patents.”63 By restricting improvements in photography, it decisively harmed art, for Hunt believed that the photographic enterprise “must, sooner or later, become highly useful to the artist in the study of the natural.”64

Although the commodification of British photography was limited by Talbot’s patents, it was not until the decision in 1852 to put the formation of the Photographic Society on hold that this issue seemed to reach a crisis point both in the British art community and in The Art-Journal. The journal asserts that it was anticipating advocating for a Photographic Society after it was formed, since it was important for the development of the art world. But, the article states, “It is, therefore, with much regret that we find the promoters of the society compelled, at least for the present, to abandon their designs, owing to the impossibility of proceeding in any satisfactory way while shackled with restrictions by the patentee of the calotype process.”65 The men who were interested in forming the society met with Talbot so that they could come to an agreement about his patent restrictions, but they felt that it was impossible to agree to his propositions, since, as the article declares, “the patentee insists upon claiming every form of photographic

62 Ibid.
63 Ibid.
64 Ibid.
process, howsoever unlike his own.”66 In fact, the article contends that “the want of that liberal spirit which should ever actuate the philosopher was so strongly displayed, that the patentee’s form of agreement was at once rejected, and thus, for the present, the society has fallen to the ground.”67

The Art-Journal does not argue against someone making a discovery having the right to patent it if that person so desires, but it asserts “that every improvement is to be crushed because one man has a patent, is a case too monstrous for even the worst form of patent laws to contemplate.”68 The journal expresses hope that the failure to form a Photographic Society may ultimately be productive for photography, since “if the society was formed free from all restrictive hindrances, there can be no doubt that the advances of photography would be rapid.”69 Finally, the journal points out that since this article went to press they had learned that Talbot “has been induced to make a proposition which may probably lead to the entire removal of all patent restrictions from photography.”70 This achievement was likely to have a significant positive effect on the commodification of British photography, and, according to the journal, for Talbot it “may change every hostile feeling into a general expression of pleasure, and a realisation of merited honours.”71 Yet, a mere two months later The Art-Journal reported, after observing some French photography, that “while the French are profiting by the progress of this Art, photography on paper and glass, we in England, shackled by patents, are endeavoring to free the Art by making really humiliating concessions to the patentee.”72 Although negotiations had continued between Talbot and the men interested in forming the photographic society, with

66 Ibid.
67 Ibid.
68 Ibid.
69 Ibid., 194.
70 Ibid.
71 Ibid.
important figures, such as Sir David Brewster and Sir John Herschell becoming involved, they
journal states that the unanimous opinion was that “science has nothing to thank Mr. Talbot for,
and that photographers have much for which they owe him their gravest censure.”73

It is noteworthy that soon after this report was published in The Art-Journal, the Literary
Gazette printed an article that contained a correspondence from the previous day’s morning
newspapers between the presidents of the Royal Society and Royal Academy and Talbot. The
article reports that Talbot has responded to a request from these men to stop hindering the
progress of photography in England “by surrendering his patent, and offering it as a free present
to the public, in all its branches excepting that of taking calotype portraits for sale.”74 The
Literary Gazette declares that “there have been sundry very unpleasant disputes as to the claims
of the patentee, but these are now happily ended by the announcement of the resignation of the
patent right.”75 Although Talbot’s resignation of his patent was important for British
photographic development, his request to keep the rights to calotype portraits for sale was a
critical problem in this agreement. The overwhelming majority of photographs taken for sale in
Britain during this period were portraits, so this decision continued to hamper the expansion of
that commercial enterprise in the country. The Art-Journal reacted to this announcement by
noting that Talbot’s surrender of the patent rights is not completely satisfactory, but the journal
thanks him for what he has offered. The journal declares its “hope that we shall see this
beautiful art, which is now free of all restrictions, except in the case of portraiture, advancing
with great rapidity in this country.”76 The commodification of British photography received
compelling encouragement from this announcement, but the photographic enterprise still lacked

73 Ibid.
74 Literary Gazette no. 1856 (14 August 1852): 627.
75 Ibid.
76 The Art-Journal 14 (September 1852): 271.
the ability to become a desirable value-bearing commodity for the majority of British society on account of the restrictions on Talbotype portraiture.\footnote{\textit{The Art-Journal} considers the reservation regarding portraits to have been “a most unwise one, inasmuch as no person would think of having his portrait taken on paper, when by the Collodion process, which has never been shackled with any patent restrictions, far more beautiful results can be obtained.” \textit{The Art-Journal} 14 (September 1852): 271.}

This conflict over patent rights with Talbot did not end with this agreement in 1852. In 1854, an article appeared in \textit{The Art-Journal} criticizing Talbot for not only suing several people throughout Britain for supposedly infringing on his patent rights, but for his applying for an extension of his February 1841 patent. The journal contends that the progress and development of British photography continually appear “doomed to contend with all the miserable annoyances and lamentable hindrances which arise from the doubtful character of our patent laws.”\footnote{\textit{The Art-Journal} 16 (August 1854): 236.} Now that it seems like Talbot will not stop in his mission for financial gain from photography regardless of its effect on the greater photographic enterprise in Britain, \textit{The Art-Journal} unleashes some decidedly harsh criticism on him by declaring that

reviewing Mr. Fox Talbot’s labours as an experimentalist, we find him industriously working upon the ground which others have opened up. He has never originated any branch of inquiry; and, in prosecuting any, his practice is purely empirical. It is the system of putting this and that together to see what it will make. It is progress by a system of accidents, without a rule. Thus it is, that we find that the calotype process was the result of an accident; and, in no respect has even the combination of which it consists the slightest claims to a scientific deduction.\footnote{Ibid., 237.}

The article concludes that Talbot “had no claim to be considered as the discoverer of any photographic process, but merely as the deviser of processes from the results of other men’s labours.”\footnote{Ibid., 238.} Although these statements can be viewed as potentially harming the commodification of photography in Britain, \textit{The Art-Journal} was condemning Talbot’s actions...
concerning the photographic enterprise as adverse to its ability to succeed as a fetishized commodity.

It is significant that for all the coverage in the British periodical press given to the conflict between the photographic community and Talbot over his patents, there is comparably little reporting on the presentation of photography at one of the most important events during the nineteenth century, the Great Exhibition of 1851.\(^{81}\) As momentous as the Great Exhibition was to the British economy, culture, and society, little of the contemporary material devoted to discussing the event focused on the photography exhibits. Only three small mentions of photography at the Great Exhibition are reported in the periodical press. The *Athenaeum* provides readers with the most detailed account of the photography on display. It lists the various types of photographic processes used to create the exhibited images and their country of origin.\(^{82}\) But, the article does not provide much detail about individual images or review them in any way. This article does provide readers with an idea that photography is at the Great Exhibition, which promotes it as a fetishized commodity. *The Leader* presents a lengthy report about the various preparations for visits by royalty and general visitors, and details about what different individual countries will be exhibiting in the Crystal Palace.\(^{83}\) But the only mention of


\(^{83}\) *The Leader* was a weekly journal that was launched on 30 March 1850. Thornton Hunt conceived of the journal the previous year. He intended, as Alvin Sullivan explains, for it to “serve as a record of radical causes and a forum of advanced opinion.” It quickly became popular with radical artisans. Sullivan notes that the journal “very ably
photography is an observation that there are “daguerrreotype portraits of her statesmen from America.”

The only coverage in The Art-Journal given to photography at the Great Exhibition concerned not the photographs on display during the event, but Mayall’s series of photographs of various points in the Crystal Palace. The article asserts that the images “are remarkable for their extreme accuracy and power,” particularly “transcripts from the sculpture (the most difficult of all the objects therein assembled in the ordinary way) have thus been rendered perfect.”

Although the photography that was displayed at the Great Exhibition of 1851 did not receive much attention in the periodical press, photographic exhibitions did attract notice from these journals. The photographic exhibition at the Society of Arts was an important moment in the commodification of photography in Britain, since it was the first time that photography was presented in a manner similar to that of the large annual society exhibitions, such as those put on by the Royal Academy or the Society of British Artists. Several journals reviewed or commented upon this exhibition, an act that encouraged the view that photographs should be considered as significant value-bearing objects in their own right, even if the continued overall message that was put forth in the press endorsed photography as an aid to the artist. The Athenaeum asserts that this exhibition “deserves notice both for its novelty and for its intrinsic value,” and provides readers with short comments on the displayed photographs.

Notes and filled a gap between the arts-oriented Athenaeum and the more political—and more conservative—Spectator, of which Hunt had previously been an editor. Its content was fairly evenly divided between political and cultural matters.” Hunt was the art critic for The Leader, but was replaced as editor of the journal in 1852. This journal was published until 1860, although it lost much of its popularity by the mid-1850s. Sullivan, British Literary Magazines, 186.

84 The Leader no. 57 (26 April 1851): 382.  
87 Athenaeum no. 1314 (1 January 1853): 23.
Queries declares that “we do not feel justified to enter into a review and criticism of the specimens so fully as the subject requires.”\textsuperscript{88} But, the journal does propose that its readers who are interested in archaeology attend the exhibition where “they will find there such interesting records of architectural detail, together with views of antiquities from Egypt and Nubia, as will perfectly convince them of the value of this art with reference to their own immediate pursuits.”\textsuperscript{89} Notes and Queries also encourages those readers “who feel less delight in mere antiquity will be gratified to see, for the first time,” photographs that can be considered works of fine art.\textsuperscript{90} The Literary Gazette acknowledges that “the practice of Photography will doubtless be much assisted in its onward progress by the Exhibition,” but it deems that photography continues to display definite imperfections.\textsuperscript{91} The journal, no longer promoting its belief that the photograph was approaching fine art, concludes its review of the exhibition stating that “photography can ever usurp the sphere of art, properly so called, we think no one can now imagine. Meanwhile its processes are on the road to perfection, to which the present Exhibition will be a means of accelerating its hitherto tardy course.”\textsuperscript{92}

The Art-Journal points out that after photographs were exhibited at the Great Exhibition of 1851 “the public appear, for the first time, to have become aware that sun-pictures might be produced which would exhibit a high degree of beauty, in addition to that truthfulness which could not be obtained by any other method.”\textsuperscript{93} According to the journal, “Out of this has grown a remarkable degree of interest, and it has, in many cases amounted to a real enthusiasm, in favour of photography.”\textsuperscript{94} The journal, by observing that a real enthusiasm for photography had

\textsuperscript{88} Notes and Queries 7, no. 166 (1 January 1853): 22.
\textsuperscript{89} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{90} Ibid., 22-23.
\textsuperscript{91} Literary Gazette no. 1878 (15 January 1853): 68.
\textsuperscript{92} Ibid., 69.
\textsuperscript{93} The Art-Journal 15 (February 1853): 54.
\textsuperscript{94} Ibid.
developed in British society, puts forth the notion that the photographic enterprise had become a fetishized commodity for this community. But not only is the larger social collectivity focused on the commodification of photography important, the presence of an “interpretive community” within the exhibition space is also a critical concept to understand.  

