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Nationalism, Cosmopolitanism, and the Politics of Collecting in *The Connoisseur: An Illustrated Magazine for Collectors*, 1901–1914

KRISTIN MAHONEY

During the Victorian period, the collector came to epitomize the deleterious effects of market society on the modern subject's ethical capacity, historical awareness, and aesthetic sensibility. As Michael Hancock argues in his recent work on representations of collectors in the nineteenth century, collecting "began to acquire a popular reputation as a degenerate obsession in mid-Victorian England," and mid-century novelists such as Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins tended to represent collecting as a pathology, a form of misanthropy, and a method for substituting relations with objects for relations with people.¹ By the *fin de siècle*, the caricature of the misanthropic and alienated collector was ubiquitous in popular print culture. Withdrawn into a world of things, the collector was viewed as a narcissist who disregarded the alterity of objects and transformed artifacts into markers of taste rather than historical relics.²

Founded in 1901, the *Connoisseur: An Illustrated Magazine for Collectors*, actively responded to this critique of subjectivist collecting that erased historical contexts and elided contexts of origin. In this essay, I examine attitudes towards the practice of collecting represented in the *Connoisseur* between 1901 and 1914 under its first editor, J. T. Herbert Baily, focusing on the extent to which the contributors to the periodical encouraged readers to consider the ethical and political significance of their collecting practices. As the *Connoisseur* established its voice and identity under Baily's editorship, contributors to the periodical also strove to develop a model of collecting that engaged with and responded to the stereotype of the asocial, decadent collector established during the Victorian period. They articulated an alternative practice of consumption that forged social

connections and allowed objects to foster discourse between individuals and nations. They worked to establish a link between collecting and scholarly pursuits, disentangling the pastime from its purely mercantile associations by modeling a mode of connoisseurship that attended to historical contexts. While this attempt to establish a more scholarly, disinterested identity for the periodical was often undercut by content related directly to the sale of goods within its pages, contributors to the *Connoisseur* nevertheless attempted to counter the Victorian caricature of the purely mercenary and misanthropic collector. Sensitivity to the ethical and political implications of collecting evidenced within the pages of the *Connoisseur* indicates that some late Victorian collectors actively engaged with the critique of the practice of collecting and endeavored to turn their pastime in a principled and just direction. The periodical redirected the regressive, narcissistic discourse associated with collecting, transforming it into a social discourse spoken to a community of collectors through the history of collected objects. The *Connoisseur*, then, offers insight into the phenomenon of self-aware Victorian and post-Victorian consumers engaging in critical reflection and responding to external critique.

As the collectors and critics writing for the *Connoisseur* worked to reposition abstracted objects within specific contexts, attending to the history of collected objects rather than the tastes of individual collectors, they became aware of the relationship between collecting and the politics of nationalism and imperialism. Contributors to the *Connoisseur* foregrounded the role private acts of consumption might play in the emergence of globalization, the spread of imperialism, and the construction of national identity. However, as much as these insights into the connections between modern consumer practices and the operations of imperialism arose from critical awareness and ethical sensitivity about the political implications of collecting, ethical collecting did not always lead its practitioners in a progressive political direction. For every critic who expressed concern about the impact of European interest on the production of Japanese goods, there was another who celebrated the role collecting English objects might play in the solidification of an English sense of patriotic superiority. Ethical collecting could, but did not necessarily, produce cosmopolitan subjects. Enlarging awareness of the political meanings of a private pastime contributed as much to a critique of cultural imperialism as it did to a heightened sense of nationalism. Interestingly, however, the *Connoisseur* indicates that patriotic visions of collecting as a method for solidifying English national identity contributed to an increased sensitivity on the part of English collectors to the ethical implications of extracting objects from their sites of origin. As the English grappled with the “ransacking” of their own past by wealthy American collectors, they gained insight into the impact cultural looting might have on the national identity of plundered countries.

The fundamentally dialogic form of the periodical allows for discordant and contradictory voices to speak to one another. In this essay, I would like to stress the extent to which discussion of the practice of collecting in the *Connoisseur* provides insight into the unevenness of and conflicts within cultural imperialist ideology during the late Victorian and post-Victorian periods.³ To solely stress the extent to which collecting was bound up with imperialism is to neglect moments when it facilitated cosmopolitanism or cross-cultural fusion. Collecting did, of course, contribute to the construction of difference, the delineation of the line between Western self and Eastern other, but when we pay attention to the complex ways in which it was practiced and represented, it becomes clear that the “lines between East and West were crossed and crossable” and that it was at times the practice of collecting that rendered those boundaries permeable.⁴ At the same time, while the connoisseurs and critics writing for the *Connoisseur* were particularly self-aware and sensitive to the ethical implications of collecting, their thoughtfulness about the pastime did not always yield what we might consider to be ideal results. Defining itself against Victorian models of collecting, the periodical attempted to generate an alternative model of ethical collecting, but the contributors’ interest in the history of objects resulted in rabid nationalism just as often as it fostered transnational contact. As the *Connoisseur* worked to define its project under Baily’s editorship from 1901 to 1914, the periodical served as a keen barometer of the political pressures operating upon the practice of collecting at the turn of the century.

“The Idea of a Magazine for Collectors”: Collectors’ Magazines, Connoisseurship, and Art Criticism at the Turn of the Century

When the *Connoisseur: An Illustrated Magazine for Collectors* first appeared in September of 1901, J. T. Herbert Baily offered “A Word of Introduction” to the new shilling monthly that stressed its unique identity. According to Baily, the “idea of a magazine for collectors” had not occurred to anyone previously, and collectors had “till now received no special attention from the Press.”⁵ Baily acknowledges the existence of periodicals devoted to certain branches of collecting, “but there has been, till to-day, no recognised and standard periodical for the whole body of collectors.”⁶ The magazine was printed continuously until 1992, so Baily’s claims concerning the demand for such a periodical do seem to have been correct. As Baily notes, periodicals such as the *Numismatic Chronicle* (1836–), the *Bookworm* (1887–1894), and the *Stamp Collector’s Magazine Illustrated* (1863–74, continued as *Alfred Smith and Co.’s Monthly Circular* [1875–1920]) had been established for the individual fields of col-

