

**Serving the Empire:
P&O, Design, Identity and Representation (1837-1969)**

Two Volumes

Volume One - Text

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Abstract

The thesis examines the place of art and design in the life of the *Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company* (P&O). In particular, the thesis examines P&O's art and design in the context of the company's evolving role in the networks of the British Empire and Commonwealth from the company's foundation in 1837 to the closure of its liner service in 1969. This contributes a different perspective to existing debates which have not yet focused on the role of everyday corporate art and design in Victorian maritime empire, the persistence of maritime empire in twentieth century art and design, or the impact of decolonisation on Britain's maritime identity and culture after 1949. Drawing on P&O's business archive held at the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, the thesis illustrates the case for a nuanced view of imperialism and culture beyond the simple monoliths of good and evil, and beyond generic characterisation as either corporate pride or propaganda. The research demonstrates how Britain's imperial-maritime culture adapted a variety of art and design forms and functions at different times and places in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It reveals a story of imperial change, instability and uncertainty, as much as it does corporate power, order and control. The extended post-colonial timeframe identifies how melancholic and nostalgic imperial echoes persist and return in corporate narratives long after the formal end of the Empire.

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List of Abbreviations

AOP	Author's own photograph, followed by source.
HE	Historic England Archive.
BIS	British India Steam Navigation Company.
BL	British Library.
NMM/CC	National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, Collections catalogue.
NMM/LC	National Maritime Museum Greenwich, Library catalogue.
NMM/OSN	National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, Orient Steam Navigation Company business archive
NMM/P&O	National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, P&O business archive
NMM/UEC	National Maritime Museum Greenwich, Uncatalogued Ephemera Collection.
NPG	National Portrait Gallery, London.
OSN	Orient Steam Navigation Company. Popularly known as The Orient Line or just Orient.
P&O	The Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company. This is unless quoting or referring to an historical document using a different formulation (such as 'P. & O. S. N. Co.,' or 'The Oriental Company') in which case the text will follow the original.
POH	P&O Heritage Collection, London.
VAM	Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

A note on the text:

Ship names appear in italics and on first appearance in any given section of the thesis will be followed in brackets by the year in which the vessel was registered e.g. *Victoria* (1887). If the vessel was registered for a P&O subsidiary then the company name will also appear in brackets e.g. *Orion* (1935 for OSN). For a full P&O fleet history please see Stephen Rabson and Kevin O'Donoghue, *P&O A Fleet History* (Kendal: World Ship Society, 1988).

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Introduction:

The Persistence and Difference of Imperial Art and Design.

While writing the proposal for this research in December 2012, I discovered that my great-great-uncle, Alfred Ellis, was a steward and barman on board P&O liners at the beginning of the twentieth century.¹ I had no personal contact with Alfred but my mother showed me a photograph (fig. 1), and a small collection of postcards he sent to his wife Edith in Britain, from as far afield as Kobe and Shanghai.

Amongst Alfred's possessions was a fascinating souvenir publication called *P&O Sketches*, created for P&O by the artist and illustrator Harry Furniss (fig 2).² Reading popular histories of the company I quickly discovered that: 'P&O is as old as seagoing steamships and its story weaves like a thread through the history of the British Empire', its ships becoming 'the natural way for generations of English men and women to travel to India and the Far East'.³ Alfred's collection of objects created a doorway for me into an unknown and intriguing world of art, design and maritime empire. Furniss' sketches and descriptions vividly illustrate scenes of everyday life on board P&O ships at the end of the nineteenth century (fig. 3). According to Furniss: 'life on board a P&O steamer is one continual round of pictures kaleidoscopic in its quick change and variety of colour.'⁴ The sketches are highly evocative, and include familiar and less familiar names and places: 'lascars at work', 'a Tommy Atkins returning home after service in India', camels at Aden, the Grand Oriental Hotel in Colombo, 'Tiffin' and 'Sunday Morning Parade'.

¹ In 1915, for instance, Alfred worked as a Barman on P&O's *Simla* (1894) and as a Second Saloon Steward on *Maloja* (1911). See 'Crew Lists of the British Merchant Navy, 1915', online resource: [<http://1915crewlists.rmg.co.uk/>, accessed 5 September 2016].

² Harry Furniss, *P&O Sketches in Pen and Ink* (London: Studio of Illustration, 1898).

³ David Howarth and Stephen Howarth, *The Story of P&O* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1986), inside front cover.

⁴ Furniss, *P&O Sketches*, p. 6.

The corporate sketchbook provoked a number of initial questions: what was the precise relationship of the company to the British Empire? How did it evolve such a role, and crucially for me as an art and design historian, what part did P&O's art and design play in shaping and sustaining its distinctive corporate-imperial way of life? Finally, how did the company's imperial image transform into the cruise holiday narratives of pleasure and relaxation I remembered in television advertisements from my childhood?

Developing these initial questions in an academic context, this thesis explores P&O's use of art and design from the perspective of its evolving role in the transport, communication and defence networks of the British Empire and Commonwealth, from the company's foundation in 1837 until the closing of its liner voyages in 1969.⁵ The timeframe is designed to enable a long view of the emergence and development as well as the tensions and anxieties of P&O's corporate-imperial identity in different historical, commercial and political circumstances. The thesis is diverse in the range of media it investigates, considering baggage labels, cruise brochures and the design of on board rhythms and regulations as much as traditional ship portraits and office architecture. This is not undertaken with a view to comprehensiveness, rather with the intention of illustrating the pervasive nature of art, design and empire, in the everyday practice of corporate life in Britain in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The first chapter locates the thesis within the existing academic landscape, identifying the inter-disciplinary, critical and archival approach it adopts. The chapter

⁵ The closing of P&O's liner services between 1969 and 1973 can be understood as a clear sign of the end of the company's historic imperial role. The liner as a distinctive mode of point-to-point travelling had for over a hundred and thirty two years provided the indispensable lines of communication, transportation and defence across Britain's maritime Empire in the east. In 1969 P&O closed its liner service from the UK to New Zealand and the Far East. In the same year, *Himalaya* was the company's last liner to leave the Tilbury dock which P&O had used regularly since 1874. In January 1970, *Chusan* made P&O's last liner voyage to India, and the company's last ever liner voyage sailed from Southampton in 1973. Ruth Artmonsky and Susie Cox, *P&O Across the Oceans, Across the Years. A Pictorial voyage* (Suffolk: Antique Collectors Club, 2012), p. 44.

explores the intersection of British art and design history, with imperial and maritime history, and cultural and post-colonial studies. Chapters two to five proceed following a broadly chronological order. Chapter two (1837-1869) explores the role of P&O's earliest pictures and practices in the initial intertwining of corporate and imperial interests in the middle decades of the nineteenth century. Chapter three (1870-1903) investigates the way in which P&O's use of art and design evolved and expanded as its role in empire grew. Beyond associating it with the political and commercial interests of empire, P&O's art and design embedded the company more intimately within the social and moral imperial landscape. The chapter also detects an underlying ambiguity in P&O's relationship with the Empire, a growing confluence of colonial desire and pride, combined with distaste and dissatisfaction. Chapter four (1904-1945) pursues the theme further, suggesting that while P&O's art and design during this period may be seen reaching the pinnacle of the corporation's imperial narrative and power, it also reveals an increasing ambivalence about imperial developments, and anxiety about the future. Chapter five (1946-1969) explores the period at the formal end of the British Empire (1949), the creation of the Commonwealth and the rise of commercial air travel. It asks how P&O re-deployed its art and design to negotiate these challenging new political and commercial circumstances.

The thesis illustrates the case for a nuanced view of imperialism and culture beyond the simple monoliths of good and evil, and beyond generic characterisation as either corporate pride or propaganda. With P&O as a case study the chapters demonstrate how Britain's imperial-maritime culture adapted a variety of art and design forms and functions at different times and places in the nineteenth and twentieth century. This reveals a story of imperial change, instability and uncertainty, as much as it does power, order and control. The extended post-colonial timeframe also

identifies how melancholic and nostalgic echoes of imperial attitudes and ideas haunted the corporate maritime sphere in the decades after the formal end of empire.

The account offers an alternative to a modernist-centric narrative of modern British art and design, and casts doubt on assumptions of progress and quality. This is connected to a more general argument which contributes to the integration of art and design history with other relevant disciplines, in this case, British imperial, corporate and maritime history. In short, the thesis illustrates the persistence and difference of British imperial art, design and maritime culture in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

*

Chapter One: History and Historiography

Introduction

This thesis concerns the role that art and design played in the life of the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company (P&O) between 1837 and 1969. It examines the way in which P&O's art and design created a powerful public image, elevating the company above the status of a mere commercial body to a proud imperial agency. The aim of this chapter is to locate the thesis, its aims, key questions and methodology, within existing bodies of knowledge and to identify its intended contribution. The first section examines histories of nineteenth and twentieth century British Empire. It locates the thesis in the transition in scholarship away from thinking about the British Empire in monolithic terms towards recognising its greater complexity and difference. The topics discussed are: British Empire and its relationship to national identity; the emergence of cultural imperialism; British maritime history as a distinct sub-discipline of historical studies, and the themes of empire, trade and commerce; Maritime history's own cultural turn; and lastly questions concerning the end of the British Empire and issues around decolonization.

The second section examines similar questions of empire and identity from the perspective of research in British art, design and visual culture. This explores: British art and empire in general; the rise of interest in the role design has played in shaping national and imperial identities; research concerning the role of landscape painting and marine painting in empire; interest in national and international exhibitions, and wider exhibitionary culture in Britain from the Victorian to the new Elizabethan periods; and finally, research concerning post-1945 British art, design and culture, and questions of decolonization. The third section examines existing research concerning both the

history and the art and design of P&O. Each section will indicate the intended contribution of the thesis to the existing fields.

1. Modern British Empire History: From the Monolithic to the Pluralistic

1.1 General

P&O was founded in a period of relative peace and prosperity in British history after the end of the Napoleonic Wars (1793-1815). The nineteenth century has in the past been characterised as Britain's classic Imperialist age, the century in which Britain developed the largest Empire in human history, reaching its geographical and economic height at the beginning of the twentieth century. H. E. Marshall's *Our Empire Story*, originally published in 1908 for children, admitted that mistakes had been made in the pursuit of Empire, but, unsurprisingly, recounted a story that was a decidedly positive and affirmative one.⁶ Beginning in the 1960s, after the formal end of the British Empire, many historians began to see in Britain's imperialist age a shameful record of racial violence, exploitation and subjugation of other peoples.⁷ From these perspectives, P&O's art and design would be seen as either an expression of a proud imperial heritage or an instrument for the propagation of a deeply disturbing imperial ideology. This thesis, however, aims to contribute to more recent scholarship which is increasingly sceptical of such broad and sweeping views and instead aims to recognise less the monolithic nature of Empire and more its ambiguities, local complexities, digressions and differences across space and time. The imperial historian John Darwin, for example, has argued against thinking of Empire in

⁶ H. E. Marshall, *Our Empire Story. Stories of India and the greater colonies, told to boys and girls* (London: T. C. & E. C. Jack, 1908), cited in John Darwin, *Unfinished Empire: The Global Expansion of Britain* (London: Penguin, 2013), p. 2.

⁷ There were earlier critical histories such as J. A. Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study* (1902) but these were not widely influential until much later. See Darwin, *Unfinished Empire*, chapter 1, 'Imagining Empire', pp. 1-32.

monolithic terms.⁸ Darwin argues that any singular conception will be necessarily limited since the Empire itself lacked ideological coherence and political solidarity. Instead he argues for what can be called a pluralistic account of Empire. It would be difficult, Darwin suggests, to argue for a shared experience of Empire in Barbados, Uganda, South Africa, Singapore, New Zealand and India. Rather what is needed is an account of Empire that, 'explains more convincingly how Britain's imperial world was constructed. It will need to do justice to the extraordinary variety of colonial societies – and hence to the variety and complexity of their post-colonial successors.'⁹ From a domestic British perspective too, the history of Empire, 'needs to acknowledge the pluralism and diversity of British society [...] What made the British so adept as Empire Builder was, in part, the exceptional range and variety of interests, skills and activities mobilized by the prospects of expansion abroad.'¹⁰

For Darwin, another aspect of the more complex picture of British Empire, comes from the different levels of co-operation and coercion within particular regions since the British were virtually always only one element in much larger political, economic and cultural equations. In settler communities Empire was not a simple case of domination and subjection. Although both might be present, a twofold picture is complicated by the creation of novel or hybrid societies in which, 'notions of governance, economic assumptions, religious values and morals, ideas about property, and conceptions of justice, conflicted and mingled, to be re-invented, refashioned, tried out or abandoned.'¹¹ To this list we might add artistic, musical and literary ideas.

⁸ Darwin, *Unfinished Empire*.

⁹ Darwin, *Unfinished Empire*, pp. 7-8.

¹⁰ Darwin, *Unfinished Empire*, p. 8.

¹¹ Darwin, *Unfinished Empire*, p. 11.

Elsewhere, Darwin draws distinctions between varieties of Empire.¹² There is a long standing distinction between informal and formal empire but within these there are further distinctions. Within formal empire, the colonies of settlement (or dominions after the colonial conference of 1907) such as Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa were quite different from dependences such as India for instance. Within informal empire, the cases of Argentina, Egypt and China represent three different categories of relationship for Darwin. These included situations in which: there was undisputed political sovereignty mixed with an informal shaping of economy through British-owned enterprise; where the British sought (but at the same time denied that they sought) some measure of influence and authority over internal government; and finally, where the British disclaimed any desire to annex or partition but exploited 'extra territorial privileges, including rights of residence and municipal self-rule.'¹³

Economic and political differences and distinctions such as these, are helpful for developing a more nuanced understanding of, firstly, P&O's business interests in general but also more specifically the varieties of socio-political and cultural context of P&O's major ports and destinations. P&O's business activities took place across a range of vastly different places around the globe, and Darwin's distinctions suggest that even P&O's imperial destinations cannot be treated as a single homogenous group. These differences are in turn helpful to recall the variety of reasons for seeking passage on P&O ships, but also the range of different types of journey and destination, and thus potential differences in conceptions and representations of those journeys. Even the same journey taken by different people with different purposes (an official,

¹² John Darwin, 'Britain's Empires', in Sarah Stockwell (ed.), *The British Empire: Themes and Perspectives* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), pp. 1-20.

¹³ Darwin, 'Britain's Empires', p. 2.

an emigrant or a tourist) will likely affect one's conception of the experience. To what extent are these differences mediated by P&O's visual representation? ¹⁴

The historian Tony Ballantyne identifies a clear shift towards cultural interpretations of empire.¹⁵ Ballantyne argues there have been three areas of analytical concern: 'The importance of information and knowledge in empire building, the centrality of cultural difference within imperial social formations, and the place of imperial networks and patterns of cross-cultural exchange in the operation of empire.'¹⁶ These three areas of general analytical concern have their own equivalent in the case of P&O's art and design, and specifically its role in the creation of a distinctive place for the merchant marine within a wider picture of British maritime and imperial identities. These themes will be explored further in this chapter, section 1.3 and 2.

1.2 Empire and National Identity

With the rise of cultural interpretation that Ballantyne identifies, theoretical and critical concepts such as representation and identity have come to the fore in empire studies. In recent cultural studies in general, questions of identity have revolved around its relative fixity and fluidity and this has found specific expression in studies of British Imperial identity. Whereas an imperial identity might in the past have been assumed to be one kind of phenomenon, such as a male, upper-middle class, white,

¹⁴ Darwin's rejection of monolithic conceptions of British Empire chimes with a number of other recent historical accounts. See for example Andrew Porter's assessment of the field, 'Introduction: Britain and the Empire in the Nineteenth Century', in A. Porter (ed.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Volume III: The Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). For Porter, recent scholars: 'no longer see in Empire the simple products of metropolitan designs imposed on comparatively inert indigenous people. They are more alive to the varied processes of interaction, adaption and exchange which shaped the Imperial and Colonial past'. p. 4.

¹⁵ Tony Ballantyne, 'The Changing Shape of the Modern British Empire and its Historiography', *The Historical Journal*, 53, 2 (2010), pp. 429-452.

¹⁶ Ballantyne, 'The Changing Shape', p. 429.

British, metropolitan conception, the term identity is now often pluralised to show that there are many different kinds of imperial identities depending on when, where and who or what is the subject of inquiry.

Rejecting older suppositions about the immutable or essential nature of national characteristics, more recent emphasis has been placed on the active roles of invention and imagination in the construction of historically contingent ideas of nationalism and national identity.¹⁷ David Cannadine has raised the issue of performance in identity construction, highlighting the constitutive role of performative ceremonies and rituals in establishing the constitutional and cultural authority of the British Monarchy between 1820 and 1977.¹⁸ This approach demonstrates that identity is not fixed inside peoples or nations but is realised through collective public action and activity. Cannadine examines the roles of ceremony and ritual at Royal weddings, coronations, jubilees and funerals, and this is suggestive for considering P&O's historically long-standing participation at Royal Naval Reviews and Coronation events. To what extent and in what ways do these repeated practices play an active role in embedding the company within the wider national maritime and imperial imagination?

Benedict Anderson offers an interpretation of what he calls the anomaly of nationalism.¹⁹ For Anderson, nationality, nation-ness and nationalism are cultural artefacts of a distinct kind which have been in evolution only from the end of the eighteenth century. Anderson defines the nation as an imagined political community,

¹⁷ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 2006 [1983]); Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

¹⁸ David Cannadine, 'The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: The British Monarchy and the "Invention of Tradition", c. 1820-1977', in Hobsbawm and Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*, pp. 101-164.

¹⁹ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

and one imagined as inherently limited and sovereign. A nation is imagined because its members never meet or know most of their fellow-members and yet 'in the minds of each lives the image of their communion'.²⁰ The nation is limited because it has finite, if elastic, boundaries beyond which lie other nations. It is sovereign because this is a gauge of the nation's independence, freedom and autonomy as a state. Finally, Anderson argues that a nation is a community because it is always conceived as 'deep, horizontal comradeship', even in the face of actual inequality and exploitation that may be present.²¹

The idea of an imagined community is highly suggestive, not only because the concepts of nation, and wider empire, were central to the evolution of the P&O company but also because the company itself can be understood as an imagined community - a body of people geographically and historically dispersed and yet, to appropriate Anderson's words, in their minds, each lives in the image of their communion. The question to be addressed here is the role that visual communication played in sustaining P&O's imagined community, and what this reveals about the wider fusion of maritime corporation, nation and empire in the public imagination in Britain across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Historians hold differing views about the significance of the Empire within domestic British cultural life.²² Bernard Porter claims that the Empire was irrelevant to most Britons, most of the time, and that imperial sentiment only really affected large numbers of Britons in the late nineteenth century.²³ Alternatively, Linda Colley has

²⁰ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 6.

²¹ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, pp. 6-7.

²² For an overview of the debates see Catherine Hall, 'Culture and Identity in Imperial Britain', in Sarah Stockwell (ed.), *The British Empire: Themes and Perspectives* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), pp. 199-217.

²³ Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society and Culture in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

argued that the idea of empire had powerful effects in helping to forge the English, Scottish, Welsh and some Irish into a credible community of Britons in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.²⁴ Research in the 'Studies in Imperialism' series of publications, under John MacKenzie's general editorship, also suggests that British metropolitan culture in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was clearly shaped by the imperial experience. This thesis suggests that any general view of the significance of empire in Britain will necessarily be limited since even within the P&O community there were widely different experiences and conceptions of empire and its significance across space and time. A moral ideal of imperial service and self-sacrifice, conceptions of maritime commerce and enterprise, and imperial land and seascape, came to define the company, but rather than remaining static these ideas and practices emerged, evolved, persisted and were nostalgically re-imagined within different historical and geographical contexts. Investigating the intersection of P&O's art and design with its role in the Empire therefore enriches any purely economic picture, and differentiates the monolithic cultural conception.

Another scholarly interest in examining the identity of a commercial shipping company, is that it provides an opportunity to investigate what the historian Tony Ballantyne has called the life-blood of empires, namely mobility.²⁵ P&O may have been a British company headquartered in London, but it ran offices around the world and its ships were continuously travelling around the Empire, creating new trade links, forging new commercial and cultural relationships, or closing down redundant routes. At any given moment in time P&O's ships and properties, staff and passengers can be pinpointed on a geo-political map, but this fails to appreciate that the life of the

²⁴ Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992).

²⁵ Tony Ballantyne, 'Mobility, empire, colonisation', *History Australia*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (August, 2014), pp. 7-37.

company existed in the transactions and transitions between these people and places. Chapters three and four will therefore examine the evolution of a P&O on board style, not only in the narrow sense of style-of-design but the richer sense of design as style-of-being, and how this emerged from the peculiarly mobile existence of P&O's 'exiles'.²⁶ It is hoped that this approach contributes to recent scholarship that recognises not only different imperial cultural identities but also the complications and nuances of their interconnectedness.

Stuart Ward highlights potential differences between the impacts of empire on national identities at home and abroad, in particular for the millions of settlers, merchants, missionaries, convicts, and military personnel who participated in the expansion of empire. These communities of people, travelling and existing across and in-between imperial locations, constituted the majority of P&O's passengers and the thesis is in part an argument for the recognition of the distinctness and difference of these mobile on board communities. Ward suggests that:

Adapting European systems of land use, social organization, economic exchange and religious belief to new often harsh and hostile environments, with only limited resources, inevitably brought new departures from established "British" ways. At the same time, the task of applying British concepts of law and liberty to these circumstances often involved a determination to preserve and uphold the political and cultural markers of Britishness.²⁷

²⁶ This is how the poet Rudyard Kipling described the Anglo-Indian community travelling on board P&O ships at the end of the nineteenth century. Kipling, 'The Exiles' Line', *Civil and Military Gazette*, 8 July 1892.

²⁷ Stuart Ward, 'Imperial Identities Abroad', in Stockwell (ed.), *The British Empire*, pp. 219-243. This ref., p. 291.

This nuanced interplay of Britishness and otherness, of home and away, and the spaces in-between, characterised the cultural dynamics of much of P&O's imperial identity. As a global operation, to what extent are there differences in the nature of P&O's displays in London and in advertising in local media abroad? How does advertising aimed at colonialists returning to Britain differ to that aimed at emigrants? What about the transitional spaces of the ships themselves, existing in a place between national and cultural boundaries?

1.3 Cultural Imperialism

The cultural turn identified by Ballantyne not only influenced historical studies of empire in general but also saw imperial culture as itself the subject of serious scholarly interest.²⁸ John MacKenzie suggests three possible reasons why historians had previously largely ignored the impact of the Empire on British domestic culture:²⁹ official records and archives are relatively silent on culture matters; historians have focused interest on dissent and resistance rather than cultural convergence which seems to characterise the imperial age; finally, influential histories such as J. A. Hobson's from the early twentieth century focused investigations on economic dimensions. However, for MacKenzie, recent scholarship recognises the pervasiveness of empire in entertainment, education and social activity in Britain. It understands, 'cultural practices as inseparable from the political and economic dimensions of imperialism: they both reflected and sometimes actively shaped the

²⁸ This development is related to the cultural turn in history more generally which saw historians embrace popular culture rather than just elite forms. Culture forms both high and low, elevated and everyday, have come to be understood not just as passive responses to socio-economic conditions but as active forces in their own right. One of the earliest examples is Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (London: Temple Smith, 1978).

²⁹ John M. MacKenzie, 'Empire and Metropolitan Cultures', in Andrew Porter (ed.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, pp. 270-293.

instruments of such domestic inheritance of Empire'.³⁰ These points are directly relevant to the case of P&O whose business archive records very little in terms of corporate cultural policy or thinking. For much of its history there is no recorded rationale for choices concerning art and design commissions and exhibitions or advertising strategy, despite these practices clearly playing a leading role in shaping the corporation's imperial public self-image.³¹ The archival absence of cultural policy may explain in part why existing research on the relationship of P&O and the Empire has so far focused exclusively on political and commercial dimensions while critical treatment of the company's art and design has remained limited.³²

One influential strand within the cultural reading of the history of empire comes from the writings of Edward Said. Said's *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism* have been widely influential for critics and supporters alike.³³ For supporters, Said's insight was to show how culture and literary forms, (at the time of his earlier writing, these were largely overlooked in historical discussion of empire), were not merely intertwined with imperial power but an expression and means of its realisation. Applying Foucault's idea of discourse, Said's claim is that a cultural relationship developed between the Occident (represented by Britain and France) and its other, the Orient. For Said, The Orient was an historical entity which described less

³⁰ Mackenzie, 'Empire and Metropolitan Cultures', p. 272.

³¹ Before 1904 P&O had no publicity or advertising department and there is no consistent record of decisions concerning corporate art and design. The first publicity department was founded in 1904 and annual publicity department reports are available between 1904 and 1917. There are no further publicity departmental records between 1917 and 1950 when advertising department reports return to the archive. For discussion of P&O's first publicity department in 1904 and possible explanations for gaps in the archive please see chapter 4, sections 1 and 2.

³² For P&O and the politics of empire see Freda Harcourt's ground-breaking, *Flagships of Imperialism: The P&O Company and the politics of Empire from its origins to 1867* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007). Another possible reason for the lack of discussion of P&O's art and design in the context of the company's imperial role, is that the conservative, imperially infused cultural tastes of the company and its typical passenger do not easily fit into the still prevalent art and design historical narrative of the rise of modernism in twentieth century Britain. Please see further, this chapter, sections 2 and 3.2.

³³ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 2003 [1978]); and Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage Books Ransom House, 1994).

a real geographical area, or even real cultural space, than an imagined cultural counter-point produced by the Occident. This act of producing the Orient had the effect of subjugating it and making dominant the Occident's own rule and identity. The Occident understood itself as rational, active, masculine, practical and civilizing, and represented the Orient by contrast, as irrational, passive, feminized, extravagant or decadent and exotic - a kind of 'surrogate' or 'underground self'.³⁴

Criticism of Said has come from, among others, John MacKenzie.³⁵ As already identified, MacKenzie's own work has formed an influential strand within the development of the cultural reading of empire but his approach, examples and conclusions are different from Said's. Both would agree that previously overlooked cultural forms need to be taken seriously as objects of scholarly study in the understanding of empire. MacKenzie's criticism of Said, however, is that Said's analysis is 'monolithic', and that it concentrates too heavily on the high and literary arts at the expense of popular art, design and culture. In his summary of the arguments, John Darwin explains that, for many, Said's account ignores time and change by assuming a single attitude and uniform approach.³⁶ Instead Darwin says, 'British thinking about non-Western peoples and cultures passed through a series of changes in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, amounting at times to a dramatic reversal of previous orthodoxy.'³⁷ Darwin summarises two further criticisms. First, Said fails to discuss different historical perspectives concerning the nature and form of British relations with eastern nations, some being more sympathetic than others. Second, the thesis treats the so called victims of cultural imperialism as just that, 'hapless and

³⁴ Said, *Orientalism*, p. 3.

³⁵ John M. MacKenzie, *Orientalism: History, Theory and the Arts* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1995).