Attending an exhibition is similar to the reading of a journal, since the spectator became, as Green-Lewis asserts, “the ordering principle.” Viewers at an exhibition might, according to Green-Lewis, “for the most part wander at random between first and last photograph without disturbing any obvious narrative arrangement.” Yet, by being in attendance with other viewers the individual spectator understands that they all form a larger collectivity that is similarly experiencing and interpreting these images. The action of authoring one’s own experience in the gallery space while simultaneously being a part of a larger interpretive community is, according to Green-Lewis, a limited encounter with these objects:

As form or story, no matter how loose, the exhibition was the site of an invisible and crucial structure; within its arrangement, as content or discourse, the photographs presented a set of meanings whose potential was strictly limited. By virtue of its selective and thus evaluative principles, the exhibition offered a coherent, if suppressed, narrative framework, notwithstanding that its narrative qualifications of a beginning and end depended to a great extent on the taste and vagaries of the reader.

Even if the interpretive options were limited for the individual viewer, they were able for the first time, in terms of a mass public gathering devoted specifically to photography, to consume images as a member of a larger communal audience existing in the same physical space, and not just as one element in a disconnected imagined community.

---

96 Ibid., 113.
97 Ibid.
98 Ibid., 120.
This exhibition was followed by two other events during this period of which the journals made particular note. A few months after the presentation at the Society of Arts, an exhibition was staged at Philip Delamotte’s gallery in Bond-street. *The Art-Journal* considers that “the figure subjects are not numerous, but those shown, especially the groups, are very perfect.”\(^9\) *The Leader* was also positively affected by this exhibition, especially through the observation that the photographs had not been “touched or tinted in the usual way.”\(^10\) The journal declared this to be “an advantage.”\(^11\) *The Journal of the Photographic Society of London* asserted that the exhibition was “deservedly attracting numerous visitors.”\(^12\) The journal suggests that “as a selection collection of photographic pictures, many of the highest excellence, this Exhibition should be visited, not only by all photographers, but by all who take an interest in pictorial art.”\(^13\) This was followed by the first exhibition held by the Photographic Society in 1854.\(^14\) Although this was an important event, only *The Art-Journal* printed a substantial notice of it.\(^15\) *The Art-Journal*’s main consideration of this exhibition by the Photographic Society was that it “was of great interest, as showing the value of photograph to the artist, to the traveller, the

\(^10\) *The Leader* no. 164 (14 May 1853): 478.  
\(^11\) Ibid.  
\(^12\) *The Journal of the Photographic Society of London* 1, no. 5 (21 May 1853): 68.  
\(^13\) Ibid.  
\(^14\) The Photographic Society of London held its first meeting on Thursday 20 January 1853. The group typically used the Society of Arts for its meetings. The introduction to the society’s journal, *The Journal of the Photographic Society of London* states that “the object of the Photographic Society is the promotion of the Art and Science of Photography, by the interchange of thought and experience among Photographers, and it is hoped this object may, to some considerable extent, be effected by the periodical meetings of the Society.” Also, the intention for the journal was to have “a medium for the publication of the proceedings at these meetings,” where correspondence from photographers and contemporary reports on the progress of photography was to be included. In May 1853, *The Art-Journal* reported on the Photographic Society’s early progress: “This society has commenced its operations with considerable activity, and everything appears to augur a career of usefulness. It had held three evening meetings at which papers of much importance to the art were read, and in the discussions which ensued many important facts were elicited.” See, *The Journal of the Photographic Society of London* 1, no. 1 (3 March 1853): 1-2; and *The Art-Journal* 15 (May 1853): 139.  
historian, the antiquarian, and the naturalist: to all, indeed, the exhibition appears to display points of the utmost importance.”106 Thus, through these exhibitions the commodification of British photography was positively advanced by 1854. Also, the social collectivity that had formed in its mutual interest in society now had been offered multiple sites at which to gather and form an interpretive community while jointly viewing the displayed images.

Although this photographic community might seem to be placed solely in London, since that is where most of the nineteenth-century British periodical press was published, it has been shown in Notes and Queries that this social collectivity was spread out across Britain to form a strong and growing imagined community focused on the photographic enterprise. These periodicals reported on the development of photography not just in London for the consumption of readers in provincial cities, but the journals also detailed process development and events in the these provincial sites. The two main locations that received attention during this period were Liverpool and Scotland.

Liverpool was typically discussed by The Journal of the Photographic Society of London primarily due to the fact that the city also had a photographic society. In its September 1853 issue, The Journal of the Photographic Society of London took note of an exhibition of photographs presented at the Liverpool Photographic Society meeting. The report observes that several impressions from J. M. W. Turner’s Liber Studiorum were displayed, and “the comparison with the photographs showed the superiority of the work of the skilful painter over the work of nature, in everything except the bare reproduction.”107 In January 1854, the journal contained a paper by Frank Howard read before the Liverpool Photographic Society, 7 June 1853. Howard states that he had previously argued “against photography as a successful rival of

107 The Journal of the Photographic Society of London 1, no. 9 (21 September 1853): 114.
the fine arts in portraiture, or even in the representation of landscape.”

But Howard had changed his perspective to consider photography as best used to assist the production of the fine arts, such as aiding the portrait painter or “in studies of drapery for the artist in general.”

Also, photography should be used by photographers as “an encyclopaedia of form, collecting every instance within reach, and leave the artist to supply this invaluable assistance to the production of the fine arts.”

*The Art-Journal* devoted space in each issue to report on art developments in British provincial cities, but material on the photographic enterprise in these cities focused on Scotland.

In April 1854, *The Art-Journal* reported that a Photographic Society had been formed in Glasgow, accompanied by a photographic exhibition. Also, a photographic exhibition was being held in Edinburgh. The journal presents a short review of the works at the Edinburgh exhibition. This article is noteworthy not only for its report on events in provincial cities, but for showing that the commodification of British photography was advancing strongly. The journal contends that “the establishment of the London Photographic Society, and the great success which attended its recent exhibition, appear to have awakened a new and strong interest in all parts of the country.”

*The Art-Journal* also reviewed a Scottish pamphlet by J. Miller titled *Photography versus the Fine Arts.* In this instance, the journal seems to be more concerned with what Miller has to say about art, than whether or not he is approaching it from a distinctly Scottish or provincial perspective.

---

109 Ibid., 156.
110 Ibid., 157.
111 *The Art-Journal* 16 (August 1854): 100. It is interesting that *The Journal of the Photographic Society of London* only makes note that this exhibition was taking place.
Although there is scant material in the London periodical press providing reports on the provincial cities, it is still significant for understanding that these London art communities were joined in larger imagined communities with similarly interested readers throughout Britain. Also, these reports demonstrate that all provincial cities, according to Patrick Joyce, in the first half of the nineteenth century, were producing grand cultural projects for their citizens. Joyce focuses on Manchester and its capitalists to analyze “the social narratives and collective identities present in these capitalists’ attempts to manufacture a culture for their manufacturing city.”

His interest is in studying how “membership of city institutions, especially those concerned to both define and regulate the cultural life of the city,” affected the social development of Manchester. He argues that “the aim of these cultural projectors was clear—to create a unity of purpose among the influential classes so that education could be utilised successfully to handle the needs and problems of the growing city.”

While Joyce was mainly interested in class formations and interactions, his commentary on there being a desire in these provincial cities to promote its cultural life for the betterment of its citizens is informative, and ties to the development of photographic societies in places like Liverpool and Glasgow.

Finally, although the critical discourse on photographic development within the nineteenth-century British periodical press was variable and experienced shifts in its primary course, the reviews of the first photography exhibition at the Society of Arts display that the belief in photography being a useful tool to aid the artist instead of a fine art on its own merits remained in place throughout this period. The formation of the London Photographic Society actually strengthened this discourse, and was the source of some concern. Hunt, who praised the

---

115 Ibid., 164-165.
116 Ibid., 165.
creation of the Photographic Society, expressed concern that painters who use photography as an aid to their art may lead to them producing a “mechanical mode of treatment, which is destructive to all those efforts which should be the results of mental power.” An article in The Leader argues against Hunt’s contention by stating, “No painter, having imagination, will be likely to sacrifice it to details, whether presented to him in Nature or in a Talbotype.” The writer asserts that Hunt also is incorrect, since “to our thinking, heliography has not so much affected the process of Art as it has confirmed it.” According to the writer, a photograph of the naked form confirms that Titian’s painting was true to the life. The writer concludes, “and certainly Titian would not have changed his method if Fox Talbot’s invention had dated from the pontificate of Clement the Seventh.”

It is significant to note that within this debate about artists mechanically following the photograph without using any of their imagination is the larger concept of the artwork being true to nature. Although this concept would seem to call for an exact representation of what the eye, or the camera’s eye, is seeing, the critical discourse from this period was filled with complaints that the photograph offered too much minute detail for a proper natural study. John Leighton argued that “Fine Art seeks to elevate the imagination by lofty images derived from nature in her most agreeable forms.” According to Leighton, artists achieve these goals by presenting nature in the abstract whereas the photograph presents them with too much detail. He declares that “photographic pictures are at present too literal to compete with works of art,” since they do not provide enough difference in intensity between backgrounds and foregrounds. The

118 The Leader no. 188 (29 October 1853): 1052.
119 Ibid.
120 Ibid.
121 The Journal of the Photographic Society of London 1, no. 6 (21 June 1853): 74.
122 Ibid.
reviewer in *The Art-Journal* who appraises Miller’s pamphlet notes that Miller contends that no matter how well a photograph is produced it has no relation to art. The reviewer argues that “we are quite ready to admit the marvels and the beauty of a photographic picture, and the aid which the science may render to Art, but we can never place it in the same category with an engraving after Turner, or with a ‘Holy Family,’ after Raffaelle.”¹²³ Also, the reviewer reflects the contention that to create an artwork that is true to nature, “the artist must, in very many cases, omit altogether, or alter, certain objects that would offend the eye; photography gives us only a faithful transcript, none of the poetry of nature.”¹²⁴ Sir William Newton contends that photographs can be artistically beautiful, so people who know artistic principles should manipulate the camera to obtain photographs that produce “a broad and general effect, by which means the suggestions which nature offers.”¹²⁵ To obtain a photograph that is more suggestive of actual nature, Newton recommends that the whole subject be a little out of focus.¹²⁶ Newton’s suggestion was controversial in the photographic community. For example, Robert William Buss, a painter and illustrator, argues against Newton’s proposal that photographs be taken slightly out of focus for obtaining general effects of light and shade. He contends that “correct definition, so important where minute forms and the varieties of texture are required, is in a general sense not absolutely necessary to render photography of great use to artists, for the moment he attempts a slavish imitation of the camera picture, he is no longer an artist.”¹²⁷ Buss argues that obtaining photographs out of focus to gain a proper effect of light and shade would be a harmful “employment of the art of photography,” since “that correct definition would be

---

¹²³ *The Art-Union* 16 (September 1854): 284.
¹²⁴ Ibid.
¹²⁶ Ibid.
¹²⁷ *The Journal of the Photographic Society of London* 1, no. 6 (21 June 1853): 75.
injurious to the end proposed, which is to have natural studies of breadth of effect to guide the painter in the conduct of his light and shade in his picture.”

