



Daniel Maclise's *Strongbow and Aoife*: the missing years

PHILIP McEVANSONEYA

DANIEL MACLISE'S WELL-KNOWN AND MUCH-LOVED PAINTING, *THE MARRIAGE OF Strongbow and Aoife* (Plates 1, 2) depicts a highly romanticised version of an historical event. Richard fitz Gilbert or Richard de Clare, Earl of Pembroke and Strigoil, was known by his *nom de guerre*, Strongbow. His assistance was sought by Dermot MacMurrough, King of Leinster, in maintaining power in his kingdom, in return for which he promised his daughter, Aoife, in marriage. In 1170 Strongbow landed in Leinster and was soon victorious. He and Aoife were married in Christ Church Cathedral immediately after Waterford was seized, although Maclise shows the ceremony as taking place on the battlefield. By Maclise's time, the advent of Strongbow in Ireland was seen as the beginning of a series of foreign invasions of Ireland.

Strongbow and Aoife was first exhibited at the Royal Academy (RA) in London in 1854 and bought by Sir Richard Wallace, who subsequently donated it to the National Gallery of Ireland (NGI) in 1879. But what happened to it in between? The present article shows how, over a 25-year period, the painting led a mysterious and somewhat peripatetic life during which its prestige was progressively lost, its condition deteriorated, and its commercial value shrank. It refutes some of the myths about the painting and provides new information about how it passed through various hands and was exhibited in miscellaneous venues, not all of them places that might be considered culturally respectable, until it was, in effect, rescued for the NGI. This secured the painting from what may otherwise have been continued mistreatment, or even loss, as was the case with other great Victorian works that fell out of fashion. *Strongbow and Aoife* could easily have suffered a fate similar to that of other, once admired, works that languished unwanted, such as the large, apocalyptic works of John Martin's Last Judgement series produced in 1851-53 (Tate Britain), the central panel of which, *The Last Judgement*, was cut up in the mid-twentieth century. Like Maclise, Martin was one of many Victorian artists whose posthumous reputation and market declined rapidly. Fortunately, the Judgement series was eventually restored and reunited in the 1970s in the Tate.¹

The present article brings together previously unknown information to provide the

1 – Daniel Maclise (1806-1870), *THE MARRIAGE OF STRONGBOW AND AOIFE* c.1854, oil on canvas, 315 x 513 cm (detail) (National Gallery of Ireland)





2 – Daniel Maclise, *THE MARRIAGE OF STRONGBOW AND AOIFE*
c.1854, oil on canvas, 315 x 513 cm (National Gallery of Ireland)

3 – *William Lake Price*

(1810-1896)

DANIEL MACLISE

c.1858, albumen print, 28 x 24.5 cm

(Royal Academy of Arts, London)

fullest provenance and exhibition history yet established.² It also touches on the exhibition practices and the conduct of the market in English provincial centres, and the alliances of metropolitan-based and provincial auctioneers and dealers. Various scholars have explored Maclise's historical accuracy and how the painting may be interpreted.³ Previous analysis has been carried out primarily through the lenses of 1879 and 1966 – that is to say, taking for granted the presence of the painting in Ireland and the status as a work of national significance that it has acquired since its inclusion in *Cuimhneachán 1916: a commemorative exhibition of the Irish Rebellion 1916* in 1966.⁴ Rather than arguing backwards, the article follows forwards, and provides new evidence for the period from 1854 to 1879, the first phase of the painting's existence.

The RA summer exhibition in 1854 must be the starting point. By then, Maclise was an artist of high repute who had consolidated his professional position in the late 1840s with his contributions to the decorative scheme in the Chamber of the House of Lords in the new Palace of Westminster or Houses of Parliament (Plate 3). *Strongbow and Aoife* was one of the most talked-about paintings exhibited at the RA that year, and the recipient of extensive critical assessment. This was not only for its ambitious scale, but also for its subject matter and visual qualities, not least its compilation of many episodes and details into a more-or-less coherent composition.

Never one to shirk the challenge of working on a large-scale, multi-figure subject, Maclise set out by 1849, when his friend, the Irish actor Charles Macready, saw a study for the subject, to depict the marriage of Strongbow and Aoife knowing that it was on a

list of prescribed subjects drawn up in 1847 for the Painted Chamber at Westminster and to be carried out during a later stage in the work there. It was one of the thirteen subjects having 'reference to the acquisition of the countries, colonies, and important places constituting the British Empire'. The list recorded the intended subject without further elaboration, but it also stated the dimensions of the space allocated to it – 10ft 4in x 16ft 4in (314 x 496 cm), the largest of those envisaged.⁵ There have been mistaken references to *Strongbow and Aoife* as a 'commission'.⁶ In fact, Maclise was not commissioned to paint the subject for the Painted Chamber, but it was presumably in the knowledge of the subject listed in 1847 and in anticipation of receiving such a commission that he produced what was, in effect, a full-scale but speculative demonstration work (315 x 513 cm). The success of this work in the RA exhibition led Maclise's friend, Charles Eastlake, in his capacity as secretary since 1841 of the Fine Arts Commission (FAC), the organisation overseeing the Westminster project, to enquire whether he would either repeat the subject in fresco for a fee of £1,500 or name his price for the canvas, to be placed in the Painted Chamber or elsewhere.⁷ The FAC reported its official proposal

to commission Daniel Maclise, R.A., to paint in fresco, in the Painted Chamber or Conference Hall, the subject of the Marriage of Strongbow and Eva, the subject being one of the series selected by us for that apartment. The design for the Fresco so proposed to be executed will be adapted, according to the requirements of Fresco, from an oil picture of the same subject executed by the artist on his own account, and which he has treated with great ability.⁸

The fact that the oil version was 'executed by the artist on his own account' shows that it was not a commission, and the proposal of a version in fresco was never realised. Maclise did not accept the offer, knowing very well by 1854, that whatever the prestige of the Westminster project, the specific viewing conditions in the Chamber were inimical to the full appreciation of his work because it was, he thought, inadequately lit. The prospect was later raised that Maclise might undertake the whole of the Painted Chamber for £9,000, but nothing came of that. When Eastlake raised the subject of the fresco to be based on the oil version of *Strongbow and Aoife*, Maclise said he was unable to borrow back the painting from John Rushout, 2nd Baron Northwick, to whom it had been sold.⁹ He may have been making excuses, and the practicalities of a loan would have been cumbersome, but Northwick was within his rights to refuse. Other artists such as W.P. Frith, J.F. Lewis and Edward Burne-Jones denied access to their works for engraving or replication.¹⁰ Maclise was getting cold feet and his mind was moving on to even bigger and better things in the form of a future commission for the frescos in the Royal Gallery at Westminster.¹¹

A great deal of critical ink was spilt on *Strongbow and Aoife* when it was shown at the RA. The main recurrent points made by critics included the high achievement of the work for its conception and scale, but opinions were divided over such factors as the integration of the parts into a whole, the success of characterisation, its archaeological authenticity and its colouring. Many similar points of praise and blame were made when it was included in the Maclise memorial exhibition at the RA in 1875.¹² Overall, it can be concluded that however impressive it was thought to be as an exercise, as a work of art it

was a mitigated success. Among the private individuals who recorded their thoughts was Emily Hall. Knowledgeable about art through continental travel, she was a constant visitor to the RA and other annual exhibitions in London. She wrote that:

Maclise has a great picture of an Irish wedding, in the days when they could do such things as be married on the battlefield, but where I don't think the lady would have had six bridesmaids all in brodered dresses with myrtle wreaths round their heads ... as Arabella [Shore] said, the bride looked as if she stood in clothes for the first time and feared they would tumble off the next moment. As for the colouring, it is as Maclise's I think always is – very chalky and disagreeable. They say he paints without any glazing, and to judge by the difference between him and other artists I can well believe it.¹³

Lord Northwick purchased the painting in August 1854 for his gallery at Thirlestane House in Cheltenham for a rumoured £4,000. There is no evidence for this sum, which sounds excessive. Such a high amount seems to have been claimed, in a widely syndicated report, only at the time that a later purchaser bought it in 1879, but it has been incautiously repeated.¹⁴ The contemporary report which is likeliest to be the best informed put the price at 'little short of £2,000'.¹⁵ Mistaken if not mischievous, as the alleged larger sum surely was, had either Northwick or Maclise still been alive in 1879 it might have suited the former to be thought so generous and the latter to have had his work valued so highly. The fact that the sale in 1854 took a while to be concluded (the RA exhibition opened on 1st May) hints that the market for a work of such dimensions and subject matter may not have been competitive, as few would have had premises of sufficient size to accommodate it. Northwick, who was then having a new gallery constructed at Thirlestane, was doubtlessly looking for things to fill it with, and was one of only a few private purchasers to whom it might appeal. Eastlake did not buy it for the FAC then (or for the National Gallery, London (NGL) later), even though some thought it should be acquired 'for the nation'.¹⁶ As the plans for the NGI were barely at an embryonic stage in 1854, this is very unlikely to have meant the Irish nation.