lecting, such as coin, book, and stamp collecting. Baily was invested, however, in fostering contact between these various fields as well as between collectors and the general public. While the articles in specialized periodicals for collectors, such as the *Numismatic Chronicle* or the *Stamp Collector's Magazine Illustrated*, addressed themselves primarily to those with expertise in a particular area, the articles in the *Connoisseur* might interest an expert or educate a novice. The last twenty pages of each issue—which included a section on recent auctions entitled “In the Sale Room” and a section on correspondence received as well as new books and exhibitions entitled “Notes”—focused on the more practical elements of collecting that would be of interest only to avid collectors. However, each issue began with longer articles on exemplary collections and particular types of collecting as well as more fanciful prose pieces, such as “The Small Collector” or “A Chat about Miscellaneous Collecting,” that would appeal to a more diverse readership.⁷ The attractive design of the periodical as well as its tipped-in and color illustrations certainly strengthened this appeal. Each issue typically ran 60–75 pages (excluding the 30–45 pages of advertisements placed at the beginning of each issue) with 50–70 images, including tipped-in and full-page color reproductions of artworks as well as smaller black and white photographs and illustrations.⁸ *The Saturday Review* noted the new periodical's appealing appearance in its review, stating that the *Connoisseur* “promises to be a striking addition to the monthly periodicals. It is admirably printed and illustrated, and . . . launched in a spirit of confidence which should prove well grounded.”⁹ In working to allow branches of collecting to communicate with one another, Baily designed a “striking” periodical that spoke to a much broader audience than the periodicals for collectors that had preceded it.

The magazine covered the collecting of stamps, coins, furniture, and china, but it paid a great deal of attention to collecting art. For this reason, the magazine is best understood in relationship to turn-of-the-century art periodicals, such as the *Art Journal* (1839–1912) and the *Magazine of Art* (1878–1904), rather than more specialized periodicals for individual branches of collecting. Operating as intermediaries between artists and purchasers as well as educators of public taste, the contributors to the *Connoisseur* played a similar role within the art market as those critics writing for the *Art Journal* and the *Magazine of Art*. However, unlike these periodicals, the *Connoisseur* would not, according to Baily, deal with contemporary art, as “these matters are adequately dealt with in existing periodicals.”¹⁰ “Our purpose,” Baily states, “is to give every sort of information that may be of use to collectors, whether as regards origin, history, current prices, or differentiation of specimens; and the various subjects will be dealt with adequately by writers who know, who are experts in the

subjects which they treat.”¹¹ The *Connoisseur* would be an authoritative source of information for consumers interested specifically in the art of the past.

The *Connoisseur*'s claims to authority must be situated within ongoing debates concerning the professionalization of art criticism, the authority of connoisseurs, and the emergence of art history as an academic discipline during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Baily's "Word of Introduction" certainly makes a claim for his contributors' authority. The subjects will, he states, be covered by "writers who know, who are experts in the subjects which they treat."¹² However, the question of who "knew" and who was an "expert" could not always be answered neatly during this period. As Helene Roberts and Elizabeth Prettejohn have argued, the authority and qualifications of the art critic were intensely debated during the latter half of the nineteenth century. The diverse backgrounds and professions of the contributors to the *Connoisseur* indicate much about the unstable state of aesthetic authority and professions tied to aesthetics during this period.¹³ The work of the writers for the *Connoisseur*, their attempts to establish the conditions under which certain artifacts of the past were produced and the significance of particular works in relationship to an artist's oeuvre, could often resemble the work being conducted in the emergent academic discipline of art history. Yet the commercial preoccupations of the *Connoisseur* distinguished the work of its contributors from the more disinterested work of the art historian. The attribution work of the connoisseur is, of course, intimately connected with art history.¹⁴ However, the title of the periodical flags and foregrounds the intermingling of aesthetics and economics in the practice of connoisseurship. The *Connoisseur* is a "magazine for collectors," and the magazine itself will play the role of the connoisseur, assisting those in the process of making purchasing decisions by bringing expertise in attribution and evaluation to bear upon individual works as well as entire collections.

When Bernard Berenson assisted in the establishment of a rival publication in 1903, its full title, the *Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, along with its claims in its first editorial to pursue the "serious and disinterested study of ancient art," implicitly critiqued the more apparently commercial aims of the *Connoisseur* by indicating that the *Burlington* would be a magazine for experts as opposed to consumers.¹⁵ The *Burlington* endeavored to engage with the latest developments in art theory and art history, but, as Trevor Fawcett notes, "there was a strong flavor of connoisseurship from the start."¹⁶ Fawcett argues that "in the *Burlington*, art history arrived, but in a filtered form. . . . To judge from the articles on private collections and antiques, and from the magazine's readiness to feature works of art in dealers' hands (a controversial policy), it was the art trade that was being

wooded quite as much as the world of scholarship.”¹⁷ The *Connoisseur* includes a similarly complex blend of trade and scholarship. It does not make quite the same claims to scholarly disinterestedness, but the articles in the magazine do often have an art historical inflection. The fact that both periodicals blur the boundary between the profession of connoisseurship and the discipline of art history demonstrates the extent to which the understanding of aesthetic authority was in flux at the turn of the century.¹⁸

Mercantilism, Antiquarianism, and the “Ethical Side of Collecting”

While the *Connoisseur* devotes itself first and foremost to the acquisition and exchange of artifacts, the contributors to the magazine nevertheless pay particular attention to the history of collected objects and, in so doing, respond to late Victorian critiques of the practice of collecting. By the end of the Victorian era, collecting was viewed as supporting what Susan Stewart has referred to as an “aesthetics of mercantilism” as opposed to an “aesthetics of antiquarianism.”¹⁹ While the antiquarian is “moved by a nostalgia of origin and presence,” the mercantilist is “moved by extraction and seriality.”²⁰ He “removes the object from context and places it within the play of signifiers that characterizes an exchange economy.”²¹ Responding to late Victorian critiques of collecting, writers for the *Connoisseur* display an awareness of the ethical implications of mercantile cultural practices. In “The Art of Collecting Oak,” for example, Frederick Roe, a historical genre painter, argues explicitly against cultural extraction, concluding with a word on what he refers to as the “ethical side of collecting.”²² According to Roe, “Ruthless removal of pieces from their homes, so to speak, is a practice to be strongly discouraged.”²³ He encourages the enlightenment of “clerical and other ignorance as to the value and local interest of such souvenirs of departed time” in order to “prevent unscrupulous acquisition.”²⁴