The Art-Journal definitely did not stand alone at the end of this period in its stance that photography should be seen as best used to assist artists in their creation of artworks. Yet, this shift toward photography as a tool instead of a fine art, did not harm either the journal’s or the photographic enterprise’s statuses as value-bearing commodities for the British art community. Instead, The Art-Journal continued to solidify its position as a significant voice for the British art community, even when faced with the launching of specialized photography journals, such as The Journal of the Photographic Society of London or journals that devoted a considerable portion of their discourse to the discussion of photography. Overall, this combined promotion of the development of photography, particularly as an aid to artists, helped to solidify a commodity fetishism for not only British-made photographs, but British photographic processes as Great Britain entered the mid-nineteenth century.

128 Ibid., 75-76.
129 Freund contends that “by 1864, twenty-five years after the invention of photography, twenty-five periodicals on the subject were being issued in six different countries.” See, Freund, Photography & Society, 83 and Le Moniteur de la photographie, no. 24, 1 March 1864.
CHAPTER 5

ART CRITICISM OF PHOTOGRAPHY, 1839-1854

Photography was put on public display since it was invented in 1839. Although many of these first exhibitions were presented to limited audiences at the meetings of scientific institutions, such as the British Association or the Royal Society, or in the galleries of individual photographers, these photographic images were being viewed, discussed, and evaluated by a public interested in the visual arts. The typical intention of these early photography exhibitions was to demonstrate advances in process development, and how they affected the resulting image. The photography displayed at the Great Exhibition, which was held in 1851, was another example of photographic images being presented to viewers in conjunction with contemporary photographic equipment and processing materials. The main difference between this event and previous photography demonstrations was that it was attended by the mass British public, and not just a small group of scientific and photographic specialists. Although this was a significant event for the advancement of the way in which photography was integrated into the larger British culture, it was the first exhibition devoted solely to photography at the Society of Arts in 1852 that presented this mass public with the opportunity to appraise these images as artworks. The people who viewed these photographs were aided in their evaluation of them by reviews in contemporary journals, particularly The Art-Journal, just as they were similarly assisted in approaching the artworks displayed at the annual Royal Academy exhibitions.

Analyzing the first photography exhibition is important, since it allows insight into the critical discourse that The Art-Journal used to assess photography as it entered its second decade of existence. It has been shown that the journal typically positioned photography as a primarily scientific enterprise or as an aid to artists, and not as something that produced art, but the Society
of Arts exhibition was intended to be an artistic presentation. Art exhibitions were staged on a regular basis in nineteenth-century Britain. They were a crucial way for artists who had organized into societies or the Royal Academy to present their works to a larger middle-class art-buying public, driven by newly wealthy factory owners in the North and Midlands. The annual reviews of these exhibitions in the periodical press were an important component in this process of exposing artists and their works to the consuming public. A distinct critical language and analytical style developed in the art reviewing profession in nineteenth-century Britain—an appraisal method that is given its own unique qualities in *The Art-Journal*.

This chapter demonstrates how *The Art-Journal* reviewed the photographic exhibitions held at the Society of Arts in late 1852 and early 1854, focusing in part on whether or not the journal continued to locate photography as a primarily scientific enterprise that should be used as a tool for aiding the artist in creating paintings and other objects representative of the plastic arts, or if it also acknowledged its artistic qualities. This analysis is paired with an examination of how *The Art-Journal* and other contemporary general and literary journals reviewed other art exhibitions, focusing on the annual exhibitions of the Royal Academy of Arts and the Society of British Artists in an attempt to understand the critical language being used to evaluate art at this

---

1 Displaying works at the annual exhibitions was not the only way for artists to have their art shown to the public. Helene E. Roberts notes that the artist “could exhibit in his own studio, he could rent exhibition space in the various establishments maintained for that purpose, he could sell or consign his works to picture dealers, or he could send his works to the annual exhibitions organized by art societies.” But, of these options, artists would be able to have their works exposed to a larger public by participating in the annual exhibitions. See, Helene E. Roberts, “Exhibition and Review: The Periodical Press and the Victorian Art Exhibition System,” in *The Victorian Periodical Press: Samplings and Soundings*, ed. Joanne Shattock and Michael Wolff (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 80.

2 These exhibition reviews were not just published on an annual basis, but as Mancoff points out, “Full reviews of the major exhibitions at established intervals gave a cyclical form to each volume: the British Institution in February, the Royal Scottish Academy in March, the Royal Academy in May (often extending to June), and the Royal Hibernian Academy in July.” By presenting readers with this recurring exhibition review format, *The Art-Journal* encouraged them to become familiar with the periodical’s format over time. This action aided in strengthening the readers’ imagined community and knowingness. Also, *The Art-Journal*’s cyclical design promoted both the journal and the artworks displayed at the exhibitions as fetishized commodities, since a recurring desire for consuming these items increased their valuation for the British art world. See, Mancoff, “Samuel Carter Hall,” 13.
time.³ This analysis does not include a comprehensive appraisal of all the exhibitions and the works within them from 1839 to 1854; rather, this examination is limited to those exhibitions that were reviewed in 1839 and 1854 with some brief commentary about photography criticism from 1841 as well as noting a few other interesting exhibition reviews published during this period. Overall, the study in this chapter attempts to understand how a critical discourse based on annual art exhibitions developed and how it was applied to the early photographic enterprise.

Reviews of exhibitions at museums and galleries were only one textual form that the developing collection of art writers used to discuss the visual arts in nineteenth-century Britain. Rachel Teukolsky notes that growing attendance at art exhibitions aided in the advancement of art writing during this period, since it “became tremendously popular as art spectatorship came to define taste and culture for a growing middle-class audience.”⁴ Along with exhibition reviews these art writers produced treatises on aesthetics, volumes of art history, and lectures to amateur societies.⁵ These textual works, according to Teukolsky, “helped to invent an idea new in the nineteenth century, that art spectatorship could provide one of the most intense and meaningful forms of human experience.”⁶ This promotion of the consumption of art ties into the desires of

³ The annual exhibitions held by the Royal Academy and the Society of British Artists were two of many similar art events staged throughout the year, including those held by the Society of Painters in Water-Colours and the New Society of Painters in Water-Colours, but this analysis will focus only these two groups for two main reasons. First, the Royal Academy and the Society of British Artists were two of the most important art groups during this period. Second, reviews of the various exhibitions were typically presented in a similar format, so it is unnecessary to examine how each group’s art was discussed. It must be remembered that the way in which reviewers used critical language to assess these exhibitions is more important in this study than how individual artworks were evaluated in comparison to the artworks displayed at other events.


⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid. A Victorian did not just perform the viewing and experiencing of art through attending exhibitions or reading textual works discussing art. Also, according to Teukolsky, the scene of art spectatorship was depicted frequently in a range of nineteenth-century artworks, both visual and verbal, attesting to the great significance many Victorians attached to art response. In the visual arts, paintings depicted families gathered in the museum, marveling at touching images on display, while cartoons satirized aesthetes in galleries dropping pretentious remarks on the latest visual fashions.
the middle classes not just for viewing art, but for purchasing and owning it. The movement from an aristocratic connoisseur who owned a large art collection to the middle-class patron newly interested in consuming art began in the eighteenth-century art market, and eventually affected the main way in which writers conducted their art criticism. Connoisseurs needed little guidance from the judgments of the art writers, but, as Roberts contends, “the new middle-class patrons, purchasing art for reasons of conspicuous consumption or commercial speculation were not so confident of their own taste.”

Teukolsky declares that “the eighteenth-century public discourse of art was fractured both by the reality of the art market, which favored smaller genre pictures and portraits over grand history paintings, and by the growing emphasis on private values and personal judgment associated with the practice of ‘virtuous’ capitalism in the later eighteenth century.”

Also, British art writing experienced a similar important shift from the aesthetic treatise, a textual form typically written by Joshua Reynolds, to art criticism in the periodical press, which became its dominant genre in the nineteenth century. Although art criticism in periodicals was typically consumed by a more urban, bourgeois reader than a country gentleman with an estate collection, the periodical criticism, as Teukolsky argues, “did not necessarily embrace a bourgeois, nascently liberal perspective in opposition to the more genteel aesthetic treatise.” In fact, many of these nineteenth-century journals promoted a conservative art politics similar to that found in the eighteenth century. This was definitely the case with The Art-Union.

Teukolsky determines that the depiction of art spectatorship in Victorian fiction “functioned as a definitive sign of class and character. The language of art worked to establish crucial sensibilities of self and society for the Victorians.” See, Teukolsky, The Literate Eye, 10.

9 Ibid. Also see, Andrew Hemingway, Landscape Imagery and Urban Culture in Early Nineteenth-Century Britain (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).
Although the art press occupied a conservative critical space in nineteenth-century discourse, it still gained a prominent position with its intended middle class audience. Teukolsky considers that as visual art was no longer viewed simply as “an aristocratic entertainment to be covered alongside other gossipy or newsworthy items” it was “beginning to occupy its own privileged place among the discourses of periodical criticism aimed at the middle class.”10 It should be understood that while the art press was gaining power and prominence in nineteenth-century Britain this progressive movement was not unique to this critical discourse, since the overall periodical press was expanding and increasing its influence during this period.11 The growth of the periodical press as the site for this influence was recognized as early as 1839, when Laman Blanchard declared the sway “acquired over the public mind by periodical literature at the present day is generally admitted to be one of the most striking characteristics of our times.”12 Blanchard argued readers, by adopting and habitually reading the periodical press, this


“intellectual food” maneuvers with “gradual but irresistible force in producing and modifying our feelings and opinions.”

Art criticism in England from the latter half of the eighteenth century to the early 1850s, according to Helene Roberts, consisted mostly of reviews. Reviews gained an important position in nineteenth-century British culture, but they did not possess an autonomous existence in the periodical press, since, as Roberts contends, “they are dependent not only upon works of art but also upon their public exhibition.” The development of regular art exhibitions was of paramount importance to the continuation and expansion of the art review as a literary genre during this period. These events became a regular occurrence in England after the 1769 Royal Academy exhibition. This took place the year after the Academy was formed, and became not only an annual summer event but one of the main art presentations in England in the nineteenth century.