A report of the sale to Northwick gave a lengthy description and critique of the painting, and set out the intention to install it in his new gallery then being built 'for the reception of the works of modern painters'. It was on display there by October 1854 when an account was given of the installation of the new gallery which measured 24ft x 40ft. *Strongbow and Aoife* was hung immediately opposite the entrance with a group of modern British paintings, including works by Maclise's fellow Academicians E.M. Ward, Edward Frost and Frederick Goodall placed nearby, and, on the left-hand wall, Maclise's *Robin Hood*, to which *Strongbow and Aoife* would have corresponded if only in scale.¹⁷ In *Lord Northwick's Picture Gallery at Thirlestaine House* (1846-47), *Robin Hood* may be seen as it was then installed in the middle of the right-hand side (Plate 4). Unfortunately, there is no equivalent image showing how *Strongbow and Aoife* was hung in the gallery.

Strongbow and Aoife was to be in Northwick's possession for only a few years. The collection was broken up in a sale that lasted from 26th July until 30th August 1859 following Northwick's death intestate earlier that year. By that time, the Northwick collection had grown in size to outstrip the NGL and it was freely open to the public.¹⁸



4 – Robert Huskisson (1820-1861), *LORD NORTHWICK'S PICTURE GALLERY AT THIRLESTANE HOUSE* 1846-47, oil on canvas, 81.3 108.6 cm (Yale Center for British Art, New Haven)

Northwick's varied collection of paintings was balanced between continental old masters, including some early renaissance artists such as Giotto and Botticelli, and artists of the modern English school. The Northwick sale, conducted on the premises in Cheltenham, attracted both large crowds and extensive publicity, although the Stowe sale in 1848 meant that it was not unprecedented in attendance, magnitude or press exposure. It was an event of some importance as regards the development of the collections of both the NGL and the NGI. In addition to his role in the FAC, Eastlake was also president of the Royal Academy of Arts (1850-65) and as director of the NGL (1855-65) he bought a number of works for the Gallery at the Thirlestane sale. Over the years, a series of works with Northwick provenances have been obtained by the NGI, starting with a work bought in 1859 in anticipation of the Gallery being built, through to the Jan Steen donated from the Beit collection in 1987.¹⁹

As for *Strongbow and Aoife*, the sale marked the beginning of an unsettled phase in its history. It was bought at the auction by the well-known London dealer, Louis Flatou, who paid 1710 guineas (£1,785). This was a high sum for the work of a contemporary artist, but it seems to have been somewhat less than was originally paid for it by Northwick. Flatou, one of the two principal dealers in modern British art then in London, helped to bring about some dramatic changes in the scale and conduct of the art market. For a successful entrepreneur like him, this was certainly a prestige purchase and a gesture

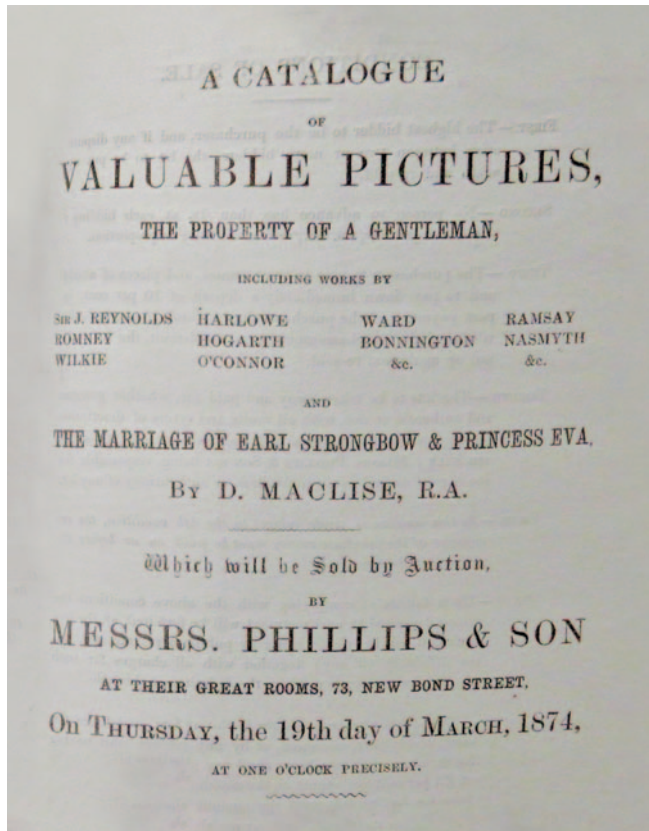
of the sort for which he was famous.²⁰ *Strongbow and Aoife* was clearly a painting with limited potential for resale to a private collector owing to its size, and possibly its Irish subject matter too. As a work he had bought outright, it represented a large capital investment. Flatou, perhaps realising that it might be difficult to sell on such a large work to a collector, soon disposed of it profitably to another London dealer, William Cox, for £2,000, who placed it in his London 'Gallery of Fine Art'.²¹

In London it may well have been a 'grand attraction' as touted in the newspapers, but not before it had been sent on a curious and thinly documented detour to New York. In September 1859, a second exhibition, of French and English paintings, was organised by the London dealer, Ernest Gambart, in collaboration with the New York dealer, Goupil, in the premises of the National Academy of Design. The evidence for this event is exiguous, and it was little commented on by the press (unlike the first such event in 1857-58). It was reported by the *New York Times* that 'Maclise is represented by his celebrated *Strongbow*'.²² It is not possible to say what the circumstances were that led to the inclusion of *Strongbow and Aoife*, and what form of collaboration there may have been between Flatou, Cox and Gambart remains a mystery. It would be fascinating to know what impact, if any, the painting had in New York, especially among Irish immigrants. In 1855 Maclise's *Noah's Sacrifice* (c.1847; Leeds Art Gallery) was exhibited by Gambart at Goupil's in New York. In the 1857-58 exhibition, which was shown in various iterations in New York, Philadelphia and Boston, Maclise's *The Installation of Captain Rock* (Plate 7) was shown, but it was not received with universal acclaim.²³

William Cox was no mean participant in the London art world. His name is frequently recorded in the commerce of art, but the history of his gallery is confused and incomplete. His investment in *Strongbow and Aoife* was an unlikely expenditure: Cox's commercial fortunes at the time were in the doldrums, the art trade was somewhat depressed and Cox's debts were mounting. He was obliged to liquidate some of his stock at Christie's in 1859 in order to repay a debt of £3,000 to the businessman and collector, Joseph Gillott.²⁴ It is likely that Cox knew *Strongbow and Aoife* well by the time of the 1859 sale. He was involved in supplying works of art to Lord Northwick and was a visitor to another family house, Northwick Park, in 1857, if not also on other occasions, and presumably to Thirlestane too.²⁵ Cox soon put the painting to work. By December 1859 it was displayed in his gallery in Berners Street, off Oxford Street in the West End of London. So numerous were the works Cox had bought at the Northwick sale that his gallery was temporarily renamed the Northwick Gallery.²⁶ At the time of Cox's exhibition, the hope first expressed in 1854 that the painting would become national property was repeated.²⁷ It may be doubted that this was a reference to the NGI, although by then it had been founded in legislation and was in the process of being set up.