Frederick Roe went on to write reference books on collecting oak furniture, such as *Old Oak Furniture* (1907) and *A History of Oak Furniture* (1920). Like many other contributors to the *Connoisseur*, his profession and his established expertise positioned him as something more than simply a consumer. He was an individual with an authentic interest in history, as evidenced in his later critical writings as well as his paintings of historical subjects such as Joan of Arc and Nelson. His exhortations to avoid careless extraction seem to emerge from thoughtful consideration of his own methods of consumption. In a later issue of the *Connoisseur*, Roe’s *Ancient Coffers and Cupboards* (1902) is reviewed, and much is made of Roe’s “intimate antiquarian knowledge” as well as his interest in pieces of antique furniture, which can serve as “memorials of the past.”²⁵

Roe, described by the reviewer as a “clever painter,” illustrated the text himself, “travelling all over the kingdom and the continent wherever sufficiently important illustrations could be noted, investigated, described, their particular history traced and drawn with spirited hand, with an accuracy begotten of full knowledge of his ‘hobby’ and a mastery of its history.”²⁶ The reviewer’s use of scare quotes around the term “hobby” indicates that Roe’s “mastery” and “knowledge” make the term incompatible with his practice. Roe does not simply amuse himself with the acquisition of objects that please his eye. The review advertises his connections to the art world as well as his investment in history in order to legitimize his interest in the possession of artifacts as well as the information he has chosen to share with his readers.

Like Roe, other contributors to the *Connoisseur* were professional men of letters whose career histories reflect an investment in an aesthetics of antiquarianism as opposed to an aesthetics of mercantilism. Their connections to museums and art schools and the world of literary criticism lent a sense of legitimacy and disinterestedness to a periodical that was in fact preoccupied with the practice of commercial collecting. William Carew Hazlitt, for example, the grandson of William Hazlitt, was a well-known bibliographer. His *Handbook to the Popular, Poetical and Dramatic Literature of Great Britain, from the Invention of Printing to the Restoration*, an enormous undertaking, was first published in 1867, with supplements in 1876, 1882, 1887, and 1889. Hazlitt’s literary lineage and his investment in book history bolster his credentials as a thoughtful and discerning practitioner of connoisseurship. In his work for the *Connoisseur*, he delineates admirable modes of collecting in opposition to more contemptible and feverish modes of acquisition, a preoccupation on display in many of his published works. In his *Collections and Notes, 1867–1876*, for example, he notes that the “aggregation of miscellaneous assemblages of literary gewgaws or emptinesses by undiscerning persons is surely a very unsatisfactory spectacle. Buy books if you love books; buy them if you are a student—if you are a reader; but in the name of reason, do not buy them simply because your neighbor does.”²⁷ When contributing to the *Connoisseur*, Hazlitt exhibits a similar contempt for thoughtless acquisition, echoing the condemnation of “aggregating emptinesses” found in his careful descriptions of responsible bibliophilia. Edward Strange, who contributed an article on Japanese color prints to the magazine, worked as assistant keeper of the National Art Library and published a book-length study on *Japanese Illustration* in 1897.²⁸ Like Hazlitt and Roe, his professional associations and publishing history establish him as much more than an amateur with an enthusiasm for consuming. By adding a scholarly air to the discourse of collecting, the contributors to early issues of

the periodical manage to infuse articles preoccupied with the pursuit of commodities with the gravity of academic pursuit. The contributors writing for the *Connoisseur* often attempt to counter the association of collecting with aggressive acquisitiveness and extraction by attending to the history of objects, to the work that produced artifacts and the value of that work. If, as many Victorian authors argued, collecting tends to emphasize the moment of acquisition and the false “labor” of the consumer, erasing the circumstances that produced the object, writers for the *Connoisseur* attempted to separate abstracted objects from narratives about collectors’ choices so that they could describe how and by whom they were made.²⁹ Many articles in the *Connoisseur* encourage consideration of the modes of production that contributed to the fineness or beauty of a collected object, and these modes of production are often favorably compared to industrial methods of producing commodities and the inferior products that result. For example, in “Old Lace, and How to Collect It,” J. H. Marriott seeks not only to provide education for the consumer but also to invite regard for the historically-contingent practices that contributed to the beauty of medieval lace, which are then contrasted to modern techniques of production that create lace of a lesser stock:

Probably the reason for the value and perfection of medieval lace lies in its origin. “Nun’s work!”—the words mean so much. In the few yards of old yellow needlework one holds in two hands and marvels at, or swathes round white shoulders and looks lovely in, is concentrated the life-essence of some world-lost woman; her energy, patience, brain, body and very soul have distilled this exquisite work through weary years of devoted labour. The tendency of the modern is to work out scrawling and meaningless designs, and the results shew hurry, absence of care and patience, and a certain lack of knowledge on the part of the designer as to methods of execution and their effect when carried out.³⁰

A piece of medieval lace is rewritten so that it is no longer a reflection of the collector’s taste but a distillation of the “life-essence” of a historical other. It speaks of a fundamental difference between past and present, between medieval craft and modern modes of production. Attention to contexts of origin is a consistent theme in the *Connoisseur*, and this concern with the historical moment from which objects emerged and the type of labor that produced them allows collectors to reimagine the practice of collecting as motivated by an aesthetics of antiquarianism.

Even though the contributors to the *Connoisseur* worked to extricate collecting from its associations with consumerism, mercantile interests are on prominent display in the *Connoisseur*. The *Connoisseur* clearly advertises its relationship to the art market, recounting the exchange of art

objects in auction houses and educating consumers on the market value and authenticity of collectibles. With its attractive tipped-in reproductions of artworks, some in color, the magazine contributed to the commodification of art objects, idealizing certain artifacts, advertising these works, and rendering them more desirable, while functioning itself as a collectible commodity. The contributions to the magazine also participate in the commodification of artifacts. It could just as easily be said, for example, that Marriott's aforementioned discussion of medieval lace and the labor that produced it reads like an advertisement. He invites his readers to envision the lace wrapped round the white shoulders of a woman. He generates a fantasy vision of contact between a body and a commodity that can also be understood as contact between two historically distant feminine bodies and, in so doing, renders the lace erotic, alluring, and desirable. In addition, the contributors' assertions about the "ethical side of collecting" and the importance of an antiquarian sensibility in the *Connoisseur* are frequently complicated and, in some cases, contradicted by the fact that they are advertising wares they themselves wish to sell. Marriott, for example, placed an advertisement in the first issue of the *Connoisseur* for his shop on Lower Grosvenor Place where "laces, embroideries, sables, curios, old gold, jewels and silver" might be "repaired, bought and exchanged" (figure 1).³¹ Laces and embroideries might also there be "cleaned, repaired, and adapted à la mode."³² Marriott's expertise and his enthusiasm for fine work must be understood in relationship to his commercial interests; his willingness to "adapt" older pieces to the current "mode" seems at odds with his professed reverence for older methods of design. Frederick Rathbone, who contributed articles on Wedgwood to the *Connoisseur*, also chose to include an advertisement in the first volume for his establishment on Alfred Place West where one might purchase pieces of English pottery from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. As much as the contributors attempted to obscure processes of economic exchange in favor of foregrounding their own antiquarian sensibilities, the centrality of mercantilism in the practice of collecting registers insistently in the advertising pages that open the magazine as well as in the lists of sales that appear in its final pages.