Newspapers and general or literary journals were the first places where art reviews and notices were published. This was the norm, according to Roberts, until the first journal that principally focused on discussing and reviewing contemporary art—The Artist's Repository and Drawing Magazine—was started by Charles Taylor in 1785. Although this journal had a fairly short run—it was published until 1794—it was the first of many other art periodicals to be published in the early nineteenth century in England. The Artist's Repository was followed by the Repository of Arts, which was published from 1809 to 1829 by Rudolph Ackerman and

---

15 The Royal Academy’s annual exhibition has always been presented in London. Roberts explains the various locations at which the exhibitions have been held:
   The Royal Academy held these annual exhibitions in Somerset House, their home from 1780 to 1836. The engraving of Plate I from a drawing by J. H. Ramberg shows paintings exhibited in the Great Room of Somerset House in 1787. They then moved to a wing of what is now the National Gallery in Trafalgar Square and in 1868 to their present quarters in Burlington House.
16 Ibid.
17 Ibid.
edited by Frederic Shoberl. It was mainly known for its hand-colored plates and its thoughtful reviews of the Royal Academy exhibitions. During this period, from 1816 to 1820, the *Annals of the Fine Arts* were produced, and, argues Roberts, included reviews primarily intended as attacks on the Royal Academy.\(^\text{17}\) Support for the Royal Academy could be found in the *Somerset House Gazette*, which had a run from 1821 to 1824, and was edited by William Henry Pyne—the pseudonymous Ephraim Hardcastle. The *Library of the Fine Arts* succeeded these periodicals, being printed from 1831 to 1834, and was known for insightful, albeit short, commentary on the exhibitions.

It is obvious that all of these journals had rather short life spans, and were joined by a variety of other art periodicals that experienced short publication runs.\(^\text{18}\) That changed in 1839 with the introduction of Samuel Carter Hall’s, *The Art-Union*—which would eventually change names to *The Art-Journal* in 1849. This journal, Roberts claims, was “the very voice of the Victorian art establishment,” and it produced its conservative, but supportive, commentary on the state of fine arts in England until 1912.\(^\text{19}\)

The reviews published in contemporary eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British periodicals were not proper critical studies. Although both forms of inquiry describe and evaluate works of art, Roberts asserts that reviews “are not expected to have that measure of analysis and depth that marks good criticism.”\(^\text{20}\) Yet, she argues that “most writers on art in Victorian periodicals had a literary background and wrote literary as well as art criticism.”\(^\text{21}\) Roberts contends that the writings of these art reviewers, “often reveal more about their

\(^{17}\) Ibid., 10.
\(^{19}\) Roberts, “Art Reviewing,” 10.
\(^{20}\) Ibid., 9.
\(^{21}\) Roberts, “Exhibition and Review,” 83.
categories of thought and the underlying values of their society than about the qualities of a painting.”

Also, these writers typically focused on the subject matter of the works, and allotted more space in their reviews to paintings with more interesting and narrative subjects. Roberts asserts that it is common to locate within these writings more about the machinations of the Royal Academy or Society of British Artists—“than about the talent of the artists reviewed.”

The faculties of the artists were important to reviewers as well, so a critical language and criteria were employed to judge the value of these works. Nineteenth-century reviewers based their critical vocabulary on Roger de Piles’s four elements of art: “Composition, Design, Expression, and Coloring.” Nineteenth-century reviewers did not always use these terms as originally defined by Piles. They also were not necessarily consistent in their usage of these terms from artist to artist or work to work, but as Roberts points out, many mid-century reviewers included these terms in “brief evaluative and descriptive phrases” throughout their reviews. Although the reviewers attempted to evaluate artists and artworks, Roberts considers that these reviewers did not appear to be comfortable with the concepts informing their critical vocabulary.

According to Roberts, these were the four elements of art that de Piles considered to be important, and are what, on a scale of twenty points, he used to grade the old masters. Thomas Puttfarken notes that de Piles, who was born on 7 October 1635 in Clamency Nivernais, appended his “Balance of Painters” (Balance des peintres) to his last work, Cours de peinture par principes. Puttfarken contends that this list “is often misunderstood as a pedantic application of rules. It was meant to be the opposite, an encouragement for a wider public to make up its own mind.” See, Helene E. Roberts, “Art Reviewing,” 12; Thomas Puttfarken, “Roger de Piles (1635-1709),” Key Writers on Art: From Antiquity to the Nineteenth Century, Edited by Chris Murray (London: Routledge, 2003): 94; and Roger de Piles, Cours de peinture par principes (Paris: Jacques Estienne, 1708).

This lack of a common and well-understood critical vocabulary being used by nineteenth-century art writers did not pass the notice of contemporary commentators in the periodical press. In an 1843 article in Fraser’s Magazine, titled “On Aesthetical Criticism as Applied to Works of Art,” the writer argued that art criticism was at its “lowest ebb” in England, since it consisted “of very little more than the application of a catalogue of cant terms and phrases, many of them conveying no definite ideas, and but few of them distinctly understood by those who use them most frequently.” See, Fraser’s Magazine 28 (1843): 72.
seldom as a basis for detailed analysis.”

She suggests that this possibly occurred “because these terms and the concepts behind them refer to technical or painterly qualities of the work, while the reviewers, usually men of literary or journalistic background, were more conversant with criteria based on the subject content of the painting, rather than its form or style.”

She points out that de Piles’s critical vocabulary did not benefit from universal acceptance, yet even journals that criticized his aesthetic theories, such as *Annals of the Fine Arts*, used the same vocabulary.

Another important criterion for appraising art was the truth of the subject to nature, and it was similar to de Piles’s critical vocabulary in being vague and ambiguous. Roberts asserts that the definitions of nature and being true to it were not well-defined in the nineteenth-century British periodical press. She contends that “it certainly was not the truth later depicted by the Realists, nor the nature discovered by the Naturalists, but a more idealized or generalized version of selected nature defined largely by the artistic tradition.”

This tradition, according to Roberts, “extended from the Renaissance through Bellori and Roger de Piles to the Royal Academy school and the *Discourses* of Reynolds.” Joshua Reynolds, who presented the *Discourses* between 1769 and 1790 while he was president of the Royal Academy, argued that artworks should be true to nature throughout these writings. Reynolds declares that the artist,
by “examining the Art itself by the standard of Nature, he corrects what is erroneous, supplies what is scanty, and adds by his own observation what the industry of his predecessors may have yet left wanting to perfection.”

Nature, Reynolds asserts, was not mere imitation. Genuine painters should strive to accomplish more than imitating nature with minute neatness, since that only amuses people. Instead, these painters should attempt to improve their works by the grandeur of their ideas. Also, Reynolds determines that painters needed to become familiar with all the imperfections, blemishes and defects of nature through lengthy observation. By performing this task, Reynolds claims painters will acquire “a just idea of beautiful forms,” so that they can correct “nature by herself, her imperfect state by her more perfect.”

The concept of being true to nature was an important component of Reynolds’s “Grand Style.” Reynolds believed that this style should be applied to every part of art—“to Invention, to Composition, to Expression, and even to Colouring and Drapery.” The Grand Style was a hierarchical model of artistic genres with history painting afforded primary importance. History paintings, according to Teukolsky featured “vast scenes of sweeping historical or mythical

---

36 See, Ibid., 44.
significance." Reynolds argued that painters were not to invent the subject of these paintings, since those were “commonly supplied by the Poet or Historian.” Also, painting in the Grand Style was to be based primarily on “beauty or truth, which is formed on the uniform, eternal and immutable laws of nature.” Teukolsky considers this conservative and tradition-laden theory, “by which painting could only be valued for its invocation of a received body of myths, stories, or styles,” to have favored the aristocratic classes “whose best selves were mirrored back to them in history paintings as heroic, public personas engaged in major projects of nation-building.”

Although Reynolds intended his concepts to be incorporated into artwork which favored consumption by an elite group of tasteful gentlemen, reviewers in the nineteenth-century periodical press extended these ideas to the rising middle classes. They praised artworks that they viewed as true to nature, but these works no longer were expected to be history paintings. This is not to suggest that history paintings were not appreciated in the nineteenth century, but the art market that was being driven by the rising middle classes preferred portraits and landscapes over history paintings. Truth to nature also was important in portraits and landscapes, since, according to Roberts, “in portraits it seemed to mean a flattering and noble, but still recognizable, version of the sitter, while in landscape it meant a generous overlay of the picturesque or sublime.” Significantly, Roberts notes that art critics in the nineteenth-century British periodical press shifted the general model put forth by Reynolds to a specific one. These

41 Teukolsky, *The Literate Eye*, 11. Teukolsky asserts that much of Reynolds’s concepts are similar to those of Kant, although they had particularly different aesthetic preferences: Kant argues for a disinterested judgment based on an artwork’s formal qualities, while Reynolds elevates history painting and old master artworks as the pinnacle of tasteful judgment. Yet both thinkers analyze taste as a function of reason, around which a community of like-minded gentlemen might gather, a select group beyond mere ‘common gazers,’ as Reynolds disdains them.
art critics expected exactness and detail, so they want, as Roberts asserts, “human bodies to
conform to actual proportions, history paintings to reflect factual events, and paintings of literary
scenes to be true to the author’s own conception.”43 If critics condemned paintings that
presented the squalor of everyday life, the fault, Roberts claims, was seen as being “in the
painter’s choice of subject, not in his truthful rendering of it.”44

Along with the technical criteria of an artwork and the belief that it should present the
truth of nature art critics wanted to have an experience from viewing it. This means, according
to Roberts, that the reviewer “wished to have his imagination stimulated, his senses aroused, and,
above all, his sentiments engaged. He wanted a painting to set off a stream of associations:
pleasant, mildly provocative, perhaps even slightly awe-inspiring.”45 Although the associationist
theory of art is incorporated into Reynolds’s Discourses, Roberts points out that the main voices
of this theory are David Hartley, who published Observations on Man in 1749, and Archibald
Alison, who, in his Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste, published in 1790, applied
Hartley’s concepts to art.46 Alison claims that a work of art must awaken the imagination, so
that “we lose ourselves amid the number of images that pass before our minds, and when we
waken at last from this play of fancy, as from the charm of a romantic dream.”47 The art
spectator does not single-handedly create this experience—it is crucial that the artwork provide
clues in its subject and composition that guide the viewer’s recognition of the chain of
associations. By taking these criteria into important consideration, it is evident that, as Roberts

43 Roberts, “‘Trains,’” Victorian Periodicals Newsletter 10, no. 3 (September 1977): 91.
44 Ibid.
46 See, David Hartley, Observations on Man: His Frame, His Duty, and His Expectations (London: S. Richardson,
1749); and Archibald Alison, Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste (Edinburgh: J. J. G. and G. Robinson,
1790). For a detailed analysis of associationism see, Helene E. Roberts, “‘Trains,’” Victorian Periodicals
Newsletter 10, no. 3 (September 1977): 91-105.
contends, “reviewers and the public preferred the literary associations of imagination and sentiment to the technical and stylistic qualities of brushwork, high finish, or design.”

A critical reaction to the individual pictures displayed on the walls of the gallery was not the only important component of the textual exhibition review within *The Art-Union*. These exhibition reviews, especially the ones contained in the 1839 volume of the journal, included a significant introduction that typically criticized the actions of the society instead of providing the reader with a description of the layout of the gallery space or an overall estimation of any sort of noticeable themes—based on color, content, or some other critical criterion. But the commentary on the conduct of the society’s members provided the reader a glimpse into the inner workings of the association. This is interesting because a negative review of this aspect of the society has the ability to influence the attitude of the reader toward the rest of the critique, which importantly consists of the appraisals of individual art works.