When, soon after Maclise's death in 1870, the well-known art journalist, James Dafforne, came to compile a book on the painter, he was at a loss to know the whereabouts of *Strongbow and Aoife*. He assumed, correctly, that Flatou had sold it, that is before the sale of his remaining stock in 1867 because it was not included then.²⁸ Presumably it was no longer in Cox's hands as that could easily have been verified because he was still in business, having moved to Pall Mall. The difficulty faced by Dafforne indicates the lack of visibility the painting had from 1860 until it re-emerged in 1874. Its provenance and

5 – Auction catalogue, Phillips & Son, London, March 1874
(British Library, London)



exhibition history between those dates has not been discovered. However, *Strongbow and Aoife* returned to visibility in March 1874 when it was offered at auction by Phillips of London, having been advertised as ‘a grand gallery picture’ (Plate 5).²⁹ The vendor on that occasion was not identified in the sale catalogue, but the auctioneer’s annotated copy of record gives the name as Garrison (or, possibly, Harrison) and the purchaser, at 750 guineas (£787 10s), as ‘Gilbert’, who is likely to be the art dealer Thomas Gilbert.³⁰

By May 1874 *Strongbow and Aoife* was the centrepiece in a new commercial gallery, the Regent Hall, located near what is now Piccadilly Circus in the heart of the West End of London. It was in competition with many other galleries in the vicinity where the annual and commercial exhibitions had just opened, as well as single painting displays such as that of Holman Hunt’s *The Shadow of Death*. The Regent Hall was lauded by the conservative and respectable *Art Journal*, but it could not be denied that it was to be found in a somewhat downmarket locality, being on the same premises as a ramshackle collection of places of entertainment at the east end of Tichborne Street such as the Black Horse Inn, the London Pavilion music hall (the first so named on or near the site), and the erstwhile anatomical museum of Dr Kahn.³¹ The latter had been closed down in 1873 in a manoeuvre by the then powerful vice suppression movement.³² It was in the premises ‘formerly occupied by the notorious Kahn’ that the Regent Hall gallery was established.³³

In the summer of 1874, a visitor, the art critic John Dubouloz, who wrote on

English art for various French publications, recorded his views of Maclise and Regent Hall. He concluded a scathing reference to the ‘inexplicable réputation de Maclise’ with his account of *Strongbow and Aoife*:

With the best will in the world, it is impossible to say the same of Maclise [that he had ‘quelque chose’, like William Etty], who nevertheless imagined himself to be a history painter, and who, in all good faith, believed himself to be the very first, which is easier to say than it is to make others believe it. Maclise has no serious value, and his former colleagues render him a very nasty service by undertaking to convince everyone of it in 1875 [at the next RA winter exhibition which was planned to have a memorial section dedicated to Maclise]. It would have been charitable to leave his works in the domain of the Barnums of Art which drums them up with a great fanfare. It’s painting ‘for Show’, and we are, for example, not surprised to see every evening now, blazing at the corner of Tichborne Street, a huge luminous sign, in these terms:

NOW ON VIEW
 MACLISE’S GREAT PICTURE
 THE MARRIAGE OF STRONGBOW
 SIZE 22 BY 16 FEET
 PRONOUNCED THE GREATEST PICTURE OF MODERN TIMES.
 EXHIBITION.³⁴

This comment took the popular nature of the exhibition and its overt commercialism as a means to mock the work as suitable for Barnum’s circus of human anomalies. It was a more emphatic iteration of a view expressed in 1854 when *The Critic* judged that *Strongbow and Aoife* was ‘conceived in the spirit of *spectacle*, not of legitimate drama, and depends for its effect, not on the manifestation of character or emotion, but on general picturesqueness of attitude’.³⁵ Dubouloz shared the view that it was a meretricious exercise, and this confirmed his low opinion of Maclise.

At the Regent Hall, *Strongbow and Aoife* was exhibited with nearly 300 works, a few of which were named in reports or advertisements.³⁶ It is certain that some of the other exhibits had been bought at auction by the dealer Thomas Gilbert very soon before the Regent Hall opened, and that others were previously or later recorded in his stock. For example, Gilbert exhibited John Pettie’s Shakespearean subject, *Scene in the Temple Gardens (The Origins of the Wars of the Roses)* (RA, 1871) at Birmingham in April, and elsewhere later in 1873, as well as at the Regent Hall in 1874, when its appearance coincided with the publication of an engraving of it in the May issue of the *Art Journal*.³⁷ A painting of this subject and attribution was exhibited by Gilbert in Harrogate in September 1873.³⁸

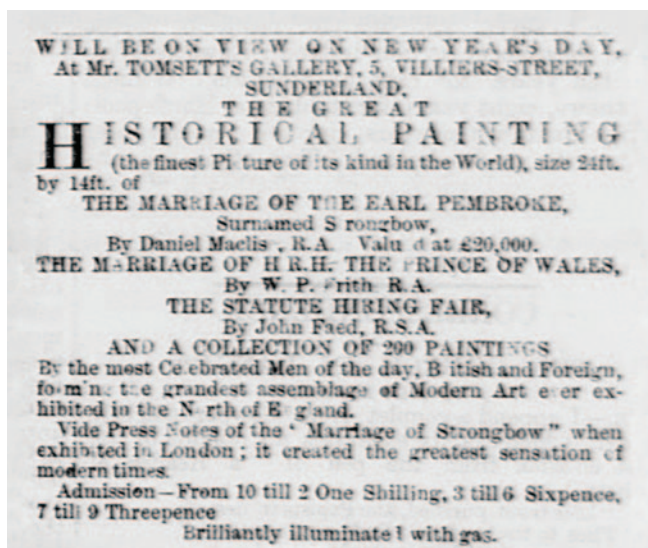
Details of Gilbert’s dealing such as these are hard to reconcile, and hint at the mystery surrounding his activities (see Appendix). Also exhibited at Regent Hall was a replica of W.P. Frith’s *The Marriage of the Prince of Wales with Princess Alexandra of Denmark, Windsor, 10 March 1863* (1863-65, Royal Collection Trust, London), possibly the work now in the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool.³⁹ The stock of the Regent Hall gallery represented a considerable investment. Such evidence, albeit circumstantial rather than conclusive, makes it a strong possibility that Gilbert was closely involved in the Regent Hall.

The details of the ownership and management of the gallery are tantalisingly vague, but it may have had some connection with the short-lived Fine Arts Financial Association (FAFA) of which Gilbert was the manager.⁴⁰ *Strongbow and Aoife* may have been stressed in the advertisements for the Regent Hall exhibition, but its precise ownership is not clear. In 1876 it was presented in other venues alongside works definitely from Gilbert's stock, but it may not then have been his property. Early in 1875 *Strongbow and Aoife* was lent by C.M. Roche to the winter exhibition of the RA, which included a selection of works by Maclise as a memorial tribute. Roche is not recorded in the usual sources as a buyer, lender or vendor of works of art, and has not been identified.⁴¹ It is possible either that Gilbert bought the painting and sold it to Roche, or that Gilbert was the nominal buyer on behalf of Roche, who lent it (or rented it?) to Gilbert to boost his exhibitions.