³⁶ Darwin, *Unfinished Empire*, pp. 265-268.

³⁷ Darwin, *Unfinished Empire*, p. 267.

helpless'. Darwin counters that 'the rich and fascinating record of non-Western responses to Western ideas – exploiting, adapting, embracing, rejecting, revising, recycling – disappears into a crude caricature in which only two reactions were possible – resistance or compliance – and only one permitted.'³⁸

In contrast to Said's focus on high and literary art, MacKenzie's own research and edited collections investigate a far wider range of cultural activity.³⁹ Within imperial culture MacKenzie happily includes music hall entertainment, poster advertising, radio broadcasting, juvenile literature, clubs and recreational activities. This is particularly relevant for P&O since its cultural world extended beyond traditional ship portraits and portraits of its Chairmen, to the design of everyday items such as cruise brochures, dinner menus, baggage labels, and playing cards. Indeed, this thesis will go further to suggest that imperial design is not something that can simply be decoded from everyday objects, but that these objects played a constitutive role in the everyday practice of imperial life. P&O's illustrated souvenirs and Pocket Books, for example, participated in the ordering of on board rhythms, rituals and regulations, which constituted a distinctively imperial world (see further, chapter 3, section 4).

The principal target of MacKenzie's *Propaganda and Empire* is the idea that the British were widely indifferent to Imperialism. Against this MacKenzie argues that:

Many of the most important companies of the day [the later 19th century] issued imperial propaganda through advertising and other marketing techniques. Sources of popular entertainment like the music hall and later

³⁸ Darwin, *Unfinished Empire*, p. 268.

³⁹ John MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1984); and MacKenzie (ed.), *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1986).

the cinema embraced the new imperial nationalism, while juvenile literature and publishers' lists generally found the imperial adventure tradition socially and politically acceptable, as well as immensely popular. In other words, a wide variety of non-governmental agencies discovered that imperial patriotism was also profitable.⁴⁰

MacKenzie argues that many of these formal and informal agencies, 'wished to propagate a view of the world which was essential to their own successful operation, and most of them made knowing and intentional efforts to control individual thought.'⁴¹ This thesis agrees that investigating the cultural role played by informal non-governmental imperial agencies such as the P&O is essential to understanding the furtherance of empire, but argues that MacKenzie's picture of sinister propaganda forced upon a helpless public oversimplifies the more organic way in which much imperial culture was brought to life. To understand P&O as a small and elite group of businessmen intentionally imposing empire on an unsuspecting public for individual self-interest, fails to grasp the more subtle social, cultural and moral aspects of the inter-relationship of P&O, its public and the Empire. P&O's passengers were often already deeply imbued with an imperial outlook such that overt or glaring propaganda would have been entirely redundant. In addition the thesis argues that a more subtle moral-imperial feeling was central to P&O's corporate identity, and one which would have found unadorned commercial promotion and self-interest wholly distasteful (chapter 3, section 4). It was only in the inter-war period in the twentieth century, with growing anxieties about the future of the Empire and P&O's role within it, that the corporation's art and design displayed an increasingly brash, blatant and propagandistic tendency. Even this development, however, is not best understood as

⁴⁰ MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, p. 3.

⁴¹ MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, p. 3.

an attempt at individual thought control but as a collective psychological retreat for the company and its empire travelling public into the perceived securities of a fictionalised imperial past (chapter 4, sections 3 and 4).

1.4 British Maritime History and Empire

Although occurring in an earlier historical period, research concerning the evolution of the East India Company and its long and complex relationship with the British Empire is suggestive for the current project.⁴² H. V. Bowen explains how from its foundation in 1600 to its demise in the 1850s, the East India Company, ‘became much more than a maritime commercial organization as it evolved into a powerful imperial agency.’⁴³ Bowen explains that beyond its core commercial and maritime activities the Company developed, ‘a range of measures and policies believed to be suitable for the support of a powerful military machine, the control of people and territories, the administration of justice, the collection of revenue, and the advancement of science and knowledge.’ Thus, for Bowen, the Company became, ‘to all intents and purposes, an office of department of state.’⁴⁴

P&O’s own story is clearly quite different in context, political scope and intent, and yet awareness of the longer historical intersection of British maritime, corporate and imperial worlds is essential to understanding P&O’s own evolution in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It is also essential since this longer British

⁴² For example, H. V. Bowen, Margarette Lincoln and Nigel Rigby (eds.), *The Worlds of the East India Company* (Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2002); and H. V. Bowen, John McAleer and Robert Blyth, *Monsoon Traders The Maritime World of the East India Company* (London: Scala Publishers, 2011).

⁴³ H. V. Bowen, “‘No Longer Mere Traders’: Continuities and Change in the Metropolitan Development of the East India Company, 1600-1834”, in Bowen, Lincoln and Rigby (eds.), *The Worlds of the East India Company*, pp. 19-32. This ref., p. 19. For the East India Company and the notion of corporate virtue (which features in much of P&O’s own imperial identity) see Phillip Stern, ‘Corporate virtue: the languages of empire in early modern British Asia’, *Renaissance Studies*, 26: 4 (2012), pp. 510-530; and see also Philip Stern, *The Company-State: Corporate Sovereignty and the Early Modern Foundation of the British Empire in India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

⁴⁴ Bowen, “‘No Longer Mere Traders’”, p. 20.

maritime-imperial cultural trajectory directly informed and inspired P&O's own sense of historical and imperial place.⁴⁵

A number of general histories of the British Empire explore questions of seapower and technology in the spread of empire.⁴⁶ David Killingray suggests it was only in the nineteenth century, from 1815, that Britain's European naval hegemony became global, and Britain became a truly *maritime* empire.⁴⁷ Despite this and despite the fact that, 'private mercantile enterprise was a prominent aspect of British overseas trade', Killingray argues (in 2004) that relatively little has been written specifically on nineteenth century empire and the sea. The case of P&O, therefore, and in particular its shaping of a powerful imperial role and cultural identity contributes to this wider scholarship.

Miles Taylor's edited collection of papers also concerns the nineteenth century maritime world and its place in Victorian Empire. Writing more recently than Killingray (in 2013), Taylor argues that within maritime history it is still naval warfare of the eighteenth and twentieth centuries which has attracted most attention. Taylor acknowledges that there is no comparison between the scale of naval engagement in the Victorian period to that of the long eighteenth century⁴⁸ but urges, like Killingray,

⁴⁵ Chapter 2 will explore how in the 1840s P&O employed W. J. Huggins, an artist long associated with the East India Company, and how in 1850 P&O exploited the location of its new offices in Leadenhall Street opposite East India House. Later chapters will show how P&O repeatedly imagined itself following in what it saw as the romantic tradition of the early merchant adventures. Chapter 5 section 3.3, discusses this in P&O's 1961 publicity film *A Great Ship*.

⁴⁶ Two such examples are: Lawrence James, 'Power and Greatness: Commerce, Seapower and Strategy 1815-70', in Lawrence James, *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire* (London: Abacus, 1994), pp. 169-183; and Robert Kubicek, 'British Expansion, Empire, and Technological Change', in A. Porter (ed.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire*. pp. 247. 269.

⁴⁷ David Killingray, 'Introduction. Imperial seas: cultural exchange and commerce in the British Empire, 1780-1900' in David Killingray, Margarette Lincoln and Nigel Rigby (eds.), *Maritime Empires: British Imperial Maritime Trade in the Nineteenth Century* (Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2004), pp. 1-12.

⁴⁸ The long eighteenth century in British history is often taken to run from 1689, the year of the Glorious Revolution until the Battle of Waterloo in 1815, the last battle in the wars between Britain and France that had begun in 1689. P. J. Marshall, 'Introduction' to P. J. Marshall (ed.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Eighteenth Century* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 1.

that, ‘there is nonetheless much that is unfamiliar and a great deal that is instructive about the relationship between the sea and the British Empire in the Victorian era.’⁴⁹

A number of themes important for this thesis emerge from these books. First, how in an age of relative global peace after 1815 the navy and shipping more generally, ‘moved from being the strategic arm of the British Empire to become the agent of cultural imperialism.’⁵⁰ The case of P&O, a non-governmental but nevertheless imperial cultural agency, exemplifies the change that Taylor describes, and the opportunity to examine the evolution of this new form of corporate cultural imperialism contributes to the research agenda Taylor identifies. Secondly, Taylor explores how, ‘for the Victorians, the sea became not only a source of national identity but also an increasing anxiety as global power became reconfigured by continental land states such as Germany, Russia and the USA.’⁵¹ This thesis will examine the maritime as a site of imperial anxiety through examples such as P&O’s pavilion at the Royal Naval Exhibition (1891) (chapter 3, section 2), and in the interior design of its *Viceroy of India* (1929) (chapter 4, section 3).

Taylor outlines some of the differences of the Victorian maritime Empire. This is significant for locating the rise of P&O. In contrast to the eighteenth century when British sea lanes had been peopled by slaves, felons, soldiers and fighting sailors, Victorian ships carried emigrants to settlement colonies and after the mid-century ensured that global trade was safe and secure even during warfare. As a sign of the changing significance of commercial shipping in the nineteenth century, Taylor points out that by the time of the war in South Africa (1899-1902) and the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, it was to the private passenger lines rather than the navy that

⁴⁹ Miles Taylor, ‘Introduction’ to Taylor (ed.), *The Victorian Empire and Britain’s Maritime World 1837-1901* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 1.

⁵⁰ Taylor, ‘Introduction’, p. 2.

⁵¹ Taylor, ‘Introduction’, p. 2.

the British government turned to mobilise troops. P&O's contribution here was significant and it will be important to see how the company exploits this role, giving it not only a strategic function but a place in the national imagination.

1.5 British Maritime Cultural History and Empire

As with historical study more generally, maritime history has been influenced by the cultural turn although it has, to some extent, adopted these approaches more gradually. Duncan Redford's edited collection brings together a series of papers examining maritime history and questions of identity: naval, national, regional, imperial, corporate and gendered.⁵² The introduction suggests that, with a few 'honourable exceptions', much research examining both English and British identity, together with histories of British Empire, fails to focus on the question of, 'how Britain's relationship with the sea shaped and contributed to its identity as an imperial state'⁵³. Through the case study of P&O this thesis aims to explore exactly these questions, examining how the evolution of P&O's corporate identity drew upon and contributed to Britain's wider maritime-imperial identity. In Redford, Victoria Carolan's analysis of shipyard workers on screen between 1930 and 1945 will be helpful for considering P&O's own use of film such as the promotional film *A Great Ship* (1962) narrated from the point of view of the men who built P&O's *Canberra* (1961).⁵⁴ Part three of the book, 'Corporate Identities in the Naval and Maritime Sector', will be useful too. Neither chapter looks specifically at the co-incidence of the British merchant marine with national-imperial identities, however, allowing room for further contribution to

⁵² Duncan Redford (ed.), *Maritime History and Identity: The Sea and Culture in the Modern World* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2014).

⁵³ Redford, 'Introduction' to Redford (ed.), *Maritime History and Identity*, pp. 1-10. This ref. p. 3.

⁵⁴ P&O, *A Great Ship*, publicity film, directed by John Reeve for P&O and Harland and Wolff, (UK: Rayant Pictures, 1962).

debates.⁵⁵ Jo Stanley's chapter in Redford investigates homosexual identities on board British liners between 1945 and 1985.⁵⁶ The chapter includes recollected evidence from a P&O head waiter and other staff working for the company in the forty years after the Second World War. It investigates hidden histories which challenge stereotypical ideas of male seafarers – the robust, working class, macho Jack Tar with a woman in every port. Stanley provides important evidence of the changed and changing social and cultural situation within which P&O operated after the Second World War – new and different identities were increasingly a part of the company's world. This is another element which warns against any simple and singular reading of P&O's corporate identity.

The transport writer and photojournalist Philip Dawson has written an historical and cultural retrospective of the ocean liner, tracing its evolution from the Victorian era to the development of modern cruising.⁵⁷ Dawson's chapter five contains an analysis of liners as symbols of nationhood and it identifies the long standing relationship of government and the shipping industry beginning with the award of mail contacts and subsidies in the nineteenth century. Dawson's discussion, however, focuses on the twentieth century, and in P&O's case, it was the company's nineteenth century experience which formed its imperial identity and helps explain much of its twentieth century identity. What is useful is the discussion of a range of shipping lines, showing that whatever the role of P&O's art and advertising in relation to national and imperial identity, other lines similarly aligned themselves with ideas of nationhood. This raises the question of what, if anything, is distinctive about P&O's identity and why? Dawson's examples of graphic design, for instance, are the iconic art deco style

⁵⁵ Redford (ed.), *Maritime History and Identity*, pp. 163-204.

⁵⁶ Jo Stanley, "They Thought They Were Normal – And Called Themselves Queens": Gay Seafarers on British Liners, 1945-85', in Redford (ed.), *Maritime History and Identity*, pp. 230-250.

⁵⁷ Philip Dawson, *The Liner: Retrospective and Renaissance* (London: Conway, 2005).

posters from the 1920s and 1930s which were not typical of P&O. What this thesis aims to show is that the use of visual communication in the constitution of maritime-imperial identity has a long historical evolution. It also aims to differentiate the cultural space in which P&O operated, distinguishing it from the much discussed use of modernism and the battles for the Blue Riband that took place in the Atlantic in the twentieth century.

Philip Dawson has also collaborated with the design historian Bruce Peter, to examine what they suggest is a neglected aspect of design practice, the development of modernism and modernity at sea from the later Victorian era through to the last decades of the twentieth century. They include discussion of two of P&O's iconic twentieth century vessels *Canberra* (1961) and *Oriana* (1960 for OSN).⁵⁸ Anne Massey argues that although Dawson and Peter's account does raise the importance of design at sea, by focusing exclusively on Modernism, it also relegates alternative traditions of design at sea.⁵⁹ In the case of P&O, openness to alternative design histories will be essential, because although the company did employ modernist styles, it was certainly not a flagship of modernism, and when it did employ the style this was often in hybrid forms not recognised within a narrow modernist canon. As Massey suggests, other factors such as national and imperial maritime identity, were equally important to understanding.

Bruce Peter has also co-authored work with Peter Quartermaine which discusses the role of design on cruise ships in relation to identity and on board cruise

⁵⁸ Philip Dawson and Bruce Peter, *Ship Style Modernism and Modernity* (London: Conway, 2010).

⁵⁹ Anne Massey, "'Flights of Unpractical Fancy': Oriental Spaces at Sea from the Titanic to the Empress of Britain" in John Potvin (ed.), *Oriental Interiors: Design, Identity, Space* (London and New York: Bloomsbury), pp. 235- 250; and Anne Wealleans (née Massey), *Designing Liners: A history of interior design afloat* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006).

culture.⁶⁰ The book also examines not just ship architecture and interior design but graphic design too, and this inter-disciplinary approach is suggestive for P&O's own wide use of visual communication. Because of its aims and the space available, there is, however, little differentiation between cruise lines, and cruise ships become signs of a general cultural change. This is where an in-depth critical analysis of a single line - the P&O - helps to provide a critical window on the evolution of one particular maritime-imperial cultural world. Viewing P&O's art and design through the lens of empire and post-colonial debate will also enable greater critical depth.

Photographic images of P&O ships, passengers and destinations form an important part of the company's visual communication in brochures, at exhibitions and in general advertising. Useful in this respect, is John Graves' in-depth study of the Marine Photo Service which undertook commissions for P&O producing some of their most iconic images such as *Officers of the Viceroy of India* (c. 1930) and *Lascars from the Viceroy of India in a tender* (c. 1935) (this thesis, fig. 226).⁶¹

From the field of information management and librarian studies, it is interesting to note that there is an increased interest in ephemera of all kinds. Gregory Toth, for example, writes about the little known maritime ephemera collection in the library of the National Maritime Museum, and indicates a number of P&O items of interest to this thesis.⁶²

⁶⁰ Peter Quartermaine and Bruce Peter, *Cruise: Identity, Design and Culture* (London: Lawrence King, 2006).

⁶¹ John Graves, *Waterline: Images from the Golden Age of Cruising* (Greenwich, London: National Maritime Museum, 2004), p. 105 (NMM/CC/P85348) and p. 85 (NMM/CC/P85233).

⁶² Gregory Toth, 'The Printed Ephemera Collection in the Caird Library, National Maritime Museum', *The Ephemera*, 159 (Winter, 2012), pp. 1-7. My thanks go to Gregory for enabling me to consult this collection and for wider general discussion concerning the problems and possibilities of researching ephemera.

1.6 End of Empire

The historian Stuart Ward highlights an important gap in research, arguing that although the demise of British Imperial power after the Second World War may be a familiar theme, there has been ‘virtually no attention to the question of how these dramatic changes on Britain’s relationship with the wider world were reflected in British culture.’⁶³ There is also very little written about issues of decolonisation in maritime history, and in histories of P&O. Ward identifies as his target what he calls the minimal impact thesis - the idea that the end of empire had very little impact on Britain and the majority of British people. Ward cites David Cannadine’s view that, ‘the British Empire may (or may not) have been won in a fit of “absence of mind”, but as far as the majority of the population was concerned it was given away in a fit of collective indifference.’⁶⁴ Ward also cites Bernard Porter. Porter had already defended the view that the Empire itself had little impact on most people in Britain, and he extended this idea to encompass the end of Empire. Porter concludes that, ‘the mass of people, as they had all along, cared very little.’⁶⁵

From around 1996, however, Ward identifies a change in the historiographical orthodoxy. Ironically enough this re-assessment includes work by both Porter and Cannadine. Porter concludes that there must be more to say than the traditional picture which sees Britain relinquish her Empire, ‘relatively smoothly, in a way that left few obvious scars.’ Porter continues, ‘Nations do not suddenly loose Empires without

⁶³ Stuart Ward (ed.), *British Culture and the end of Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), p.1.

⁶⁴ David Cannadine, ‘Apocalypse When? British Politicians and British “Decline” in the Twentieth Century’, in Peter Clarke and Clive Trebilcock (eds.), *Understanding Decline: Perceptions and Realities of British Economic Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 261-2, cited in Ward (ed.), *British Culture and the End of Empire*, p. 3.

⁶⁵ Bernard Porter, *The Lion’s Share: A Short History of British Imperialism, 1850-1995* (Harlow: Longman, 1996), p. 347, cited in Ward (ed.), *British Culture and the End of Empire*, p. 3.

leaving their mark’, and argues that decolonization, ‘was to have as big an impact on Britain’s self-image as on the colonies granted independence.’⁶⁶

Drawing upon this change in thinking, 1969 has been chosen as the end date for the current project, in order to make a proper assessment of the impact of the end of Empire on P&O. Given P&O’s century-long fusion of corporate with national and imperial identity, how did it respond to the end of the Empire? Does its corporate identity show any change in these shifting political contexts or did the demise of Empire have minimal impact?

The thesis argues that the answer to the question of Britain’s imperial legacy is a more complex one than historians at first assumed. In the maritime sector, with which the British Empire was not merely associated but made manifest, clear echoes of the Empire remained long after its formal end. P&O is a case in point. Its art and design returns to and reformulates many of the corporation’s older imperial ideas and narratives until at least 1969. Useful in this context is MacKenzie’s suggestion about the end of the British Empire. For MacKenzie the imperial idea was so strongly embedded that it outlived the passing of the Empire itself. Writing in 1984, only two years after the Falklands War, MacKenzie argues that the war, ‘aroused many echoes of the earlier period of popular imperialism – the jingoistic press, the wildly enthusiastic reception of returning troops and ships, victory parades, repeated medal distributions [...]’.⁶⁷ Although it is beyond the timeframe of this thesis, P&O’s own involvement and pictorial commemoration of the role its vessel *Canberra* (1961) played in the Falkland’s War in 1982, is clear evidence of the persistence of empire in the corporation’s post-colonial imagination.

⁶⁶ Bernard Porter, ‘The Empire Strikes Back’, *History Today*, 46: 9 (September 1996), quoted in Ward (ed.), *British Culture and the End of Empire*, p. 5.

⁶⁷ MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, p.11.

2. British Art, Design, and Empire: From Orientalism to Entangled Histories

2.1 Art and Empire

The art historian Linda Nochlin was one of the first to pursue the arguments and literary examples of Edward Said's writing on culture, discourse and difference in the fields of art history and visual culture.⁶⁸ Nochlin asks how art history is to deal with Orientalist imagery through analysis of Jean-Leon Gerome's *Snake Charmer*. She characterises art historians as (at the time) being reluctant to proceed in anything but the celebratory mode. As such, art history either simply denies a given work is of artistic value and therefore can safely be ignored or, justifies its inclusion by linking it stylistically or formally with an accepted great artist. Both views are problematic according to Nochlin. Gerome's work is worth studying for Nochlin not because it shares aesthetic values with high art but on a slightly lower level. It is worth studying because it anticipates and predicts the qualities of incipient mass culture. As such, 'the strategies of concealment lend themselves [...] to the [...] deconstructive techniques now employed by the best film historians [...] sociologists of advertising [and] analysts of visual propaganda.'⁶⁹ Given the nature of P&O imagery, which often does not fit into traditional canons of art or design, or old assumptions about artistic progress and quality, Nochlin's non-canonical approach will be useful.

There have been significant developments since Nochlin first made her argument however. What has developed over the last twenty years or so is the question not just of how the west constructed its oriental other, but how the discursively constructed other looks back.⁷⁰ The art historian Natasha Eaton, for example, moves

⁶⁸ Linda Nochlin, 'The Imaginary Orient', in Vanessa R. Schwartz and Jeannene M. Przyblyski (eds.), *The Nineteenth-Century Visual Culture Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 289-298 (originally published in *Art in America* (May 1983).

⁶⁹ Nochlin, 'The Imaginary Orient', p. 297.

⁷⁰ Schwartz and Przyblyski, (eds.), *The Nineteenth-Century Visual Culture Reader*, p. 288.

beyond the one way, metropole-periphery, singular and subjugating, direction of cultural vision, and the implied passivity of the other. Instead Eaton seeks to examine the, ‘entanglements of an artistic traffic between two distinct “visual economies”’ the late Mughal and early colonial cultures which overlapped in India between 1772 and 1795.⁷¹ Eaton’s thesis is an example of a more complex, cross-cultural, art history. The notion of cultural hybridity was introduced by the literary theorist and academic Homi Bhabha in response to Edward Said’s work on colonialism and culture. The current research must be open not only to the notion of hybridity but also to what Bhabha identifies as the ambivalence of imperial discourse, which is to say that it pulls in to contradictory directions.⁷² Examples of Bhabha-inspired post-colonial readings of art include Beth Fowkes Tobin’s examination of late eighteenth century British painting (predominantly portraits) which stresses ‘the complexity, fluidity and multi-valency of cultural encounters and political interactions between colonizers and colonized.’⁷³ In the case of P&O, chapter 4 will argue that P&O’s Orientalising tendencies in the 1920s and 1930s are less a sign of the hegemonic power of its imperial position than a sign of its increasing anxiety about the future of the Empire. Bhabha’s approach thus enables the thesis to detect greater variation and difference in P&O’s imperial narrative which a Saidian style analysis risks ignoring or oversimplifying, characterising it simply as subjugating.

The art historians Tim Barringer, Geoff Quilley and Douglas Fordham published a collected edition, *Art and the British Empire*, which contains many useful

⁷¹ Natasha Eaton, *Imagining Empire: The Trafficking of Art and Aesthetics in British India c. 1772 to c. 1795* (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Warwick, 2000).

⁷² Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994).

⁷³ Beth Fowkes Tobin, *Picturing Imperial Power. Colonial subjects in eighteenth-century British painting* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1999), pp. 3-4.

references.⁷⁴ Although slightly before the period of the current thesis, particularly suggestive is Eleanor Hughes', "Ships of the 'line': Marine Paintings at the Royal Academy Exhibition of 1784".⁷⁵ Hughes offers an analysis of the interaction of maritime and national identity, which moves beyond internal pictorial meanings towards wider exhibitionary practices, what Hughes calls painting's specific and relational structures. Following suggestions by Benedict Anderson, Hughes argues that the Royal Academy shows of maritime paintings should be added to newspapers and the novel as key forms for, 're-presenting the kind of imagined community that is the nation'.⁷⁶ The interest for this thesis is to move the debate forward to the following historical period and to investigate the role of P&O's specific and relational visual communication at the numerous national and international exhibitions in which the company participated.

Between November 2015 and April 2016 there was an important exhibition at Tate Britain in London called *Artist and Empire*. The aim of the exhibition was to provide, 'a wide-ranging presentation of the great breadth of objects made across the British Empire.'⁷⁷ The exhibition and accompanying catalogue were by intention general and wide-ranging in their approach in contrast to the singular case study approach adopted here. Included were important objects from maps to fine art paintings, together with critical commentary by curators and academics working in the field such as Paul Gilroy and Annie E. Coombes.

⁷⁴ Tim Barringer, Geoff Quilley and Douglas Fordham (eds.), *Art and the British Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007).

⁷⁵ Eleanor Hughes, in Barringer et. al. (eds.), *Art and the British Empire*, pp. 139-152.

⁷⁶ Anderson quoted in Hughes, 'Ships of the Line' in Barringer et. al. (eds.), *Art and the British Empire*, p. 151.

⁷⁷ Alison Smith, David Blayne Brown and Carol Jacobi (eds.), *Artist and Empire: Facing Britain's Imperial Past*. (London: Tate Publishing, 2015). Inside front cover.

2.2 Design, National identity, and Empire

Research concerning empire from within art and design history and visual culture, joins hands with imperial historians working on visual materials. Two examples of historians reaching over the disciplinary divide are Tony Ballantyne whose work includes investigation of the role of print culture in colonialism and social change, and Stephen Constantine whose work examines the posters of the Empire Marketing Board (EMB).⁷⁸ The EMB was set up in 1920s and was a propaganda body for the Empire. The body commissioned an exciting range of posters promoting empire goods and services, and they include some of the most influential examples of advertising design at the time. Artists such as Charles Dixon and Charles Pears worked for both the EMB and P&O, the commercial shipping company undertaking a significant transport, trade and communication role across the ‘highways of empire’. Another historian, Felicity Barnes’ work represents more recent research on the EMB and focuses specifically on the role of the Board in the construction of Dominion identities between 1926 and 1933.⁷⁹

Although intended as design historical overviews, work by the architectural and design historians Adrian Forty, Jonathan Woodham, and Penny Sparke provide useful starting points for discussion of the intersection of design histories with national and corporate identities.⁸⁰ None explicitly focuses on the British Empire and its

⁷⁸ Tony Ballantyne, ‘What Difference Does Colonialism Make? Reassessing Print and Social Change in an Age of Global Imperialism’, in Sabrina Alcorn Baron, Eric N. Lindquist and Eleanor F. Shelvin (eds.), *Agents of Change: Print Culture Studies after Elizabeth L. Eisenstein* (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007), pp. 342-352; Stephen Constantine, *Advertising Posters of the Empire Marketing Board* (London: Her Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1986).