A negative opinion of the decisions of some of the younger managers of the Society of British Artists definitely colors the way the rest of this exhibition review is approached. The reviewer in *The Art-Union*, within the introduction to the Society’s sixteenth exhibition in 1839 criticizes the decision to issue tickets to admit only one person, without a companion, to the private view:

---

49 A description of the physical makeup of the society’s gallery space may have been omitted from the review because it was assumed that the reader was also likely to have been a spectator at the exhibition.
50 The Society of British Artists was founded in 1823, and held its first exhibition in 1827. It was formed to rival the Royal Academy, and was originally embraced by critics because of this stance as well as the fact that it offered a different exhibition space. Yet, as Roberts asserts, “critics could not bring themselves to shower liberal praise on its exhibitions,” since it did not attract the best paintings being produced in Britain. Roberts notes that “by the 1870s the Society had become a refuge for the landscapes and genre scenes beloved by the new middle-class patrons.” Overall, Roberts point out that while the Society had “an attractive exhibition hall,” it possessed a “reputation of being second rate.” Other societies were formed in early nineteenth-century Britain in reaction against the Royal Academy, such as the Society of Painters in Water-Colour (1805) and the British Institution (1825). The New Society of Painters in Water-Colours (1831) was founded, as Roberts claims, “in order to counteract the exclusiveness and narrowness of the Old Society.” See, Roberts, “Exhibition and Review,” 91-95.
We cannot pardon them for having so acted. They are the guardians, not of their own interests alone, but of the interests of some hundreds of artists who contribute to furnish their walls; and whom they had no right to injure by their absurd decree. The publishers were treated in the same manner as the press—the one class give them fame and the other bread; and the advantages to be derived from the assistance of both were sacrificed to the whim or arrogance of some half a dozen young persons who outvoted the gray-beards of the Institution.  

It is important to understand that the reviewer is not alone in feeling irritated at the way he was treated at Suffolk Street Gallery. He declares that the success or failure of an art society is dependent on having a cooperative relationship with the periodical press, since their market will be radically reduced in size and value if the reviewers turn their back on them. The only group that could ignore the press and still flourish was the Royal Academy. But the Society of British Artists was not, in a condition to assume a lofty bearing and a high tone. Every year they have needed indulgence—and they have received it. The press has been largely generous to them; the establishment was looked upon as a sort of nursery for artists; so indeed it was proved, and has been judged rather for good promise than for worthy performance. If its managers think they can, as two of them publicly stated they could, do without the press, and care nothing for its co-operation, they will find themselves mistaken. They are not yet strong enough to walk alone.

In concluding that statement the reviewer turns to assessing the “leading works which form the present exhibition.”

Overall, the exhibition review is organized by artist, with a brief comment on how many or few works he or she is exhibiting, followed by several observations appraising the content and

---

51 The Art-Union 1 (April 1839): 43.
52 The pronoun he will be used in reference to the reviewer for the Art-Union throughout the remaining discussion of this work. Although it is known that Mrs. S. C. Hall worked closely with her husband on books, and contributed various articles to some of the journals he edited, including The Art-Union, it cannot be conclusively determined that she wrote this review. Mrs. Hall does not seem to have published any memoirs. The only discussion of her writing reviews for journals that were edited by S. C. Hall is found in his memoirs. He states that she would write reviews for the New Monthly and other journals—none being specifically named—although only if she did not have to abuse or condemn the author. For a full discussion of this issue, see Hall, Retrospect of a Long Life, 553.
53 The Art-Union 1 (April 1839): 43.
54 Ibid.
technical aspects of individual works. The reviewer considers W. Linton’s *The City of Argos, with the Embarkation of Agamemnon for the Trojan War* to be “lofty in conception, gorgeously coloured, skilfully arranged, and exquisitely finished.” He declares that the scene is animated and brilliant; a ‘countless host’ is on the shore or in the ships, yet the painter has so managed that there is no confusion in his groups; the winds and the waves are both tranquil, the one just suffices to move their ‘glittering pennons’ the other to bear them onwards to the ten years’ war.

Frederick Yeates Hurlstone, who contributed several paintings to the exhibition, does not have his history painting praised by the reviewer. The critic states that “it represents the appalling scene, ‘in St Peter’s, Rome,’ which Byron describes in such powerful language, when at the sacking of the Seven-hill’d City, the soldiers of Bourbon pursue Olympia, who takes refuge at the foot of the Cross.” Although the painting showed Olympia at the moment when she utters, “Respect your God!,” the reviewer complains that Hurlstone had “thrown a very weak expression into her countenance; it is neither of terror, courage, passion, confidence, hope, or despair.” He argues that Hurlstone should have studied the preceding and succeeding scenes. If so, the critic contends that the painter should have understood that “energy, bravery, and

---

55 Ibid.
56 Ibid.
57 Frederick Yeates Hurlstone (1800-1869) was a portrait and history painter. In 1820 he was admitted to the Royal Academy Schools where, in 1823, he won the gold medal for his history painting, *The Contention between the Archangel Michael and Satan for the Body of Moses*. Hurlstone exhibited paintings at the annual Royal Academy exhibition between 1821 and 1830. In 1831 he was elected a member of the Society of British Artists. After Hurlstone joined the Society he seldom presented his work at any other exhibitions. He was elected president of the Society in 1836, and again in 1840. He held the position until his death. Hurlstone was opposed to the constitution and management of the Royal Academy, including the privileges and preferences shown to it and its Academicians. He died at Stoke Newington, London, on June 10, 1869. See, John Evan Hodgson and Frederick Alexis Eaton, *The Royal Academy and Its Members, 1768-1830* (London: Murray, 1905); and Hesketh Hubbard, *An Outline History of the Royal Society of British Artists: Part I: 1823-1840: The Foundation and Early Years* (London: Royal Society of British Artists, 1937).
58 *The Art-Union* 1 (April 1839): 43.
59 Ibid.
resolution like hers must have had a finer and nobler expression than that which the artist has given to her.”

Eugenio Latilla, who, according to the reviewer, painted the “other great picture,—the world applies only to the space it fills”—The Seven Bishops Blessing the People, Previous to Their Commitment to the Tower—presented a work that was not well-liked. The critic states that he gave it notice, “because it is impossible to pass over a work so prominent.” But the work was “cold and tame; and by no means realizes ‘the affecting and animating spectacle’ which the historian so eloquently describes.” Roberts determines that the critics condemned painters “who did not give proper attention to subject matter.” She declares that “the public wanted its imagination stimulated, but not too far, its sentiments titillated, but not for too long, and its sense aroused, but not too much.” In the case of Latilla’s painting the critic is censuring the artist for not offering a work provides the spectator with enough stimulation.

It is obvious that the narrative of the image was important to this reviewer, and that the painters at this exhibition received praise or censure based on their ability to present a work displaying a proper historical or mythological account. But, regardless of a painter being able to show talent and success through his or her narrative, the reviewer reprimanded an artist who did not show enough creativity in choosing the subjects of his works. The critic notes that C. Hancock’s A Deer-Stealer in His Bothie “is finely and vigorously painted; but it is sheer folly in this artist so perpetually to select subjects which have been treated by another hand.” He argues that Hancock “is able to think as well as paint,” and is presented in nature with an

---

60 Ibid., 43-44.
61 Ibid., 44.
62 Ibid.
63 Ibid.
64 Roberts, “Art Reviewing,” 16.
65 Ibid.
66 *The Art-Union* 1 (April 1839): 44.
abundant selection of striking characters from which to choose.\textsuperscript{67} The reviewer deplores that Hancock, who is “so capable of executing the finest and most original works” constantly reduces himself to “following in a beaten track” especially considering that his powers of invention are great.\textsuperscript{68}

The reviewer declares James Baker Pyne’s \textit{View from the Cheddar Hills, Terminating with Bridgewater Bay in the Distance} to be a “delicious production” that while possessing a “peculiar” coloring is still “true.”\textsuperscript{69} J. Wilson is praised for exhibiting works that “possess rare merit; his estimate of Nature is a high one; he consults her in all he does; and appears satisfied to follow her directions, without seeking ‘the foreign aid of ornament.’”\textsuperscript{70} The critic declares that Wilson’s painting, \textit{On the Coast of Sussex—an Indiaman Stranded}, is a “fine and true picture, arranged with skill, and coloured with a free, yet careful, pencil.”\textsuperscript{71}

The reviewer presents critiques of how well or not these paintings display a truth to nature, correspond to a historical narrative or myth, and achieve the technical criteria he is using as his guidelines, yet he does not provide readers with much detailed information about any given work. These are only a few examples of the reviewer’s critical vocabulary used for assessing this exhibition, but they should give the reader some insight into how these paintings were analyzed in 1839. The reviewer wraps up this exhibition with a general appraisal of the works on display: “Of first class works there are indeed few; of such as just pass the boundary of mediocrity there are several; but such as are absolutely bad are, unhappily, very numerous.”\textsuperscript{72}

\textsuperscript{67} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{69} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{70} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid.
The review of the 1839 exhibition by the Society of British Artists that was published in *The Athenaeum* presents a much different critique of the works on display, yet the reviewer uses an overall similar language and style as did his colleague in *The Art-Union*. The critic in *The Athenaeum* declares that he does not “remember a better exhibition of the Society of British Artists than the present.” He singles out Latilla’s *Seven Bishops* and Hurlstone’s *Scene from the Deformed Transformed* as the “two most ambitious pictures” in the exhibition. Latilla’s work, he declares, is “claiming only the expressive notice of silence.” The reviewer agrees with *The Art-Union* critic’s issues with Hurlstone’s painting, but he provides a more expansive critique of this work. He determines that “there is always some deficiency or superabundance in Mr. Hurlstone’s pictures, which stands between them and first-rate excellence.” The composition, according to the critic, “appears to us clever, though inartificial,” since the two ravishers press forward “with an eagerness which gives an identity of gesture and attitude effective rather than otherwise.” The reviewer censures Hurlstone for having failed with Olympia, particularly in showing her expression. He declares that “there is nothing of haste, nothing of sudden terror visible;—her scorn is too deliberate and concentrated, and her fluttering drapery and flying attitude are not consistent with the contempt seated on, not startled to, her lips.” The reviewer commends Egerton’s *Fall of Niagara* for the “sobriety of its colouring,” and J. Wilson’s “shores scenes, and his composition (235), which, as a wild piece of highland scenery, is excellent.” Overall, the reviewer in *The Athenaeum* dedicates little space to any

---

73 *The Athenaeum* no. 596 (30 March 1839): 245.
74 Ibid.
75 Ibid.
76 Ibid.
77 Ibid.
78 Ibid.
79 Ibid., 246.
single work in the exhibition, and he concentrates mainly on the aesthetics and composition of
the paintings he does discuss.