In his memoir of Maclise, Justin O'Driscoll bemoaned the fact that at the time of the artist's death, the NGI held no work by him (or James Barry, Martin Archer Shee, Francis Danby or William Mulready), and was devoid of works with 'national associations'.⁴² On the occasion of the RA memorial exhibition in 1875, a Dublin newspaper regretted that 'no one has even suggested' obtaining one of Maclise's works exhibited there for his native country, adding that *Strongbow and Aoife* 'ought to be here'. In fact, *Merry Christmas in the Baron's Hall* had been bought for the NGI in 1872, its first Maclise, but it was 'by no means one of his best'.⁴³

By January, and until March 1876, *Strongbow and Aoife* was being exhibited in Sunderland, until it was moved to Newcastle-upon-Tyne between May and June 1876. In Sunderland it was shown by the auctioneer John Tomsett at his 'Fine Art Gallery' or sale room in Villiers Street (Plate 6). Tomsett had started out as a joiner and cabinet-maker, and made the not unusual change to auctioneer.⁴⁴ Entry to see *Strongbow and Aoife* alongside a collection of 200 other paintings cost 1s from 10am to 2pm; 6d from 3 to 6pm, and 3d between 7 and 9pm.⁴⁵ In advertisements, it was claimed that *Strongbow*

6 – *SUNDERLAND DAILY ECHO*,
29th December 1875
(British Library, London)



and *Aoife* was valued at £20,000, but there is no evidence that it, unlike other exhibits, was actually for sale. The alleged value of the painting may have been impressive in itself, but would have been beyond the means of most collectors in the north-east or elsewhere. Therefore, it was displayed as the promotional flagship of ‘the grandest assemblage of Modern Art ever exhibited in the North of England’. Maclise was apparently in good company: alongside *Strongbow and Aoife* were works with attributions to reputable painters such as Frith’s acknowledged replica of *The Marriage of the Prince of Wales with Princess Alexandra of Denmark* and John Faed’s *The Statute Hiring Fair* (aka *The Scotch Hiring Fair*; there is a version of this subject in Wolverhampton Art Gallery).⁴⁶ These were works that had already been exhibited elsewhere by Gilbert, who then styled himself as ‘of Harrogate and London’.

Initially, *Strongbow and Aoife* and the other exhibits were advertised together and without reference to Gilbert. Later in the run, the Maclise was omitted from advertisements, when the remainder of the stock was described as being supplied by Gilbert.⁴⁷ When *Strongbow and Aoife* is listed in advertisements, Gilbert is not mentioned; Gilbert was never explicitly named as the owner or lender of Maclise in connection with these events. This is a tiny piece of admittedly vague evidence regarding the suggestion given above that the painting may have been borrowed from its possible actual owner, Roche. The exhibition at Tomsett’s was further publicised with a half-column long newspaper article headed ‘Exhibition of pictures at Mr. Tomsett’s Gallery’, which, to judge by its content and tone, was an exercise in advertorial.⁴⁸ Be that as it may, it put Maclise’s painting squarely as the main work in the exhibition.

According to local newspaper advertisements, Tomsett’s exhibition was refreshed in March 1876 with new additions by P.F. Poole, Erskine Nicol and W.P. Frith, among others. No full listing of the works exhibited by Gilbert has been found, and the question must be raised as to their quality and probably their authenticity too (see Appendix). On the basis of admittedly vestigial records, Gilbert’s exhibition at Tomsett’s seems to have been consistent with the one shown in London in the Regent Hall. Certainly the principal attractions were the same. It is possible that Gilbert owned *Strongbow and Aoife* in 1874, and it was certainly available to him in 1876. It might be asked whether the owner of *Strongbow and Aoife* (if it was not Gilbert) had some particular connection with the north-east of England. It seems that Gilbert did not, but George Dryden Dale, one of the directors of the FAFA and a shipowner of 38 Cornhill, London, and North Shields, did.

By the spring of 1876 Gilbert and Tomsett were in competition with another dealer, Wolfe Lesser ‘of Beak-street, Regent-street, London’. He was exhibiting at G. Bulman’s ‘spacious Gallery, Fawcett-street, Sunderland’ a selection of ‘High-class Modern Oil Paintings’ by such artists as Charles Hunt, F.R. Lee and ‘R. Stubb’, presumably the Yorkshire painter of marine and landscape scenes, Ralph Reuben Stubbs, and other ‘guaranteed examples’. Lesser, who subsequently also exhibited his holdings at Tomsett’s gallery, was involved in exactly the same sort of activity, with broadly the same stock, as Gilbert, like whom he can occasionally be shown to have handled authentic works.⁴⁹ Indeed, the commercial methods of Gilbert and Lesser bear comparison with other London-based dealers of the era such as Algernon Moses Marsden and Arthur Tooth, who formed alliances with provincial dealers and auctioneers to circulate their stock to indus-

trial cities such as Aberdeen, Bradford, Glasgow and Liverpool, as well as towns such as Harrogate or Whitehaven. Although they were quite common, the collaborations between metropolitan and provincial figures have been little studied.⁵⁰

The administration and economics of nineteenth-century English provincial commercial exhibitions and dealing are enigmatic and remain beyond the scope of the present article. However, this research has thrown up various pieces of evidence that provide a snapshot of the sorts of connections that Tomsett enjoyed. In his case, in the 1870s, this involved the London-based dealers Tooth and Lesser acting as suppliers, as well as Gilbert.⁵¹ This was a different type of activity to the numerous and well-established single-painting exhibitions that were toured around the showrooms of provincial print-dealers in order to boost subscription lists for engravings. There is no evidence of Tomsett being involved in that practice, nor can it be shown that any works similar in eminence to Maclise's *Strongbow and Aoife* were exhibited by him. After those by Frith and Maclise, the most notable work in Tomsett's 1876 exhibition was probably the *Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah* (1852; Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle-upon-Tyne) by John Martin. This was not only for the scale (136.3 x 212.3 cm) of the work, a late example of the large apocalyptic subjects he had produced since 1820s, but also for Martin's status as a son of the north-east of England.⁵²

By mid-1876, *Strongbow and Aoife*, along with the 200 other 'choice works', had been sent on the short journey to Newcastle-upon-Tyne, where they were shown in the Central Exchange News Room and Art Gallery from 4th May to mid-June 1876, where admission cost 6d.⁵³ There is less information about this exhibition than the one in Sunderland, but there is more information about the gallery managers than there is about Tomsett. When the Exchange was founded in 1870 there was an amount of commercial competition in the city, led by Robert Turner's Fine Arts Repository in Grey Street. The Exchange was run by Thomas Pallister Barkas and Thomas Hall Tweedy, who had come to gallery management by different routes. Tweedy was a wood-carver of some eminence and international repute, but he gave it up in favour of dealing. Barkas was firstly a builder, then a bookseller, printer and publisher. He was an archetypal Victorian both as a self-improver through attendance at mechanics' institutes and by auto-didacticism. He also had interests in astronomy, fossils and geology, literature and spiritualism among very many other things, on which he lectured widely in the north-east and published on in various books and journals. However, it would seem that art was never the subject of one of his numerous public lectures. The transition from bookseller to art dealer and exhibition manager was not unusual and Barkas carried fine art prints in his bookshop stock. *Pace* Trevor Fawcett, whose study of English provincial art stops at the 1830s, nineteenth-century English provincial commercial art exhibitions and dealing have never been the subject of a synoptic account. Various groups of provincial collectors such as those in Birmingham or the north-east have been studied, but not the trade and market, the interest in which has been focused on London.⁵⁴

Barkas and Tweedy's first plan was to run exhibitions of works by local artists and of loans from local collectors, but this soon evolved.⁵⁵ One valuable detail given in a biographical account of Barkas is that in the Exchange, 'special collections and pictures by eminent artists, alive and dead, are from time to time submitted to public view by the

lessees, or by the best known art dealers in the kingdom'.⁵⁶ In other words, in addition to their 'permanent exhibition of modern pictures and articles of vertu', or their stock-in-trade, Barkas and Tweedy mounted two sorts of exhibitions – those that they themselves organised, and those that were, in effect, bought in from other dealers. As previously noted, it is very likely that this model was widespread in the provincial art trade.⁵⁷

After 1876, sight of *Strongbow and Aoife* was again lost until it was sold in 1879. It is said, albeit in an isolated comment, that, before that sale, the painting had most recently been exhibited 'at the Aquarium' in London.⁵⁸ Unfortunately this has proved impossible to verify, but, if correct, it raises some intriguing questions. The Royal Aquarium, a vast building that occupied a site opposite Westminster Abbey, opened in 1876 under royal patronage. It was conceived of as a place of popular resort, where various forms of rational entertainment, including a concert hall, a picture gallery and a reading room, were provided in addition to the nominal one. Various art exhibitions were held there, including open exhibitions supervised by a committee of eminent artists as well as a sort of Salon des Refusés of works 'crowded out' from the RA annual exhibition in 1893.⁵⁹ In 1879 its initial respectability may still have been intact, but its original up-market orientation was soon compromised in favour of aerial displays by lightly dressed female acrobats and the exhibition of tattooed men and exotic animals, and as a result it became the focus of characteristically Victorian moral anxieties.⁶⁰ The idea of including a picture gallery alongside other forms of entertainment has echoes of the Regent Hall gallery, and also of more prestigious venues such as Alexandra Palace in London as it was originally conceived.⁶¹ There were many such alternative exhibition venues in nineteenth-century London. For example, on its return from New York, Maclise's *Noah's Sacrifice* was shown in 1858 in the picture gallery attached to the Canterbury Music Hall in Lambeth, among the paintings supplied by dealer, Ernest Gambart.⁶²