⁷⁹ Felicity Barnes, ‘Bringing Another Empire Alive? The Empire Marketing Board and the Construction of Dominion Identity, 1926–33’, *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 42: 1 (2014) pp. 61-85.

⁸⁰ Adrian Forty, *Objects of Desire: Design and Society 1750-1980* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1986), chapter 10, ‘Design and Corporate Identity’, pp. 222-238. Jonathan Woodham, *Twentieth Century Design* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), chapter 4, ‘Design and National Identity’, pp. 87-109, chapter 6, ‘Multinational Corporations and Global Products’, pp. 141-163, and chapter 9, ‘Nostalgia, Heritage and Design’, pp. 205-219. Also, Penny Sparke, *An Introduction to Design and*

legacies but themes of national and international exhibitions, and the inter-relationship of corporate culture with the state, both constitute important questions for research into the nature and evolution of P&O's distinctive imperial-corporate identity. Elsewhere Woodham has also written one of the earliest paper length examinations of the inter-connections of British design with questions of empire. Here Woodham makes the important point that British design history in the inter-war period in the twentieth century is often focused around the emergence of the modern movement but that other questions, such as the deep-rooted economic belief and commitment to the Empire rather than Europe, are important to a fuller understanding.⁸¹ This is also an early paper which identifies the importance of exhibitions in the ordering of national and imperial identity. The uncovering of alternatives to the trajectory of the rise of modernism will be particularly important for an understanding of P&O's identity since its preference was for the more conservative in art and design, creating hybrid objects combining a tradition of maritime art with the more commercial language of design.

An area of emerging interest which sits alongside design history is transport design history, both the design of transport itself and its publicity, advertising and ephemera. The design historian Gregory Votolato has written important texts which have been the first to apply critical methods specifically to transport design and history, including a text specifically on the ship as a mode of transport.⁸² This way of grouping the literature highlights resonance between themes in design history and transport history, with approaches to cultural history and also specifically empire. The cultural historian Wolfgang Schivelbusch, for example, has investigated the beginning

Culture (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge), chapter 5, 'Designing Identities', pp. 82-98 and chapter 10, 'Redesigning Identities', pp. 185-201.

⁸¹ Jonathan Woodham, 'Design and Empire: British Design in the 1920s', *Art History*, 3: 2 (June 1980), pp. 229-240.

⁸² Gregory Votolato, *Transport Design: A Travel History* (London: Reaktion Books, 2007); and *Ship* (London: Reaktion Books, 2011).

of railway travel in the nineteenth century and demonstrated far-reaching conclusions concerning culturally and historically specific forms of spatial and temporal imagination made real by the new form of transport.⁸³ In the context of P&O these ideas can be related back to Ballantyne's work on maritime mobility and the making of colonial space and place.⁸⁴

Anne Wealleans (née Massey) has written the first book-length investigation of the interior design of ocean going liners. This includes the most in-depth critical discussion of P&O ship interior design to date, and also notes the importance of the question of the company's role in empire.⁸⁵ Extending the criticisms of canonical thinking expressed by Nochlin and Woodham,⁸⁶ Wealleans argues that while it is tempting to approach the interior design of liners from 1930s onwards in terms of the battle of styles, 'reforming modernism versus intransigent periodization', other factors such as national identity are equally important.⁸⁷ The current thesis extends the idea further taking P&O as a single case study in order to detect the extent to which qualitatively different notions of national and imperial identity are articulated through design over time. The thesis also includes a wider range of graphic, fine art and on-shore architectural work and seeks to integrate readings of individual objects with discussion of the role these play in everyday corporate policies and practices, rules and regulations. The objects are thus interpreted less as signs of empire than constitutive of it.

⁸³ Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: Trains and Travel in the 19th Century* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980).

⁸⁴ Ballantyne, 'Mobility, empire, colonisation', pp. 7-37.

⁸⁵ Wealleans, *Designing Liners*.

⁸⁶ Nochlin, 'The Imaginary Orient'; and Woodham, 'Design and Empire'.

⁸⁷ For Wealleans another extra-canonical feature relevant to twentieth century design historical understanding is the growing professionalization of design practice. Wealleans, *Designing Liners*, p. 103.

In terms of graphic design and ocean liners, Gabriele Cadringer and Anne Massey have written a richly illustrated book of ocean liner posters which contains useful examples from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. There is also a critical commentary which places the posters within a changing artistic, cultural, social and industrial landscape. This extends from the second half of the nineteenth century to end of the liners in the 1960s and includes examples commissioned by P&O and designed by artists such as Charles Dixon and Norman Wilkinson.⁸⁸ There are also examples from P&O subsidiaries such as the Orient Steam Navigation Company (OSN), and British India Steam Navigation Company (BIS). The book covers a similar time period to the current thesis and so provides a useful starting point for a more particular investigation of a single company. The book's examples make it clear that P&O was not alone in employing visual communication and themes of nation and empire in the fashioning of its corporate identity. The question remains though, the extent to which P&O's self-image and public identity was distinctive and why.

In parallel with Cadringer and Massey, Scott Anthony and Oliver Green have investigated the use of graphic design in British aviation posters.⁸⁹ The research draws upon British Airways' collection, focusing on discussion of the company's forerunners, Imperial Airways (1924-39) and the state-owned BOAC (1939-1974). There are a number of useful parallels with the P&O project, including the question of

⁸⁸ There is a particularly intriguing example of a poster designed by Norman Wilkinson for the La Havre-Canada Allan Line c.1901 (pp 36-37). The style, technique and approach to representation and typography are radically different to anything P&O commissioned at the same time and also different from anything Norman Wilkinson created for the P&O. This indicates that an overall account of liner posters can be complimented by a detailed investigation of how and why individual companies evolved distinctive identities.

⁸⁹ Scott Anthony and Oliver Green, *British Aviation Posters: Art, Design and Flight* (Surrey: Lund Humphries, 2012).

national and imperial identities, transport design, and the growth of advertising, publicity and marketing.⁹⁰

As part of the *Studies in Imperialism* series, another useful source is Anandi Ramamurthy's book on British advertising during the Age of Imperialism.⁹¹ The book examines the representation of Africa and Asia in British advertising in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and investigates how these representations played a role in instituting a broader imperial programme. An earlier source, is Anne McClintock's *Imperial Leather*, which investigates specifically nineteenth century soap advertising within broader racial and imperial discourses.⁹²

The cultural historians Mike Esbester and Paul Dobraszczyk have each examined the formal mechanisms of graphic design in nineteenth century Britain and related this to broader questions in cultural history of the period. Esbester has examined nineteenth century transport timetable design arguing that these reflect contemporary notions of time but also construct new understandings of space.⁹³ Dobraszczyk's research has examined map design and typography in nineteenth century London guidebooks.⁹⁴ These kinds of investigations suggest a critical reading not just of ship portraits and seascapes but also of P&O's shipping timetables, route maps and ship plans which are often found in P&O passenger information books.

⁹⁰ For recent critical discussion of the interior design of BOAC's aircraft see Paddy O'Shea, 'From Interior to Brand: The British Overseas Airways Corporation, 1939 - 1974. A Case Study of Post-Second World War British Commercial Design', (unpublished doctoral thesis, Kingston University, 2015).

⁹¹ Anandi Ramamurthy, *Imperial Persuaders: Images of Africa and Asia in British Advertising* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003).

⁹² Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Context* (New York and London: Routledge, 1994).

⁹³ Mike Esbester, 'Designing Time: the Design and Use of Nineteenth-century Transport Timetables' *Journal of Design History*, 22: 2 (2009), pp. 91-113.

⁹⁴ Paul Dobraszczyk, 'City Reading: The Design and Use of Nineteenth-Century London Guidebooks' *Journal of Design History*, 25: 2 (2012), pp. 123-144

Jeremy Aynsley and Kate Forde examine design and the modern magazine.⁹⁵

Approaches explored in this research will be useful in the discussion of not only P&O's brochures but the company's self-published magazine, *The Blue Peter*, and staff journal, *About Ourselves*. These publications are important indicators of changes in P&O's preferred self-image.

2.3 Imperial land and seascape

There are a number of traditional sources for the discussion of ship portraits and seascapes. Although these sources tend not to employ more recent critical art historical approaches they nevertheless provide excellent autobiographical and other background information about many of P&O's artists.⁹⁶ More recent critical research concerning landscape more generally will be helpful in developing post-colonial readings of P&O's ship portraits. The art historian W. T. J. Mitchell not only examines the inter-relationship of landscape and empire but defends the specific thesis that landscape itself needs to be understood not as a genre of art but as a cultural practice, and a practice with its historical roots in European imperialism. Seascapes and maritime painting, which contribute an important element in P&O's corporate identity, have received less of this kind of critical attention. There are in depth critical studies of famous artists who painted the sea such as Turner, and in P&O's case texts on its artists such as Frank Mason,⁹⁷ but the notion of seascape as a historically specific

⁹⁵ Jeremy Aynsley and Kate Forde (eds.), *Design and the Modern Magazine* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007).

⁹⁶ Examples include: Dennis Brook-Hart, *British 19th Century Marine Painting* (Suffolk: Antique Collectors' Club, 1974); also Dennis Brook-Hart, *20th Century British Marine Painting* (Suffolk: Antique Collectors' Club, 1981); David Cordingly, *Marine Painting in England 1700-1900* (London: Studio Vista, 1974); E. H. H. Archibald, *The Dictionary of Sea Painters of Europe and America* (Suffolk: Antique Collectors' Club, 2000).

⁹⁷ Edward Yardley, *Frank Henry Mason. Marine Painter and Poster Artist* (Colley Books, 2015).

practice in relation to imperial and national identity has received less critical scrutiny. There are, however, important and suggestive exceptions.

In addition to Hughes's work already discussed,⁹⁸ the art historians Geoff Quilley and Sarah Monks highlight the critical significance of maritime art for understanding British national and imperial discourse.⁹⁹ Quilley and Monks focus on the period before P&O's foundation, and tend to concentrate on fine art painting and prints (rather than everyday design and ephemera), but the themes and approaches identified remain suggestive for P&O in the subsequent period. Quilley has conducted research concerning the eighteenth century art of the East India Company (historically and culturally so influential for P&O) in relation to visual signs of commerce and empire. This is helpful for critical discussion of P&O's visual culture and its role in maritime empire in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.¹⁰⁰ In addition to continuities and developments from earlier marine art there will also be questions unique to the P&O material. For instance, to what extent does the introduction of steam propulsion impact on the nature and perception of ship portraiture? Should P&O's ship portraits and their reproduction in guide books, brochures, and on posters and dinner menus be approached as a continuation of the academic tradition of fine art marine painting or from the more commercial context of graphic communication and design? The thesis suggests that, as with much of P&O's art and design, the company's ship portraits and their reproductions do not fit easily into either category and are better

⁹⁸ Hughes, in Barringer et. al. (eds.), *Art and the British Empire*, pp. 139-152.

⁹⁹ Geoff Quilley, *Empire to Nation: Art, History and the Visualization of Maritime Britain* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011); also Quilley, "All ocean is her own": the image of the sea and the identity of the maritime nation in eighteenth-century British art', in Geoffrey Cubitt (ed.), *Imagining Nations* (Manchester and New York: Manchester Press, 1998), pp. 132-152; Sarah Monks, 'Marine Art and the public sphere in Britain, 1739-1795' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London, 2002).

¹⁰⁰ Geoff Quilley, 'Signs of Commerce: the East India Company and the Patronage of Eighteenth-Century British Art', in H. V. Bowen et. al. (eds.), *The Worlds of the East India Company*, pp. 183-199.

understood as hybrid objects, existing in-between the academic and the commercial (see chapter 4, section 4.1).

2.4 Empire and Exhibition

P&O's business records show that for most of its history the company was not concerned with recording details of specific artistic commissions and its aesthetic rationale. Yet between 1837 and 1969 the archive does show consistent concern at the highest level of the company with the maintenance of the highest public profile and presence through repeated participation at grand collaborative public events such as international exhibitions and naval reviews.¹⁰¹ One of the earliest exhibitions was a moving panorama of the company's overland route to India at the Gallery of Illustration in London in 1850 which P&O helped to fund, and the company was still participating at such events a century later at the Festival of Britain in 1951. The evolution of this corporate concern can be understood against the backdrop of an exhibitionary culture in Britain which developed (in parallel with the company's own maturation) during the Victorian and Edwardian periods. The literature on exhibitions, the practices and cultures which informed them, and their relationship with national and imperial themes in Britain, is vast, but there are some key and helpful starting points.

In a synoptic introduction to the topic, Julie Codell traces links between culture, commerce and nation at British exhibitions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and this is useful for considering P&O's exhibition participation.¹⁰² Some of the first research to highlight the themes of exhibition and empire as an area of interest

¹⁰¹ NMM/P&O/1/1 to 1/130 Minutes of the Board.

¹⁰² Julie F. Codell, 'International Exhibitions: Linking Culture, Commerce, and Nation', in Dana Arnold and David Peters Corbett (eds.), *A Companion to British Art; 1600 to the present day* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2013), chapter 10, pp. 220-240.

came from John MacKenzie and Jonathan Woodham.¹⁰³ One of the earlier book length investigations was Paul Greenhalgh's *Ephemeral Vistas* and of particular interest are chapters three and five, on Imperial display and the national profile.¹⁰⁴ Although it is important to point out that exhibitions were not solely concerned with imperial achievement Greenhalgh says imperialism was certainly celebrated, 'to the full', and that any study neglecting this runs the risk of misrepresenting their overall flavour. Greenhalgh continues by suggesting that the exhibitions are important indicators in the wider debate amongst historians about the impact of empire in Britain and shows convincingly that from 1851 onwards empire was, 'proudly and exhaustively displayed'.¹⁰⁵ However, in common with developments in post-colonial studies after Edward Said's work, Greenhalgh argues that the imperial theme was not uniform over time. He explains that 'examining British exhibitions from 1851 to 1940, the type and shape of imperialism at work in them can be seen to alter qualitatively much in the way empire changed in the world in general.'¹⁰⁶ This thesis agrees with the more nuanced analysis of the functioning of imperial commitments and narratives. It will argue that in the case of P&O, the company did indeed evolve a powerful imperial narrative which it pursued and which persisted for over a century but that this was not a singular, monolithic and unchanging story. Rather, much of the importance and interest of the story is in the way the company's imperial identity evolved at different points in its history in relation to wider changes in imperial and post-colonial identities in Britain.

¹⁰³ McKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*; Woodham, 'Design and Empire', and also, Jonathan Woodham, 'Images of Africa at the British Empire Exhibitions between the Wars' *Journal of Design History*, 2: 1 (1989), pp. 15-33.

¹⁰⁴ Paul Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas the Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World's Fairs, 1851-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998).

¹⁰⁵ Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas*, p. 57.

¹⁰⁶ Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas*, p. 57.

There are helpful book length investigations of individual national and international exhibitions. Jeffrey Auerbach examines The Great Exhibition of 1851 (to which P&O contributed funds) as the first of the great international exhibitions, and shows how the event was conceived as a national showcase.¹⁰⁷ Peter Hoffenberg's research will be of particular interest because it examines in detail the imperial theme in exhibitions held in England, India and Australia between 1851 and 1914.¹⁰⁸ Hoffenberg mentions P&O twice: first in a discussion about exhibitions commissioners and their relationship to the state,¹⁰⁹ and second in a discussion of 'Exhibition Tourists as Pilgrims', where discussion focuses on the roles played by colonial visitors to exhibitions.¹¹⁰ Cultural analyses of other high profile exhibitions in which P&O participated include Becky Conekin, Jo Littler and Harriet Atkinson's work on the 1951 Festival of Britain.¹¹¹ Of particular interest will be the question of the role of the recently dissolved British Empire at the Festival.¹¹²

Two often cited and influential papers, (interestingly published without knowledge of each other, at around the same time, and both drawing on Foucault), come from Tony Bennett and Timothy Mitchell.¹¹³ Mitchell links what he calls, 'the exhibitionary order', to themes from Edward Said's work. However, Mitchell extends

¹⁰⁷ Jeffrey A. Auerbach, *The Great Exhibition A Nation on Display* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999).

¹⁰⁸ Peter H. Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display: English, Indian, and Australian Exhibitions from the Crystal Palace to the Great War* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 2001).

¹⁰⁹ Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display*, p. 91.

¹¹⁰ Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display*, p. 254.

¹¹¹ Becky Conekin, *The Autobiography of A Nation: The 1951 Festival of Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), in particular Chapter 7, 'The Place that was almost absent: The British Empire', pp. 183-202; Jo Littler, 'Festering Britain: The 1951 Festival of Britain decolonisation and the representation of the Commonwealth', in Simon Faulkner and Anandi Ramamurthy (eds.), *Visual Culture and Decolonisation in Britain* (London: Ashgate, 2006); Harriet Atkinson, *The Festival of Britain: The Land and its People*, (London and New York: I. B. Taurus, 2012).

¹¹² See in particular Littler, 'Festering Britain' and Conekin, *The Autobiography of A Nation*, chapter 7, 'The Place that was almost absent: The British Empire', pp. 183-202.

¹¹³ Tony Bennett, 'The Exhibitionary Complex' *New Formations*, 4 (Spring 1988), pp. 73-102; Timothy Mitchell, 'Orientalism and the Exhibitionary Order' (1989), rpt., in Donald Preziosi (ed.), *The Art of Art History* (Oxford and New York Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 455-472.

the thesis not by examining how the exhibitions construct otherness in the manufacture of Western national identities and the furtherance of imperial purpose, but instead takes accounts of non-Western visitors to nineteenth century Europe as they encounter the, 'representation of their own otherness'. Mitchell uses this to elucidate the idea of the-world-as-exhibition in nineteenth century Western minds and experiences.

Building on the work of W. T. J. Mitchell, Denise Blake Oleksijczuk examines the co-incidence of landscape and imperialism in the specific case of the panorama shows of nineteenth century London.¹¹⁴ This will be particularly useful for examination of P&O's (1850) giant moving panorama of *The Overland Mail to India*.

There is very little on the specific role of maritime exhibitions and associated events such as naval reviews in Britain's cultural and imperial identity. There are exceptions: Hughes as already identified; Pieter van der Merwe on the Royal Naval Exhibition, Chelsea (1891) at which P&O built its own oriental pavilion (see this thesis chapter 3, section 2); Jan Rüger's *The Great Naval Game*; and Kevin Littlewood and Beverly Butler's chapter 'The Navy Displayed'.¹¹⁵ As with much other maritime history these discussions focus on naval themes and so alertness to the distinctiveness of P&O as a leading member of the merchant marine community and its relationship to empire will be important.

¹¹⁴ Denise Blake Oleksijczuk, *The First Panoramas Visions of British Imperialism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

¹¹⁵ Hughes, in Barringer et. al. (eds.), *Art and the British Empire*, pp. 139-152; Pieter van der Merwe, 'Views of the Royal Naval Exhibition, 1891', *Journal for Maritime Research*, 3: 1 (2001), pp. 146-156; Jan Rüger, *The Great Naval Game. Britain and Germany in the Age of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Kevin Littlewood and Beverly Butler, *Of Ships and Stars. Maritime heritage and the founding of the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich*. (London and New Brunswick NJ: Athlone Press, 1998), pp. 1-32.

2.5 Art, Design, Britain and Decolonization

As is the case with imperial cultural history and maritime history, the question of decolonization and its impact in British art and design is a relatively under researched area, certainly relative to the impact of Empire. Simon Faulkner and Anandi Ramamurthy suggest their edited collection of papers in 2006 was the first in-depth analysis of visual culture with regard to the processes of decolonization in Britain between 1945 and 1970.¹¹⁶ The edited collection contains work, previously mentioned, by Jo Littler on the Festival of Britain. Littler suggests that whilst the Festival did represent a break with, ‘the grandiose swagger of imperialism’, it is also important not to overlook the way festival discourses re-articulated the theme of national greatness in familiar ways.¹¹⁷ While P&O’s art and design between 1945 and 1969 shows a clear and positive response to wider modernising cultural and post-colonial changes in Britain, Littler’s analysis raises the prospect of a more subtle persistence and re-formulation of older imperial themes. Lisa Tickner and David Peters Corbett’s special edition of *Art History* re-assesses post-war British art and aims to reinvigorate new approaches and interest, specifically in the period 1939 to 1960. This period, they argue, is relatively under-explored in a way in which scholarship on nineteenth and early twentieth century British art is not. One of the new approaches highlighted concerns, ‘the working through of a sense of Britain’s diminished place in the post-war world, a sense exacerbated by the loss of an imperial role, the disruption to established systems of British society and the increasing political, economic and cultural power and influence of the USA.’¹¹⁸ This thesis strongly agrees with this

¹¹⁶ Faulkner and Ramamurthy (eds.), *Visual Culture and Decolonization in Britain* (Hampshire UK and Burlington US: Ashgate, 2006).

¹¹⁷ Littler in Faulkner and Ramamurthy (eds.), *Visual Culture and Decolonisation*, pp. 183-202.

¹¹⁸ Lisa Tickner and David Peters Corbett, ‘Being British and Going ... Somewhere’, introduction to their edited collection of papers, ‘British Art in the Cultural Field, 1939-1969’ a special issue of *Art History*, 35: 2 (April 2012), pp. 206-215. This quote p. 210.

revisionary post-colonial reading of British post-war art and design and will explore P&O as a significant case in point. It will suggest the company's post-1945 identity demonstrates: the persistence of empire in the corporate and national imagination; a melancholy about the passing of empire;¹¹⁹ and the desire to exploit the new commercial and political circumstances of the British Commonwealth to prolong the old advantages and status Empire had afforded.

The literary and film studies academics Lee Grieveson and Colin MacCabe have edited a collection of papers which examine the role film played in the transition from the ending of Empire, to the foundation of the Commonwealth and decolonization in Britain between 1939 and 1965.¹²⁰ The collection investigates the ways in which both state and non-state actors employed film to shape attitudes toward colonial and neo-colonial power. It includes analysis of corporate financed non-fiction films which will be helpful for approaching a number of films which P&O commissioned post-1945.

3. Histories of P&O: From the Celebratory to the Critical.

3.1 P&O History

Literature on the P&O Company itself is largely of a different kind to that already discussed. While there is some critical and academic work, much of the existing knowledge is in historic first-hand accounts and company-commissioned histories. The historical accounts written by and for the company are helpful and often speak with a first-hand authority, but it must also be remembered that these sources come

¹¹⁹ Helpful in assessing the nature and extent of tacit persistence of imperial thinking in Britain is Paul Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack: The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation* (London: Routledge, 1987) and particularly his, *After Empire: Melancholia or Convivial Culture* (London: Routledge, 2004).

¹²⁰ Lee Grieveson and Colin MacCabe (eds.), *Film and the End of Empire*, (Hampshire UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

with a vested interest. There is an account of the company's involvement in the First World War, for example, titled *Merchant Adventurers* and published in 1920, which was written by F. A. Hook, head of the company's first publicity department.¹²¹ The book includes a general history of the company¹²² but also provides scholars today with crucial evidence of how the company preferred to imagine its own history and role. Lord Inchcape, the company's Chairman, wrote a foreword describing the company as holding, 'a place of honour', in the history of the nation.¹²³

In its centenary year, P&O also commissioned a company history by 'Boyd Cable', a pseudonym for Colonel E. A. Ewart, P&O's public relations manager at the time.¹²⁴ Cable's book, like Hook's, was an insider's view of company history. The book is beautifully produced including an attractively designed map by L. A. Doust showing P&O's shipping routes past and present, and a full colour plate of the company's newly commissioned coat of arms. Another war history of the P&O, examining the company's service in the Second World War, was published in 1951.¹²⁵ Although the focus of this thesis is P&O there are separate histories of P&O subsidiary company's such as Saunders' history of BIS during the Second World War, and Isherwood and McCart's books on OSN's passenger ships.¹²⁶ McCart has also written

¹²¹ F. A. Hook, *Merchant Adventurers 1914-1918* (London: A & C Black, 1920).

¹²² Hook, *Merchant Adventurers*, pp. 1-18.

¹²³ Lord Inchcape, 'Foreword' in Hook, *Merchant Adventurers*, pp. v-vi

¹²⁴ Boyd Cable, *A Hundred Year History of the P&O Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company* (London: Ivor Nicholson and Watson, 1937).

¹²⁵ George F. Kerr, *Business in Great Waters: The War History of the P&O* (London: Faber and Faber, 1951).

¹²⁶ Hillary St George Saunders, *Valiant Voyaging: A Short History of the British India Steam Navigation Company in the Second World War 1939-1945* (London: Faber, 1948); Phillip Rentell, *Historic P&O-Orient Liners* (Kingfisher Publications, 1990); J. H. Isherwood, *Ships of the Orient Line* (Southampton: Harrap, 1953); Neil McCart, *Passenger Ships of the Orient Line* (Wellingborough: P Stephens, 1987).

popular style books on individual P&O liners which contain useful background information and details concerning specific ships.¹²⁷

Other historic sources include John Nicolson's biography of one of the founding chairman of the company, Arthur Anderson, and Malcom Sutherland has written a more recent biography of a later Chairman, Sir Thomas Sutherland (no relation).¹²⁸ Further recent histories of the company include books by David Divine and Peter Padfield, and David and Stephen Howarth.¹²⁹ Padfield's is a useful collection of primary sources, of passenger and staff recollections and reminiscences. As Padfield admits, however, it is a romanticised account by someone with a life-long attachment to the company. Howarth and Howarth is a useful, detailed, balanced and historically contextualised account of the story of P&O. There is also the definitive and extremely useful P&O fleet history.¹³⁰ Further books were commissioned by the company to celebrate P&O's 175th anniversary in 2012, including texts by Sharon Poole and Andrew Sassoli-Walker; Bruce Peter and Phillip Dawson; and Ruth Artmonsky.¹³¹

P&O's own Heritage Collection website provides a wide range of information in considering company history, and although it is celebratory in tone and approach it is also not without elements of critical discussion.¹³²

¹²⁷ Neil McCart, *Famous British Liners 2. SS Viceroy of India – P&O's First Electric Cruise Liner* (Cheltenham: Fan Publications, 1993); Neil McCart, *Famous British Liners 5 P&O's Five White Sisters – the Strath Liners of the 1930s* (Cheltenham: Fan Publications, 1994).

¹²⁸ John Nicolson, *Arthur Anderson: a founder of the P&O Company* (T & J Manson, 1932); Malcolm Sutherland, *Thomas Sutherland: A Great Victorian: Chairman of P&O founder of HSBC, Member of Parliament* (Leiston Press, 2010).

¹²⁹ David Divine, *These Splendid Ships: The Story of the Peninsular & Oriental Line* (London: Frederick Muller, 1960); Peter Padfield, *Beneath the House Flag* (London: Hutchinson, 1981). David Howarth and Stephen Howarth, *The Story of P&O*, (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1987).

¹³⁰ Stephen Rabson and Kevin O'Donoghue, *P&O: A Fleet History* (Kendall: World Ship Society).