These exhibition reviews rarely gave notice of every work, or even the majority of works,
on display, since the reviewer was confronted with the issues of both the periodicity of the
newspaper or journal for which he was writing and the large size of the exhibitions. Roberts
notes that several of these exhibitions “displayed more than 500 works in their annual
exhibitions; the Royal Academy often exceeded 1500.” She points out that “R. St John
Tyrwhitt, the critic for the Contemporary, felt it would take at least two months to view the
Royal Academy exhibition, while Henry Morley in the Fortnightly estimated that if a critic gave
merely one minute of time to each work in the 1872 exhibition, it would take 25 hours to see
them all.” Thus, the reviewer, particularly of the monthlies and quarterlies, typically focused
attention on the leading artists of that given society, but this consideration was inconsistent. In
brief, the reviewer may have written a substantial paragraph for a number of a single artist’s
works in one exhibition whereas at a different exhibition the same artist has several works
reviewed in one sentence.

81 Also, Bernard Cracroft, in his review of the 1869 Royal Academy exhibition declares,
There are in the Academy thirteen hundred odd pictures. Fewer works have supplied materials for many big
volumes of criticism, and many years’ study. It would not be just to look to a few pages for more than a first
impression. But we know from Talleyrand that there is a peculiar virtue attaching to ‘first impressions,’ and
throughout this article I take that with me as my talisman.
See, Helene E. Roberts, “Exhibition and Review,” 84; R. St John Tyrwhitt, “Skilled and Literary Art-Criticism,” The
Contemporary Review 11 (1869): 106. Fortnightly Review 5, no. 30 (June 1869): 671; and Fortnightly Review 11,
no. 66 (June 1872): 695
82 Roberts contends that reviewers usually commented in detail on the works painted by the most revered artists
whether or not they merited the attention at a given exhibition. Also, she notes that the reviewer in most journals
“made brief remarks on the 20 or 30 paintings of special interest.” Some periodicals, such as The Art-Union did not
follow this general form. Roberts indicates that in 1845 The Art-Union “devoted 18 pages to a review of the Royal
Academy exhibition. It offered its review to the public as a ‘practical guide to the Exhibition’ and promised to ‘give
some notice to every work of interest and merit.’ Of the 1470 works exhibited that year, 388 works were noticed
individually.” See, Roberts, “Exhibition and Review,” 84; and The Art-Union 7 (May 1845): 137.
The review of the Royal Academy exhibition in 1839 is much more substantial in content than the discussion of the Society of British Artists, since it was the oldest and most important annual public display of art in Great Britain. Yet, the critical vocabulary employed to appraise these works is the same. This exhibition receives a lengthy introduction, with many significant comments on the state of contemporary art criticism. One evaluation must not be passed over, simply because the reviewer seems to intend that his comment be taken as high praise, yet it must be the high praise of a tough critic:

The Exhibition of 1839 is therefore the most ‘satisfactory’ which this country has yet witnessed; because it affords evidence, not only of existing talent of the highest order, but of improvement, not to be mistaken, in the junior members of the profession; we say this without the fear of contradiction by any who will go carefully, and in a fair spirit, through the rooms.\(^\text{83}\) The critic argues that his opinion of the exhibition being satisfactory was to support the Academy’s presentation, which was in opposition to many “persons who glance along the walls, stroll about for an hour, find that Mr This has not outdone himself, and that Mr That has not surpassed his former efforts, and depart with a murmur that the collection is ‘an average one.’”\(^\text{84}\) This sort of commentary, the reviewer argues, “is not the way it should be judged, but we lament to say that so it has been judged; and thus our national character is lowered by the very persons who should uphold it.”\(^\text{85}\)

The reviewer declares *Scene from the Burletta of Midas* by Daniel Maclise to be “an exquisite picture, full of point and character.”\(^\text{86}\) He argues that Maclise will be the next member of the Royal Academy, even though he was not yet thirty, because he had “established his

\(^{83}\) The reviewer qualifies this statement by continuing, “because it affords evidence, not only of existing talent of the highest order, but of improvement, not to be mistaken, in the junior members of the profession; we say this without the fear of contradiction by any who will go carefully, and in a fair spirit, through the rooms.” *The Art-Union* 1 (May 1839): 66.

\(^{84}\) *The Art-Union* 1 (May 1839): 66.

\(^{85}\) Ibid.

\(^{86}\) This review is organized in accordance with the number order of works in the exhibition catalogue, with headings for which room in the National Gallery in Trafalgar Square to locate them. See Ibid., 67.
position as a leading artist of the age.”\textsuperscript{87} This commentary may not seem peculiar, and is in accordance with the established critical vocabulary, but this support of Maclise was at least in part due to a growing friendship between Hall and him.\textsuperscript{88} The reviewer considers Charles Robert Leslie’s \textit{Who Can This Be?} “a work of the highest merit of design; if he would colour as he conceives, he would be unrivalled in his age.”\textsuperscript{89} Edwin Landseer’s \textit{Tethered Rams, Scene in Scotland} is, according to the critic, “a fine picture of peculiar character.”\textsuperscript{90} He also contends that “it is elaborately finished—as if the artist has determined to do his best.”\textsuperscript{91}

J. M. W. Turner’s \textit{The Fighting Temeraire Tugged to Her Last Berth to be Broken Up} is highly praised by the reviewer. He declares enthusiastically that this painting is, “perhaps, the most wonderful of all the works of the greatest master of the age; a picture which justifies the warmest enthusiasm:—the most fervent praise of which cannot incur the charge of exaggeration.”\textsuperscript{92} It is noteworthy that the critic does not discuss any of the colors that Turner used in this work, since that was typically an oft-commented upon element of his works. Instead, the reviewer assesses the painting as if it were a visual representation of poetry. He asserts that “it is a painted ‘ode,’ as fine and forcible as ever came from the pen of poet; it will live in the memory associated with the noblest productions of those who have made themselves immortal by picturing with words.”\textsuperscript{93} Thus, by viewing Turner’s painting, the spectator was expected to have an emotional experience.

\textsuperscript{87} Ib\textidash{id}.
\textsuperscript{89} \textit{The Art-Union} 1 (May 1839): 67.
\textsuperscript{90} Ibid., 68.
\textsuperscript{91} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{92} Ibid., 67.
\textsuperscript{93} Ibid.
One final piece from the Royal Academy exhibition is necessary to present because its language will be compared to the critical vocabulary used to assess the photography exhibition at the Society of Arts in 1852. This work is *Scenery in Woburn Park* by F. R. Lee. The reviewer states that in this work, “the foliage is well and firmly painted, and the cattle admirably so. The scene is of a simple character, a glade in a noble park, but the artist has contrived to make it very interesting.”

*The Athenaeum’s* review of the 1839 Royal Academy exhibition is similarly extensive to *The Art-Union*’s appraisal, being printed in three separate installments between May and June. Whereas *The Athenaeum*’s review of the exhibition by the Society of British Artists was overall more favorable than that printed in *The Art-Union*, its critique of the Royal Academy exhibition was generally more negative than *The Art-Union*’s. The reviewer begins his assessment of the Royal Academy exhibition by stating that “as an exhibition of cabinet pictures, the display this year ranks higher than usual. But as to works of art, as to evidence of lofty aspirations, it is singularly poor.” He asserts that Maclise’s scene from Gil Blas is finished with his “well-known accuracy of detail: and without that harshness of colour to which we have been obliged to object.” He censures Maclise’s *Scene from the Burletta of Midas* for this problem with color, although he considers this work “otherwise capital.” The critic is moved by Turner’s *Fighting Temeraire* in an emotional way similar to that of his counterpart at *The Art-Union*. Although *The Athenaeum* reviewer does not provide much discussion of the painting’s poetic constitution other than to state that the poetry of the painting “strongly impressed us,” he presents readers with an instance of graceful prose to describe the painting’s composition:

---

94 Ibid., 68.
95 *The Art-Union* published its review in three installments during May, June, and July 1839.
96 *The Athenaeum* no. 602 (11 May 1839): 356.
97 Ibid., 357.
98 Ibid.
A sort of sacrificial solemnity is given to the scene, by the blood-red light cast upon the waters by the round descending sun, and by the paler gleam from the faint rising crescent moon, which silvers the majestic hull, and the towering masts, and the taper spars of the doomed vessel, gliding in the wake of the steamboat—which latter (still following this fanciful mode of interpretation) almost gives to the picture the expression of such malignant alacrity as might befit an executioner.  

This poetic interpretation of the painting should have had a similarly impressive effect upon readers as if they had actually viewed the work at the exhibition. Overall, the reviewer appraises the works in the Royal Academy exhibition for their narrative qualities, and the impression they give to the spectator.

It should be obvious that, as Roberts contends, while “the form of the review might vary and the critics differ about individual evaluations and aesthetic criteria, most of them followed the pattern and selected the most memorable paintings from the vast number exhibited around which to organize their comments.”  

Punch was no exception to this critical model, but the reviews in this journal did offer its readers a satirical and humorous alternative to the strictly serious commentary found in most of the periodical press. In an 1841 Punch article, Punch sets about to prove that he “is tolerably well up in this line of pseudo-criticism.” He asserts that his review—a very light style of reading that some people rather enjoy—describes either the next year’s private view of “either the Royal Academy or the Suffolk-street Gallery, or the British Institution.” He claims that this review is applicable to the collected artworks being exhibited, since “he had done it after the peculiar manner practised by the talented conductor of a journal purporting to be exclusively set apart to that effort.” Punch contends that his critical format is thoroughly impartial, and is applicable to several different subject styles. Also, he emphasizes

99 Ibid.
100 Helene E. Roberts, “Exhibition and Review,” 85. Also, this is the case in the Literary Gazette’s and The Leader’s exhibition reviews.
101 Punch 1 (July to December 1841): 9.
102 Punch took occasional satirical jabs, like this one, at Samuel Carter Hall and The Art-Union. Two extended mocking articles within which Hall is the primary character are, “The Art-Union”—Its ‘Hand, Head, and Heart’” and “Art-Union’ Epistles.” See, Punch 8 (January to June 1845): 266 and Punch 9 (July to December 1845): 50.
that it will blend the peculiarities of Samuel Carter Hall’s “consummate” critical style by combining the “strict attention to the nature of the subject chosen” with “what an intimate knowledge of technicalities the writer above alluded to displays.”103 Punch presents a list of subject options, such as portraits, under which are listed specific sorts of that work—for example, “Portrait of Sir Robert Peel” by Peter Palette, “Portrait of the Empress of Russia” by Vandyke Brown, or “Portrait of His Majesty the King of Hanover” by Valentine Vermillion. The reader is then given the option of choosing one of three criticisms of any of these works, such as, “The head is extremely well painted, and the light and shade distributed with the artist’s usual judgment.”104 Also, Punch offers censures for the condemned and half-condemned artist. The half-condemned artist, according to Punch, should be criticized in the following manner: “This artist is, we much fear, on the decline; we no longer see the vigour of handling and smartness of conception formerly apparent in his works.”105 This article in Punch effectively lampoons the conservative critical style used by most contemporary art reviewers, but if it affected them in any way is difficult to determine.