Collections Visited: Collecting as Social Practice

The *Connoisseur* also responds implicitly to turn-of-the-century critiques of collecting in its stress on the communicative potential of collections. Late Victorian critiques of collecting tend to emphasize the regressive orientation of the collection, its independence from the world and from social discourse. As the consummate Victorian collector, Dorian Gray, like his inspiration, Huysmans's Des Esseintes, retreats into a narcissistic world of

LACES, EMBROIDERIES, SABLES, CURIOS, OLD GOLD, JEWELS AND SILVER
REPAIRED, BOUGHT AND EXCHANGED.

J. H. MARRIOTT
(CONNAISSEUR DES BEAUX ARTS),
VALUER FOR PROBATE,

TELEPHONE:
317 WESTMINSTER.
TELEGRAMS:
"LACENAIRE, LONDON."

4, Lower Grosvenor Place, Belgravia.
Lace Designing Studio: 161, Ebury Street, S.W.

Laces and Embroideries Cleaned, Repaired, and adapted a la mode.
Lace-Making Tuition imparted.

FANS, OLD CHINA, IVORIES, &c., **STONES CUT AND RE-SET.**
REPAIRED AND RESTORED. **SILVER PLATING AND RE-GILDING.**

CHARITY BAZAARS SUPPLIED AT REDUCED RATES.

Figure 1. Advertisement in the *Connoisseur* for J. H. Marriott's shop on Lower Grosvenor Place, which specialized in the sale and repair of lace.

objects that reflect his refinement and sophistication. This emphasis on the narcissism of the collector has persisted in more recent critiques of collecting. Baudrillard, for example, stresses the asociality of collecting, arguing that "although the collection may speak to other people, it is always first and foremost a discourse directed toward oneself."³³ According to Baudrillard, "The object pure and simple, divested of its function, abstracted from any practical context, takes on a strictly subjective status. Now its destiny is to be collected."³⁴ The *Connoisseur*, however, stresses the collection's communicative potential, exposing existing collections to a much larger public, fostering discourse between collectors, and allowing collected objects to speak to and about the world. It invites collectors to think of themselves as a community and to view objects as having meanings beyond those imposed by the consuming subject.

Many issues of the magazine begin with an article on "Collections Visited" or "Notable Collections." In his "Word of Introduction" to the first issue of the magazine, Baily states that the intent of the "Collections Visited" feature will be to "open the doors" of those private collections "hidden in private houses."³⁵ By opening the magazine with this feature, Baily identifies it as one of the periodical's most significant elements.³⁶ The magazine's desire to foster communication and conversation between collectors is visually reinforced by the header "Collections Visited," which was drawn by William Jenkins, who contributed many illustrations to early issues of the *Connoisseur* (figure 2). The header features two collectors contemplating a set of curios together. One reaches inside the open cabinet to examine a particular artifact as another looks on. The doors of a private

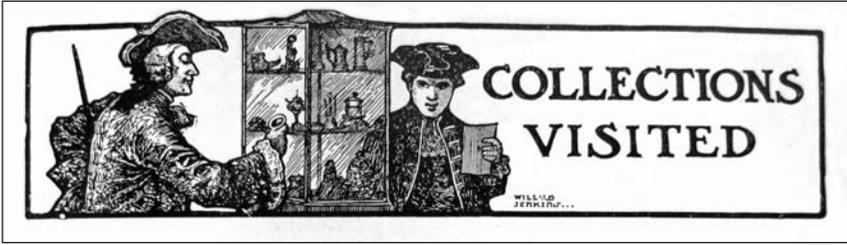


Figure 2. Header for the *Connoisseur's* "Collections Visited" series, designed by William Jenkins.

collection have been opened, and the collection has become a catalyst for contact and conversation between two lovers of fine things.

The *Connoisseur's* beautiful color reproductions of artwork along with the abundance of photographs and illustrations also contribute to the periodical's capacity to open the doors of private collections. Each "Collections Visited" article, for example, includes ten to twenty illustrations, transforming collections housed within collectors' homes into virtual galleries to which every reader of the *Connoisseur* has unfettered access. In certain cases, the articles themselves are composed so as to reproduce the feeling of being led on a tour of a private collection. Julia Frankau's article on "Lord Cheylesmore's Mezzotints," for example, quotes liberally from the lectures Frankau herself heard as she encountered Cheylesmore's engravings. Cheylesmore's exuberant speech is relayed word for word, and the reader, who contemplates reproductions of the works under discussion, is transported into his home: "Look, for instance, at this 'Shipwreck' (*see page 6*) by Charles Turner, after his great namesake: how well the engraver has translated the artist, what movement it has, and light! . . . Here unhappy 'Mrs. Musters' (*see page 9*) . . . has Reynolds and John Raphael Smith to make her charms eloquent."³⁷ "Collections Visited" also typically discloses the contents of a collection in order to discuss the origin of particular pieces, reestablishing connections between objects and their histories.³⁸ By historically situating a collected object, the magazine resurrects that object's capacity to communicate in social and historical terms.

As editor of the *Connoisseur*, J. T. Herbert Baily presumably played a large part in fostering a collaborative, social culture of collecting. In his book-length works, Baily operated according to a similar model, drawing together artworks situated in private homes so they might speak together about historical subjects and artistic practices. His *Life of Emma, Lady Hamilton* (1905), for example, includes twenty-three engraved plates of portraits of Lady Hamilton, drawn from public collections, such as the National Gallery, and private collections in the possession of Sir Audrey

Neeld and Tankerville Chamberlayne, among others.³⁹ Making use of his connections in the realm of connoisseurs, Baily assembled a scattered set of artworks, allowing them to cooperate in the production of a vision of a single historical figure. Baily's obituary in *Notes and Queries* makes note of his "attractive personality," his "large circle of friends," and his popularity in Clubland.⁴⁰ Upending the caricature of the withdrawn and narcissistic connoisseur, Baily conceived of collecting as a practice that cultivated connections, bringing individuals together based on their appreciation for objects.