¹³¹ Sharon Poole and Andrew Sassoli-Walker, *P&O Cruises: Celebrating 175 years of Heritage* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Amberly, 2011); Bruce Peter and Phillip Dawson, *P&O at 175 : A World of Ships and Shipping Since 1837* (Ramsey, Isle of Man: Ferry Publications, 2012); Ruth Artmonsky, *P&O: A History* (Oxford: Shire Publications, 2012).

¹³² *P&O Heritage Collection* (POH hereafter), online resource: [<http://www.poheritage.com/> accessed 6 September 2013].

There is also important academic work from the perspective of business, shipping and social history. Freda Harcourt was the first to examine P&O from an academic, critical perspective, and her important book *Flagships of Imperialism* is central to informing the complex political background within which critical discussion of P&O's art and design can take place. The book is particularly useful in charting the struggles, both internal and external, that the company faced in its early years and the debates and events surrounding the award of the all-important mail contracts.¹³³

3.2 P&O Art and Design

Although very little academic work has been written on P&O's use of art and design there are a number of useful existing sources. Christopher Jordan has examined work by the ceramicist William De Morgan undertaken for the company in the later nineteenth century, and Veronica Sekules has examined the role of Sir Colin Anderson (1904-1980) as ship owner and patron of the arts.¹³⁴ Anderson was principally involved with the OSN but he was hugely influential on the evolution of P&O's art and design, particularly after OSN and P&O fully merged in 1960. Ruth Artmonsky has written a book which examines Anderson's work at OSN, and this is of great interest for understanding his impact on P&O.¹³⁵ There are also important primary

¹³³ Freda Harcourt, *Flagships of Imperialism: The P&O Company and the politics of Empire from its origins to 1867* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007). See also Harcourt, 'Black Gold: P&O and the Opium Trade, 1847-1914', *International Journal of Maritime History*, 6: 1 (June 1994), pp. 1-83; and Harcourt, 'The High Road to India: The P&O Company and the Suez Canal, 1840-1874', *International Journal of Maritime History*, 22: 2 (December 2010), pp. 19-72. I am also very grateful to Dr. Edward Harcourt for kind permission to consult and make copies of Freda Harcourt's unpublished manuscripts in the P&O business archive at Greenwich.

¹³⁴ Christopher Jordan, 'Tile Panels by William De Morgan for the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company' *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. 143, no. 1179 (June 2001), pp.371-374; Veronica Sekules, 'The Ship Owner as Patron: Sir Colin Anderson and the Orient Line 1930-1966', *Journal of the Decorative Art Society* (1986).

¹³⁵ Ruth Artmonsky, *Shipboard Style: Colin Anderson of the Orient Line* (London: Artmonsky Arts, 2010).

sources written by Anderson himself, explaining his thinking about art and design, particularly with regard to interior design and passenger ships.¹³⁶

To celebrate P&O's 175th anniversary the design researcher Ruth Artmonsky and Curator at P&O Heritage Collection, Susie Cox, published 'a pictorial voyage' through the history of P&O.¹³⁷ The book is richly illustrated and includes a range of examples including fine art painting and portraiture, the company flag and coat of arms, posters, architecture, baggage labels, promotional leaflets, brochures, postcards and photography. Although the book is another commissioned by the company and is, like the website, celebratory in tone, it is not uncritical. The text places examples of art and design in an historical, social, commercial and political context.

3.3 Approaching the Archive

The research is designed as a single corporate case study adopting an archival based approach. This draws primarily on the P&O business archive held in the Caird Library at the National Maritime Museum in London. The company's archive, which is on permanent loan to the museum, was deposited by P&O in instalments between 1971 and 2008. The instalments began shortly after the closure of the company's liner services in 1969, the end point of the current research project. The archive holds a wide range of company records dating from 1837 to the 1990s.¹³⁸

Freda Harcourt was the first scholar to examine P&O's archive in critical detail, writing a new kind of business history of the company which highlighted its

¹³⁶ Colin Anderson, *Colin Anderson's Lecturers (1936-67)* NMM/P&O/92/22; also, Anderson, 'The Interior Design of Passenger Ships' *Journal of the Royal Society of the Arts*, (May 1966); and Anderson, *Three Score Years and Ten* (London: C. S. Anderson, 1974).

¹³⁷ Ruth Artmonsky and Susie Cox, *P&O Across the Oceans, Across the Years. A Pictorial Voyage* (Suffolk: Antique Collectors Club, 2012).

¹³⁸ P&O/NMM/1 to 102. It is estimated that the archive takes up some 500 meters of shelving, see POH, 'P&O Archives at National Maritime Museum', online article: [<http://www.poheritage.com/our-archive/research-guides/crew/po-archives-at-national-maritime-museum>, accessed 12 December 2015].

role in the workings of the British Empire.¹³⁹ Harcourt focused on the relationship between P&O's commercial and business history, the political context in which the company operated, and the evolution of its strategic role within the networks of Empire. Harcourt drew upon specific elements of the company archive such as P&O's Board minutes and agenda, committee minutes, Board papers, reports to shareholders, general correspondence and letters, and papers relating to the Royal Charters and mail contracts.¹⁴⁰

Developing this work in a new direction, the current project uses the archive to investigate the role of the company's visual culture in the mediation and intertwining of its commercial and imperial interests. This complements existing research, reading items such as P&O's Board minutes and reports to shareholders against different and unexplored archival elements which help to map P&O's evolving public image as a non-governmental imperial agency. These newly highlighted archival elements include: diaries and memoirs kept by P&O passengers and staff; Advertising and Publicity department annual reports; corporate handbooks, pocketbooks, brochures and publications; records of corporate properties; samples of printed documents and stationery; information on individual ships; corporate uniform design; newspaper cuttings and staff journals.¹⁴¹ These items are supplemented with readings of P&O objects in the NMM's general collections such as ship models, photographic publicity albums, and maritime ephemera.¹⁴²

¹³⁹ Harcourt, *Flagships*.

¹⁴⁰ See, Board minutes and agenda (NMM/P&O/1), committee minutes (NMM/P&O/2), Board papers (NMM/P&O/3), reports to shareholders (NMM/P&O/6), general correspondence and letters (NMM/P&O/11-23), and papers relating to the Royal Charters and mail contracts (NMM/P&O/30).

¹⁴¹ See diaries (NMM/P&O/92); departmental and agency reports (NMM/P&O/4); corporate handbooks, pocketbooks and guides (NMM/P&O/42 and 91/21 to 91/22); corporate properties (NMM/P&O/90); exhibitions and naval reviews (NMM/P&O/91/11 and 91/30); samples of printed documents and stationery (NMM/P&O/91/31 to 91/37); general publicity (NMM/P&O/96); uniform design (NMM/P&O/91/37); newspaper cuttings (NMM/P&O/98) and staff journals (NMM/P&O/99).

¹⁴² In addition to P&O's business archive the three main supplementary sources are the museum's general collection (references to the collections catalogue follow the abbreviation NMM/CC), the

Drawing on P&O's business archive and the wider collections of the NMM, the research presents a different kind of art and design history which builds upon cultural histories of British Empire, but focuses on the evolution of the corporate image of a single shipping company. It contributes a sustained critical narrative of P&O's use of art and design, interrogating the role of visual culture in fostering and sustaining the distinctively imperial flavour of the company's preferred public image. In so doing it demonstrates the case for a refined view of the relationship between imperialism and culture which moves beyond simple notions of either corporate glory or greed. The research approaches the archive building upon on the critical debates, concepts and controversies outlined in this review. What was the nature and extent of the role of P&O's art and design in fashioning a deeply felt corporate identity as a proud servant of Empire? How and why did this identity evolve and to what extent was it recalibrated in the transition from Empire to Commonwealth? Finally, what more general conclusions can be drawn concerning the role of art and design in the ebb and flow of maritime, corporate and imperial identities in Britain across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries?

library collection (NMM/LC), and the uncatalogued ephemera collection (NMM/UEC). The uncatalogued ephemera collection was in the process of being catalogued during the later stages of this research and many items can now be located through the library catalogue.

Chapter Two: Embarking on Empire (1837-1869)

Introduction

STEAM POWER is undoubtedly *the* feature of the nineteenth century, and steam navigation is by far the most important aspect of that feature. The extension of steam navigation with different parts of the world will, in all probability, accomplish greater good for humanity than any invention, or the application of any power since the days of Guttenberg [sic] or Caxton. Business, commerce, health, pleasure, social intercourse, international peace, enterprise, civilisation, and Christianity, are alike interested in this extension.¹⁴³

The public advantages of the enterprise are unspeakable. Geographical distance has been annihilated – the time occupied in the communication between England and India has been shortened by *nearly three months*, the commercial relations of the two empires have been immensely multiplied, and the cause of good government materially promoted.¹⁴⁴

Britain's maritime economy and culture saw radical changes in the nineteenth century. Retrenchment and reform in the Admiralty and Royal Navy, the rise of free-trade policies and break up of established shipping monopolies opened up the world's maritime lanes to a wide range of shipping entrepreneurs.¹⁴⁵ Steam navigation was in its infancy in the first half of the nineteenth century and for its supporters it held immense potential for accelerating trade and commerce but also circulating the benefits of culture and civilisation (as it was seen). New shipping lines developed to

¹⁴³ [Anon.], 'Steam Navigation,' *Nautical Magazine* (1842), pp. 62-64. This ref., p. 62.

¹⁴⁴ From a prospectus accompanying a diorama exhibition of the route of the Overland Mail to India, sponsored by P&O. See Thomas Grieve, *The Route of the Overland Mail to India from Southampton to Calcutta* (London: Atchley & Co., 1852), p. 1.

¹⁴⁵ This summary of the changes draws upon Miles Taylor, 'Introduction' to Taylor (ed.), *The Victorian Empire and Britain's Maritime World 1837-1901* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 8.

exploit raw materials and goods, re-invigorate existing markets and create new ones, and to transport a wide range of passengers and emigrants to diverse parts of the globe. Around the middle decades of the century a number of new shipping lines were founded including: the British and North American Royal Mail Steam Packet Company (later Cunard Line) operating in the Atlantic Ocean (1840); Donald Currie & Co., (later Castle Line) trading initially with Calcutta around the Cape of Good Hope (1862); and P&O in the Mediterranean and Indian Ocean (1837).

At this early stage in its development, however, steam navigation incurred such high running costs that it was not a viable private commercial proposition and the industry was only able to survive with government subsidy and support.¹⁴⁶ As Freda Harcourt has argued, this was ‘nowhere more so than in the case of the P&O Company.’¹⁴⁷ The directors of the emergent P&O Company recognised the financial challenges of steam navigation and took advantage of recent changes in government attitude which saw mail contracts open to competitive tender. Before the 1830s the Admiralty had been responsible for the delivery of overseas mail. These deliveries had been in sailing ships which, being dependent on the weather, provided only an irregular and unpredictable service. With the advent of steam technology at sea HM Government decided to abandon this arrangement and pay private steamship companies to provide a regular mail service which could be integrated with their normal commercial shipping activities.¹⁴⁸ The first state-private contract for the mail to Rotterdam and Hamburg, was awarded to the General Steam Navigation Company

¹⁴⁶ Harcourt, *Flagships*, p. 1.

¹⁴⁷ Harcourt, *Flagships*, p. 1.

¹⁴⁸ A. J. Arnold and Robert G. Greenhill, ‘Business, government and profit: the management and regulation of overseas mail contracts, 1836-90’, *Accounting, Business & Financial History*, 5:3 (1995), pp. 334-359.

in 1832.¹⁴⁹ Foreshadowing more recent political argument, it was urged at the time that these arrangements provided benefits both to Whitehall and to the development of the British merchant marine. Also foreshadowing recent criticism, there were objections raised that contracts were overgenerous and represented ‘contractors’ bounties’ rather than ‘consideration for performing a valuable public service.’¹⁵⁰

It was in this commercial-political context that P&O’s founders embarked on their own maritime initiative in the 1830s. Freda Harcourt has shown how in its written communication with government, the early founders repeatedly appealed to the idea of the P&O as a servant of the public good and national interest, beyond narrow economic arguments. As early as 1840 the company directors described P&O as a ‘great national undertaking’.¹⁵¹ Harcourt has argued that from its first Admiralty contract in 1837 this uniquely political element in P&O’s written correspondence with government was crucial in securing contracts and also in saving the company from the brink of financial ruin in 1867.¹⁵²

This chapter seeks to extend and elaborate Harcourt’s argument taking it into a new and unexplored corporate cultural realm. It argues that in conjunction with P&O’s

¹⁴⁹ Sarah Palmer, “‘The most indefatigable activity’: the General Steam Navigation Company, 1824-50,” *Journal of Transport History*, 3, pp. 1-22, cited in Arnold and Greenhill, ‘Business, government and profit’ p. 335.

¹⁵⁰ The General Shipowners Society in evidence to the ‘Select Committee on Steamship Communications with India’ (First Report, Appendix 4) *Parliamentary Papers* (1851) XXI, cited in Arnold and Greenhill, ‘Business, government and profit’, p. 335. Echoes of the debates continue in more recent contexts. In 1992 The British Government under John Major’s Conservative administration launched its Public-Finance-Initiative policy, a systematic approach designed to encourage public-private partnership (PPP) in the delivery of public services and facilities. From 1997 this programme was extended and expanded under Tony Blair’s Labour administration. For a critique of the implementation and consequences of high profile PPPs from this period see George Monbiot, *Captive State: The Corporate Takeover of Britain* (London: Macmillan, 2000). For more general background and discussion see, Darrin Grimsey and Mervyn K. Lewis, *Public Private Partnerships: The Worldwide Revolution in Infrastructure Provision and Project Finance* (Cheltenham, UK, Northampton MA, US: 2004).

¹⁵¹ NMM/P&O/15/2, 31 March 1841, cited in Harcourt, *Flagships*, p. 3.

¹⁵² Harcourt, *Flagships*, p. 4. The first mail contract awarded in 1837 to Richard Bourne’s Peninsular Steam Navigation Company was for the delivery of mail to five ports in the Iberian Peninsula ending at Gibraltar.

written correspondence, the company also exploited the rapid expansion during the nineteenth century of practices of exhibition and display. This element of soft-imperialism or cultural-imperialism became vital in the successful articulation and dissemination of P&O's corporate identity which brought the economic and political arguments from the pages of its letter-books vividly to life within the public imagination.

1. Reliable Romantics: Picturing the P&O (1837-47)

The first forms of visual communication commissioned by P&O were portraits of its ships. Despite widespread recognition of the commercial and imperial significance of P&O's role in establishing steam communication across British Empire, the distinctive nature of its ship portraits has never been critically addressed. There are a number of parallels with a similar lack of discussion of ship portraits of the East India Company in the eighteenth century. Geoff Quilley suggests the gap in this case can be explained by the seemingly mundane and prosaic character of the work, the wider marginalization of maritime art as a serious subject for art history, and the fact that many of the artists were academically untrained and from maritime rather than metropolitan artistic communities.¹⁵³ These are almost exact parallels with problems facing discussion of P&O's ship portraits of the nineteenth century which traditional categories and canons of art history risk ignoring as uninteresting or second-rate works. Quilley seeks to re-habilitate the East India Company's ship portraits by considering them in the context of the company's financial and political power but also in demonstrating the important role they played in a deeper association of the

¹⁵³ Geoff Quilley, 'Signs of Commerce: the East India Company and the Patronage of Eighteenth-Century British Art', in Bowen, Lincoln and Rigby, (eds.), *The World's of the East India Company*, pp. 183-199.

company's commercial function and character with wider perceptions of British national identity at large. P&O's distinctive early ship portraits also need to be approached from the perspective not of metropolitan artistic communities but the world of maritime commerce at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and the unique problem-situation in which the P&O Company was seeking to operate and establish itself during the first thirty years of its existence.¹⁵⁴ Central to this, and quite distinct from eighteenth century contexts of the East India Company, is the question of steam and time, and in particular notions of efficiency, regularity and reliability.

In order to win the trust of the public and also the Admiralty, from whom it was seeking to secure subsidised mail contracts necessary for its survival, P&O needed to exhibit the clear benefits of the company's new steam communication service and the paintings can be seen as part of its solution to this challenge. What emerges is a distinctive kind of romanticism, reliable romanticism. This demonstrates on the one hand a sense of romance, adventure and possibility offered by the new means of transportation and, at the same time, reassures potential passengers and government officials of the regularity, reliability and security of the service in the otherwise notoriously dangerous and unpredictable world of travel by sea. These qualities can be found in the very earliest text-based corporate advertisements.

1.1 'More rapid and regular': Early Advertising Themes (1834-37)

In 1834 Brodie McGhie Willcox and Arthur Anderson (later two of the managing directors and then, successively, Chairman of P&O) issued a proposal for an enterprise called the Peninsular Steam Navigation Company. Harcourt says the proposal came to

¹⁵⁴ Explaining human made objects – artistic or otherwise – by imaginatively re-enacting their construction as a concrete solution to problems or questions in specific historical situations is a methodological approach outlined in Michael Baxandall, *Patterns of Intention, On the Historical Explanation of Pictures* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985).

nothing, mainly because the two men had no ships of their own.¹⁵⁵ It is interesting to note, however, that the advertising for this embryonic company contains key elements which reoccur in the early identity of the P&O itself and some elements which continue to characterise its public profile for another half century and more. An advertisement for the Peninsular Steam Navigation Company appeared in the *London Morning Post*, 1 October 1834. Willcox and Anderson are named as the agents, and the company's temporary address was No. 6. Broad-Street where, 'Prospectuses may be obtained and applications received'.¹⁵⁶ A copy of an 1834 prospectus survives in the British Library (fig. 4). The prospectus argues that 'the very imperfect state of communication between Great Britain, Spain and Portugal, for Passengers, Mails and Goods, has led many persons connected with the trade of the countries to contemplate a more efficient and regular establishment of Packets than has yet existed.'¹⁵⁷ It suggests that the arrival of more settled political circumstances on the Iberian Peninsula has brought stronger trading prospects for Britain, and that 'the time is now come when the means of communication must be improved, and rendered more rapid and more regular', emphasising the company's unique selling point that 'this can only be effected by means of Steam Packets, built on a large, commodious and powerful scale.'¹⁵⁸

Kennedy's 1903 *History of Steam Navigation*, in which P&O features prominently, helps provide context by explaining that prior to 1837 the conveyance of the mails between Falmouth and the Peninsula, was undertaken by sailing brigs which left Falmouth for Lisbon every week 'wind and weather permitting'.¹⁵⁹ In other words,

¹⁵⁵ Harcourt, *Flagships*, p. 36.

¹⁵⁶ *London Morning Post* (1 Oct 1834), p. 1.

¹⁵⁷ P&O, *Prospectus of the Peninsular Steam Navigation Company* (Peninsular Steam Navigation Company: London, 1834), n. p.

¹⁵⁸ P&O, *Prospectus* (1834), p. 1.

¹⁵⁹ John Kennedy, *The History of Steam Navigation* (Liverpool: Charles Birchall, 1903), p. 50.

as Howarth and Howarth point out, Wilcox and Anderson's advertisements which announced a frequent and regular timetable represent an entirely new phenomenon. The pace and progress of sailing ships depended entirely on weather conditions and so not only would passengers not know when a ship would arrive they would not know its departure time in advance either.¹⁶⁰ A regular and reliable timetable of steam communication thus offered a new and revolutionary prospect for the Admiralty and for maritime travellers and traders more widely. It is from this unique commercial-imperial maritime context that P&O's distinctive ship portraits emerged but this cultural world has historically not been much understood by art criticism and history.

1.2 An Aesthetic Disagreement

In his *Harbours of England*, first published in 1856, the prominent art critic and author John Ruskin records an encounter with a guide at the Royal Hospital for Seamen at Greenwich:

Some years ago I happened to stand longer than pleased my pensioner guide before Turner's 'Battle of Trafalgar' at Greenwich Hospital; a picture which, at a moderate estimate, is simply worth all the rest of the hospital-ground-walls-pictures and models put together. My guide, supposing me to be detained by indignant wonder at seeing it in so good a place, assented to my supposed sentiments by muttering in a low voice: 'Well, sir, it *is* a shame that that thing should be there. We ought to 'a 'ad a Uggins ; that's sartain'.¹⁶¹

¹⁶⁰ David Howarth and Stephen Howarth, *The Story of P&O: the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1986), p. 16.

¹⁶¹ John Ruskin, *The Harbours of England* (Sunnyside, Orpington, and London: George Allen, 1895), p. 33.

The Hospital had been created in 1696 for elderly or injured seamen and although not part of its original aim it had by the mid-nineteenth century acquired a substantial collection of naval art and artefacts.¹⁶² According to Pieter van de Merwe, this made the hospital ‘the Navy’s principal theatre of memory’, adding that the generations of naval pensioners it housed provided the hospital with a unique commemorative identity of “‘living history’”.¹⁶³ The encounter between the art critic and retired seaman in front of Turner’s *The Battle of Trafalgar* (figs. 5 and 6) encapsulates the different concerns and interests of the maritime and metropolitan artistic communities and some of the tensions arising from these differences.

In an exaggerated manner, designed to defend Turner from criticism, Ruskin claims that Turner’s painting is worth more than any of the other paintings or models, or even the Greenwich Hospital building itself (designed by Sir Christopher Wren). By contrast, Ruskin’s pensioner-guide refers to Turner’s painting as ‘that thing’, claiming it would be better replaced with a work by the seaman turned marine painter William John Huggins (1781-1845), whom Ruskin disparagingly refers to as ‘Uggins’.¹⁶⁴ When Turner’s painting had been installed in 1824 in its original location, the State Rooms at St James’ Palace, it is reported that naval officers (including the future King William IV), seamen and naval historians disapproved of the work, objecting to what they took to be its historical inaccuracies.¹⁶⁵ When the painting was

¹⁶² Pieter van der Merwe, “‘A proud monument of the glory of England’”. The Greenwich Hospital Collection’, in Geoff Quilley (ed.), *Art for the Nation: The Oil Paintings Collections of the National Maritime Museum* (Greenwich, London: National Maritime Museum, 2006), pp. 18-37. This ref., p. 20.

¹⁶³ van der Merwe, “‘A proud monument’”, p. 20.

¹⁶⁴ It is interesting that Ruskin’s rendering of the seaman’s voice adds the question of class and taste to the aesthetic disagreements between maritime and artistic communities. The issue may not be so clear cut, however, since, as Leo Costello notes, Turner himself had ‘decidedly lower-class origins’ and was said to have kept a thick Cockney accent throughout his life. Leo Costello, *J. M. W. Turner and the Subject of History* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), p. 235.

¹⁶⁵ Christine Riding, ‘Trafalgar Squared’ in Christine Riding and Richard Johns, *Turner & the Sea* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2013), pp. 102-123. This ref., pp. 112-113.

transferred to the Naval Gallery in Greenwich in 1829 the pensioners there, many of whom had served under Nelson at the battle, reacted similarly. As a seaman himself, and bringing to his work a seaman's idea of accuracy, Huggins' pictures on the other hand were generally received far more warmly by maritime communities. Towards the end of his life Huggins created ship portraits for P&O and so this encounter is helpful and important, not so much for the rights and wrongs of the disagreement, but because it can be used to reconstruct a distinctive maritime visual culture within which P&O's first images emerged.

1.3 S. D. Skillett and the First Ship Portraits (c. 1837-47)

S. D. Skillett created the first pictures to hang on the walls of P&O's company offices at St. Mary Axe.¹⁶⁶ Not very much is known about Skillett but Brewington records that Skillett was an English marine painter working in oils, active between 1835 and 1860, with work represented in museums in America and Britain.¹⁶⁷ Dennis Brook-Hart records that Skillett lived at Limehouse 'on the tidal Thames', painting both local river scenes and wider marine subjects, and that he exhibited eighteen times in London, and eight at the Royal Academy.¹⁶⁸ Skillett is thus characteristic of a painter from the maritime communities rather than metropolitan artistic circles. In addition to the works identified in Brewington and Brook-Hart we know that Skillett also painted six ship

¹⁶⁶ Artmonsky and Cox, *Across the Oceans*, p. 211.

¹⁶⁷ Dorothy E. R. Brewington, *Dictionary of Marine Artists* (Salem, Massachusetts: Peabody Museum of Salem; Mystic, Connecticut: Mystic Seaport Museum, 1982), p. 356. The four museums listed for Skillett's work are: City of Liverpool Museums; London Port Authority; Mariners' Museum, Newport News, Virginia; Peabody Museum, Salem, Massachusetts.

¹⁶⁸ Brooke-Hart suggests different dates from Brewington for Skillett (fl. 1845 and 1856). See Brook-Hart, *British 19th Century Marine Painting*, p. 360. For a record of Skillett's work at the Royal Academy see Algernon Graves, *The Royal Academy of Art. A Complete Dictionary of Contributors and their work from its foundation in 1769 to 1904*, (London: Henry Graves and George Bell, 1906), vol. VII, pp. 148-149.

portraits which are now in the P&O Heritage Collection, *Britannia*, *William Fawcett*, *Braganza*, *Royal Tar Carrying the Mail*, *Jupiter at Sea* and *Tagus*.¹⁶⁹

P&O's business records do not show whether the company approached Skillett or vice versa. Skillett had previously created work for the General Steam Navigation Company then the largest and most successful steam navigation company in London.¹⁷⁰ It is tempting to speculate that the Peninsular Steam Navigation Company chose (or accepted) Skillett to paint its own *William Fawcett* (1828), in part because of this association, the artist's name functioning as a sign of the scale of the young company's growing ambition.¹⁷¹

To help bring into relief the distinctive pictorial features of Skillett's paintings they can be compared and contrasted to near historical relatives from connected but distinct representational traditions - late Romantic paintings, and technical representations such as ship plans and three dimensional ship models. Skillett's pictures are interesting in part because they occupy a space between these categories.

There are basic similarities between Skillett's *William Fawcett* and a late Romantic painting by Turner such as *Snow Storm – Steam Boat off a Harbour's Mouth*

¹⁶⁹ S. D. Skillet (for GSN), *Britannia*, 27 October 1835, oil on canvas [POH/AC/02021/00]; *William Fawcett*, 1836, oil on canvas [POH/AC/02128/00]; *Braganza carrying the mails*, 1837, oil on canvas [POH/AC/02099/00]; *Royal Tar in rough seas*, 1838, oil on canvas [POH/AC/02020/00]; *Jupiter at sea*, 1847, oil on canvas, POH/AC/02143/00; *Tagus*, 1837, oil on canvas, [on loan from POH to NMM Cornwall]. Artmonsky and Cox, *Across the Oceans*, p. 213.

¹⁷⁰ In 1835 Skillett painted a ship portrait of GSN's *Britannia*. This painting is now in the P&O Heritage Collection, POH/AC/02021-00. GSN was later acquired by P&O in 1920 during Lord Inchcape's programme of acquisitions.