Strongbow and Aoife came back onto the market at Christie's in July 1879.⁶³ It was singled out on the catalogue title page as the principal work in the sale (as it had been when sold at Phillips' in 1874), but it was the final lot in a miscellaneous sale with no identified vendors. In the auctioneer's annotated copy of record, the purchaser, at £787 10s (750 guineas), is given as 'Prince'.⁶⁴ A price of 750 guineas was variously reported, but in fact it was not sold because it failed to reach its reserve.⁶⁵ It was bought privately soon after, with Christie's acting as agent by Charles Davis for Sir Richard Wallace, for £800.⁶⁶ Davis and his father, Frederick, were Bond Street art dealers who had been connected with Wallace since at least 1865.⁶⁷

Strongbow and Aoife had certainly declined in commercial value since 1854 or 1859, but it fetched the same sum in 1879 as it had in 1874.⁶⁸ The price achieved in 1879 may be surprising because its condition had deteriorated. It was reported that it had 'repeatedly suffered [from] the rolling and unrolling' that were inevitable for a painting of its size.⁶⁹ While it is certain that the painting had been transported a number of times over long distances, the recent conservation of the painting identified only damage from being on a folding stretcher rather than from rolling.

The price paid by Wallace may be put into context by briefly considering the prices of Maclise's work, albeit works of smaller dimensions. For example, *The Wrestling Scene from As You Like It* (1854) fetched 588 guineas in 1868, rose to 760 guineas in 1874, but



7 – Daniel Maclise, *THE INSTALLATION OF CAPTAIN ROCK*
 1834 (reworked 1843), oil on canvas, 172 x 244 cm (National Gallery of Ireland)

was unsold and bought in at only 250 guineas in 1891. *Alfred the Saxon King, Disguised as a Minstrel, in the Tent of Guthrum the Dane* (c.1852; Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle-upon-Tyne) was sold in 1855 for £690, but fell to 215 guineas in 1888 and yet further to 110 guineas in 1907. It is a conventional truism to say that there was a dramatic reevaluation of mid-century academic painting towards the end of the nineteenth century, and that the value of such work plummeted in the twentieth century until the revival of interest in Victorian art in the 1960s began to take effect. With the benefit of that revival and also the renewed market for Irish art that developed from the 1980s and 1990s, *The Wrestling Scene from As You Like It* sold for £315,000 in 2003, and £337,000 in 2012.⁷⁰ Maclise's *The Installation of Captain Rock* (Plate 7) was valued at €800,000 when donated to the NGI in 2021.

Wallace, who had joined the board of the NGI in January 1879 in succession to Dr William Stokes, offered *Strongbow and Aoife* to the director, Henry Doyle, for the Gallery on 21st July 1879.⁷¹ His letter of offer was published in the press at Doyle's request before it was formally accepted.⁷² The offer was unanimously accepted at the Gallery board meeting on 6th November 1879.⁷³ Doyle acknowledged that the painting had 'repeatedly suffered', and given the eager public anticipation once it was known the painting would soon arrive in the NGI, he was obliged to request patience: 'there must be some delay before the picture is placed in the gallery, owing to the necessity of repairing some damage which it has sustained by having been several times rolled up for convenience in moving on account of its great size.'⁷⁴

News of its presentation by ‘a distinguished patron of the arts’ to the NGI was first published on 25th July 1879, and he was soon identified as Sir Richard Wallace.⁷⁵ *Strongbow and Aoife* went on display in the NGI on 10th November 1879, ‘filling an entire end of the National Gallery’, although it is not clear exactly where that was.⁷⁶ At present, it is the only work displayed on the east wall of the Shaw Room.

Had it not been for Wallace, *Strongbow and Aoife* may now be a work lamented for its obscurity in England, or even its disappearance, rather than one that is celebrated for its interest and merits, which, as a consequence firstly of its display since 1879 in the NGI and secondly of various turns in research and popular enthusiasm since the 1960s, are probably better appreciated now than ever. In the absence of any policy or foresight by the board of the NGI, or other officials, for want of a budget, it was the acumen and generosity of an individual whose connections with Ireland were not particularly close that brought the painting to the NGI. The NGI did not seek special grants in order to secure valuable artefacts in the way that the Royal Irish Academy did to obtain, for example, the ‘Tara’ brooch in 1868 or the bell and shrine of St Patrick in 1872. The arrival of the painting in the NGI initiated a process of rehabilitation. That process, which has developed significantly since 1966, has led to *Strongbow and Aoife* now being seen as Maclise’s principal painting, a work not only of high artistic merit, but also one that in Ireland holds symbolic, national significance and has completely eclipsed his other work, including the frescoes in the Palace of Westminster. It will have been seen that the present article raises more questions than it answers about the history of *Strongbow and Aoife*. Nevertheless, it assembles the fullest account of the history of the painting so far. It is hoped that other sources of information will come to light to help fill in the many remaining gaps in knowledge.

APPENDIX

1 – PROVENANCE: bought by Lord Northwick by August 1854; his sale, Phillips, 26th July and 21 subsequent days [12th August] 1859, lot 1,210, bought by the London dealer, Louis Flatou, 1,710 guineas; sold by Flatou to the London dealer William Cox for £2,000 by December 1859; ...; sold by Garrison (or possibly Harrison), Phillips, 19th March 1874, lot 15, bought by Gilbert for 750 guineas; ...; C.M. Roche when lent to the RA Maclise memorial exhibition in 1875 (cat. no. 78); (anonymous sale), Christie’s, 5th July 1879, lot 200, bought by Charles Davis for Sir Richard Wallace, £800; offered by Wallace to the NGI, 21st July 1879; formally accepted 6th November 1879.

2 – EXHIBITION HISTORY: RA 1854 (379); second exhibition in New York of paintings, the contributions of artists of the French and English Schools, organised by Gambart and Goupil and held at the National Academy of Design, New York, September 1859; William Cox’s gallery, Berners Street, London, by December 1859 until ?January 1860; ...; Regent Hall by 30th May 1874 until c.mid-July 1874; ...; RA Maclise memorial exhibition in 1875 (cat. no. 78); ...; Tomsett’s Gallery, Sunderland, 1st January 1876 – March 1876; (Barkas and Tweedy), Central Exchange Art Gallery, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 4th May – 17th June (possibly later) 1876; ...; possibly at the Royal Aquarium, London, c.1879; NGI, where it was unveiled on 10th November 1879; *Cuimhneachán 1916: a commemorative exhibition of the Irish Rebellion 1916*, NGI, 1966, cat. no. 1.

3 – THOMAS GILBERT is not a well-documented person. From public records it can be shown that he was born on 13th March 1819 in Wigan, and died on 25th June 1887 in Harrogate. In 1852 and 1854 he was

listed as an artist living in Hardy Street (then Bold Street), Liverpool.⁷⁷ There is no entry for him to be found in the biographical dictionaries of artists.⁷⁸ By 1870, and until at least 1875, Gilbert was recorded as an artist in living in Charlotte Street, London, and in the census of 1881 as a 'dealer in works of art' at 10 Royal Parade in Harrogate. His will, originally proved on 15th July 1887 and recording an estate with a value of £1,454, was resworn in January 1889 at £1,769 4s.⁷⁹ In October 1887 the sale of his remaining stock of '200 valuable oil paintings and water-colour drawings' was advertised.⁸⁰ The London address at which he was recorded, 6 Charlotte Street (now 10 Bloomsbury Street), had formerly been the location of Sass's drawing academy. It is quite a substantial premises for an otherwise unknown artist to have occupied exclusively, although it would have provided ample space for a dealer to display his stock.