Although Punch mocked contemporary art criticism it still engaged in it throughout this period. The early reviews were explicitly absurd and mocking, such as that written in response to the 1844 Royal Academy exhibition, in which the critic, while using similar language and format as the exhibition reviews in other journals, presents painting titles and artist names that mock the actual items and people. One example of this is what the reviewer lists as painting number 691: “Portrait of the Hat of His Royal Highness Prince Albert; with His Royal Highness’s favourite boot-jack. His Royal Highness’s Persian wolf-dog, Mirza, is lying on the latter, while the former is in the possession of His Royal Highness’s diminutive spaniel, Miss

103 Punch 1 (July to December 1841): 9.
104 Ibid.
105 Ibid.
Kidlumy.—*Sandseer, R. A.*" This is a satirical account of both Sir Edwin Henry Landseer as the painter, and Prince Albert’s enjoyment of sitting for many portraits. By 1854, the review of the Royal Academy exhibition was a short article that typically only considered a few artworks, but in a much more subtly satirical manner. In that year, the reviewer commented on two works—Edward Matthew Ward’s *Argyle’s Last Sleep* and Daniel Maclise’s *The Marriage of Strongbow and Aoife*. He respects within this painting “the thoughts and courage, visible all through it, the painter’s mastery of hand in details of drawing, and his honest and conscientious elaboration.” But the reviewer determines that the painting leaves him “unmoved, unaffected, unimpressed.” He is unable to “neither feel the horror of the slaughter, nor the grim irony of the bridal.” Also, he contends that he is unable to justifiably praise or disparage the work until he sees it displayed in a more appropriate setting. He states that it is his “wish to see it hung in some vast Gothic hall where, in rivalry with painted glass and bright tapestry, it would, I believe, have an effect and significance” that is not possible “amid the crowded and garish commonplace of the Academy walls.” Regardless of the varying levels of satire that the art critics used in *Punch*, they followed the standard contemporary critical format.

Taking into consideration that the art critical format did not experience much change between 1839 and 1854, it is unnecessary to analyze a significant number of the exhibition reviews from this period. But, it is important to note how nature, as it was presented in an artwork, was assessed at the end of this period, since this particular discourse will have a definite impact on the critical language used in appraising the contemporaneous photography exhibitions.

Although the paintings at these exhibitions continued to depict a diverse range of subjects, the

---

106 *Punch* 6 (January to June 1844): 200.
107 *Punch* 26 (January to June 1854): 248.
108 Ibid.
109 Ibid.
110 Ibid.
current focus on landscapes is for the reason that many of the exhibited and reviewed photographs were either landscapes or architectural images. Landscapes and other views of nature in these exhibitions were often assessed as possessing truth, yet were criticized for various deficiencies in color. These issues continued to be manifest in the 1853 exhibition reviews of both the Society of British Artists and the Royal Academy in *The Art-Journal*. The reviewer at the Society of British Artists exhibition declares that W. W. Gosling’s *In Leigh Wood—a Study from Nature* “has very much the appearance of a veritable passage of woodland scenery. It is most faithfully rendered; but the lower part of the subject is too universally brown.”\textsuperscript{111} Similarly, the reviewer asserts that A. J. Woolmer’s *Forest Scene in “As You Like It”* contains “nothing of nature either in the colour or character of the trees; but the composition is agreeably put together, and skilful in manipulation.”\textsuperscript{112} The reviewer of the 1853 Royal Academy exhibition considers J. S. Raven’s *Summit of Ben Cruachan, From a Mountain Side* to possess material that “has nothing to recommend it, the truth of the colour and the imitative nicety of the textures, constitutes the value of the work.”\textsuperscript{113} John Everett Millais’s *The Proscribed Royalist, 1651*, according to the reviewer, was superior “in natural truth, not only of character and texture, but in the absence of that isolation of form which a sharp and edgy manner must always induce; still the greens in this picture are still inharmoniously crude.”\textsuperscript{114}

Although the development of photography was discussed in the British periodical press throughout this period, the majority of these texts did not approach the photographic enterprise from an art critical standpoint. The only early exception to this lack of critical engagement with the photographic image was in *The Art-Union*. In the April 1841 issue of *The Art-Union* a brief

\textsuperscript{111} *The Art-Union* 15 (May 1853): 135.
\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., 137.
\textsuperscript{113} *The Art-Union* 15 (June 1853): 144.
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., 149.
article on photographic portraits provides the reader with a critical assessment of photography only two years after the announcement of its invention. The reporter does not site the commentary within the terms of truth to nature, even though that is what is being discussed; rather, the reader encounters this statement: “It is true that a photographic portrait is a most perfect icon of the sitter, inasmuch as it is a most faithful reflection.” Yet, the reporter contends that photography may obtain too perfect of an image, since “none know better than artists themselves how rarely a very close resemblance is really pleasing to the person painted.” Although viewing an image that was, according to Mary Warner Marien, “an unprecedented kind of reproduction” may not have been aesthetically pleasing to the observer, it is this discussion of a photograph being not just true to nature, but an exact replica of nature that breaks down the critical vocabulary used for paintings. Photography at this time was not seen as art. But, the photographs in 1852 were engaged as artworks—pieces that had their composition and shading criticized. The shift to attempting to apply the traditional art critical vocabulary proved to be difficult to accomplish.

This example of the critical discourse used on photography in 1841 is interesting, yet the portraits being appraised were not part of a public exhibition. Also, no single photograph is engaged in this review, so the reader is left to wonder about the exact composition of any given work. Public exhibitions of photography were mounted at this time at the British Association, Royal Scottish Academy, and Royal Polytechnic Institution, among others, but none of them became a recurring, let alone annual, event. This may be why individual photographs did not

115 The Art-Union 3 (April 1841): 65.
116 Ibid.
receive a more comprehensive appraisal by *The Art-Union* prior to 1853. It is important to remember Roberts’s contention that reviews “are dependent not only upon works of art but also upon their public exhibition. The future of the art review as a literary or journalistic entity was guaranteed only after the secure establishment of regular art exhibitions.” Economics were sure to have been a determining factor in what was included in this periodical. Finances were a concern of any journal during this time, so Hall perhaps could not afford to send a reviewer to most, let alone every, public art exhibition in London, Great Britain, and Europe. Much of the journal’s resources were noticeably directed toward extensive reviews of the established art society exhibitions, which expectedly left less money available for discussing emerging art forms or movements. Also, photography was in its infancy in 1841, and *The Art-Union* treated it somewhat tentatively at least until the publication of a Talbotype in June 1846.  

Teukolsky argues that economics was an important factor governing how art writers in the periodical press appraised photography during its early years. She determines that “Victorian visual culture was the product of capitalism as it was practiced in Britain following the Industrial Revolution.” The bourgeois commodity culture that became prominent during this period, as Teukolsky argues, propelled “rapid developments in new technologies of visual reproduction and display” that were ultimately used to create images and spectacles for the marketing of new goods and services to this same group of people with the intent that they buy the items they saw in the photographs and prints. Teukolsky suggests that these developments in media technologies had a direct impact on how writers approached art, since this new and growing abundance of reproducible images—‘photographs, illustrations, advertisements, cartoons, signs,
or prints—had to be distinguished from the fine arts like paintings, sculpture, and certain kinds of architecture.” According to Teukolsky, the differentiation between new media and fine arts was crucial:

If prints reproduced in *The Illustrated London News* could be viewed at any newsstand, a painting could only be seen by making a special trip to an imposing, temple-like building—an exquisite temporal experience whose aura art writing helped to construct. Likewise, if advertisements used images as instruments for the sale of goods, then one value in art writing was to emphasize high art as a limpidly disinterested version of ‘the beautiful.’

Therefore, high art was to be viewed as offering a reprieve from the visual representations of vulgar mass-culture, such as photography, as well as existing on a different, and definitely, elevated plane than that of nineteenth-century visual new media.

*The Art-Journal’s* review of the Society of Arts’ 1852 photographic exhibition challenges the assertions by Teukolsky that photography was only viewed as a new visual media that should not be assessed in accordance with established nineteenth-century art criticism discourse. This is not to say that as part of the overall review of this exhibition, the critic will avoid discussing photographic process development. In fact, although the reviewer discusses the exhibited photographs in an art critical manner, most of this article deals with current research in process development. In contrast, similar exhibition reviews of the Royal Academy and other comparable organizations do not discuss improvements in brushes or novel ways for a canvas to be treated to ensure the best results. Also, overall the review groups photographers by the process they used to produce their images—paper, albuminized glass, waxed paper, wet process, dry process, or the collodion processes.

Photography is no longer expected to show mere objective reality, since the reviewer in examining some of the works by Roger Fenton argues, “there is a more harmonious blending of

---

123 Ibid., 20.
124 Ibid.
the high lights, middle tones, and deep shadows, although these last are mostly far too dark.”

Hugh Owen’s photographs showing interior portions of Redcliffe Church and Bristol Cathedral are viewed by the critic as being very “pleasing in their general character.” He praises the photographs for “possessing so much nice detail, and such gradation of tone,” since they were taken inside dim churches where the light was “stealing its way through the stained windows, and casting long and dark shadows from the columns along the Gothic aisle.”

The reviewer is dissatisfied with some of Benjamin Brecknell Turner’s work because it is not true to nature: “The Photographic Truth, should have been called the Photography Fallacy, the unnatural depth of the shadows in the water.” He also contends that the Scotch Firs “are too decided for our taste, being cut out too sharply from the clear sky.”

The ways in which shadows were represented in the photographs was of particular concern for the reviewer’s attempts to address the truth to nature of these images. Interior of Holyrood, Entrance of Holyrood, Melrose Abbey, and the Views of Edinburgh by the studio of Ross and Thomson of Edinburgh were afforded special commendation by the reviewer. He asserts that in these images “there is a nearer approach to the point we desire to see reached, a truer reflex of nature than in most of the photographs exhibited.” Yet, the reviewer deems that “if, in some cases, the exposure had been sufficiently long to effect a full development of the parts in shadow, there would have been but little life to desire.”

The Art-Journal was not the only periodical to report on and review this exhibition. The reviewer in The Athenaeum seems to approach this exhibition in a similar manner as did the

---

126 Ibid.
127 Ibid.
128 Ibid.
129 Ibid., 56.
130 Ibid.
131 Ibid.
critic in *The Art-Journal*, but an examination of this review demonstrates that he mainly lists off the titles and photographers of several different grouped types of images, such as architectural, landscapes, and portraits. His provides the reader with little commentary on the individual photographs, but that is because he asserts that for photography “the important differences lie in the facilities of execution,—not in the results obtained.”\(^{132}\) The reviewer argues that “this similarity of result makes criticism very difficult.”\(^{133}\) *Notes and Queries* printed only a short notice of this exhibition. The writer directs the reader to specific photographers who had produced excellent photographs, but no details were given. In fact, the writer declares that “many of the pictures here exhibited may rank as fine works of art,” but he does not point out any specific images.\(^{134}\) The reviewer in the *Literary Gazette* focuses his critique on how truthful to nature are the photographs on display, and seems to concentrate his efforts more on finding flaws in the works than presenting praiseworthy works to the reader. He argues that “scarcely in a single instance do we find that absolute perfection, which is needed in order to give the eye perfect pleasure, unless it be in some of the portraits, and a few of the well-chosen architectural subjects.”\(^{135}\) The reviewer concludes, “That photography can ever usurp the sphere of art, properly so called, we think no one can now imagine. Meanwhile its processes are on the road to perfection.”\(^{136}\)

---

\(^{132}\) *The Athenaeum* no. 1314 (1 January 1853): 23.