¹⁷¹ In addition to the works by Skillett and Huggins discussed here, a number of other leading maritime artists were associated with the company in the first decades of its life. These included John Charles Schetky (1778-1874) and Thomas Goldsworthy Dutton (c.1819-1891). Schetky held a number of prestigious posts as Professor of Drawing at the Royal Naval Academy, Portsmouth and then at the East India College at Addiscombe. He was also successively Marine Painter in Ordinary to George IV, William IV and Queen Victoria. In 1861 at the invitation of P&O's directors 'to several of whom he was personally known', Schetky made his last trip abroad on the company's *Alhambra* (1855). See S. F. L. Schetkey, *Ninety Years of Work and Play. Sketches from the public and private career of J. C. Schetky [...] By his daughter* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood, 1877), pp. 258-259. See also E. H. H. Archibald, *The Dictionary of Sea Painters of Europe and America* (Suffolk: Antique Collectors Club, 2000), p. 208. Archibald describes Dutton as 'the finest 19th century lithographer of shipping scenes and ship portraits', p. 149.

(figs. 7 and 8).¹⁷² Both are pictorial representations (as distinct from purely symbolic representations) made by British artists, painted within six years of each other, depicting steam ships at sea, and the medium for both is oil paint on canvas. There are also differences: Skillett's is formally quite distinct and it was also a commercial piece of work, painted for P&O. Turner's depiction might be said to create a new kind of conception of the relationship between humans and the natural world. Sarah Monks argues that Turner's sea paintings, of which *Snow Storm* is a key example, uniquely articulate a new and alternative form of sublime experience for the nineteenth century spectator.¹⁷³

With Turner as a paradigm of romantic and sublime experience at sea during this period, Skillett's work might appear rather mundane: it is a straightforward representation of a steam ship at sea, one creating no especially novel conceptual or perceptual relations. Skillett is the norm against which Turner's innovations can be measured. However, this approach risks assuming conventional ship portraits form a homogenous whole and also that they are unproblematic or uninteresting to art history.

Contrasting Skillett's historical brief against Turner's helps spectators look and understand with differentiating eyes. Monks argues that Turner's paintings are suggestive of liquid depth and the gravitational force of the sea. For Monks, Turner articulates a new form of sublime experience, one in which drowning rather than

¹⁷² J. M. W. Turner, *Snow Storm – Steam Boat off a Harbour's Mouth* (1842) oil on canvas, 914 x 1219mm Tate Gallery: N00530. Although not for the company Turner did also paint P&O's *Oriental* (1840) in *Peace: Burial at Sea*. This depicts the occasion when the celebrated Scottish painter, Sir David Wilkie (b. 1785), died on board *Oriental* while returning from a voyage to the Near East on 1 June 1841. See Stephen Rabson and Kevin O'Donoghue, *P&O A Fleet History*, (Kendal: World Ship Society, 1988), pp. 534-535 and P&O/65/251 Individual Ships: *Oriental*: Miscellaneous material, 1840.

¹⁷³ Sarah Monks, "'Suffer a Sea-Change": Turner, Painting, Drowning', in Nigel Llewellyn and Christine Riding (eds.), *The Art of the Sublime*, Tate Research Publication (Jan 2013) [<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/the-sublime/sarah-monks-suffer-a-sea-change-turner-painting-drowning-r1136832>, accessed 06 July 2016].

ascendancy is at stake. It can immediately be appreciated why the interests of a commercial steamship company require a different mode of representation.

In contrast to Turner's representation of 'what might be beneath – beneath the horizon, beneath the water and beneath paint',¹⁷⁴ Skillett's painting can be characterised in terms of the way the pictorial composition and paint contain and control the sea, and do so from a putatively objective point of view. The spectator's eye level is horizontal to the ship depicted and the ships themselves sit firmly on the water. Turner's multiple layering of paint depicts the sea swirling out from the picture enveloping and overwhelming the spectator. Skillett's paint by contrast is carefully applied in a precise and controlled way, concealing beneath it the chaos of the sea. The regularity and control of the painted marks metaphorically regulate the unpredictability of sail, wind and weather. A common feature of these early ship portraits is an implicit contrast drawn between heavily listing sailing ships and the company's own hybrid steam and sail vessels, represented as making steady and solid progress in rough seas. Skillett's *Royal Tar in Rough Seas* (fig. 9) is a prime example. In contrast to the *William Fawcett* portrait this is clearly a rough sea indicated by breaking waves and dark foreboding skies. In contrast to the disorientating angular horizon in Turner's seascape, Skillett's horizon is clear and horizontal. There is a fixity to the spectator's position and vision which lends itself to the idea of calm objectivity, the spectator remains untouched and unmoved by the choppy seas unlike Turner's spectator who is lost within it. This is echoed by the passengers in the picture who, thanks to the stability of the ship, are able to be on deck taking in the view. The name of the ship, its flags and rigging are represented with precision and clarity and as such become further emblems of corporate control and order in an otherwise disordered and

¹⁷⁴ Monks, 'Suffer a Sea-Change', n.p.

chaotic world. The clarity, stability and precision of visual form itself becomes a metaphor for the reliability of P&O's service and in a period when shipwreck and loss of life were not uncommon at sea, this is of central importance to the company's image. This context and conception of maritime imagery, may in turn explain why many in the maritime community objected to, as they saw it, Turner's inaccuracies. For seaman, these features of the painting, the flags, ship names, type of vessel, the correctness of the rigging, were an essential part of their training and daily routine, part of the shared knowledge, craft and discipline of good seamanship, and in the worst case scenarios marked the difference between safe, secure passage, and disaster.

For a new company, required to demonstrate both to the Admiralty and the public the regularity and reliability of its service, Skillett's paintings enact those very qualities. They are no less an aesthetic experience than Turner's immersive seascapes but they articulate something quite different, an aesthetic of reliability, order and control over the natural elements and celebration of the commercial and political goods which follow.

In the encounter with a retired seaman at Greenwich Hospital, Ruskin compares the experience of Huggins' paintings unflatteringly with that of looking at 'correct ships models [...] floated in a fishpond'¹⁷⁵. For Ruskin they offer at best an anatomically correct representation but one which gives little idea of what it is like to be at sea, or perhaps in the sea as Turner has it. Whether or not this is a legitimate aesthetic criticism, the association with ship models is a helpful way to understand how a sympathetic spectator at the time might appreciate and understand Skillett's and Huggins' ship portraits.

¹⁷⁵ Ruskin, *Harbours of England*, p. 34.

Although ship models have been made for widely differing purposes, two common functions are the testing of various properties and characteristics of the life size ships they represent, and also demonstrating and showing these properties and characteristics to audiences.¹⁷⁶ Figures 10 and 11 illustrate a ship plan (profile view) and ship model of the *William Fawcett*. Ship plans and models are distinctive types of representation and were commonly used to inform, educate and train sailors about the structures, functioning and details of particular vessels. The imperial romance of Skillett's paintings means the works are more than purely technical representations. They do however clearly have a technical aspect which would appeal to the maritime epistemic community (seamen, and other maritime minded passengers) enabling them to read and appreciate the working nature of the vessel, its form, structures and achievements.

P&O ship models themselves become a key part of the company's exhibitionary practice, being exhibited at trade shows, national exhibitions and the company's office windows from the 1920s.¹⁷⁷ They have also been used to represent the company in more permanent public museums. As early as 1868 P&O lent items from its collection to the new South Kensington Museum, which today is the Science Museum.¹⁷⁸ At the time the museum had recently started a collection of ship models and marine engines and P&O lent a model of *Surat* (1866).¹⁷⁹ The lending of items from the company's collection can be seen as another element in P&O's cultural positioning: by lending its models to high profile public museums the company quietly re-enforces its own contribution to the life of the nation.

¹⁷⁶ Hans Jürgen Hansen (ed.), *Art and the Seafarer: A Historical Survey of the Arts and Crafts of Sailors and Shipwrights* (London: Faber and Faber, 1968).

¹⁷⁷ Artmonsky and Cox, *Across the Oceans*, p. 230.

¹⁷⁸ Artmonsky and Cox, *Across the Oceans*, p. 236.

¹⁷⁹ Further loans followed, in 1878 and 1907. Artmonsky and Cox, *Across the Oceans*, p. 236.

1.4 W. J. Huggins and the Hindostan (1843)

When W. J. Huggins was appointed marine painter to William IV in 1834, Redgrave tells us that the King ‘esteemed his work rather for its correctness than its art’.¹⁸⁰ As the above discussion argues this apparent judgement of correctness in contrast to art, is best reconstructed by asking the question from the point of view of the seaman and not that of the art critic or connoisseur. William IV was known as the Sailor King because of his service in the Royal Navy and this indicates further why, as a seaman, he may have valued Huggins’ paintings. By contrast, Redgrave, a Victorian civil servant and writer on art and not a seaman characterises Huggins’ works as ‘tame in design, skies bad in colour, seas thin and poor.’¹⁸¹

Huggins was a distinctively maritime artist and his standing within the maritime community helps explain his significance for P&O. In contrast to an artist like Turner who was admitted to the Royal Academy Schools at the age of fourteen (1789) Huggins reputedly began life as an ‘ordinary seaman’ in the East India Company. He served as steward to Captain Thomas Buchanan on *Perseverance* and only later established an artistic career.¹⁸² Huggins also lived and worked in the maritime community. When he first exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1817, he was registered at the address of Thomas Merle, a frame maker and dealer at 36 Leadenhall Street near East India House and in 1823 he settled at 105 Leadenhall Street. This was an excellent choice of location since he specialized in portraits of East India vessels and similar shipping and naval subjects and his main patrons were merchants and captains. From

¹⁸⁰ Samuel Redgrave, *The Dictionary of Artists of the English School: Painters, Sculptors, Architects, Engravers and Ornamentists: With notices of their Lives and Works* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1872), p. 228.

¹⁸¹ Redgrave, *Dictionary*, p. 228.

¹⁸² This account of Huggins has drawn upon Pieter Van der Merwe, ‘Huggins, William John (1781-1845)’ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004) online edn., Jan 2012 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/14053>, accessed 15 Nov 2014] and NMM collections online BHC1157 [<http://collections.rmg.co.uk/collections/objects/12649.html>, accessed 15 Nov 2014].

this address Huggins published his own business card (fig. 12). In 1830 as marine painter to William IV Huggins was commissioned to make three large paintings of the Battle of Trafalgar (for the last in the series see fig. 13).¹⁸³ Thus to purchase prints and an original painting by Huggins was to employ not only an artist with a significant reputation and standing within the merchant-maritime community but also an artist whose work played a role in a wider narrative of Britain as a maritime nation.

Although Redgrave's verdict on Huggins' was not a positive one he does make the important point that several of Huggins' paintings were made into engravings. In P&O's case, for instance, we know the company purchased 40 prints of Huggins' *Hindostan Departing Southampton on the 24th September 1842 to open the comprehensive plan of steam communication with British India* (fig. 14) as well as the original painting. The possibilities offered by printing technology were highly beneficial for the company, enabling widespread reproduction of relatively affordable representations of its vessels. The P&O Board minutes for 25 July 1843 record the following: 'Read a letter from Mr Huggins marine painter dated 24th inst. offering 40 proofs of the Hindostan with the original paintings for 40 guineas which was agreed to.'¹⁸⁴

The painting and prints of the *Hindostan* (1842) represent an important event in P&O's history and an important event in the history of imperial mobility and communications, namely the inauguration of the Indian mail service, the first regular and reliable service between Britain and India. Writing in 1904 about the history of steam communication, Kennedy notes this important date:

¹⁸³ For further information on these paintings see The Royal Collection Catalogue RCIN 407180; RCIN 406187; RCIN 406793 [<https://www.royalcollection.org.uk/collection>, accessed 15 Nov 2014].

¹⁸⁴ NMM/P&O/1/100 Minutes of the meetings of the Board of Directors, 25 July 1843, quoted in Artmonsky and Cox, *Across the Oceans*, p. 211.

On the 24th September, 1842, the P&O Company despatched its first Steamer to India via the Cape of Good Hope. She was the paddle-steamer HINDOSTAN, of 2,017 tons gross and 520 horse power. On her arrival at Calcutta she was placed on the service between Calcutta, Madras, Ceylon and Suez.¹⁸⁵

Huggins also created a picture of P&O's *Bentinck* (1843) which in January 1844 joined the *Hindostan* on the two-monthly service from Calcutta to Suez. In this picture can be seen the beginnings of a jointly corporate-imperial landscape (fig. 15). P&O's *Bentinck* was named after Lord William Bentinck (1774-1839) a British soldier and statesman who served as Governor-General of India (1828-1835). On his return to Britain in 1837 Bentinck chaired a parliamentary committee to consider the question of steam communication with India and was reportedly 'very urgent' that the Peninsular Steam Navigation Company should undertake the shorter overland route to India as soon as possible.¹⁸⁶ Thus when P&O sent a second ship to join *Hindostan* in 1844 the company named it *Bentinck* in Lord Bentinck's memory (Bentinck having died in 1839). Huggins' painting *Bentinck passing Aden January 3rd 1844* depicts the ship 'on her first voyage in the Indian Seas' and this, in conjunction with Edward Duncan's print of the picture, represents an important imperial territorial, commercial and cultural message. The medium of the maritime print is also well suited to the easy reproduction and wide circulation of this message.

Aden as an imperial site-in-progress, and as an imperial site amongst a network of others, is significant and provides a context for the image. As recently as 1839 Aden had been seized by the East India Company as a strategic base to sustain British trade and influence in the immediate region, but it would also become an important staging

¹⁸⁵ Kennedy, *The History of Steam Navigation*, p. 52.

¹⁸⁶ Arthur Anderson quoted in Harcourt, *Flagships*, p. 43, and for the ship *Bentinck* see NMM/P&O/65/67 Individual Ships: Bentinck: Miscellaneous material, 1843.

post to replenish water, coal and other supplies for onward journeys to Calcutta and Bombay and other trading ports and settlements.¹⁸⁷ An 1850 publication with which P&O was associated, described Aden as follows: ‘A port near the mouth of the Red Sea, now in the possession of the English, and admirably well suited to the purpose of a coal depot. It formerly belonged to the Arabs, and was then very thinly populated, but since it fell into our hands its commerce and population have vastly increased.’¹⁸⁸

The image itself exemplifies the imperial possibilities represented by Aden and in particular the virtues of steam and private enterprise in the acceleration of imperial trade and transport. In the image *Bentinck*’s flags act as important signifiers. From the fore-mast flies the Blue Peter which is normally hoist in harbour to indicate that all persons should report on board as the vessel is about to proceed. In this context it can be interpreted as a sign of a more general state of readiness, the readiness of new steam technology, of the P&O Company and of the empire it serves, to accelerate British interests in the Indian seas. From the main-mast flies the P&O Company flag, from the mizzen-mast the Union Jack, and from the spanker gaff a red ensign, the flag of the British merchant marine. In a clear advertisement in favour of the advantages of steam over sail power, the image shows *Bentinck*’s large paddle wheel, two smoking funnels, sails neatly furled, and the ship upright without any noticeable angle of list. In Duncan’s print the precision, detail and control enabled by the medium (more so than Skillet’s ship portraits in oil) are suggestive of the projected qualities of P&O’s service itself. This ordered projection is in stark contrast to contemporary accounts of paddle steamers which show them to have been far from stable.¹⁸⁹ The bright, clear

¹⁸⁷ Porter (ed.), *British Empire: The Nineteenth Century*, p. 720.

¹⁸⁸ Thomas Grieve and William Telbin, *The Route of the Overland Mail to India from Southampton to Calcutta* (London: Atchley & Co., 1852), p. 4.

¹⁸⁹ Howarth and Howarth suggest that, ‘any small ship is more sickening under power than under sail because sails steady her and give more rhythm to her motion. Paddles were never really suited to the open sea. When a paddle steamer pitched, both paddles came out of the water at once and let the

and stable visual qualities of the picture lend themselves further to a moral vision for the role of steamships in empire, and indeed Lord Bentinck himself believed steam communication to be ‘the great engine’ of ‘moral improvement’ in India ‘where the human mind [had] been buried for ages in universal darkness’.¹⁹⁰

The national and imperial significance of P&O’s *Hindostan* and the high profile role of the ship and company in the inauguration of the Indian mail was underlined further when on 16 July 1849 the ship travelled to the moorings at Cowes Road off Osborne House (the Royal Residence), to welcome on board Queen Victoria and Prince Albert.¹⁹¹ The event was a source of great importance and pride for P&O and there is a painting by Robert Strickland Thomas (1787-1853) recording the event (fig. 16). Thomas was another seaman artist having entered the Royal Navy as an able seaman in 1805 rising to the rank of lieutenant by 1815. He took up painting having contracted a disease that left him deaf and made him unfit for service. His work was mainly of Royal Naval subjects and so, as with Skillett and Huggins, the artist’s name and background was a useful indicator of P&O’s view of its elevated status in Britain’s maritime-imperial world.¹⁹² P&O’s minutes of the Board record the formal and ceremonial nature of the Royal visit which was for the company an act of Royal corporate endorsement:

Her Majesty and Prince Albert [...] came off the Royal Barge at 3 o’clock and were received with every demonstration of respect and loyalty the yards being manned, the Royal Standard hoisted at the main, and the band

engine race, then plunged in too deep and almost brought the engine to a stop. When she rolled, one paddle was too shallow and the other was too deep, and she proceeded like a corkscrew. [...] Whatever happened, throughout it all was the slow endless thud of the engine [...] every four seconds [...] and a rhythmic series of clanks and hisses between’, *The Story of P&O*, p. 13.

¹⁹⁰ Lord Bentinck quoted in Harcourt, *Flagships*, p. 40.

¹⁹¹ NMM/P&O/65/157 Individual Ships: *Hindostan*: Miscellaneous material, 1842.

¹⁹² For Thomas, see E. H. H. Archibald, *The Dictionary of Sea Painters*, pp. 221-222.

of HMS *Blenheim* (kindly lent for the occasion by Capt. Blackwood) playing the National Anthem.¹⁹³

A deputation of company directors including Sir John Pirie and Deputy Chairman Arthur Anderson conducted a tour of the vessel. The minutes finish by reporting that the Royal Party remained on board for, ‘rather more than an hour [...] the Queen and Prince Albert expressing themselves highly gratified with their visit.’¹⁹⁴ The Court Circular, the official record of royal engagements, also recorded the event reporting that the *Hindustan* was a ‘magnificent vessel’ and that Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, ‘expressed themselves highly pleased with this noble ship.’¹⁹⁵

2. Seas of Significance: P&O’s Imperial Geography (c. 1846-51)

Alongside and enabling the administrative and commercial partitioning of the seas by rival shipping companies in the nineteenth century there was also an important and little explored cultural shaping of the sea. In P&O’s case over the course of the nineteenth century, the company came to be identified with networks of interconnected maritime sites, imbuing this land and seascape with an emotional national and imperial significance. Ports from Southampton to Calcutta, and beyond to Singapore, China, Japan and Australia, were identified jointly with P&O and the workings of British Empire in the east. By the early twentieth century these routes were distinctive enough to be recognised by their own company moniker, P&O’s ‘Eastern Highway’, and celebrated in a popular set of souvenir playing cards (fig. 17). The following section explores the emergence of the company’s imperial geographical imagination in the period between 1846 and 1851. It examines three cultural artefacts

¹⁹³ NMM/P&O/1/102: 17 July 1849.

¹⁹⁴ NMM/P&O/1/102: 17 July 1849.

¹⁹⁵ NMM/P&O/65/157.

sponsored by P&O: a literary travelogue by W. M. Thackeray (1846); a set of six watercolour drawings of P&O's principal ports by Andrew Nicholl (1848); and a fashionable moving diorama by Thomas Grieve, William Telbin, with other artists (1850-1). Through these case studies, the argument traces the formation of a jointly corporate and imperial seascape or highway in which the company interweaves its own commercial story with powerful national imperial, maritime and aesthetic narratives.

2.1 'A Hundred Pictures': From Cornhill to Cairo (1846)

William Makepeace Thackeray's *Notes of a Journey from Cornhill to Grand Cairo* (*Notes* hereafter) records a Mediterranean tour the author made on board P&O steamers, and paid for by the company.¹⁹⁶ Although Thackeray had not yet reached the height of his fame with the publication of *Vanity Fair* (1847-8) he would have been known to the public through his fictional stories and non-fictional journalism and writing.¹⁹⁷ Before *Notes* was published articles of the journey appeared in *Punch* under the pseudonym 'Fat Contributor' and according to Searight these travel articles made Thackeray's reputation.¹⁹⁸ The volume, published for P&O under another pseudonym, Michael Angelo Titmarsh, was successful enough to be followed only a few months later by a second edition.¹⁹⁹ Such widespread public exposure generated an important form of advertising for the company. In terms of P&O's emerging imperial narrative,

¹⁹⁶ William Makepeace Thackeray (pseudo., Michael Angelo Titmarsh) *Notes of a Journey from Cornhill to Grand Cairo By way of Lisbon, Athens, Constantinople and Jerusalem : Performed in the Steamers of the Peninsular and Oriental Company* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1846); see also NMM/P&O/100/10, Personal History, William Thackeray ('Journal Cornhill to Cairo'), 1844; and for a modern edition see, W. M. Thackeray, *Notes of A Journey from Cornhill to Grand Cairo*, introduction by Sarah Searight (Heathfield: Cockbird Press, 1991).

¹⁹⁷ Before 1846 Thackeray was already writing regularly for *The Times*, *Fraser's Magazine*, and *The Morning Chronicle* amongst other publications.

¹⁹⁸ Sara Searight, 'Introduction' to Thackeray, *Notes* (1991), pp. 13-19. This ref., p. 13.

¹⁹⁹ Searight, 'Introduction' to Thackeray, *Notes* (1991), p. 19.

Notes records the excitements and cultural riches of foreign travel but it is also a geographical expression of a British Imperial landscape. The imperial landscape is a source of collective national pride but so too is the P&O, the ‘noble company’²⁰⁰ which enables the experience.

Thackeray recalls in the preface to *Notes*, an evening in 1844 with two friends at a gentleman’s club in London. He recounts how one of the friends, a Mr. William, had organised a farewell dinner for another companion, Mr. James,²⁰¹ who was to embark on ‘a tour’ of the Mediterranean with P&O. Thackeray recounts the deliberation and various doubts about undertaking such a journey. This neatly pre-empted the readers’ own likely deliberation and doubt about undertaking a similar journey.²⁰² Amusingly, he says that ‘with every glass of claret the enthusiasm somehow rose, and the difficulties vanished.’²⁰³ Mr. James says that ‘his friends,’ the Directors of the Peninsular and Oriental Company, would make Thackeray the present of a berth for the voyage. Thackeray agrees and embarks at Southampton on P&O’s *Lady Mary Wood* (1842) on 26 July 1844, ‘quite astonished to find himself one of the passengers on board.’²⁰⁴

This type of tour, excursion or cruise, as Thackeray variously calls it, was a new and increasingly popular kind of journey and the publication acted as an excellent piece of advertising, making the possibilities of this new mode of travel, and P&O’s name, more widely known to the public.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁰ Thackeray, *Notes* (1846), p. vi.

²⁰¹ ‘Mr. James’ was Thackeray’s friend James (later Sir James) Emerson Tennent (1804-1869). See Searight in Thackeray, *Notes* (1991), p. 13. As an important patron of the arts, Tennent was directly connected with another of P&O’s artists, Andrew Nicholl, whose series of watercolours for the company will be discussed in the following section.

²⁰² It is interesting that the same approach is followed in P&O’s cruise advertising a hundred years later in the publicity film *Holiday with Everything* (1954). See chapter five section 2.1.

²⁰³ Thackeray, *Notes* (1846), p. xii.

²⁰⁴ Thackeray, *Notes* (1846), p. xiii.

²⁰⁵ Cable, *Hundred Year History*, p. 95.

Thackeray dedicates the book ‘To Captain Samuel Lewis of the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company’s Service,’ and makes approving reference to ‘the noble Company in whose service you command (and whose fleet alone makes them a third-rate maritime Power in Europe).’²⁰⁶ Here Thackeray is aligning P&O’s fleet with the national fleets of Britain and France and for a private company to possess fleets comparable to the largest of European national navies was notable and a sign of the company’s success and status.²⁰⁷ The preface draws to a close by thanking P&O’s Directors, and recommending to readers this new kind of ‘delightful excursion’:

[The excursion was] so easy, so charming, and I think profitable – it leaves such a store of pleasant recollections for after-days – and creates so many new sources of interest - [...] that I can’t but recommend all persons who have time and means to make a similar journey – vacation idlers to extend their travels and pursue it : above all, young, well-educated men entering life, to take this course, we will say, after that at college ; and, having their book-learning fresh in their minds, see the living people and their cities, and the actual aspect of Nature, along the famous shores of the Mediterranean.²⁰⁸

Thackeray’s book provided positive publicity for P&O’s new form of tourism, expanding the already popular market for Mediterranean travel.²⁰⁹ More than generic

²⁰⁶ Thackeray, *Notes* (1846), p. vi. Captain Samuel Lewis commanded *Iberia* (1836) in which Thackeray sailed for the Jaffa-Alexandria section of his journey in 1844. For further information on *Iberia* see NMM/P&O/65/161. Thackeray also sailed on *Lady Mary Wood* (1842) for which see NMM/P&O/65/185.

²⁰⁷ Later, in its Pocket Books, first produced in 1888, P&O would regularly publish comparative tables listing the size of ‘Merchant Navies of the World’ (P&O having the largest) and ‘Navies of Great Powers’ (Britain having the largest). See *P&O Pocket Book* (London: Adam Charles Black, 1908), pp. 266-267, NMM/P&O/91/21.

²⁰⁸ Thackeray, *Notes* (1846), pp. xiii-xiv.

²⁰⁹ Sarah Searight argues that: ‘by the 1840s the Levant and Egypt were all the rage with the general public. Illustrated albums of the Bosphorus and the Holy Land by such artists as Thomas Allom and W. H. Bartlett, dioramas of the so-called Overland Route to India via Egypt and displays of antiquities from the banks of the Nile fed a public imagination already whetted by gothic tales of Arabian nights.’ See Searight, ‘Introduction’ to Thackeray, *Notes* (1991), pp. 13-19. This quote, p. 13.

corporate advertising or propaganda, however, Thackeray's text needs to be understood in more nuanced post-colonial terms.²¹⁰

In his review of *Notes* in the *Daily News*, Charles Dickens comments with approval the vividly pictorial nature of the writing. 'The author writes with the pencil of a painter. You see a hundred pictures as you go along.'²¹¹ Indeed, Thackeray himself often refers to the experience of the journey as the experience of pictures. Intertwined with the visual is the central importance of the steamship. Thackeray's text describes how this mode of travel is not merely a new means of experiencing sights but one which creates an entirely new kind of experience. At both the beginning and the end of the book Thackeray impresses on the reader the swiftness with which one can travel and experience the sites of the ancient world thanks to P&O:

The Peninsular and Oriental Company²¹² had arranged an excursion on the Mediterranean, by which, in the space of a couple of months, as many cities were to be seen as Ulysses surveyed and noted in ten years. Malta, Athens, Smyrna, Constantinople, Jerusalem, Cairo were to be visited and everybody was to be back in London by Lord Mayor's-day.²¹³

And at the close of the book:

²¹⁰ This discussion focusses on P&O and empire rather than the question of Thackeray's own imperial sympathies. For discussion of Thackeray see Sandy Morey Norton, 'The Ex-Collector of Boggley-Wollah: Colonialism in the Empire of Vanity Fair' *Narrative*, 1: 2 (May, 1993), pp. 124-137. In reply see J. Russell Perkin, 'Thackeray and Imperialism: A Response to Sandy Morey Norton', *Narrative*, 2: 2 (May, 1994), pp. 161-166.