One wonders exactly what sort of an artist he was. The painter G.E. Hicks, in whose work Gilbert dealt, was convinced he was a forger, but no evidence of this and no other such accusation has been found. In his notebooks, Hicks stated in relation to forged sketches of *Woman's Mission* that: 'Mr Gilbert the dealer appears to have had more than one set of copies made, selling them as originals, 1 set deposited for loan of £200. Another at Leeds; one set at Hotel in Grafton St on view for sale. All forgeries'.⁸¹ 'Mr Gilbert' is undoubtedly to be identified as Thomas Gilbert. For example, in 1864 Thomas Gilbert offered 'The small replica of "WOMAN'S MISSION" by the same eminent Artist [G.E. Hicks]' at Glasgow, and at Dundee without the qualification 'replica'.⁸² In December 1865 'Thomas Gilbert, Bedford-square, London' offered "'Woman's Mission" – Past, Present, and Future' at Huddersfield, and probably at other Yorkshire locations in the same month.⁸³ In February 1866 at Bradford, a work of the same attribution and title was advertised by Gilbert with the additional text: 'She tends us in infancy, consoles us in manhood, and administers comfort in old age. An exquisite work in three dramatic and heart-stirring incidents. One of the greatest attractions of the Royal Academy, 1863, and much and deservedly eulogised by the press and art critics.'⁸⁴ This may have created the impression that the original work was being shown. Hicks recorded that he also sold *The Convalescent* to 'Mr. T. Gilbert' in about 1872.⁸⁵

Gilbert was already active as a dealer by 1873 when a liquidation sale of his stock was advertised and reported.⁸⁶ A catalogue for the sale on 17th and 18th April was prepared by the City auctioneer, H. Southgate, a firm more often connected with literary sales, but no copy has been found. The lots included works with the same attributions and subjects as some of those later exhibited by Gilbert – for example, Frederick Goodall's *The Happy Days of Charles I* and Abraham Solomon's *Too Truthful*. It was also said on this occasion that 'Slavers throwing overboard the dead and dying, typhoon coming on, by J.M.W. Turner RA' was sold for 550 guineas. This does not accord with the details given for the authentic work of the same attribution and title now in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.⁸⁷ Gilbert's stock was circulated widely in Britain and Ireland between about 1864 and 1877, but in the present state of knowledge the details of his operation remain highly mysterious.

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ENDNOTES

The following abbreviation is used:
 NGI National Gallery of Ireland

¹ John Martin, *The last judgement*, 1853, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/martin-the-last-judgement-t01927> (acc. 22nd June 2022); M. Myrone (ed.), *John Martin, Apocalypse*, exhibition catalogue, Tate Britain (London, 2011) 173-83, nos 99-101.

² For example, compare the appendix above with the entry on the NGI website (acc. 22nd June 2022).

³ See S. Bhreathnach-Lynch, 'Imaging the past: the marriage of Strongbow and Aoife – reconstruction and reality' (2000), in Bhreathnach-Lynch, *Ireland's art, Ireland's history: representing Ireland, 1845 to present* (Omaha, NE, 2008) 39-51. N. Weston, *Daniel Maclise:*

- Irish artist in Victorian London* (Dublin, 2001) 210-17; T. Dunne, 'The marriage of Strongbow and Aoife', in P. Murray (ed.), *Daniel Maclise 1806-1870: romancing the past* (Cork and Kinsale, 2008) 70-74; R. Ó Floinn, 'Antiquarian influences in The Marriage of Strongbow and Aoife', in J. Hawkes (ed.), *Making histories* (Donnington, 2013) 385-98; T. Dunne, 'The marriage of Strongbow and Aoife: entertaining history in the interests of the state', in B. Rooney (ed.), *Creating histories: stories of Ireland in art, National Gallery of Ireland* (Dublin and Newbridge, 2016) 135-53, 175; entry by Clare Crowley, E. Mayes, M. Lydon and S. Mancini (eds), *The Marriage of Strongbow and Aoife: conserving a national treasure* (Dublin, 2017). The latter states that the present folding stretcher of the painting is 'most certainly the same one that Maclise commissioned for its 1879 journey from London to Dublin', 32. For Maclise, who died in 1870, perhaps read Wallace. It is possible that from 1854 the painting was on a folding stretcher. According to a note dated April 1966 in the painting's NGI curatorial file, when the painting was prepared for inclusion in *Cuimhneachán 1916: a commemorative exhibition of the Irish Rebellion 1916*, held at the NGI in 1966, the stretcher then bore a label stating that the painting had been framed in July 1879 by the London firm of Vokins of Great Portland Street.
- 4 Dunne, 'Entertaining history', 135. Dunne also noted the renaming by 1980 of Maclise's 'Eva' as 'Aoife'.
 - 5 Weston, *Daniel Maclise*, 211. She suggested that what Macready saw was possibly the water-colour version of the subject (NGI.6315). Fine Arts Commission (FAC), *Seventh report* (London, 1847) 14-15.
 - 6 See Dunne, 'Entertaining history', 136; Mayes et al, *Conserving a national treasure*, 18.
 - 7 D. Robertson, *Sir Charles Eastlake and the Victorian art world* (Princeton, 1978), 344.
 - 8 FAC, *Tenth Report* (London, 1854) 8.
 - 9 Robertson, *Sir Charles Eastlake*, 344.
 - 10 E. Cooper, *Art and modern copyright: the contested image* (Cambridge, 2018), 116-19.
 - 11 Robertson, *Sir Charles Eastlake*, 344; W.J. O'Driscoll, *A memoir of Daniel Maclise, RA* (London, 1871) 109-14.
 - 12 See, for example, *Art Journal*, 1854, 166; *Athenaeum*, 6th May 1854, 559; *Critic*, 15th May 1854, 275; *Examiner*, 29th Apr 1854, 261; *New Monthly Magazine*, May 1854, 45-47. The first two are discussed by Weston, *Daniel Maclise*, 215. *Freeman's Journal*, 4th Jan 1875; *Illustrated London News*, 9th Jan 1875; *The Tablet*, 13th Mar 1875.
 - 13 A.R. Mills, *The Halls of Ravenswood: more pages from the journals of Emily and Ellen Hall* (London, 1967) 110.
 - 14 *Worcestershire Chronicle*, 12th July 1879; Dunne 'Entertaining history', 146.
 - 15 'Thirlestane House', *Cheltenham Looker-On*, 12th Aug 1854, 566-67. It is plausible that the 'Critical notices' on the Thirlestane collection that were originally published in the *Cheltenham Looker-On* and later gathered together as *Hours in the picture gallery of Thirlestane House*, were informed by William Court, the house steward: O. Bradbury and N. Penny, 'The picture-collecting of Lord Northwick: part I', *Burlington Magazine*, vol. 144, no. 1193, 2002, 485-96: 496; Bradbury and Penny, 'The picture-collecting of Lord Northwick: part II', *Burlington Magazine*, vol. 144, no. 115, 2002, 606-17. It is reasonable to assume that Court was the source of other information on the collection provided to the principal local journal. With the exception of the *Irish Times* and the (London) *Times*, all newspaper articles have been consulted via the commercial website, British Newspaper Archives.
 - 16 *Art Journal*, 1854, 168.
 - 17 Robin Hood, Sotheby's, 28th November 2002, lot 20. 'Lord Northwick's Picture Galleries', *Cheltenham Looker-On*, 28th Oct 1854, 763.
 - 18 *Hours in the picture gallery of Thirlestane House* (Cheltenham, 1846) 5; Bradbury and Penny, 'Picture-collecting of Lord Northwick: part I', 485.
 - 19 See Bradbury and Penny, 'Picture-collecting of Lord Northwick: parts I and II'.
 - 20 J. Maas, *Gambart: Prince of the Victorian art world* (London, 1975) 135-9 and *passim*, but without reference to Strongbow and Aoife.
 - 21 'Purchasers names and prices', supplement to *Catalogue of the late Lord Northwick's extensive and magnificent collection ... at Thirlestane House, Cheltenham...*, 2nd edition (London, 1859) 17, footnote.
 - 22 *New York Times*, 10th September 1859, quoted by S.P. Casteras, *English Pre-Raphaelitism and its reception in America in the nineteenth century* (Rutherford and London, 1990) 86. *Second exhibition in New York of paintings: the contributions of artists of the French & English schools ... at the National Academy of Design...*