\(^{133}\) Ibid.

\(^{134}\) *Notes and Queries* 7, no. 166 (1 January 1853): 23. The writer also contends that some of the pictures have “all of the minute truthfulness of nature, combined with the beautiful effects of some of the greatest painters” without naming any particular photographs.

\(^{135}\) *Literary Gazette* no. 1878 (15 January 1853): 68.

\(^{136}\) Ibid., 69.
The photography exhibition that was held in 1854 was the first exhibition of the Photographic Society.\textsuperscript{137} The reviewer declares that almost 1500 pictures were on display that illustrated “with a few unimportant exceptions, every variety of the photographic Art.”\textsuperscript{138} He notes that not every photograph was discussed, since it was impossible to examine all of them.\textsuperscript{139} Also, the reviewer addresses the contention by some spectators that the established art critical language should not be used on photography:

To the inexperienced, it may also appear that, since every picture is drawn by the same agent—the sunbeam, in the same instrument—the camera obscura, they must have the same general character, and therefore admit not of any critical remarks as to their artistic value. Such is not, however, the case. The productions of the painter are not more varied than those of the photographer; and it is a curious and interesting study to examine the subjects selected for photographic view, and to trace in these, as we would in an artist’s picture, the peculiar bent of the mind.\textsuperscript{140}

He points out that Sir William Newton enjoys the picturesque features of the Burnham beeches, and that he attempts to “produce a general harmony and breadth of effect, rather than to secure the minute details in which many of his photographic brethren delight.”\textsuperscript{141} This is an important consideration for the development of photographic art criticism, since the reviewer finds Newton’s use of the picturesque in his images to be acceptable, where in the past, most critics preferred a rather unquestioning adherence to a detailed truth to nature in photographs. The reviewer contends that Hugh Owen has an artist’s eye for selecting “bits out of the tangled forest, the ‘Path of the Torrent,’ or the depths of the glen, which must prove treasures to a landscape-painter.”\textsuperscript{142} It is noteworthy that even though the reviewer commends Owen’s artistic

\textsuperscript{137} The Photographic Society discusses this exhibition in its journal, but only to announce the successful opening of the event. No review of individual photographs is conducted. See, \textit{The Journal of the Photographic Society of London} 1, no. 13 (21 January 1854): 153.
\textsuperscript{138} \textit{The Art-Journal} 16 (February 1854): 48.
\textsuperscript{139} \textit{Notes and Queries} did not discuss any single photograph or photographer in this exhibition, but it did print a short note announcing the exhibition. See, \textit{Notes and Queries} 9, no. 219 (7 January 1854): 16-17.
\textsuperscript{140} \textit{The Art-Journal} 16 (February 1854): 48.
\textsuperscript{141} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{142} Ibid., 49.
perspective for composition, he does not appraise these photographs on their own creative merits; rather, he sees them as an aid to the painter. Fenton’s *The Garden Terrace*, according to the reviewer, contained a gradation of tone that was as perfect as any photograph that he had observed, and the “gradual fading off of the outlines of the objects as they are respectively more and more distant from the eye, yet still retaining their distinctness, is beautifully artistic and at the same time natural.”

Although the review does assess the artistic qualities of many of the exhibited photographs, it also categorizes them in sections based on their useful applications, such as architectural or engineering photography, portraits taken of the insane, its value to travelers, and as an aid to recording natural history.

*The Athenaeum* presented a brief review of the 1854 exhibition, in which the reviewer noted some of the important photographers who had works on display. But, this review contains little art criticism, particularly when compared to *The Art-Journal*. The reviewer did take note of one interesting artistic development in photography:

One of the most satisfactory results of this Exhibition is the proof that the mere mechanical character of the art is fast disappearing. This is shown by the fact of the varied results, peculiar to themselves, and unattainable by others—although using precisely the same means—which are produced by different photographers, showing the niceties of taste and management on which the more successful students of the art depend.

The reviewer praises this progressing artistic aspect of photography, yet he does not elaborate upon it.

Although it has been shown that photography had achieved a status as an artistic object by the mid-1850s in Britain, at least by the stated opinions of some critics, there was still a tension between its artistic and practical properties. Photography was beginning to occupy an imprecise critical space that did not favor its scientific, artistic, or functional attributes. This

---

143 Ibid.
144 *The Athenaeum* no. 1367 (7 January 1854): 23.
shifting and indefinite development of the analytical approach to photography was complicated by attempts to form for it a critical language and configuration. It is instructive that the main method attempted was to apply a conservative critical discourse that had been formulated in the eighteenth century as the primary way to appraise painting, and was currently being used to assess the exhibitions of groups such as the Royal Academy and the Society of British Artists. This may have been an imperfect fit for considering the artistic merits of photography, but it provided the critic with a starting point for developing a critical discourse for the photographic enterprise. By adopting and understanding the analytical approach to painting, the nineteenth-century British critic was given the tools to begin to merge it with a photo-centric critical language that focused on the process used to develop the individual image.
CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

At the close of 1854, it is noteworthy that The Art-Journal had spent the past fifteen years engaging with both the British art world generally and the developing photographic enterprise specifically. Yet, for all the coverage, analysis, and criticism it had devoted to photography, the journal was still unsure whether or not to treat it as an artistic or scientific enterprise. However, it is true that both The Art-Journal and photography had gained significantly commodified positions in nineteenth-century Britain.

Although The Art-Union worked hard during its first seven years to understand how to discuss photography—as an art or a science—it also was faced with the challenge of how to influence readers of the periodical press who were presented only with a text and not images. Also, The Art-Union was faced with general and literary journals that, while they did not focus specifically on art or provide much coverage on photography during this period, presented independent voices on photographic development that had the potential to impact negatively Hall’s journal’s position as a value-bearing object for the British art world. The Art-Union overcame any potential competitive obstacles by focusing on promoting the adoption and advancement of British photography. The journal gained cultural prominence when, in 1846, it presented its readers with a Talbotype in each issue. This action was essential for not only the commodification of photography in Britain, but for creating a commodity fetishism for British photography.

The Art-Union, by developing a commodity fetishism for both British photography and itself through their constant promotion, also created a conceptual space in which the British art world was able to imagine their community. The transformation from an unstructured
aggregation of individuals into a communal British formation concentrated on photography occurred simultaneously to the development of a commodified journal and photographic enterprise. *The Art-Union* did not just foster the development of a social collectivity interested in it and photography; rather its status as a member of the contemporary periodical press advanced it as a primary site for creating a complex and meaningful relationship with its readers that then allowed them to actualize their conceptual grouping. Once again this mission was mainly accomplished through a textual format until the June 1846 Talbotypes provided the developing art community in Britain with a concrete site of knowledge that solidified its formation into a specifically British community.

This newly assembled British social collectivity as well as the commodified status of photography in Britain faced a crisis as both *The Art-Union* and the photographic enterprise entered their second seven years of existence. Although *The Art-Union* had published a Talbotype in each of its issues in June 1846, the journal published no other photographs during this period. Also, *The Art-Union* changed its approach toward Talbot from July 1846 to 1854, since prior to publishing his photographs the journal had said little about him and his work between 1839 and June 1846. Once these photographs were displayed in *The Art-Union*, the journal attacked Talbot on a constant basis over his photographic patents, since it believed that his pursuit of financial gain was detrimental to the development of British photography. Talbot finally capitulated, but maintained the patent rights to the sale of Talbotype portraiture. It was not the desired solution to this issue, but it showed positive effects with the formation of the Photographic Society in 1853.

Another element in this crisis was *The Art-Union’s* seemingly sudden shift away from declaring photography as an art form in June 1846 to announcing in July of that year that the
photographic image was not art in its own right, but was to be promoted and used as simply a tool for the artist to create better artworks. Although this abrupt shift in the way in which The Art-Union promoted photography threatened its recently concretely assembled social collectivity with disillusionment, and to harm both the commodification of the journal and British photography, it was a positive shift to promoting the photographic process and the utility of the photograph. This resulted in the continued strengthening of The Art-Union and British photography as fetishized commodities in mid-nineteenth century Britain.

Although the majority of the relationship between the readers of The Art-Union and photography was through the pages of the journal, the first exhibitions devoted solely to photography in 1853 and 1854 offered these members of the British art community to directly encounter photographic images in a gallery space. As part of the larger debate in The Art-Union and the contemporary periodical press over how to appraise the artistic and scientific qualities of photography, the reviews of these photographic exhibitions were assessed using the art critical framework that had been developed in the eighteenth century for evaluating paintings and the other plastic arts. Therefore, to achieve a proper perspective of The Art-Journal's approach to assessing photographic exhibitions, its reviews of the annual painting exhibitions presented by the Royal Academy and the Society of British Artists were analyzed and compared to its reviews of the exhibitions put on at the Society of Arts by the Photographic Society. It is informative that photography was typically considered to be a tool for the artist in most of the critical discourse during this period, but that the exhibition reviews, when they discussed individual photographs placed them into an imprecise critical space that did not favor their scientific, artistic, or functional qualities. Yet, this critical discourse offered the British critic an initial framework from which to mold and adjust its meanings and approaches as the relationship
between the periodical press and photography proceeded into the second half of the nineteenth century.

Ultimately this analysis of the association between *The Art-Union* and photography during the first fifteen years of both enterprises reveals that the journal was continually interrogating its own critical approaches to the development of British photography during the period of 1839 to 1854. Although *The Art-Union’s* approach to photography experienced some important alterations over these fifteen years, it constantly worked to promote a particularly British enterprise that was a fetishized commodity. Thus, in 1854 it can be claimed that Hall had effectively used *The Art-Union* to accomplish this goal while also successfully championing the assembling of a British art community.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources


Periodicals

Athenaeum: Various articles, 1839-1854.


The Leader: Various articles, 1851-1853.

Literary Gazette: Various articles, 1839-1854.

Notes and Queries: Various articles, 1852-1854.

Punch: Various articles, 1841-1854.

Unpublished Sources


Secondary Sources

Works of Reference


Monographs


Articles and Chapters of Books


-------. “‘Trains of Fascinating and of Endless Imagery’: Associationist Art Criticism Before 1850.” Victorian Periodicals Newsletter 10, no. 3 (September 1977): 91.