²¹¹ Charles Dickens, *Daily News*, 14 February, 1846.

²¹² At this point in its history the company's name is rendered in two or three different forms and there does not appear to be a centralised attempt to standardise. An entry in the Board Minutes from 1886 shows that the directors were by this time keen to protect a distinctive corporate identity and avoid any possible confusion in the public's mind. On 24 September 1886, the Board agreed that lawyers, Freshfields, should be instructed to prepare a letter to be addressed to the *Oriental Steamship Company*, (a separate company), 'making objection to the use of the title "Oriental"'. The minutes also show that P&O had considered whether it had recourse in law to restrain the *Oriental Steamship Company* from using the word 'Oriental'. The opinion of the Attorney General at the time was that there was 'not sufficient evidence put forward to justify an application to the court [...]' This indicates there was an increasing awareness of the need to define and protect P&O's distinctive name, identity and reputation. NMM/P&O/1/113: 24 Sep 1886.

²¹³ Thackeray, *Notes* (1846), p. xi.

[...] between the 23rd of July and the 27th of October, we may boast of having seen more men and cities than most travellers have seen in such a time [...] With what a number of sights and pictures, – of novel sensations, and lasting and delightful remembrances, does a man furnish his mind after such as tour! ²¹⁴

In common with Schivelbusch's analysis of the nineteenth century steam train²¹⁵ the steam ship also played a crucial role in the increased rate of geographical experience. Thackeray rhetorically exclaims that his journey compacted ten years' worth of travel into three months. Schivelbusch finds in the writing of Ruskin and others that the steam train nullified the senses and that the experience of landscape was consequently diminished. By contrast, in Thackeray's account, written positively for P&O, the effect of the steamship is to heighten the senses and offer a new found access and appreciation of the landscape. Thackeray does acknowledge seasickness and 'the almost incessant sight-seeing of the last two months'²¹⁶ but his general view is that one is not only able to appreciate the sights but that the cultural and phenomenological experience is actually heightened:

It was but for a couple of days that those shining columns of the Parthenon glowed under the blue sky there; but the experience of a life could scarcely impress them more vividly. We saw Cadiz only for an hour; but the white buildings, and the glorious blue sea, how clear they are to the memory! ²¹⁷

²¹⁴ Thackeray, *Notes* (1846), p. 299.

²¹⁵ Wolfgang Schivelbusch, 'Panoramic Travel', originally in Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey. Trains and Travel in the 19th Century* (1977) translated by Anselm Hollo, reprinted in Vanessa R. Schwartz and Jeannene M. Przyblyski (eds.), *The Nineteenth Century Visual Culture Reader* (New York and London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 92-99.

²¹⁶ Thackeray, *Notes* (1846), p. 299.

²¹⁷ Thackeray, *Notes* (1846), p. 300.

For W. T. J. Mitchell landscape must be considered ‘not as an object to be seen or a text to be read, but as a process by which social and subjective identities are formed.’²¹⁸ For Mitchell, landscape is not an independent or inert external reality, it forms part of a dynamic human cultural process by which an individual or group identity is formed. Considered in this active mode Thackeray’s representation of the landscape interpellates its reader into an imagined but determinate political relationship with the sites and sights described. It naturalises a British imperial reading of history and identity as if it were inevitable or given and this process is not far beneath the surface of the text. In this instance, Thackeray describes the entrance to Gibraltar, ‘the Rock’:

Before sunset we skirted along the dark savage mountains of the African coast, and came to the Rock just before gun-fire. It is the very image of an enormous lion, crouched between the Atlantic and the Mediterranean, and set there to guard the passage for its British mistress. The next British lion is Malta, four days further on in the midland sea, and ready to spring upon Egypt or pounce upon Syria, or roar so as to be heard at Marseille in case of need.

To the eyes of the civilian, the first-named of these famous fortifications is by far the most imposing. The Rock looks so tremendous, that to ascend it, even without the compliment of shells or shot, seems a dreadful task – what would it be when all those mysterious lines of batteries were vomiting fire and brimstone [...] ?²¹⁹

Thackeray’s representation of a network of interconnected imperial fortifications is not an isolated example. It needs to be understood as one episode within a longer national historical process. Gibraltar was first taken from Spain by the British in 1704

²¹⁸ W. T. J. Mitchell, *Landscape and Power*, p. 1-2.

²¹⁹ Thackeray *Notes* (1846), p. 28.

and its possession, despite only being 2.25 square miles of territory, was of huge strategic naval significance for Britain then and since. Admiral Sir John Jervis, Earl of St. Vincent, described this when he said ‘the only use of Gibraltar is to furnish the Navy of Great Britain with supplies, and thereby enable it to maintain the empire in the adjacent seas.’²²⁰ ‘The Rock’ plays a significant role in the formation of a powerful national narrative of defence, defiance and pride and it is a reoccurring site and symbol in P&O’s seascapes. In 1782 France and Spain attempted to take possession of Gibraltar from the British but were unsuccessful and Thomas Colley’s print *The bombardment of Gibraltar, or f-t-g against thunder*, shows in amusing fashion how Gibraltar was seen as an important site of national maritime triumph (fig. 18). In 1853, seven years after Thackeray’s *Notes*, Clarkson Stanfield painted *HMS Victory with the Body of Nelson on board, towed into Gibraltar 28th October, 1805, seven days after the battle of Trafalgar* (1853) (fig. 19). This was universally well received in Britain and indicates the kind of national emotion evoked by Gibraltar as a site associated with another British naval victory at Trafalgar in 1805, the events still being within living memory.²²¹ Indeed two of P&O’s founders, Richard Bourne and Arthur Anderson, served in the Navy during the Napoleonic wars, Bourne joining in 1787 and Anderson joining in 1806 shortly after the Battle of Trafalgar.²²²

²²⁰ Rear Admiral Sir John Jervis (1735-1823) Earl of St. Vincent, Letter to Earl Spencer, January 1799. Quoted in Ben Wilson, ‘Gibraltar: A Rock and a Hard Place’ *History Today* 63: 10 (October 2013), p. 3.

²²¹ When it was exhibited at the RA in 1853 the painting was admired by critics as ‘a great and dramatic, historical work, containing much of the pathos and emotion aroused by the event itself’ Pieter van der Merwe, *The Spectacular Career of Clarkson Stanfield 1793-1867* (Tyne and Wear County Council Museums, 1979), pp. 163. A watercolour painting likely to be a preparatory study can be seen at the NMM [Object ID: PAH8042]. For an historical discussion of the Rock’s role in British history since 1713 see Wilson, ‘Gibraltar: A Rock and a Hard Place.’

²²² Harcourt, *Flagships*, p. 29; and John Nicolson, *Arthur Anderson. A Founder of the P&O Company* (Lerwick: T & J Manson), pp. 9-17. Harcourt says that Bourne was elevated to Lieutenant within ten years of joining the Navy. In 1805 he fought ‘an action of great gallantry with a privateer of far superior force’ and in 1840 was given the rank of retired commander. Thereafter he adopted the courtesy title of ‘Captain Richard Bourne, RN’.

The wider Mediterranean landscape which Thackeray describes can also be understood in terms of British political, commercial and imperial interests. The historian Holger Hock argues that in the late eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth century Britain had ‘a vital sphere of interest’ between the western Mediterranean and the China Sea. Hock also argues that, as important as the geostrategic and commercial potential of this region was to Britain, it was also of increasing cultural significance:

The remains of ancient civilisations provided rich spoils for European imperial states engaged in wars of collecting and eager to claim ancient Empires for their national cultures. Britain, it was argued, gained national prestige by capturing antiquities that were either of high aesthetic value like the Parthenon Marbles, or illustrative of the history of art.²²³

Thackeray’s *Notes*, can be understood in this context as articulating and sustaining an imperial visual and cultural tourism. Thackeray’s numerous references to classical culture and empire provide a space for the reader to reflect and imagine Britain’s own imperial possibilities. Invoking Ulysses at the beginning of the book frames the readers’ expectations concerning the journey to come, and creates an analogy between the classical hero’s unceasing desire for travel and the contemporary colonial desire for adventure and knowledge of other lands.²²⁴

²²³ Holger Hock, *Empires of the Imagination Politics War and the Arts in the British World, 1750-1850* (London: Profile Books), p. 206.

²²⁴ Tennyson’s poem *Ulysses* had been published just four years earlier (1842). In the poem the theme of heroic adventure by sea is prevalent. Ulysses call to his mariner friends, ‘... Come my friends, | ‘Tis not too late to seek a newer world. Push off, and sitting well in order smite | The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds | To beyond the sunset, and the baths | Of all the western stars, until I die...’ in Alfred Tennyson, *Poems Vol. II* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields 1863), pp. 30-33. This ref., lines 56 to 61.

2.2 Picturing ‘the principal ports’ (c. 1847)

In the same year that Thackeray published *Notes* the painter Andrew Nicholl (1804-1886) made application to the P&O Board for reduced passage in the Company’s steamers to Ceylon. The Board Meeting minutes show that the request was granted, although without giving further details or explanation:

Read, a letter from Mr. A Nicholl making application for a passage in the Company’s vessels to Ceylon, for himself Wife and child at reduced rates and under the particular circumstances it was, Resolved, that a passage be granted for £100.²²⁵

Two years later, to the very day, the Board meeting minutes reveal that:

The Secretary produced six watercolour drawings of the principal ports visited by the Company’s steamers between Southampton and Ceylon which had been forwarded to the Directors by Mr Nicholls [sic] in consideration of the free passage granted to his wife to Galle in August 1846.²²⁶

The six watercolour drawings presented to P&O’s Board in exchange for reduced passage depict the following sites: Gibraltar (fig. 20); Malta; Alexandria; Aden (fig. 21); Point de Galle, Ceylon (fig. 22); and Coromandel Coast, Ceylon.²²⁷ These marine paintings can be understood as exhibiting and extending a similar imperial landscape

²²⁵ NMM P&O/1/101, 30 June 1846.

²²⁶ NMM P&O/1/101, 30 June 1848.

²²⁷ Andrew Nicholl, *Shipping off the coast of Malta* (with the harbour at Valetta visible) (c.1847) Watercolour on paper with a little scratching out [AC-03280-00]; *Off the Coast of Gibraltar*, (c. 1847) Watercolour heightened with white on paper [AC-03279-00]; *Point de Galle, Ceylon*, (c.1847) Watercolour over pencil with some scratching out on paper [AC-03425-00]; *Shipping of Alexandria* (c.1847) Watercolour on paper [AC-03281-00]; *Off the Coast of Aden* Watercolour on paper with scratching out (c. 1847) [AC-03278-00]; *Coromandel Coast, Ceylon* (c. 1847) Watercolour and brown ink heightened with white on paper, on board [AC-03424-00].

to the one Thackeray describes, in this case intertwining P&O's service with a colonial vision, exoticism and desire for knowledge.

The role of Sir James Emerson Tennent (1804-1869) traveller, natural historian, politician and colonial secretary, is important in locating the imperial eyes through which these images were constructed and viewed. It was Tennent who was responsible for Nicholl's travelling to Ceylon, and thus his interaction with P&O in the first place.

Tennent was born in Dublin in 1804, he was a Member of Parliament for Belfast from 1832-1845, Joint Secretary to the India Board, 1841-1845, Colonial Secretary in Ceylon, 1845-1849, and after this Permanent Secretary to the Board of Trade, 1852-1867.²²⁸ As a senior official at the India Board in the early 1840s, Tennent had been an important supporter of P&O in their difficult negotiations for the Indian Mail Contract, which the company eventually secured in January 1845.²²⁹ Later as Colonial Secretary to the Governor in Ceylon, it seems that Tennent was partly responsible for arranging Nicholl's appointment as art teacher at the government-run Colombo Academy.²³⁰ As was the case with Thackeray, it seems likely that it was Tennent (friend to the directors as Thackeray reports) who was instrumental in the arrangements with P&O. This network of relationships illustrates in microcosm the broader intertwining of art, commerce and empire. During his time as colonial

²²⁸ Sidney Lee (ed.) 'Sir James Emerson Tennent (1804-1869)' *Dictionary of National Biography* Volume LVI (London: Smith Elder & Co., 1898) pp. 65-66; and 'Sir James Emerson Tennent's career', Tempo Manor Estate, Co Fermanagh [<http://tempomanor.com/sir-james-emerson-tennents-career>, accessed 27 January 2015].

²²⁹ The award of the contract was a key indicator of the Government's growing confidence in P&O and Tennent's support had been instrumental in the growth of the company. For an account of the negotiations for the Indian Mail Contract 1840-45 see Harcourt, *Flagships*, pp. 79-83. For the specific reference to Tennent see p. 80.

²³⁰ According to Strickland, Nicholl was not sent to Ceylon until 1849. By contrast, Simpson says Nicholl left England for Ceylon in August 1846 and returned permanently in 1849. These latter dates correspond with P&O's records. Walter G. Strickland *A Dictionary of Irish Artists* (Dublin and London: Maunsell & Co., 1913); Joe Simpson 'Andrew Nicholl (1804-86): Belfast Artist in Colonial Ceylon' *Your Place & Mine*, BBC Radio Ulster, webpage archived 16 October 2014. [http://www.bbc.co.uk/northernireland/yourplaceandmine/belfast/andrew_nicholl.shtml, accessed 20 December 2014].

secretary Tennent also wrote *Ceylon. An Account of the Island Physical, Historical, and Topographical* and chose Nicholl as one of the artists and cartographers employed to make drawings, maps and plans of Ceylon to illustrate the work.²³¹

Nicholl's watercolour *Point de Galle, Ceylon* (fig. 22), displays a Turneresque sun infused seascape, with tropical verdant trees and foliage and exemplifies what James Duncan has argued was a British romanticization of the Sinhalese landscape in the middle decades of the nineteenth century.²³² Nicholl's painting can be understood in this context as exemplifying a wider imaginative intertwining in Britain of the rich natural beauty of the landscape with a vision of its commercial and cultural richness, as embodying the possibilities and potential of empire.

The British first arrived in Ceylon in 1796 but did not gain military and administrative control of the individual kingdoms until it captured Kandy in 1815. Duncan suggests that it was as the local military threats diminished that Kandy and its landscape began to be perceived by the British in romantic and idealised terms as an image of a pre-industrial England. Tennent himself clearly subscribes to this kind of view when he describes how before 1815 Kandy had been a zone mysteriously hidden to the Portugese and Dutch colonists but after British military and administrative unification was suddenly opened to (British) enterprise:

The lofty region, from behind whose barrier of hills the kings of Kandy had looked down and defied the arms of three successive European nations, was at last rendered accessible by the grandest mountain road in

²³¹ Sir James Emerson Tennent, *Ceylon. An Account of the Island, Physical, Historical, and Topographical with notices of its natural history, antiquities and productions* 4th edn., 2 vols., (London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1860). Nicholl is the best represented artist in the work contributing 30 illustrations.

²³² James Duncan, 'The Power of Place in Kandy, Sri Lanka, 1780-1980' in John Agnew and James Duncan (eds.) *The Power of Place: Bringing Together Geographical and Sociological Imagination* (London and Winchester; MA: Unwin Hyman), cited in, Robin Jones, 'British Interventions in the Traditional Crafts of Ceylon (Sri Lanka) c. 1850-1930' *The Journal of Modern Craft* Volume I, Issue 3, November 2008, pp. 383-404.

India; and in the north of the island, the ruins of ancient cities, and the stupendous monuments of an early civilisation, were discovered in the solitudes of the great central forests. English merchants embarked in the renowned trade in cinnamon, which we had wrested from the Dutch; and British capitalists introduced the cultivation of coffee into the previously inaccessible highlands.²³³

The rich commercial possibilities represented by the island are intertwined with a perception of the landscapes' 'singular beauty' and its 'ancient renown', a description of which Tennent opens his whole account:

Ceylon, from whatever direction it is approached, unfolds a scene of loveliness and grandeur unsurpassed, if it be rivalled, by any land in the universe. The traveller from Bengal, leaving behind the melancholy delta of the Ganges and the torrid coast of Coromandel; or the adventurer from Europe, recently inured to the sands of Egypt and the scorched headlands of Arabia, is alike entranced by the vision of beauty which expands before him as the island rises from the sea, its lofty mountains covered by luxuriant forests, and its shores, till they meet the ripple of the waves, bright with the foliage of perpetual spring.²³⁴

The vision of Ceylon as a site of natural tropical richness ripe for commercial and imperial possibility and exploitation continued in P&O literature into the twentieth century. In the 1920s P&O produced its own maps and guides for motoring in Ceylon

²³³ Tennent, 'Introduction' to his *Ceylon*, vol. 1, p. xxv.

²³⁴ Tennent, *Ceylon*, vol. 1, p. 3. Nicholl himself later recalled an extended drawing tour of the island in July 1848 as 'the most interesting I ever had in my life; and though attended with both danger and fatigue, yet the enjoyment which I derived from it far more than compensated for the hardship of the journey, and will ever be considered by me other most delightful of all my sketching excursions, either at home or in distant lands.' Andrew Nicholl, 'A Sketching tour of five weeks in the forests of Ceylon' Part 1, *The Dublin University magazine: a literary and political journal*, XL (November-December 1852), pp. 527-540, and part 2, same volume p. 691. Cited in Robin Jones, 'An Englishman Abroad: Sir James Emerson Tennent in Ceylon, 1845-50' *Apollo*, 164: 537 (November 2006), pp. 36-43.

which refer to the country as: ‘A Half-way Meeting Place between Europe, Australia, and the Far East. For Business Men. For Families. For Dominion Statesmen’, and; ‘An Equatorial Playground for the Tourist, for the Sportsman, for the Archaeologist’ (fig. 23).²³⁵

2.3 ‘Geographical distance has been annihilated’ (1850-1)

In addition to more traditional modes of fine art, P&O exploited the possibilities of popular visual culture as a means of demonstrating the qualities of its service to targeted audiences. In March 1850 a ‘gigantic moving diorama’ entitled *The Route of the Overland Mail to India, from Southampton to Calcutta*, opened to the public at the Gallery of Illustration in London’s Regent’s Street.²³⁶ The exhibition emphasised the immense public advantages of P&O’s overland route to India which had been inaugurated by its paddle steamer *Hindustan* in 1842. The diorama represented key sites along the route between Southampton and Calcutta. As with Thackeray and Nicholl, from the landscape emerges a distinctive embroachment of corporate, commercial and imperial interests. Distinct from Thackeray and Nicholl the particular qualities of the medium of the moving diorama were used to demonstrate P&O’s triumphant acceleration of this interrelationship.

Historically there had been two main sea routes between Britain and India; one attributed to Vasco da Gama around the Cape of Good Hope (from 1498); and the other, the ancient Overland Route. The Overland route was so named because, before the Suez Canal opened in 1869, passengers travelled in ships between Southampton and Alexandria, overland across the 150 miles of desert at the Isthmus of Suez, and

²³⁵ P&O, *A Holiday Trip by P&O. Ceylon*, brochure (c. 1928) p. 1 and p. 5. NMM/P&O/42/22. See also Artmomskey and Cox, *Across the Oceans*, p. 84.

²³⁶ *The Athenaeum* (2 November 1850), p. 1143.

returned to the sea again between Suez (or Cosseir) and Calcutta.²³⁷ Securing the safest, most time efficient and cost effective route was of immense commercial and political significance in Britain since the route formed the crucial lines of transport and communication with India. P&O favoured the Overland Route, however, in establishing and maintaining the route the company faced a number of political and practical challenges, and even when it was established the overland section in particular generated a large volume of letters from passengers complaining of poor conditions.²³⁸ The company, and in particular Arthur Anderson, worked tirelessly to improve the overland route, transforming an initiative which could have been fatal for the company into one of its strengths. The 1850-1 diorama at the Gallery of Illustration can be understood as an integral part of this work. The company needed to establish and maintain the challenging mechanics of the route, and smooth the political path. However, the diorama played an equally important role in establishing P&O in the wider public imagination as a positive imperial agency, activating and accelerating Britain's imperial landscape, and enabling reliable and romantic lines of transport and communication with India.

The diorama consisted of a series of over thirty paintings by the noted scenery artists Thomas Grieve (1799-1882) and William Telbin (1815-1873) with figure work by the Royal Academician David Roberts (1796-1864).²³⁹ Thomas Grieve (fig. 24) who appeared to take a leading role in the diorama, was from a family of theatre designers working with his father John Henderson Grieve (1770-1845) at Covent

²³⁷ For P&O's correspondence regarding the Overland Route between 1847 and 1870 after the Suez Canal had opened see NMM/P&O/89/10. For further background to the Overland Route and its significance see Howarth and Howarth, *The Story of P&O*, pp. 26-46.

²³⁸ Howarth and Howarth, *The Story of P&O*, p. 39.

²³⁹ The prospectus accompanying the diorama also lists Absalon [John Absolon, 1815-1895], Herring Sen. [John Frederick Herring, Sr. 1795-1865], Weir [Harrison Weir 1824-1906] 'and other eminent artists'. See Thomas Grieve, *The route of the overland mail to India from Southampton to Calcutta* (London: Atchley, 1852).

Garden and other locations from 1817. Between 1846 and 1859 he worked at Drury Lane, Covent Garden and Her Majesty's Theatre, and also on popular Shakespearean revivals of the time at the Princess' Theatre, Oxford.²⁴⁰ William Telbin was a watercolourist and designer of stage sets working mainly for the Drury Lane Theatre.²⁴¹

On 1 January 1850 the minutes of P&O's Board meeting record that Grieve and Telbin applied to the company for exhibition funds:

Read

a letter from Messrs. Grieve and Telbin dated 31st Dec' soliciting some assistance from the Company towards the production of the moving Diorama of the Overland Route to India now about to be opened to the public and it was

Resolved

that £100 be granted in furtherance of this exhibition.²⁴²

Earlier the company had granted Grieve and Telbin free passage to Spain and Portugal 'for the purposes of taking sketches' and also lent oriental costumes for the diorama itself.²⁴³ The diorama consisted of a sequence of moving and still pictures which were viewed by gaslight through an oval aperture which was increased in size for the stationary pictures.²⁴⁴ The pictures moved in front of the audience on a large mechanical wheel, and this was accompanied by music and a descriptive commentary

²⁴⁰ For information on the Grieve family, including Thomas, and a collection of surviving drawings for set designs, see the *Grieve Family Collection of Theatre Designs*, Senate House Library, University of London, MS1007. Unfortunately no preliminary sketches of the overland diorama appear to have survived in this collection. There is an original sketch of Gibraltar by Telbin in VAM/E268-1925,DT39A.

²⁴¹ Emmanuel Bénézit, *Dictionary of Artists* (Paris: Gründ, 2006), vol. 13.

²⁴² NMM/P&O/1/102.

²⁴³ Artmonsky and Cox, *Across the Oceans*, p. 213.

²⁴⁴ 'The Gallery of Illustration' in *London as it is Today: Where to go and what to see during the Great Exhibition* (London: H. G. Clarke & Co.), p. 268.

by J. H. Stocqueler. *The Illustrated London News* reported that the show was ‘superior to any work of its class hitherto produced in this country’ praising amongst other things its ‘sublime and picturesque scenery.’²⁴⁵ By the time the diorama closed permanently, there had been 1,600 shows and a quarter of a million admissions.²⁴⁶

The pictures from the diorama were reproduced in a hard cover prospectus containing ‘thirty-two large choice engravings’, with tinted plates, ‘executed in quite a New Style’. The prospectus had a smart ‘oriental’ cover and gilt edges (fig. 25) and cost £2-12s-6d. Also available was a smaller cloth folio for £1-11s-6d and a hand-held letter-press descriptive guidebook to the diorama costing one shilling.²⁴⁷

The prospectus is clearly designed to promote the benefits of P&O’s management of the Overland Route in stark contrast to previous arrangements:

The route to India, via the Mediterranean and the Red Sea, was formerly accomplished under great difficulties, attended by many serious delays. The trip to Alexandria could only be made in small, slow-sailing merchant-ships; - the journey thence to Suez (or Cossier) was accomplished on donkeys or camels, and the traveller was entirely dependent upon chance for a passage down the Red Sea to India. Many attempts were made between 1823 and 1840, at the instance of the late Lieut. Waghorn, to establish a regular line of communication, but that nothing could be accomplished until the Peninsular Company (thenceforward ‘The Peninsular and Oriental Company’) took the matter in hand.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁵ *Illustrated London News*, 30 March, 1850: 221, cited in Richard D. Altick, *The Shows of London* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1978), 207-9.

²⁴⁶ Altick, *Shows of London*, pp. 207-9.

²⁴⁷ Thomas Grieve, *The Route of the Overland Mail to India, from Southampton to Calcutta* [prospectus] (London: Atchley, 1852); and Thomas Grieve, *The Route of the Overland Mail to India from Southampton to Calcutta* [guidebook] (London: Atchley, 1852).

²⁴⁸ Grieve, *The Route of the Overland Mail* [prospectus], p. 1.

There is more to the diorama than a straightforward commercial imperative however. The selection of sites appearing in the diorama, their sequential panoramic and theatrical display, and the textual framing of the prospectus, exemplify Mitchell's thesis that landscape is less a genre of art than a medium and technique of European imperialism. Landscape-as-medium functions by making a series of conventions of the natural world and at the same time making these conventions appear natural.²⁴⁹ Building on aspects of this argument Denise Blake Obleksijczuk has examined the panorama, a medium closely related to the diorama, suggesting it was an intrinsically imperial form of representation.²⁵⁰ The panorama as a form was patented by Robert Barker in 1787. It involved a specially designed rotunda housing a raised platform from which one could view a 360-degree illusionistic representation of any location in the world on a scale of 1:1. The word panorama was a neologism meaning an all-encompassing vision. According to Obleksijczuk the increasingly imperial subject matter of the panoramas (including numerous depictions of British naval victories) and changes in the panorama's form 'supported the operations of the nation-state by helping to make "a people" out of the multitude.' The panorama began to 'strategically solicit the active participation of its spectators in ways that helped to naturalise Britain's imperial goals.'²⁵¹

In P&O's case, its moving diorama naturalised a carefully selected sequence of imperial-maritime sites and demonstrated how the company's steamships mobilised a new set of commercial, political and cultural possibilities. The prospectus

²⁴⁹ W. T. J. Mitchell 'Imperial Landscape', in W. T. J. Mitchell ed., *Landscape and Power* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), pp. 5-34.