- (New York, 1859). The efforts of the present writer to obtain a reproduction of the unique copy of this catalogue in the Philadelphia Academy of Arts have been unsuccessful. This exhibition was not reported in the leading American art journal, *The Crayon*, and only a brief account appeared in the *Cosmopolitan Art Journal*, III, no. 5, Dec 1859, 236-37, but without mention of Maclise.
- ²³ This is not mentioned in the exhibition history for *Noah* given in R. Ormond and J. Turpin, *Daniel Maclise 1806-1870*, exhibition catalogue, National Portrait Gallery, London, and National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin (London, 1972) 93, cat. no. 98. 'Reviews. Maclise's Sacrifice of Noah', *The Crayon*, 18th Apr 1855, 249; 'The Fine Arts', *Putnam's Monthly Magazine*, May 1855, 554-57. *Catalogue of the American exhibition of British art, at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts: oil pictures and water-colors* (Philadelphia, 1858), cat. no. 1; S.P. Casteras, 'The 1857-58 exhibition of English art in America and critical responses to Pre-Raphaelitism', in L.S. Ferber and W.H. Gerdtts (eds), *The new path: Ruskin and the American Pre-Raphaelites*, exhibition catalogue, Brooklyn Museum and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (New York, 1985) 109-33: 113.
- ²⁴ Maas, *Gambart*, 98. Jeanie Chapel, 'The papers of Joseph Gillott (1799-1872)', *Journal of the History of Collections*, vol. 20, no. 1, 2008, 37-84: 58. Cox was later to handle many works by Maclise, for example, lending three works to the Dublin Loan Museum of Art Treasures in 1873.
- ²⁵ Chapel, 'Papers of Joseph Gillott', 58.
- ²⁶ See 'Cox's Northwick Gallery', *Morning Post*, 1st Jan 1860.
- ²⁷ *Art Journal*, 1860, 29.
- ²⁸ *Pictures by Daniel Maclise, R.A. with descriptions and a biographical sketch of the painter* (London, n.d., but c.1871) 40-41. In fact, a deal of Flatou's stock remained with his widow, later Mrs Tanton, and was sold at intervals.
- ²⁹ *The Hour*, 28th February 1874.
- ³⁰ Phillips & Son, London, 19th Mar 1874, lot 15: British Library, London, shelfmark S.C.Phillips.
- ³¹ *Art Journal*, 1874, 191; 'Great Windmill Street Area' in F.H.W. Sheppard (ed.), *Survey of London: vols. 31 and 32, St James Westminster, part 2* (London, 1963) 41-56, details the vicinity but without reference to Regent Hall, which does not appear on the London Gallery Project website: <https://learn.bowdoin.edu/fletcher/london-gallery/> (acc. 22nd June 2022). Tichborne Street was found at the southern end of Regent Street and just north of Piccadilly Circus, and was demolished in the construction of Shaftesbury Avenue in 1884-86: 'Great Windmill Street Area', 'Shaftesbury Avenue', *Survey of London: vols. 31 and 32*, 68-84. *The Art Journal*, 1874, 191, gave the gallery address as 20 Piccadilly.
- ³² A.W. Bates, "'Indecent and demoralising representations": public anatomy museums in mid-Victorian England', *Medical History*, 52, 2008, 1-22.
- ³³ 'Art notes', *Illustrated Review*, 20th May 1874, 330. This change of use is not noted in 'Great Windmill Street Area'. This exhibition space was constructed in the 1780s or 1790s above part of the stable yard of the Black Horse. The remainder of the yard was roofed over in 1859-60, becoming the London Pavilion.
- ³⁴ J. Dubouloz, 'Lettres anglaises', *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 2e série, X, no. 206, August 1874, 175-84: 176. Translation by the present author.
- ³⁵ *The Critic*, 15th May 1854, italics in the original.
- ³⁶ *Art Journal*, 1874, 191; *The Graphic*, 30th May 1874; *Illustrated London News*, 30th May 1874; *The Standard*, 19th May 1874. *The Graphic* referred to a catalogue, but no copy has been found.
- ³⁷ *Morning Post*, 19th Apr 1873.
- ³⁸ *Leeds Times*, 19th July 1873; *Harrogate and Boston Spa News*, 12th Sept 1873. This work exists as both a sketch and a finished work (M. Hardie, *John Pettie* (London, 1908) 224), but it is not known which is the version in question here.
- ³⁹ O. Millar, *The Victorian pictures in the collection of Her Majesty the Queen*, 2 vols (Cambridge, 1992) I, 68-73, cat. no. 239.
- ⁴⁰ The prospectus of the Association was widely advertised (*Daily Telegraph*, 8th Mar 1873). The Association was set up to provide interest-bearing loans to artists and others on the security of works of art that would be sold on commission by the Association. It seems never to have filed accounts and was compulsorily wound up. An organisation of the same name was in operation by the autumn of 1872 (*Yorkshire Post*, 26th Oct 1872), well before the articles of association were drawn up in 1873. Minimal records of the Association are to be found in the company file at the National Archives Kew, BT 31/1820/7046.

- ⁴¹ I am grateful to Mark Pomeroy, RA Archive, who reported that the RA has no record of Roche. The only C.M. Roche to be found in directories or in records of births, deaths and marriages is Charles Mills Roche (or Mills-Roche), of 33 Old Jewry, London, a solicitor and auctioneer. Roche is not known to have been connected with the FAFA. On occasion, Gilbert apparently used a proxy or pseudonym, 'Mr Coleman': *Middlesborough & Stockton Gazette*, 24th Apr 1873; *Boston Spa News*, 12th Sept 1873, and it might be wondered whether the same does not apply to Roche.
- ⁴² O'Driscoll, *Memoir of Daniel Maclise*, 239-40.
- ⁴³ *The Warder*, 20th Feb 1875. These comments raise questions outside the scope of the present article regarding the initially limited and slow growth of works of the Irish School in the NGI. See S. Breathnach-Lynch, 'A National Gallery for Ireland: issues of ideological significance' (2002), in Breathnach-Lynch, *Ireland's art, Ireland's history*, 15-37: 29-36.
- ⁴⁴ Census 1851, 1861, 1871; *The Post Office Directory of Durham and Northumberland* (London, 1879) 383.
- ⁴⁵ *Sunderland Daily Echo*, 12th Jan 1876.
- ⁴⁶ *ibid.*, 29th Dec 1875. Frith's original was toured to many venues in Britain and Ireland, including Belfast and Dublin in April-July 1868, and Sunderland in c.1869 according to the *Sunderland Daily Echo*, 10th Jan 1876.
- ⁴⁷ *ibid.*, 29th Dec 1875, 26th Feb 1876.
- ⁴⁸ *ibid.*, 10th Jan 1876.
- ⁴⁹ *ibid.*, 14th Mar 1876, 12th Nov 1876; V.G. Swanson, *The biography and catalogue raisonné of the paintings of Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema* (London, 1990) 131, cat. no. 55, *Flemish interior in the fourteenth century* (unlocated). Wolfe Lesser was a member of a family of dealers more widely involved in the art trade. His brother, the modestly named Lesser Lesser, was a respected Bond Street dealer.
- ⁵⁰ K. Matyjaskiewicz, 'Algernon Moses Marsden, "the most enterprising of picture dealers"', *Burlington Magazine*, vol. 164, no. 1434, 2022, 874-87: 876, 885; *Sunderland Daily Echo*, 14th Oct 1877. The main reason for this gap in studies must be the absence of even the most basic records other than newspaper advertisements and reports.
- ⁵¹ *Sunderland Daily Echo*, 28th Feb 1876.
- ⁵² *ibid.*, 13th Mar 1876. Myrone, *John Martin, Apocalypse*, 210, fn.116, reports a gap in the provenance of this work from 1853-92, omitting to mention that it was exhibited alongside Maclise in Sunderland. In 1892 it was sold from the collection or stock of William Wardle, carver, framer, gilder and art collector of Grey Street, Newcastle, who died in 1891 and not 1892 as in *ibid.*
- ⁵³ *Newcastle Daily Journal*, 3rd May 1876.
- ⁵⁴ T. Fawcett, *The rise of English provincial art: artists, patrons, and institutions outside London, 1800-1830* (Oxford, 1974). C. Coan, 'Birmingham patrons, collectors, and dealers 1830-1880', unpublished MA dissertation, University of Birmingham, 1980; J. Vickers et al, *Pre-Raphaelites: painters and patrons in the north east*, exhibition catalogue, Laing Art Gallery (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1989). D.S. Macleod in *Art and the Victorian middle class: money and the making of cultural identity* (Cambridge, 1996), refers to about forty art dealers of whom only nine operated solely or partly in six centres outside London – Birmingham, Bradford, Glasgow, Liverpool, Manchester and Sheffield.
- ⁵⁵ *Newcastle Guardian & Tyne Mercury*, 28th May 1870.
- ⁵⁶ 'Mr Thomas Pallister Barkas, FGS', *Light, a Journal of Psychical, Occult and Mystical Research*, no. 5, 23rd May 1885, 244-45: 244.
- ⁵⁷ John Martin's *Last Judgement* series was exhibited at The Exchange in 1871; *Newcastle Guardian and Tyne Mercury*, 2nd Sept 1871. On the long exhibition route followed by these works, see Myrone, *John Martin, Apocalypse*, 175, 182-83.
- ⁵⁸ *The Times*, 12th July 1879.
- ⁵⁹ See, for example, 'The picture gallery at the Royal Aquarium, Westminster', *Art Journal*, 1876, 93; *The Globe*, 13th Apr 1893.
- ⁶⁰ J.M. Munro, *The Royal Aquarium: failure of a Victorian compromise* (Beirut, 1971); P. McEvansoneya, "'A libel in paint": religious and artistic controversy around P.H. Calderon's "Renunciation of St Elizabeth of Hungary"', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, I, no. 2, 1996, 254-79.
- ⁶¹ Alexandra Palace first opened in May 1873, but along with the inaugural loan exhibition of works of art, it was burnt down (for the first time) two weeks later.
- ⁶² This is not mentioned in the exhibition history for *Noah* given in Ormond and Turpin, *Daniel Maclise*, cat. no. 98. *The Builder*, 6th Nov 1858, 746; Maas, *Gambart*, 69; R.D. Altick, *The*