Cosmopolitan Collecting and the Ransacking of National Pasts

The *Connoisseur* was distributed in the United States by the International News Company, allowing American collectors contact with collecting trends and practices on the other side of the Atlantic. In this sense, the periodical extended its social project internationally, creating an opportunity for the shared appreciation of artifacts to foster transnational contact and understanding. In 1912, Baily reinforced his belief in collecting's capacity to facilitate international communication by bringing an exhibition of paintings by Old Masters to New York. The exhibition, which was organized to benefit the Dickens centenary fund, included eighty pictures by such artists as Anthony Van Dyck, Thomas Gainsborough, and George Romney. In an article on the exhibition published in the *Connoisseur*, Baily states that he hoped the exhibition might foster transnational contact and the sharing of cultural goods: "I argued that if English owners contributed liberally, might not a precedent be established, and the Atlantic no longer considered an obstacle to the transfer of pictures on loan for comparatively short periods from one continent to another."⁴¹ *The New York Times* noted with approval that "never before has such a valuable collection of paintings crossed the Atlantic, and Mr. Baily prides himself on having put together a unique collection."⁴² The headline announcing the exhibition refers to the collection as the "Finest That Ever Crossed the Ocean" and foregrounds the fact that the works were "LOANED BY ENGLISH OWNERS," drawing attention to the generosity of the donors, who are listed by name in the article itself.⁴³ The article also remarks upon the generous "arrangements made at Washington, through Collector Loeb, [to give] the pictures free entry into the country" as well as the role Lord Chief Justice Alverstone played in heading the committee that obtained the exhibition.⁴⁴ While international art exhibitions had become increasingly common by the teens, critical response reveals particular enthusiasm about the quality of the Old Masters exhibition, the extensive international collaboration that facilitated the event, and the socially minded collectors

who made it possible. Baily's participation in such an event speaks to his investment in facilitating cosmopolitan contact between European works of art and American audiences.

Like Baily, critics writing for the *Connoisseur* often exhibit a willingness to practice a more cosmopolitan alternative to nationalist collecting.⁴⁵ In particular, contributors frequently bemoan the lack of appreciation or understanding on the part of English audiences for Eastern art. In an article on Arthur Morrison's collection of Japanese painting, for example, Stewart Dick notes that "Chinese and Japanese pictorial art differs widely both in point of view and in manner of expression from the works of our European schools, and for this reason is often, even by the cultured amateur, unappreciated and misunderstood. Also the text-books dealing with the subject . . . are too often written from an alien and unsympathetic standpoint."⁴⁶ Dick laments the fact that "rare as are the old Japanese paintings, the European critic who understands and fully appreciates their merits is rarer still."⁴⁷ At times, the inability to perceive the beauty of Eastern art, to engage in cosmopolitan connoisseurship, is openly ridiculed. A note on the recent sale of Indian curios at an incredibly low price derides the "utter inability of the average Englishman or woman to appreciate Art as Art, and . . . their consequent hesitation in purchasing the most exquisitely decorated article unless they happen to be the fashion."⁴⁸ Similarly, an account of Sir Julius Raines's collection of Japanese ivory masks concludes with an anecdote about a visitor who responded to the collection by crying, "What a lovely piece of ivory, and what a shame to cut it about like this!"⁴⁹ The visitor, the author notes contemptuously, was a manufacturer of hairbrushes.

Contributors to the *Connoisseur* often mourn the impact of Western consumption on Eastern modes of production. Egan Mew notes, in an article on "Old Chinese Lacquer," that the "especial character" of furniture designed for native use in China becomes obscured when the "Oriental tries to please the lust of the Western eye."⁵⁰ In an article on "Mr. Michael Tomkinson's Japanese Collection at Franche Hall," R. E. D. laments the fact that collections such as Tomkinson's will soon be impossible to amass. He bemoans the "injurious effect" of "European commercialism" on the "handicraft of one of the two artistic nations left in the world."⁵¹ He argues that the "leisurely production" that is "essential if the thing produced is to have any artistic value is not possible under modern commercial conditions."⁵² The more Japan participates in modern world commerce, the more it produces "for the markets of 'higher civilisation' cheap commodities, which . . . are produced merely to sell."⁵³ The only way Japan can "ward off the ultimate triumph of the Cheap and the Nasty" is to "[shut] out European commerce and Western civilization."⁵⁴ This critique can be understood as a part of a larger cosmopolitan discourse that, as Tim

Barringer has noted in his discussion of the South Kensington museum and the colonial project, “[inverted] the standard account of imperialism’s triumphal technological transformation of ‘backward’ colonised lands” by stressing the beauty of handcrafted Eastern objects.⁵⁵ Much as R. E. D. implicitly references the Arts and Crafts tradition in his celebration of Japanese craft, this discourse drew upon the critique of industrialization articulated by Thomas Carlyle, John Ruskin, and William Morris and implemented this tradition of critique in order to voice concerns about the impact that contact with industrialized, Western modes of production might have on the aesthetic production of the East.

At the same time that the *Connoisseur* expresses an openness to and appreciation of other cultures, it also implicitly asserts the right to possess the artifacts of those cultures. The aforementioned article on Sir Julius Raines’s Japanese mask collection, for example, opens with an anxious discussion of Blucher’s famous statement, “What a city to sack!” This statement, H. C. Shelley insists, “is only appreciated at its full worth by those who have some acquaintance with the priceless art treasures which are to be found in many of the private houses of London.”⁵⁶ Shelley attempts to avert the threat of ransacking by foregrounding the fact that many private collectors allow visitors to see their collections. However, opening a piece on objects that have themselves been looted from Japan with a plea against further ransacking indicates much about English collectors’ vision of cultural appropriation, their belief in the justice of their own acts of cultural extraction as well as their lingering anxiety and guilt about the violence of these acts and the threat of future retribution.