²⁵⁰ Denise Blake Obleksijczuk, *The First Panoramas: Visions of British Imperialism* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

²⁵¹ Obleksijczuk, *The First Panoramas*, p. 7. Obleksijczuk shows that during the French Revolutionary Wars (1793-1802) about half of all panoramic images represented scenes of the British fleet and during the Napoleonic Wars (1803-15), 'nearly every image shown at the Panorama had to do with movements of the Royal Navy or the British Army.' During the 1816 exhibition of the panorama of the Battle of Waterloo annual visitor numbers 'soared upwards of two hundred thousand'. p. 6.

accompanying the show appealed directly to the public, arguing that the success of the overland route lay at the heart of vastly improved commercial and imperial relations between Britain and India, and the medium of the moving diorama perfectly encapsulated this accelerated imperial landscape:

The public advantages of the [overland] enterprise are unspeakable. Geographical distance has been annihilated – the time occupied in the communication between England and India has been shortened by *nearly three months*, the commercial relations of the two empires have been immensely multiplied, and the cause of good government materially promoted.²⁵²

The oriental frontispiece creates a dialectic of British efficiency and work (carried out by natives) and the bodily pleasures and exoticism of other cultures (fig. 26). It represents the ‘Dak’ method of transporting post in India. This featured a vehicle called an Equirota (having wheels of the same size or diameter) which required about twenty native men to drag it. Inside sat two officials with the mail. According to the prospectus, gruelling distances could be covered: ‘In this way, travelling day and night, one hundred miles can be got over in twenty four hours, allowing a little rest at the numerous stage bungalows.’²⁵³ Contrasted with this efficiency is a romanticised and exotic vision of otherness: ‘On the left of the Composition is a seated lady of Cairo, with her slave; and on the right, reclines a Carine merchant, enjoying his hookah.’²⁵⁴

²⁵² Grieve, *The Route of the Overland Mail* [Portfolio], p. 1.

²⁵³ Grieve, *The Route of the Overland Mail* [Portfolio], p. 1.

²⁵⁴ It is noticeable that this otherness is layered with gendered, class based, and ethnic hierarchical complexity. The male merchant from Cairo, female Egyptian prostitute, her black slave, and the native men dragging the mail Equirota.

The first represented site on the Overland Route is Southampton Docks (fig. 27) and spectator's visual experience is infused with information concerning the enhanced regularity, capacity and power of P&O's steam ships and descriptions highlighting the national and historic significance of sites encountered on departure:

The steamers for Alexandria, with the passengers to India, quit Southampton on the 20th of every month. Each steamer averages 1600 tons burthen, with engines of 500 horse power. They are admirably found in all respects, carry out from one hundred to one hundred and thirty passengers, and about two hundred bags of letters. Steaming down Southampton water, a view is obtained of Calshot Castle, which was built in the reign of Henry the Eighth, of stone taken from Netley Abbey, and is now used as a preventative station.²⁵⁵

The blending of the commercial and the national-historic continues throughout the journey. Of the Isle of Wight (fig. 28) the texts declares, 'Perhaps there is not a spot in all England so calculated, by the simple beauty of its scenery, to convey favourable and lasting impressions of the loveliness of our native scenery. No person exiling himself from England, but must wish to return on recalling the charming scenery'.²⁵⁶ This emotional imperial gaze for those departing, or returning to, England is next focused on the site of Queen Victoria's residence at Osborne House 'an excellent view of it is obtained, on a clear day, from the deck of the outward-bound steamer'.²⁵⁷ The Bay of Biscay is romantically evoked through Byron's descriptions of its 'sleepless' nights. Cape Trafalgar (fig. 29) is identified as the 'celebrated spot, the scene of Nelson's greatest victory and glorious death' which 'necessarily awakens strong

²⁵⁵ Grieve, *The Route of the Overland Mail* [Prospectus], p. 2.

²⁵⁶ Grieve, *The Route of the Overland Mail* [Prospectus], p. 2.

²⁵⁷ Grieve, *The Route of the Overland Mail* [Prospectus], p. 2.

emotions in the bosoms of Englishmen'²⁵⁸. For some visitors to the exhibition in 1850, the Battle of Trafalgar would have been in living memory, lending added emotional weight to its evocation. The 'striking and picturesque' scenery of Gibraltar (fig. 30) is again infused with the site's strategic naval significance for the British 'as a valuable key to the Mediterranean', and as a site of proud national defiance at the Great Siege of Gibraltar in 1782. 'An endeavour was made to wrest it from us by the French and Spaniards under Crillon but General Elliott repulsed them.'²⁵⁹ At Gibraltar the musical accompaniment to the diorama played Rule Britannia (and the Spanish Contrabandists) and when finally arriving at Calcutta (fig. 31) the British National Anthem was played.²⁶⁰

Not everyone was convinced by this display. A review appearing in the guidebook *London as it is today*, had some formal criticisms of the work ('many of [the scenes] appear insipid, and made up from indifferent sketches, both tame and inaccurate'), but also deeper criticism of the tendency of the representations towards a glib British mono-culturalism. For the reviewer, the image of Calcutta:

... is a showy flimsy display of gala officers on sleek hunters and racers amidst newly made palaces and club-houses. Nothing could give a more partial and inadequate notion of Calcutta, as it is: - the heterogeneous compound of gorgeous edifices and disgusting misery, of European manners and supremacy, with Mahometan and Brahminical superstition and degradation;- of polluted Calcutta, with its vegetable eating Brahmins and its carrion fed dogs and jackals.'²⁶¹

²⁵⁸ Grieve, *The Route of the Overland Mail*, [Prospectus], p. 2.

²⁵⁹ Grieve, *The Route of the Overland Mail* [Prospectus] p, 2. For an original sketch of Gibraltar by Telbin see VAM/E268-1925,DT39A.

²⁶⁰ Artmonsky and Cox, *Across the Oceans*, p. 213.

²⁶¹ 'The Gallery of Illustration' in *London as it is Today: Where to go and what to see during the Great Exhibition* (London: H. G. Clarke & Co.), p. 279.

This is a far more nuanced and complex view of Calcutta than would have suited P&O and its desired audiences. The joy that emerges from the chaotic heterogeneous city is not recognised to any great extent in P&O's more ordered and controlled representational universe.

P&O's overland route was also represented and imaginatively re-enacted in a board game, *Sallis's Dioramic Game of the Overland Route to India*.²⁶² The sites are represented as a single panoramic style landscape, and players, each represented by a piece of folded card bearing their initials, proceeded along the route, taking turns to spin an eight sided tee-to-tum (fig. 32). As with the moving diorama, the game and accompanying booklet (fig. 33), imbue the imagined journey with the political, commercial and cultural possibilities made possible by P&O's route.²⁶³

Over the course of the second half of the nineteenth century, and continuing for much of the twentieth, the landscape animated by the giant moving diorama came to be identified jointly with P&O and the administration of British Empire 'in the East'.²⁶⁴ This was also extended to ports in Singapore, China, Japan and Australia. Paintings such as Chas Pears' *Gibraltar* (1928) although not directly commissioned by P&O, would have been recognised as a treasured location within what had by then become known as the company's Highway to India, an intimately corporate-imperial

²⁶² William Sallis, *Sallis' Dioramic Game of the Overland Route to India*, Board Game (London, England: William Sallis, between 1852 and 1863), lithograph paper on card, VAM/E.181&A-1947. I thank Catherine Howell and Esther Lutman at the V&A Museum of Childhood for bringing my attention to this board game and enabling a study visit.

²⁶³ P&O features less prominently in Sallis' game than in the diorama. At the start of the game in Southampton the instructions read, 'Here all players make a start. From these Docks vessels to various parts of the world take their departure. Here the Oriental and Peninsular Company's steamers proceed on their journey to Alexandria, with passengers for India.' Stop number 67 is 'The central Station in the Great Desert of Suez' and the booklet read, 'You have now arrived at the central, or half-way station, erected by the Oriental and Peninsular Company. Resting at this station, there is much mirth and jollity. Here a dinner is prepared at the Oriental Company's expense, to regale the passengers who are journeying with the overland mail.' See William Sallis, *Sallis's Dioramic Game of the Overland Route to India* (London; William Sallis, n.d.), p. 9.

²⁶⁴ For historical use of this phrase see, for example, [E. Burrows], *Our Eastern Empire: Stories from the History of British India* (London: Savill and Edwards, 1857).

landscape (fig. 34).²⁶⁵ For P&O and its passengers, more than discrete points on a map, these names and places formed an inter-connected network of imperial transport, communication, culture and commerce, activated and enabled by the proud work of the P&O.

3. Personalities and Places (c. 1848-50)

Portraiture and architecture were also employed early in the corporation's history to demonstrate its projected status as a uniquely positioned commercial and imperial body. In the portraits of P&O's founding fathers (1850) and the architecture of its new company offices (1848) the theme of reliable romanticism found new expression. The portraits offered an opportunity to create a moral image of the directors, not as avaricious businessmen motivated by personal wealth and status, but as dedicated public servants. The new offices on Leadenhall Street, located opposite East India House, positioned the company geographically and culturally at the centre of Britain's nineteenth century commercial shipping empire.

3.1 Positioning Portraits: Wilcox and Anderson at the Royal Academy (1850)

On 9 August 1850, the Board of Directors recorded that:

Sir John Pirie [Chairman of the Board] then addressed the Directors stating that he had to request the Board's acceptance of the portraits of Mr Willcox and Mr Anderson and to beg permission to have these pictures placed upon the walls of the Boardroom and it was

²⁶⁵ In 1928 Pears created a series of seascapes for the newly established Empire Marketing Board collectively titled *The Empire's Highway to India*. The posters were designed to promote inter-imperial travel and import and export trade between Britain and India. Although P&O is not explicitly identified, spectators familiar with the route would very likely have associated it principally, if not exclusively, with P&O or perhaps the Orient Line in which P&O had a controlling share from 1918. Chas Pears also created an oil painting for P&O, *Ranchi in the Suez Canal*, P&O Heritage Ref. AC-021190-00. For more on Empire Marketing Board see chapter 4, section 2.

Resolved unanimously

that the best thanks of the Board be given to Sir John Pirie for his very appropriate and valuable present, with an assurance that the Directors will have great pleasure in placing these pictures in the Boardroom accordingly.²⁶⁶

Arthur Anderson (1792-1868) and Brodie McGhie Willcox (1786-1862) were two of the founders of P&O (described most commonly as the founding fathers of P&O). The portraits (figs. 35 and 37) were painted by Thomas Francis Dicksee (1819-1895). Dicksee was a reasonably well known painter having exhibited ten pictures, mostly portraits, at the Royal Academy in London between 1841 and 1849 prior to the P&O commission. Dicksee's teacher was Henry Perronet Briggs (1793-1844) a fashionable painter of portraits and, interestingly, historical marine subjects such as *Visit of George III to Howe's Flagship, the 'Queen Charlotte', on 26 June 1794* painted for the Naval Gallery at Greenwich Hospital.²⁶⁷

Graves records that Anderson's portrait was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1850, the very same year it was presented to P&O's Board.²⁶⁸ The entry in Graves notes Anderson's status as Member of Parliament, and that the portrait's permanent residence was P&O's boardroom. Willcox's portrait was exhibited in the Academy later, in 1857. The appearance of the portraits at the RA is highly significant as it indicates another means by which P&O presented itself to the public. Each of P&O's exhibitionary moments contribute cumulatively to a wider perception of the company as a national institution.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁶ NMM P&O/1/102, 9 August 1850.

²⁶⁷ NMM/CC/BHC0476.

²⁶⁸ Graves, *The Royal Academy of Art*, vol. 2, p. 327.

²⁶⁹ The strategic display of Anderson and Willcox's portraits has been influential in fashioning P&O's corporate image. The portraits have been repeatedly exhibited and reproduced to evoke an idea of the

The Royal Academy was the epicentre of London's cultural and artistic establishment and its unique institutional history, conventions and reputation, acted as a metaphorical frame through which a sitter could be perceived. As indicated in paintings such as *Public Opinion* by George Bernard O'Neill, (fig. 39), nineteenth century exhibitions at the Royal Academy drew large crowds and from a wider social range than the eighteenth century. The Academy's private views were popular social occasions where the viewing public were not passive in their viewing but fully engaged in the discussion of pictures. P&O's name and presence at such sociable events was excellent publicity.

In their role as Members of Parliament the names of Anderson and Willcox would also have been known to a portion of the news reading public. In 1851 an engraved portrait of Anderson along with a short biography appeared in a regular feature called *Parliamentary Portraits* in the *Illustrated London News* (fig. 36).²⁷⁰ The article describes Anderson as a man dedicated to working for the good of the nation. It identifies his role in the original *Peninsular Company*, opening up trade with Spain and Portugal, the foundation of P&O and its incorporation by Royal charter, and the establishment of rapid steam communication with India. According to the article, P&O's ships formed, 'powerful agents of social, commercial and political intercourse and consequently of peace and civilization [...]'.²⁷¹

Neither Willcox nor Anderson was from a wealthy family background so neither inherited great wealth or status. Anderson's first job was reported to have been curing

corporation's romantic origins. They were exhibited in the company's pavilion at the *Exposition Universelle* in 1900 (NMM/P&O/1/115), they held pride of place in P&O's boardroom, re-designed in the 1890's by T. E. Colcutt, and they held a similar position in the strikingly new modernist building from 1969. It is also interesting to note that of the original four founders, the three men with portraits - Willcox, Anderson and Bourne (fig. 38) - have been the ones remembered by history. Charles William Wye has been virtually forgotten. For Wye see, Harcourt, *Flagships*, p. 22-28.

²⁷⁰ [n.a.], 'Parliamentary Portraits, Arthur Anderson Esq., M.P. for Orkney and Shetland', *The Illustrated London News* (22 March 1851), p. 233.

²⁷¹ [n.a.], 'Parliamentary Portraits, Arthur Anderson Esq.', p. 233.

fish when he was eleven, and when he first came to London Anderson later recalled that he was: ‘a youth of such slender resources [...] that I was fain to dine upon a twopenny loaf, a pennyworth of cheese, and a glass of porter, every other day’.²⁷² After a period in the Navy, Anderson returned to London and secured a job with Willcox working as a clerk. Willcox himself is described in 1815 as a shipbroker ‘with no influence and but limited pecuniary means.’²⁷³ Both men needed to work to achieve any wealth, social status and recognition. This background is helpful in understanding the portraits since we can now say that the two men were part of the new and expanding middle class which had been evolving in Britain since the middle of the eighteenth century.

In terms of the discourse of portraiture the conventions of representing gentlemanly politeness, embodied by Godfrey Kneller’s portraits, were diminished by the eighteenth century, in large part due to the rise of the new commercialised nation. It is from this new state of affairs that men like Willcox and Anderson were able to profit and prosper. By 1850 Willcox and Anderson clearly did not need to put on the clothes of gentlemanliness like their earlier professional and class counterparts, or be required to make classical allusions through dress or posture. By 1850 status could be demonstrated through the representation of public virtue.²⁷⁴ Willcox and Anderson are shown as if barely posed. The pictorial composition implies the men are in the middle of their working day and that each has paused momentarily but will return immediately to their professional papers. In Willcox’s portrait there is the slightest reference to classicism in the fluted pilaster but overwrought references to history are largely

²⁷² Anderson, quoted in Nicholson, *Arthur Anderson*, p. 18.

²⁷³ Howarth and Howarth, *The Story of P&O*, p. 10.

²⁷⁴ For background concerning the interplay of the moral, social and aesthetic in Victorian culture see Asa Briggs, ‘Morals, Manners, Tastes and Styles’ in his *The Age of Improvement 1783-1867* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014 [1959]), pp. 402-410.

absent. The pilaster acts as the background against which Willcox stands but it can also be interpreted metaphorically, imagining Willcox as pillar of the Company he helped to establish. The spectacles in his hand reinforce the focus on professional life. Both men were Liberal Members of Parliament which also helps to explain the restrained nature of the images. As working men from the lower-middle classes they deliberately eschewed any overtly theatrical extravagancies and foregrounded hard-work, self-sacrifice and public service in the creation of their success.

This distinctively moral aspect of Willcox and Anderson's portraits can be highlighted by comparison with a portrait depicting three brothers in the service of the East India Company, exhibited at the Royal Academy half a century earlier (fig. 40). The appropriately named Money Brothers, Robert, William and James Money, were painted by John Francis Rigaud between 1788 and 1792. The brothers were sons of William Money (1738-96) a Director of the East India Company and themselves worked for the Company in India. They benefitted from changes in business practices enabling them to combine different kinds of Company service with better organised private trade.²⁷⁵ In the portrait Robert (left) and James (right) point to Canton and Calcutta on a map, indicating their places of work and the source of the family wealth. The ship in the background, the Indiamen *Rose*, flying the company's flag, also acts as a sign of the source of the brother's wealth. The eldest brother, William Taylor Money, wears the uniform of a lieutenant in the East India Company. The relaxed poses, brightly coloured sumptuous textiles, powdered hair, rosy cheeks, well fed stomachs and gently smiling faces, combine to act as a celebration of the brothers' status and wealth derived from East India trade. The Willcox and Anderson portraits

²⁷⁵ H. V. Bowen, 'The most illustrious and most flourishing commercial organisation that ever existed. The East India Company's seaborne empire, 1709-1833' in Bowen, McAleer and Blyth, *Monsoon Traders*, p. 107.

by contrast remain proud but consciously eschew overt displays of personal wealth. This moral and more modest picture of the P&O makes sense against the backdrop of political and public criticism of companies like the East India Company and the monopoly system of trade in general.²⁷⁶ P&O's own government mail contracts in effect granted the company a monopoly on particular lines, and this exposed P&O to intense public scrutiny. Modesty, restraint and an emphasis on pride in public service over declarations of individual wealth thus became central elements in the corporation's early public image.²⁷⁷

3.2 'Fronting East India House' (1848)

As P&O had exploited the name of W. J. Huggins, the marine painter and printmaker famous for his pictures of East Indiamen, the establishment of the company's earliest permanent offices in London's Leadenhall Street (1848) was used to locate P&O favourably at the heart of London's commercial shipping community, opposite East India House. The young steam navigation company would have been keen to distance itself from criticisms of the excesses, greed and corruption of the East India Company. At the same time, however, P&O clearly uses its art, design and architecture to show that it continues in the best maritime traditions of the honourable Company, providing

²⁷⁶ Bowen cites Adam Smith in the eighteenth century as an influential critic of restrictive trading practices.

²⁷⁷ The ideal of service remained important in P&O's corporate identity for much of the twentieth century. With the end of empire, however, its tone shifted considerably from public and imperial service to serving the Commonwealth and the consumer. The 1850 portraits can be contrasted with a portrait of a later P&O chairman, Lord Inchcape, in 1921 (fig. 41). The contrast can be understood in part with reference to the changing attitudes of the company toward a changing empire. By the beginning of the twentieth century P&O was the largest shipping company in the world and the British Empire was at its height. Inchcape's portrait announces the Chairman and the company's imperial role with pride and even brashness. The portrait is clearly posed and takes great pleasure in putting on the clothes of imperial status. In a sense it revives the eighteenth century grand manner of masculine portraiture in the tradition of Reynolds.

strong trading and commercial relations with India and China, thus bringing opportunity, wealth and benefit to London and the Nation.

Leadenhall Street in London has a unique cultural history and when P&O first moved there in 1848 from much smaller temporary offices, at nearby St. Mary Axe, the company used the new premises to align its corporate activities and identity with what it saw as a long and proud tradition of English and British merchant trading. Sources such as Charles Knight's *London* (1845) and Thornbury's *Old and New London* (1878) reveal nineteenth century perceptions of the commercial and trading history of Leadenhall Street and why P&O's presence there from 1848 was significant to corporate identity. Both sources highlight what for P&O was an important historical, commercial and cultural touchstone on Leadenhall Street, the Honourable East India Company before it was finally dissolved in 1874.

Thornbury devotes two chapters to describing the history, people and places of Leadenhall Street, identifying the wide variety of trade and commerce - from wool and corn to meat, fish and herbs - that had characterised its life since the original Leadenhall Market of the early fourteenth century.²⁷⁸ Even though Thornbury is writing after the two hundred year history of the East India Company had come to an end, its presence clearly continues to dominate the landscape, not purely in the history of Leadenhall Street and commercial London, but in the wider conception of Britain as a trading nation. The company mainly traded in cotton, silk, indigo dye, saltpetre, tea and opium and through its trade with India gradually amassed vast wealth for its members and for Britain as a whole. In 1874 the day after the company was finally dissolved *The Times* wrote that the company 'had accomplished a work such as in the

²⁷⁸ Walter Thornbury, *Old and New London*, 2 Vols., (London: Cassell, Peter & Galpin London, 1879) Chapter XXIII 'Leadenhall Street and the Old East India House', p. 183; and Chapter XXIV 'Leadenhall Street (continued)', p. 188.

whole history of the human race no other company ever attempted, and as such is ever likely to attempt in the years to come.’²⁷⁹

The East India Company found a permanent home on the corner of Lime Street and Leadenhall Street next to the busy Leadenhall Market in 1647, purchasing the site in 1710 and remaining there until 1858. The historian H. V. Bowen has argued that the process of the progressive re-development of the company’s Leadenhall site ‘in many ways reflected the advancement of the Company’s commercial and political fortunes.’²⁸⁰ From the first small wooden house there were various extensions and a replacement by a Palladian style building (1726-29) designed by the architect Theodore Jacobson. Following further additions, however, by the 1790s Bowen recounts that the directors embarked on a new development ‘in part motivated by a desire to possess a building whose exterior fully reflected the Company’s late-18th century commercial and imperial status.’²⁸¹

Knight’s *London* says of the new building that the façade ‘is 200 feet in length and is of stone. The portico is composed of six large Ionic fluted columns on a raised basement, and it gives an air of much magnificence to the whole’ (fig. 43).²⁸² This grand imperial building was still in existence when in 1845-6 the young P&O company, still only eight years from Royal Incorporation, found its trade expanding to such an extent (and taking over trades from the increasingly embattled East India Company) that its business required larger, more permanent premises. When in November 1845 the King’s Arms Inn & Hotel came up for sale, the opportunity to

²⁷⁹ *The Times*, 2 January 1874.

²⁸⁰ H. V. Bowen ‘The most illustrious and most flourishing commercial organisation that ever existed. The East India Company’s seaborne empire, 1709-1833’, chapter three in H. V. Bowen, John McAleer and Robert Blyth, *Monsoon Traders. The Maritime World of the East India Company* (London: Scala, 2011), pp. 90-125. This quote p. 95.

²⁸¹ Bowen ‘The most illustrious and most flourishing’ in Bowen, et. al. *Monsoon Traders*. p. 95.

²⁸² J. C. Platt, ‘The East India House’, chapter CIV in Charles Knight (ed.), *London*, vol. 5 (Ludgate Street, London Charles Knight & Co., 1843), pp. 49-64. This quote p. 61.

commission its own building directly opposite East India House must have been a thrilling prospect to the young company's ambitious directors.

P&O's managing directors purchased the whole estate freehold for the company for £7,250 and commissioned an architect, Mr. Beachcroft, to draw up plans for their new offices. The cost of the new building was £8,000 and in March 1848 P&O moved in to 122 Leadenhall Street. The building, although much extended, remained the home of the Company until 1964.²⁸³

In 1859 by which time numbers 121 and 123 to 125 Leadenhall Street had been acquired by P&O and the company's frontage on Leadenhall Street extended to sixty feet, an engraving of the main architectural structure appeared in the *Illustrated London News* (fig. 42). The opening paragraph of the article accompanying the print is highly complimentary and was in itself a helpful piece of advertising indicating the company's prestige through its new building:

This rich and extremely ornamental front to the large range of buildings occupied by the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company stands in Leadenhall-street, fronting the eastern end of the India House. It is composed of two stories above the basement, terminated by a handsome cornice and pediment.

The architectural forms of P&O's building are quite different from East India House, but the two pedimented structures can be imagined entering into an architectural conversation which shares a classical starting point. P&O's building occupied a much smaller frontage than India House, but displays its own authority through the adoption of a familiar classical language with individual accents. These include: a tall triumphal

²⁸³ P&O 1/104 cited in Harcourt, *Flagships*, p. 161; also see Artmonsky and Cox, *Across the Oceans*, p. 52.

arch like carriage entrance; boldly stepped rustication on the ground floor pilasters; softer rustication and three large round headed windows on the *piano nobile*, subdivided by a granite column into two lights; and continuous dentil like ornamentation punctuating the horizontals, entablature and pediment. Over the carriage entrance (which led to a central quadrangle) is a carved head of Neptune representing the sea. A further full length figure of Neptune appears with a trident at the very top of the building, crowning the pediment. In the central bay of the *piano nobile* is the company's shield with symbols of Britannia and the company's principal destinations, Egypt, India and China.

As a whole, P&O's building is clearly more modest than the dramatic projecting portico of six fluted Doric columns of East India House. This can be explained on a basic level by the fact that P&O was still in its infancy and its financial resources were limited. It may also be explained in part from a conscious desire to appear restrained rather than profligate or avaricious, a fatal charge which was levelled at the East India Company and would eventually contribute to its downfall (fig. 44). The possibility is strengthened further by considering the architecture alongside the portraits of the Chairman, and indeed the ship portraits by Skillet and Huggins, which within their own medium and genre, have a similarly restrained style and one which eschewed unnecessary extravagance. This is a characteristic that would change to some extent as the company's imperial profile grew reaching a crescendo under Lord Inchcape in the decades between the two world wars.

4. 'The Power of the P&O': Exhibiting Proximity to the Royal Navy (1845-69)

We ALWAYS are READY, – steady, boys, steady!
We'll fight and we'll conquer again and again. (Dibdin)

PRIDE, in the power that guards his country's coast,
And all that Englishmen enjoy and boast;
PRIDE, in a life that slander's tongue defied –
In fact, a noble passion misnamed PRIDE. (Crabbe)²⁸⁴

A crucial element in the wider historical evolution of P&O's corporate identity is its relationship with the Royal Navy, and the question of what the company saw as its elevated role, not merely in imperial communications, trade and transport, but also in the realm of imperial defence. The relationship evolved over time, and at different points in its history there was a tension for P&O between the often restrictive conditions of government contracts (such as the government's right to requisition company ships)²⁸⁵ and the desire and feeling of immense pride at the company's role in enabling and activating imperial interests and achievements. Against this background the company's use of art and design and its wider corporate cultural behaviour, show that P&O chose to make a virtue of the commercial restrictions imposed by its various imperial roles by repeatedly aligning the company with the work, practices and values of the Royal Navy. On this basis the company also assumed something of an equivalent public prestige and status. By the time of the Company's

²⁸⁴ Quotations prefacing a novel published by P&O, A P&O [anonymous author], *Always Ready, or, Everyone His Pride. A Novel*. (London; Hall, Virtue, & Co., 1859), title page.