- shows of London* (Cambridge, MS, and London, 1987) 502-03.
- ⁶³ Christie's, 5th July 1879, lot 200.
- ⁶⁴ National Art Library, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, C/SAL Special Collections, Sales catalogues priced.
- ⁶⁵ *Freeman's Journal*, 14th July 1879.
- ⁶⁶ Wallace Collection Archive (WCA), London, Davis to Wallace, 19th July 1879 (kindly sent by Morwenna Roche). A. Graves, *Art sales from early in the 18th century to early in the 20th century* (1918-21; reprinted Bath, 1973) 193, records C.M. Roche as the vendor and the price of £800 to 'C. Davis', as if those were the details of the auction rather than the subsequent private sale.
- ⁶⁷ S.S. Jervis, 'Charles Davis, the fifteenth Duke of Norfolk, and the formation of the collection of furniture at Arundel Castle', *Furniture History*, 41, 2005, 231-48; S. Higgott, *The most fortunate man of his day: Sir Richard Wallace, connoisseur, collector & philanthropist* (rev. ed, London, 2019).
- ⁶⁸ The 1879 sale was sometimes commented on using inaccurate information; see, for example, *Newcastle Courant*, 18th July 1879.
- ⁶⁹ *The Times*, 12th July 1879.
- ⁷⁰ Graves, *Art Sales*, 192-93. On the origins of *The Wrestling Scene from 'As You Like It'*, see P. McEvansoneya, 'Daniel Maclise and a bankrupt patron', *Irish Arts Review Yearbook*, 12, 1996, 126-129. Christie's, 19th-20th Feb 2003, lot 38, and 13th Dec 2012, lot 20. Maclise is positioned in the rise of the art market between 1851 and 1871 by J. Piggot, 'The golden age of art', *Art Journal*, 1871, 277-80. Maclise's prices were thought to be surprisingly low at the time of his studio sale in 1870. G. Reitlinger, *The economics of taste*, 3 vols (London, 1961-70) I, *The rise and fall of picture prices 1760-1960*.
- ⁷¹ NGI Archive, Minute Book no. 2 (1865-79) 321, 16th Jan 1879; 336-37, 6th Nov 1879, Wallace to Doyle, 21st July 1879, partly reproduced in Mayes et al., *Conserving a national treasure*, 11; WCA, Doyle to Wallace, 25th July 1879.
- ⁷² See, for example, Henry Doyle, letter to the Editor, *Belfast News-Letter*, 1st Aug 1879.
- ⁷³ NGI Archive, Minute Book no. 2, 336-37.
- ⁷⁴ *Belfast News-Letter*, 1st Aug 1879, 7; WCA, Doyle to Wallace, 1st Aug 1879: '...I am afraid there will be considerable delay in restoring the picture and making it ready to hang in its place, I have found [?] a very good one for it.'
- ⁷⁵ *Freeman's Journal*, 25th July 1879; *Irish Times*, 31st July 1879.
- ⁷⁶ *Freeman's Journal*, 10th Nov 1879, and not in November 1881 as stated by Higgott, *The most fortunate man of his day*, 303.
- ⁷⁷ Birth record, Hope Street Chapel, Wigan; marriage certificate, 1st Mar 1852; baptism record for his daughter, Alice Anne, 28th Mar 1854. *Yorkshire Gazette*, 12th Nov 1887.
- ⁷⁸ See, for example, E. Bénézit, *Dictionary of artists*, Oxford Art Online (acc. 22nd June 2022); M. Bennett, *Merseyside painters, people & places*, 2 vols (Liverpool, 1978); E. Morris and E. Roberts, *The Liverpool Academy and other exhibitions of contemporary art in Liverpool 1774-1867: a history and index of artists and works exhibited* (Liverpool, 1998); C. Wood, *Dictionary of Victorian painters*, 2nd ed (Woodbridge, 1978).
- ⁷⁹ *Post Office Directory London*, 1870-75; Census 1881; National Probate Calendar. His will, dated 15 July 1887, refers somewhat unclearly to 'the stock of pictures in Gallery stock in Melbourne in the hands of A. Fletcher & pictures elsewhere'. Alexander Fletcher was the agent in Melbourne for English dealers but his precise connection with Gilbert remains elusive: C. Jordan, 'Fletcher's of Collins Street: Melbourne's leading nineteenth-century art dealer', *La Trobe Journal* 75 (2005), 77-93.
- ⁸⁰ *Leeds Mercury*, 8th October 1887. A catalogue was said to be in preparation but no copy has been found.
- ⁸¹ Hicks's notebooks, cited by R. Allwood, *George Elgar Hicks, Painter of Victorian life*, exhibition catalogue, Geffrye Museum, London, and Southampton Art Gallery (London, 1982) 55. Unfortunately, Allwood, *G.E. Hicks*, 33, seems to confuse Thomas Gilbert with the Sheffield art dealer James Gilbert, and this error has been repeated by Macleod, *Art and the Victorian middle class*, 257, fn.33. On James Gilbert, see Chapel, 'Papers of Joseph Gillott'.
- ⁸² *Glasgow Daily Herald*, 13th Apr 1864; *Dundee Courier & Argus*, 25th Apr 1864.
- ⁸³ *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 16th Dec 1865.
- ⁸⁴ *Bradford Observer*, 8th Feb 1866.
- ⁸⁵ Allwood, *G.E. Hicks*, 57.
- ⁸⁶ *London Evening Standard*, 14th Apr 1873; *Art Journal*, 1873, 189.
- ⁸⁷ M. Butlin and E. Joll, *The paintings of J.M.W. Turner*, 2 vols, rev. ed. (New Haven and London, 1984), I, 236-37, cat. no. 385.