As much as Baily and his journal worked to foster transatlantic connections, the *Connoisseur* frequently promoted a sense of English national identity by favoring those collectors and collections that concentrated on the English school of painting; English silver and English stippled prints; Sheffield plate and Wedgwood pottery; and collections that reflected the English national heritage and reaffirmed the superiority of English modes of manufacture. A collector of Sheffield plate warns his audience away from “Continental copies,” which are “far below English ware in intrinsic value.”⁵⁷ In an article on Mr. Arthur Sanderson’s collection of Old Wedgwood, Frederick Rathbone declares that while a “catholic taste for all good art is always commendable, . . . patriotism is often an important factor of collection.”⁵⁸ Of all potteries, according to Rathbone, Wedgwood in particular “deserves collecting” because “it is an English art, invented and perfected by a native of England. The designs used for its decoration were made by the best native artists of his time. It was made by English clay, by native craftsmen.”⁵⁹ Sanderson is, in Rathbone’s eyes, a particularly admirable collector because he has devoted himself to bringing back to

England all the Wedgwood that was exported to France, thereby shoring up the nation's aesthetic resources. Sir Charles Tennant's collection of pictures exhibits a similarly admirable patriotic cohesion, concentrating on the works of the Early English School by Turner, Gainsborough, Reynolds, and Hoppner. The paintings in Tennant's collection allow for reflection on the grace and generosity of English women and the delightfulness of English children, a general celebration of all that was right and good in England's recent past. The collection also invites consideration of England's political ascendancy, reflected, for example, in Constable's *Whitehall Stairs*. The painting commemorates a "great day in the annals of London," June 18, 1817, when a new bridge across the Thames was opened and baptized in order to celebrate the second anniversary of Waterloo, the "breaking of the wing of the ravenous French eagle."⁶⁰ The painting is, according to the visitor, "as valuable an historical document as it is a work of art."⁶¹ No longer simply a reflection of Sir Charles Tennant's taste and success as a collector, it serves as a tool for celebrating the taming of France and the beauty of English political spectacle.

This sense that English things can speak to and about England in inspiring ways contributes to a growing concern about the ransacking of England's aesthetic resources by wealthy American collectors.⁶² This is a recurring theme in the *Connoisseur*, which is taken up by many contributors who decry the plundering of England's past by thieves and interlopers who have no cultural right to the objects with which they abscond. The collector of Sheffield plate mourns that the "finest examples are continually drifting toward New York."⁶³ In an article on Mrs. Collis P. Huntington's collection, J. Kirby Grant notes that the many notable American art collections are "continually draining England and the Continent of Europe of their most precious possessions."⁶⁴ Mrs. Huntington's addition of five important examples of Netherlandish art will, Grant states, "be regarded as a calamity by the students and art lovers in England and on the Continent of Europe."⁶⁵ A collector of old English pottery calls English collectors to arms, warning, "While we are neglecting to collect, the shrewd American is steadfastly purchasing at an unduly cheap rate the valuable remnants of a fast-diminishing store."⁶⁶ The situation is particularly dire because of the "preposterous sum [the American collector] is always prepared to stake for the satisfaction of his fancy."⁶⁷

American collectors are typically represented as the worst sort of new money, possessing far greater degrees of wealth than English collectors while lacking the cultural capital that might allow them to spend that wealth wisely or tastefully. In an article titled "The Bourgeois Collector," William Carew Hazlitt asserts proudly that it is the "phalanx of poor collectors," of which he is a member, that is "most humanly interesting."⁶⁸

The bourgeois collector that he celebrates “is so far unlike his American contemporary that he does not like an article the less because he has picked it up cheap; and . . . he has the faculty in a much higher degree of discerning beauties and merits for himself and of leaning on his own judgment.”⁶⁹ Hazlitt gazes longingly at the “past era of collecting” when the hobby was “less scientific but less artificial,” when it lacked “feverish rivalry” and “unwholesome ostentation,” and, most importantly, when it was “local.”⁷⁰ According to Hazlitt, “collectors used to keep within their own ground or country.”⁷¹ However, “American acquisitiveness” has “steadily widened,” and England is frequently defeated in the transatlantic “fight for prizes and rarities.”⁷² “The old country was conquered by the new,” and the “treasures and heirlooms of Great Britain were shipped to adorn the cabinets and saloons of New York.”⁷³ Artificial, feverish collecting that is motivated by an aesthetics of mercantilism is consistently othered onto American collectors, who, lacking a history of their own, must thief from the heritage of England.

Concerns about the depletion of England’s store of cultural objects resulted in increased sensitivity on the part of English collectors to the harm done by collecting. Articles in the magazine reflect a dawning awareness that nations have a finite number of cultural resources, a finite amount of history that can be spirited away. Collectors writing for the *Connoisseur* exhibit a real sensitivity to the fact that gain on the part of a collector frequently necessitates loss on the part of a nation. A discussion of ancient Peruvian pottery, for example, concludes by stating that the tombs of Peru “have now been so industriously ransacked that the future supply of genuine examples of the ancient pottery of Peru must necessarily be limited.”⁷⁴ The term “ransacked,” with its violent overtones, is used quite frequently to describe the labor of the collector within the pages of the *Connoisseur*. While Mr. Deming Jarves, an American collector of Chinese porcelain, is celebrated by the periodical as a particularly successful collector, the visitor to his collection notes that Jarves’s dining room in Detroit “contains some four hundred pieces of blue and white porcelain for which the enthusiastic owner has ransacked the world.”⁷⁵ In addition, the visitor devotes special attention to an object that might serve as a figure for the destructive impact of Western connoisseurship on the Eastern cultures from which it pillages. This piece, stolen from the Winter Palace in 1895, “was sold to a native dealer, who re-sold it to an American, to whom it was traced by the Chinese authorities. He offered to return it, but it was refused because of contamination by contact with ‘foreign devils.’ The theft, however, was swiftly avenged, the native dealer banished to the galleys for life, and the hapless thieves beheaded.”⁷⁶ The author chooses to foreground the casualties in a struggle over aesthetic resources and the equation of the exportation of cul-

tural objects with treason in a beleaguered and ransacked nation. R. E. D. notes that extensive ransacking has led Japanese connoisseurs to become increasingly protective of their cultural artifacts. Japan is now “closed to the European collector,” as Japanese collectors “have become alarmed at the rate” at which Japanese art objects “were leaving their country.”⁷⁷ The Japanese, then, have been successful at what the English have not: shutting out cultural looters so as to preserve their aesthetic resources and by extension their sense of national identity. The extensive consideration of cultural “ransacking” in the pages of the *Connoisseur* allowed for insight into the destructive consequences of globalized consumption and imperial extraction.

The *Connoisseur* after Baily: World War I and the Arousing of National Consciousness

Baily’s progressive project was, to a certain extent, undermined by his successor. When J. T. Baily died in 1914, C. R. Grundy assumed the editorship of the *Connoisseur*. Under Grundy’s editorship, the magazine continued to occupy itself primarily with English art while exhibiting a cosmopolitan capacity for appreciating the cultural productions of France, Japan, Spain, and Russia. However, a new strain of particularly strident nationalism began to appear in its pages, a symptom of the changes wrought within the broader culture by the onset of World War I. Grundy was interested in the artifacts of war, and his tastes are reflected clearly in the periodical under his editorship. He contributed articles on the the oldest national war museum and the need for local war museums. His preoccupation with artifacts associated with war registers in the articles he chose to include in the magazine, including essays on war curios, war medals, and naval and military heroes on English pottery. Grundy’s contributions are marked by a somewhat operatic tone of patriotism. In his 1916 article, “Local War Museums: A Suggestion,” he concludes by arguing that local war museums might “bring home to the people of every locality, however obscure, that they and their ancestors have played their part in the making of England and her empire, and that their share in her greatness and the glory of her achievements ennobles them and gives them a cause of higher price than the possession of either rank or riches can bestow.”⁷⁸ In a 1915 article on “Art and the National Economy,” Grundy asserts that it is vital for the English public to continue purchasing English art during wartime. However, he is careful to note that he does not “wish to place the interests of art before the higher interests of the nation, for “on the outcome of the war hangs the destinies of the human race for countless centuries. Our defeat would bring the world under the power of a military despotism more ruthless

than the Huns in its savagery, more narrow in its views on life and culture than the Spanish Inquisition.”⁷⁹ Nevertheless, he insists that the “sacrifice of art will weaken the country during its mighty struggle.”⁸⁰ Grundy’s aggressively patriotic tone is echoed by other contributors during the war. A series of 1917 articles by Alexander J. Finberg on the representation of the British school in the National Gallery makes the case that there should be a two-to-one representation of the “native school” against the “foreign schools” in the museum, arguing that “it is time to settle the matter now that the national consciousness has been aroused by the events of the last two years.”⁸¹ Finberg laments the fact that the National Gallery currently “stands for art connoisseurship in general, divested of all national and local requirements,” and he expresses the wish that it might be transformed into a “great national institution which shall play a worthy part in the future by strengthening those ties of common feeling and imagination which bind the English-speaking peoples into one mighty empire.”⁸² The war as well as a change in editors produced a more militaristic and shrilly patriotic strain within the magazine. However, these marked changes did not undermine entirely the transnational project of the periodical initiated by Baily. Even in wartime, the *Connoisseur* did not eliminate its coverage of international art collecting, nor did it abandon the cultivation of cosmopolitan taste.

The *Connoisseur* provides rich insight into the manifold ways in which “ethical collecting” was practiced during the post-Victorian period. This practice was proposed as a response to the more narcissistic and mercenary forms of collecting that came under fire during the Victorian period. Contributors to the magazine reformulated collecting with an eye to its more progressive possibilities, and they tried to create a venue in which art collecting might be treated in more scholarly or disinterested terms. However, this reformulated practice of ethical collecting was often complex and contradictory. An ethical investment in preserving contexts rather than abstracting objects resulted in cultural nationalism, yet that cultural nationalism resulted in an increased capacity for self-criticism on the part of English cultural imperialists. Reverence for the alterity of things served at once as a foundation for English nationalism as well as the basis for an enlarged sympathy for the Eastern victims of cultural imperialism as England itself was plundered by avaricious American connoisseurs. Contact with artifacts from the East contributed at once to an increased reverence for the Eastern other and an escalating desire for the looting of Eastern nations. In this way, a single periodical managed to intertwine aggressive nationalism with cosmopolitanism, to merge cultural imperialism with a critique of globalization. Articles in early issues of the *Connoisseur* bear out Maya Jasanoff’s assertion that collecting should not be interpreted as

a “transparent or programmatic expression of imperial power, the playing out of an ‘imperial project.’ Rather, the history of collecting reveals the complexities of empire; it shows how power and culture intersected in tangled, contingent, sometimes self-contradictory ways.”⁸³ The *Connoisseur* demonstrates awareness of the relationship of collecting to the complexities of empire as well as a sophisticated sense of possible political positions that ethical collectors might choose to occupy.

The inherently dialogic form of the periodical allowed for complex conversation concerning cosmopolitanism and cultural imperialism at the beginning of the twentieth century. Each issue of the *Connoisseur* demonstrates the complexity of the collector’s political positioning, the stresses placed on individual connoisseurs as they worked to consider the ethical implications of their practice, and the anxieties nations faced as their cultural resources became increasingly desirable in the international marketplace. Periodicals such as the *Connoisseur*, which, due to their form, illuminate the diverse strains of discourse regarding the politics of collecting, can serve as an incredibly rich resource as we continue to consider the role that the practice of collecting played in both the development and the contestation of the imperial project.

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NOTES

I would like to thank Julie Codell for her helpful feedback on this essay.

1. Hancock, “Boffin’s Books and Darwin’s Finches,” 14.
2. Wilde’s *Dorian Gray*, James’s *Adam Verver*, and the countless corrupt collectors in stories by Vernon Lee, for example, reflect a growing dissatisfaction on the part of fin de siècle writers with the manner in which collecting and connoisseurship dealt with the alterity of things. This critique has been echoed and extended in the twentieth century by a tradition of Marxist and post-Marxist thinking that uses collecting as a figure for the erasure of conditions of production in modern capitalism: the replacement of the historical and the social with an emphasis on consumer choice. See, for example, Stewart, *On Longing*, Chapter 5, Part II; Baudrillard, “The System of Collecting”; and Saisselin, *Bourgeois and the Bibelot*.
3. As Maya Jasanoff stresses in her recent work on collecting and empire, the dislocated objects in public and private collections in Britain present tangible evidence of the circuits of exchange and exploitation that linked Europe and the Eastern world. However, as Jasanoff argues, collectors both bridged and defined boundaries between European and non-European. See Jasanoff, “Collectors of Empire.”
4. Jasanoff, “Collectors of Empire,” 130.

5. Baily, "A Word of Introduction," 1.
6. Ibid.
7. Jackson, "Small Collector," 217-22; Jennings, "Chat About Miscellaneous Collecting," 35-40.
8. By the teens, the number of pages of advertisements increased to seventy. The *Connoisseur* was often bound without its advertisements.
9. "New Books and Reprints," 246.
10. Baily, "A Word of Introduction," 2.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. When reviews were no longer published anonymously, questions of authority became even more vexed, and, as Prettejohn argues, the emergent professional art critics of the final decades of the century had to work to "[establish] both a set of professional credentials and a critical value system which they claimed to be uniquely qualified to exercise." Prettejohn, "Aesthetic Value," 73. It became increasingly necessary for a critic making a claim to authority to have traveled widely on the Continent, to have studied foreign art, and to possess knowledge of art theory and art history, which meant that the credentials of the professional art critic came to resemble more closely those of the art historian and the connoisseur.
14. Berenson's predecessor, Giovanni Morelli, for example, regarded correct attribution as a means to an end and as the necessary foundation for a "more systematic history of Italian art." Hatt and Klonk, *Art History*, 51.
15. "The Burlington Magazine," 3-5.
16. Fawcett, "Scholarly Journals," 14.
17. Ibid.
18. For further discussion of the relationship between connoisseurship and art history during the nineteenth century, see Scallen, *Rembrandt, Reputation, and Connoisseurship*; and Brown, *Berenson and the Connoisseurship*.
19. Stewart, *On Longing*, 153.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid.
22. Roe, "The Art of Collecting Oak," 30.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.
25. "Ancient Coffers," 131.
26. Ibid.
27. Hazlitt, *Collections and Notes*, viii.
28. "Strange, Edward Fairbrother," 1076.
29. The Victorian critique of the erasure of labor by collectors is echoed by Susan Stewart, who argues that "in the souvenir, the object is made magical; in the collection the mode of production is made magical." Stewart, *On Longing*, 165.

30. Marriott, "Old Lace," 34.
31. "J. H. Marriott, Valuer for Probate, AD.," xxvii.
32. *Ibid.*
33. Baudrillard, "The System of Collecting," 22.
34. *Ibid.*, 8.
35. Baily, "A Word of Introduction," 2.
36. *Ibid.*
37. Frankau, "Lord Cheylesmore's Mezzotints," 3, 5.
38. Baily, "A Word of Introduction," 2.
39. See Baily, *Emma, Lady Hamilton*.
40. "Obituary: J. T. Herbert Baily," 440.
41. Baily, "The Exhibition Reviewed," 228.
42. "Old Masters," 3.
43. *Ibid.*
44. *Ibid.*
45. The treatment of international art was a contested issue for many art journals and art critics at the turn of the century. For a discussion of the manner in which the *Magazine of Art* became more cosmopolitan in its coverage under the editorship of W. E. Henley, see Greiman, "William Ernest Henley." Pamela Fletcher and Anne Helmreich discuss Harry Quilter's defense of the British school against the influence of modern French art as well as a shift toward more cosmopolitan coverage of French and Dutch art in the *Art Journal* in the late nineteenth century in their article, "The Periodical and the Art Market."
46. Dick, "Mr. Arthur Morrison's Collection," 85.
47. *Ibid.*, 86.
48. "In the Sale Room," 212.
49. Shelley, "Japanese Faces," 87.
50. Mew, "Old Chinese Lacquer," 229-30.
51. R. E. D., "Mr. Michael Tomkinson's Japanese Collection," 219. While R. E. D. never states explicitly what the other artistic nation might be, it is presumably England. England was often referred to as the "first of the artistic nations" after the Paris Exposition of 1867. However, this categorization had to do with the manner in which changes in art education transformed the artistic quality of manufacturing in England. In a 1920 article, "A National Program of Industrial Art Education," for example, Charles A. Bennett celebrates the "establishment of the South Kensington Museum and school that started the great movement for art education in England which bore fruit at the Paris Exposition of 1867, placing England in the first rank of artistic nations. Bennett, "A National Program," 84. If R. E. D. does in fact refer to England here, the two "artistic nations" operate in an interesting contrast with one another, for it is Japan's reliance on "handicraft" and the nation's rejection of Western modes of manufacture that the author

praises in this article, while England's status as an artistic nation seems to rely on its ability to infuse its textiles and other manufactures with an artistic sensibility. It is also worth noting that while R. E. D. wishes to represent Japan in opposition to modern world commerce, as Dōshin Satō notes, many of Japan's art collections in the late nineteenth century were formed by those in the *zaibatsu* (business conglomerates), while "in the next historical phase, collectors were associated with the railroad industry." Satō, *Modern Japanese Art*, 131.

52. R. E. D., "Mr. Michael Tomkinson's Japanese Collection," 219.
53. *Ibid.*
54. *Ibid.*
55. Barringer, "The South Kensington Museum," 20.
56. Shelley, "Japanese Faces," 83.
57. Townsend, "Sheffield Plate," 18.
58. Rathbone, "Mr. Arthur Sanderson's Collection," 63.
59. *Ibid.*, 71.
60. Roldt, "The Picture Collection of Sir Charles Tennant," 3-4.
61. *Ibid.*, 4.
62. For further discussion of the debates about cultural objects and national ownership at the turn of the century, see Bailkin, *The Culture of Property*. As Bailkin notes, "In late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Britain, the question of how art might be owned generated a high volume of critical debate. Artists, individual buyers, and institutions asserted their different claims to the ownership of cultural objects in Britain, based on labor, consumption, and the power of preservation, respectively. These debates dealt both with the virtues of private collecting and with the special nature of property in art as it applied to public galleries." Bailikin, *The Culture of Property*, 14.
63. Townsend, "Sheffield Plate," 18.
64. Grant, "Mrs. Collis P. Huntington's Collection," 3.
65. *Ibid.*, 5.
66. Solon, "The Solon Collection," 245.
67. *Ibid.*
68. Hazlitt, "The Bourgeois Collector," 235.
69. *Ibid.*
70. *Ibid.*, 233-34.
71. *Ibid.*, 234.
72. *Ibid.*
73. *Ibid.*
74. "Ancient Peruvian Pottery," 131.
75. "Mr. Deming Jarves's Collection," 135.
76. *Ibid.*, 138.
77. R. E. D., "Mr. Michael Tomkinson's Japanese Collection," 220.

78. Grundy, "Local War Museums," 170.
79. Grundy, "Art and the National Economy," 54.
80. *Ibid.*, 57.
81. Finberg, "Why Banish the British School," 6.
82. Finberg, "Reply," 224.
83. Jasanoff, *Edge of Empire*, 6.

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