²⁸⁵ Harcourt explains that government mail contracts were sought after because, where available, they led naturally to monopoly but there were also disadvantages. Fixed-term mail contracts lasting several years meant that P&O's revenues from Government remained fixed while costs such as coal and repairs rose unpredictably. Contracts stipulated the types of vessels to be used, which were costly. Mail and cut-rate government personnel took up space on board ship meaning potential profit from commercial passengers and cargo had to be foregone. The strictures of abiding by the mail timetable and the use of ships for trooping disrupted normal commercial activities. See Harcourt, 'Burdens and privileges of the mail contractor', in *Flagships*, pp. 1-3.

centenary celebrations in 1937 no less a figure than Admiral of the Fleet, Lord Chatfield, The First Sea Lord, raised a toast to P&O's 'overwhelming importance to the British Empire'. The emergence of this corporate-state inter-agency relationship can be traced to the mail contracts during the first decades of the company's existence a hundred years earlier. More than a purely contractual arrangement, P&O recruited the resources of its fine art painting and prints, uniform design, ship model displays and literary efforts to the consolidation and furtherance of this relationship and the political, commercial and cultural benefits it secured.

4.1 'Capable of carrying armaments' (from 1845)

After the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815 when Britain enjoyed a period of relative peace there were debates about the scale and importance of the Admiralty. According to Taylor, after 1830, the Navy assumed less importance in government and parliament with a downsizing of the Admiralty during two waves of administrative reform - under the Whigs in the 1830s and Gladstone's Liberal Party in 1860s. Within this debate were underlying question of the efficiency and affordability of the Navy and its size and power in relation to the wider perceptions of British prestige on the European and global stage. One aspect of the discussion, important for the early private steam navigation companies like P&O, was the possibility of supplementing the Admiralty's warships with steamers of the mercantile marine, the Admiralty seriously considering the question as early as 1830.²⁸⁶

²⁸⁶ John Beeler, 'Ploughshares into Swords: the Royal Navy and Merchant Marine Auxiliaries in the Late Nineteenth Century' in Greg Kennedy (ed.), *The Merchant Marine in International Affairs 1850-1950* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), p 6.

In the company's centenary history, Boyd Cable notes that P&O's significance as a supplement to British Naval power was being reported as early as 1845.²⁸⁷ The article Cable cites, 'The Power of the P&O', emphasises the size of the P&O fleet: 'The P. & O. Company now have in service and in process of construction 36 steamers, 26 being sea-going and 4 for river service; 14 of them are from 1,200 to 2,000 tons and of 450 to 520 horsepower, 12 of them from 500 to 1,000 tons and or 200 to 400 horse power.' The article then identifies the ships' fighting capabilities, reporting that all were 'capable of carrying armaments, the first 14 as heavy as any steam frigate.'²⁸⁸ The article then claims that, 'No single Power in Europe, France not excepted, can boast of such a steam squadron as this single branch of British enterprise has produced in the short space of four years'.²⁸⁹ This rehearses P&O's argument and vision of itself in short: that its commercial enterprise was of a special national and imperial character and purpose, and at this stage in its history, fighting capabilities were a central part of this vision.

In 1849 it was one of P&O founders, Arthur Anderson, who, speaking in his capacity as Member of Parliament for Orkney and Shetland, brought forward a motion in the House of Commons that 'a select Committee be appointed to inquire into the practicability of providing, by means of the Commercial Steam Marine of the Country, a reserve Steam Navy available for the National Defence when required'.²⁹⁰ There

²⁸⁷ Indeed Cable goes further to suggest that 'it might fairly be said that the Company was born out of the war service which Willcox and Anderson first undertook for the Queens of Portugal and Spain, and in which the "Royal tar" and other chartered steamers took active part as warships.' Boyd Cable 'Early War Services', chapter 27 of his *A Hundred Year History of the P&O* (London: Ivor Nicholson and Watson, 1937), pp.191-199. This quote p.191.

²⁸⁸ See also 'Board of Trade Instructions re Carriage of Explosives in Ships', February 1877, in NMM/P&O/7/7.

²⁸⁹ 'The Power of the P&O', *Gore's Directory*, 1845, cited in Cable *A Hundred Year History*, p.191.

²⁹⁰ Quoted in John Beeler, 'Ploughshares into Swords: the Royal Navy and Merchant Marine Auxiliaries in the Late Nineteenth Century' in Greg Kennedy (ed.), *The Merchant Marine in International Affairs 1850-1950* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), pp. 5-30. This ref., p. 5. Also see Beeler for helpful and important discussion concerning the complex background to issues

was considerable debate about the nature and scope of the relationship between the merchant marine and Royal Navy. For instance, the idea of merchant steam vessels acting as auxiliary armed cruisers was a controversial one not being adopted until the 1870s, after when P&O vessels such as *Victoria* (1887) were designed for this special purpose.²⁹¹ Before these developments, however, P&O was already intimately involved in the transportation of troops, armaments and supplies to and from sites of overseas conflict, as the need arose. The company sought to exploit the public presentation of these roles in order to encourage the impression of corporate prestige and status.

4.2 ‘The terrible industrial beauty of war’²⁹² (from 1845)

Knowledge of the role P&O’s ships played in trooping, the carrying of armaments and military supplies to and from theatres of war informs readings of its ship portraits and seascapes. In 1848 Andrew Nicholl’s picturesque and romanticised watercolour of Point de Galle had arrived at P&O’s London Offices (fig. 22). In the same year P&O’s *Lady Mary Wood* (1842) was at Point de Galle having been called there to aid with the outbreak of a rebellion in Ceylon. The vessel was sent from Ceylon to Madras with an urgent message for the Governor there, requesting troops. It returned with troops, and according to Cable, it was reported at the time that ‘the island had been saved from a serious spread of rebellion by [the troops’] prompt arrival.’²⁹³ These two events, the picturesque idealisation of the landscape and the imposition of militaristic order can

and debates about the extent of the role of the merchant marine in supplementing and, so some such as Anderson suggested, even substituting the ships of the Royal Navy.

²⁹¹ Beeler, ‘Ploughshares into Swords’, p. 19; See also Cable, *A Hundred Year History*, p. 191. Cable points out that the Admiralty classified P&O’s steamships according to the number and weight of guns they could carry and later contributed to the cost and the construction of ships’ gun platforms and hulls which needed to be especially strengthened to carry the weight and withstand the physical battering of firing guns.

²⁹² This phrase is borrowed from Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display*, pp. 199-202.

²⁹³ Cable, *A Hundred Year History*, p. 192.

be understood with reference to what the literary and post-colonial theorist Homi Bhabha has suggested is an ambivalence at the heart of imperial discourse.²⁹⁴ In this case, tension arises between the landscape as an idealised or romanticised image projecting fantasies of a pre-industrial picturesque British landscape, underlying fears about native savage rebellion, and the military imposition of order. Such ambivalence can be seen further in a lithograph of *Lady Mary Wood* by Charles Chabot and William Delamotte. The print shows *Lady Mary Wood* not at Ceylon but steaming past Gibraltar (fig. 45). In the representation of the sharply climbing landscape, and the wake of the ship painted in white signifying the progress of the vessel through the water, there is sense of the sublime beauty of the landscape and the freedom enabled by steam navigation – freedom of trade, freedom of the movement of people, and global exploration. At the same time however knowledge of *Lady Mary Wood*'s role quelling the Ceylon rebellion and, as discussed already, the reiteration of 'the Rock' as symbol of British national defence and defiance suggests equally an image of territorial aggression, even paranoia.²⁹⁵ This peculiar ambivalence can also be understood in terms of what Hoffenberg argues was an emerging European-imperial aesthetic, what he calls the terrible industrial beauty of war.²⁹⁶ As P&O ships become more intimately entangled in the machinery of imperial defence across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries many of its ships portraits begin to take on this appearance.²⁹⁷

In addition to the Ceylon rebellion, two other events during this period came to mark P&O's role in imperial defence, namely, its transportation of troops and supplies

²⁹⁴ Homi K. Bhabha, 'Of mimicry and man: The ambivalence of colonial discourse', in his, *The Location of Culture* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2004), pp. 121-131.

²⁹⁵ *Lady Mary Wood*, after whom the ship was named, was the wife of Sir Charles Wood, secretary to the Admiralty, later Lord Halifax. See Howarth and Howarth p. 78.

²⁹⁶ Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display*, pp. 199-202.

²⁹⁷ See 'Painting and Patrolling Britain's Maritime Empire (c. 1887)' this thesis, chapter 3, section 1.

during the Crimean War (1854-5) and the Indian Mutiny (1857).²⁹⁸ Kennedy's history of steam navigation written in 1903 indicates the tone of reports of P&O's service in the Crimean War:

Another famous steamer built for the P. & O. in 1853 was the COLOMBO (steamship), which was engaged as a Government transport during the Crimean War. Even Santa Claus himself could not have been more eagerly welcomed than was the COLOMBO when she arrived off Sebastopol on Christmas Eve, 1854, with provisions for the wounded soldiers and sailors. [...] The HIMALAYA and the COLOMBO were two, out of eleven, P. & O. steamships chartered to the government as transports during the Crimean War, and these vessels conveyed during the continuation of the hostilities 1,800 officers, 60,000 men and 15,000 horses.²⁹⁹

Kennedy's text includes a reproduction of a painting of P&O's *Colombo* (1953) by William Whitelocke Lloyd (fig. 46). Kennedy's caption under the image reads '*Colombo* carrying Xmas gifts to the troops in the Crimea'. The date of the painting itself is unknown but it is certainly a retrospective representation, probably painted in the 1890s when Lloyd produced other work for the company. Another painting by an unknown artist records P&O's *Ripon* with the Grenadier Guards on board, leaving Southampton to fight in the Crimean War (fig. 47). There is little available information concerning the image and it does not seem to have been a commission. Its importance in corporate history however is demonstrated by its appearance in later photographs of P&O exhibitions such as at the Royal Naval Exhibition (1891) (fig. 48), and, much later, the P&O Museum (c. 1954).³⁰⁰ There does not appear to be a visual

²⁹⁸ 'The Indian Mutiny' is the historical name given to the events in India of 1857, including in P&O's own literature. The name clearly assumes a British colonial perspective however, and more recent academic writing often refers to the Indian Rebellion of 1857.

²⁹⁹ Kennedy, *The History of Steam Navigation*, pp. 53-54

³⁰⁰ For a photograph of the picture hanging in P&O's museum c. 1960 see fig. 288.

representation of P&O's involvement in the Indian Mutiny of 1857, however, the mutiny, like the Crimean War, reappears in P&O's literature as a clear signifier of the company's contribution to imperial defence.

4.3 Close Ties: Company Uniform and the Royal Navy (1845)

Artemis Yagou has recently argued the critical study of uniforms offer new possibilities for design history. She suggests that uniforms as everyday and mundane products have often been neglected by design historiography in the past, but that they offer both exciting possibilities and questions to be debated and untangled. In the case of P&O's uniform design, its role in the performance of empire on board ship and later in publicity brochures, photography and film, is of central importance to an understanding of P&O's sense of imperial identity.³⁰¹

A standard Royal Navy Officer's Uniform had been established in 1748 but there was no equivalent for men on merchant ships. When P&O established a uniform and regulations in the 1840s, corporate records suggest this was unusual and possibly unique amongst even the largest private steamship companies.³⁰² This raises the question of possible motivations for the establishment of a standard uniform and what the nature of its design might demonstrate about the company's self-conception. C. B. Thompson, writing for the P&O in house publication *About Ourselves* in the 1960s, records that there had been suggestions that P&O's uniforms were based on those of the East India Company, but he concludes there is little evidence of this and instead

³⁰¹ Artemis Yagou, 'Foreword: Uniforms in Design-Historical Perspective', *Journal of Design History*, 24: 2 (2011), pp. 101-104. The paper is an introduction to a special edition of *JDH* devoted to discussion of uniform design.

³⁰² C. B. Thompson, 'A History of P&O Uniforms', *About Ourselves*, 11 (Summer 1963), pp. 190-196 and continued *About Ourselves*, 12 (Autumn 1963), pp. 223-227. Copies available NMM/P&O/96/5/1. For discussion of naval uniforms see Amy Miller *Dressed to Kill: British naval uniform, masculinity and contemporary fashions, 1748-1857* (London: National Maritime Museum, 2007).

suggests that it is more likely the uniforms were based on those of the Royal Navy. Indeed, a letter written in 1955 from a Mr. W. C. Mizen of the P&O Company to a Mr. Howgego at the Guildhall Library, London, on the question of the origins of P&O's uniform, reports that:

In the early 1840s, when the P. & O. Company as such received its first mail contracts from the Admiralty, the P. & O. and Admiralty vessels were carrying mails alongside each other from Southampton. The P&O ships carried an Admiralty Representative, and it seems clear that the P. & O. uniform was indistinguishable from the Admiralty uniform at the time.³⁰³

Interestingly, Mizen refers to a letter sent to P&O in 1846 from the Admiralty:

In 1846 [...] representations were made to the P. & O. Company to prevent their officers in the future wearing epaulettes and a dress resembling in other respects that of Naval Officers, which was immediately agreed to by the Company.³⁰⁴

Mizen ends the letter making the point that the subsequent numerous changes in P&O uniform have taken place 'entirely at the whim of the Company'. The same exchange of letters also makes mentions of P&O officers being granted permission to wear swords as officers in the Navy did. A P&O press release from 1966 reports that one such sword, thought to be one of only three in existence, had been discovered (fig. 49). The press release reports that the sword was thought to date from the early 1840s and that 'its slightly curved and grooved tip indicate that it was a "working" weapon rather

³⁰³ Mr W. C. Mizen to Mr. J. L. Howgego, 3 February 1955, in NMM/P&O/91/31: P&O Company Records: Miscellanea: P&O Uniforms 1890-1966.

³⁰⁴ Mizen to Howgego in NMM/P&O/91/31. One of the original letters, from P&O to Rear Admiral Cochrane, is in the Public Records office ADM/2/1302.

than a dress sword.’³⁰⁵ Thompson says that the sword design ‘follows the naval pattern very closely’ (fig. 50).³⁰⁶

These incidents demonstrate how, within the first ten years of its life, P&O used a very wide range of corporate design and display to indicate proximity to the Royal Navy. A number of P&O Commanders and Officers had previously served in the Navy and the institution of a corporate uniform and officer’s sword bearing close resemblance to naval designs, implied corporate congruity with naval values, policies and standards, and further implied an equivalence of corporate status and pride. When considering this, it may be easy to forget that the P&O was fundamentally a private enterprise. It is quite extraordinary that within ten years of its foundation the company was presenting itself as the highest non-state imperial agency corresponding to the Royal Navy and claiming equivalent status and recognition. The case highlights the political and cultural entanglements of corporation, nation and empire in Britain at the beginning of the Victorian Empire.³⁰⁷

4.4 ‘The large and splendid fleet’ (1862)

In 1862 a model of P&O’s latest ship, *Poonah* (1863), was displayed at the International Exhibition in London. P&O had not sent ship models to the Great Exhibition of 1851 but it had contributed funds to the exhibition’s production.³⁰⁸ In between these two dates contemporary sources identified a shift, from a sense of peace in 1851 to a more militaristic feeling by 1862. An article concerning the 1862

³⁰⁵ ‘Rare Sword Found’ P&O press release, 17 October 1966, reprint in NMM/P&O/91/31.

³⁰⁶ Thompson, ‘A History of P&O Uniforms’, *About Ourselves*, 11 (Summer 1963), p. 192.

³⁰⁷ Of additional interest is the subsequent storytelling and myth making surrounding the company’s early uniform. Much of the evidence comes from the company’s own records and so it is sometimes difficult to ascertain the veracity of reports. What this does reveal, however, is how through the act of history telling, P&O continued to imagine and enjoy this close corporate-state relationship.

³⁰⁸ NMM/P&O/1/102, 19 July 1850: ‘The circular of the Committee for promoting the “Great Exhibition of the Industry of all Nations” having been brought under consideration it was resolved that this company subscribe £100 to the fund now being raised for carrying out this project.’

exhibition in the *Cornhill Magazine* reported that ‘when we have gone all through the exhibition, observing the finish and ingenuity of its labours of peace, we are not a little struck at finding greater finish, greater ingenuity, and more meaning grace in its works of war.’³⁰⁹ As cited earlier, Hoffenberg identifies a broader aesthetic of warfare which saw in the machinery and means of war a ‘terrible industrial beauty’.³¹⁰ This is helpful for locating P&O’s ship model display within a wider sensibility. An article in the *Illustrated London News* in 1862, the year of the exhibition, reported of *Poonah* that:

This magnificent addition to the large and splendid fleet of [P&O] was launched at the commencement of last month, and is now rapidly completing for sea. She is a vessel of the same class and character as those already in possession of the Peninsular and Oriental Company [...] No effort has been spared to make the new vessel perfect as a ship, or to provide those conveniences which so much contribute to the comfort of passengers in long sea voyages; and a beautiful model of her attracted much attention in the Naval Court of the late International Exhibition.³¹¹

Unfortunately there are no surviving images of the model, and its exact location in the Naval Court is not entirely clear. There are, however, surviving photographs of the ship itself (fig. 52) and images of the Admiralty Department of the Naval Court, which show how ship models were displayed (figs. 53 and 54). Further images show displays of heavy guns in the Naval Court which exemplify Hoffenberg’s analysis of an abiding aesthetic of warfare in the exhibition as a whole (fig. 55). The original caption reads: ‘This Court proudly displays a rifled breech-loading 70-pounder gun recently invented by Sir William Armstrong’).

³⁰⁹ ‘At the Great Exhibition,’ *Cornhill Magazine*, 5 (1892), p. 676, quoted in Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display*, pp. 199.

³¹⁰ Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display*, pp. 199.

³¹¹ ‘The Peninsular and Oriental’ *Illustrated London News*, 6 December, 1862.

The Thames Iron Works & Ship Building Company which built *Poonah* had a display in the naval architecture section of the South Court, in a sub-section exhibiting ‘Ship Building for purposes of War and Commerce’.³¹² The company’s display consisted of ‘Models of iron-cased frigate *Warrior*, and other vessels’, and it seems likely (in the absence of other evidence) that this is where the model of P&O’s *Poonah* was displayed. *Poonah* had little immediate involvement in military matters although later it was involved in trooping voyages to Malta, Cyprus and Alexandria (in 1884) and to South Africa (1885) and Egypt (1886).³¹³ The physical proximity of the displays implies closeness between the Merchant Marine and the Royal Navy. As such the exhibition was an embodiment of the position P&O was rapidly evolving and seeking to consolidate concerning its role and elevated sense of place within the hierarchies of imperial maritime commerce and defence.

A different medium of display but one embodying a mutually supportive set of ideas and attitudes, was a novel published by P&O in 1859 titled, *Always Ready or Everyone in His Pride* (fig. 56). As the portraits of P&O’s Chairman were used metaphorically to ascribe to the company a preferred personality, style and moral character the novel provides content to the idea of corporate character by asking its readers to follow a narrative of a fictionalised protagonist. Should there have been any doubt as to how the book was to be interpreted, the novel opens with a preface explaining that the term *Always Ready* is intended to refer to the ‘character and prestige’ of the services which ‘uphold the dignity of the British Crown’:

³¹² *International Exhibition, 1862, Official Catalogue, Industrial Department* (London: Truscott, Son, & Simmons, 1862), p. 44.

³¹³ This was during the scramble for Africa when European imperial rivalry reached a peak. See ‘The Scramble for Africa’ in Nigel Dalziel, *Historical Atlas of the British Empire* (London, Penguin, 2006), pp. 72-73.

The proud distinction of being in the service of their country, ever creates a lively enthusiasm in the breasts of those so engaged, which carries them through danger, privations, and fatigue with courageous hearts, and a steady determination to bring victory and glory to the land of their birth. Moral and physical force, combined, never failed to accomplish this ; and the certainty of its effect, nerves the arm, and steels the heart, against all considerations of self-interest which otherwise might subdue the flames of inspiration, by which alone great deeds are accomplished, and fresh heroes rise in England's great and glorious cause of liberty and freedom.³¹⁴

The underlying moral imperative of this passage is clearly intended to galvanize and animate imperial subjects: men and women willing and proud to sacrifice narrow self-interest and achieve greater glory by robust participation in the life of the wider nation and empire. This distinctively moral-imperial picture is an increasingly important element in P&O's corporate identity and one which comes to prominence in the later nineteenth century as the company becomes increasingly intertwined with the cultural life of the Empire.

Conclusion

From its very foundation the P&O Company inaugurated a widespread practice of corporate art, design and display which identified the company as a prestigious and proud servant of the British Empire. The emergence of this distinctive corporate-imperial relationship continued to shape and characterise P&O's identity until the end of its liner services over a hundred and thirty years later. P&O's empire narrative is not, however, characterised by monolithic empire propaganda, rather the nature of empire shows considerable nuance and evolution at different points and locations

³¹⁴ Anonymous Author, pseudonym 'a P&O', *Always Ready, or, Everyone His Pride. A Novel.* (London: Hall, Virtue & Co., 1859), introduction, p. v.

across its history. In the period from P&O's foundation until 1869, the key themes emerging from its corporate-imperial cultural life were: the romance but crucially also the reliability of its steam navigation service in securing political, commercial and cultural goods for Britain and its Empire; the intertwining of a distinctively corporate and imperial land and seascape; the expression of a proud but essentially moral imperial corporate character; the use of architecture as imperial exhibition; and the promotion of the company's status as an auxiliary Royal Navy. In the first thirty years of its existence empire can be found everywhere in the life of the P&O but qualitatively it has yet to dominate and define corporate identity as it does in the following period. Here the fine-grained textures of P&O's everyday life and practice become more intimately 'bound in the wheel of empire'.³¹⁵

³¹⁵ From Rudyard Kipling, 'The Exiles' Line', line 65, stanza 17. The Exiles' Line was first published in the *Civil and Military Gazette*, 8 July 1892. [Publication information found at: http://www.kiplingsociety.co.uk/rg_exiles1.htm accessed 02/06/2015, accessed 25 July 2015]

Chapter Three: ‘Bound in the Wheel of Empire’³¹⁶ (1870-1903)

Introduction

The period from 1870 to 1903 saw a marked expansion and evolution in the use of art and design within the life of the P&O Company. As the British Empire evolved and P&O’s role within it expanded, the company’s art and design reached a new level of integration with the formal institutions and structures of the Empire but also with its social, moral and cultural fabric. By the end of the Victorian era in 1901 P&O’s popular corporate image as ‘the Empire line’ was firmly established within both the company the wider public imagination, and the company’s newly expanded practices of art, design and display, were central to this development.

Section one examines the representation of P&O’s role in imperial defence, which had begun as early as 1845. In this period, however, P&O’s identity becomes increasingly interwoven with imperial defence. At the 1862 International Exhibition, P&O displayed one model of its latest ship *Poonah*. By 1886 it had eleven models together with a number of photographic and painted ship portraits displayed in the entrance hall to the Colonial and India Exhibition in South Kensington. This exhibition indicated a new level of corporate status and recognition, specifically its key transportation, communication and defensive role along what became known as ‘the empire’s highway to India’. In P&O’s Jubilee year, R. H. Neville-Cumming’s ship portraits represented the company’s latest Jubilee Class steamers alongside historic P&O vessels, emphasising its established and continuing role in imperial

³¹⁶ Kipling, ‘The Exiles’ Line’, line 65, stanza 17. For discussion of the poem see this chapter, section 3.1. Kipling made his last return voyage from India on board P&O’s *Arcadia* (1888) in 1891 travelling from Aden to Brindisi and then overland to London. NMM/P&O/65/38 Company Records: Individual Ships: *Arcadia*: Miscellaneous material, 1888.

communication. Neville-Cumming's paintings extend the tradition of reliable romanticism identified in chapter one. In contrast to the earlier portraits however, Neville-Cumming's style and pictorial construction exemplify a new dynamism and power in ship movement through the sea, but the work also employs pictorial devices to represent the political power of P&O's vessels, policing and patrolling strategic sites across Britain's maritime Empire.

Section two is dedicated to P&O's role in a single but nevertheless singularly important event in its cultural history to date: The Royal Naval Exhibition (RNE) in Chelsea in 1891. In contrast to previous displays in which P&O shared space with other exhibitors, at the RNE the company commissioned and built its own semi-permanent structure in the grounds of the exhibition. P&O's Oriental Pavilion at Chelsea was clearly of great importance in the history of the company and a sign of the new status of art and design in its public image. On another level, however, the display, together with the accompanying guidebook and souvenir album, forms a case study in the convergence of wider imperial themes and narratives. The terms exhibitionary complex, new imperialism, and new navalism have each been coined to identify historical currents in mid to late nineteenth century Britain. Rarely have these threads been discussed together but at P&O's Oriental Pavilion these wider historical themes intertwine. As a case study, P&O's Pavilion also helps to refine these general ideas and the nature of their interrelationship through a single concrete example. The Pavilion highlights the way in which display was used to mediate a new form of national belonging: the increasing prestige of the merchant marine within a wider story of British maritime commerce and Empire, past, present and future.

Section three extends the idea of reliable romanticism to look at how reliability and closely related feelings of safety and security were transmitted on board ship.

Corporate developments in marine architecture and engineering were important elements in corporate advertising. However, the discussion in this section focuses on the interior design and spatial organisation of P&O's vessels and how this was used to foster an atmosphere of social and cultural security, both essential to winning the trust and patronage of passengers. This develops the overall argument by investigating how the notion of imperial space enters into the design of ships and how this creates a socially and culturally secure environment for the Empire travelling work force.

Section four examines the way in which an underlying imperial moral philosophy and practice, with which the P&O community could identify, is articulated and disseminated through the company's exploitation of recent developments in graphic reproductive technologies. Portable hardback corporate souvenir sketchbooks and pocket-books were new forms of representation for P&O in the later nineteenth century, and their strength lay in the new, more informal and personal appeal to passengers' experiences of empire and its associated moral sentiments. The infusion of the corporate-imperial world with personal, moral and religious sentiment through new forms of design sheds light on the more general ways in which visual culture moves empire beyond the strategic decisions of government and institutions to the way in which it was lived and practised on a daily basis by British colonialists.

1. Painting and Patrolling Britain's Maritime Empire (c.1887)

Sharing its foundation year with Queen Victoria's coronation in 1837, P&O also shared the Queen's Jubilees, and the company exploited this coincidence to great effect, aligning itself with popular and powerful Royal themes and narratives. In 1887, the Golden Jubilee year for both Queen and Company, P&O inaugurated its *Jubilee Class* of vessels, the first vessel named after the Queen herself, the others with

similarly patriotic names: *Victoria* (1887); *Britannia* (1887); *Oceana* (1888); and *Arcadia* (1888). To accompany *Victoria*, the company also sent a second vessel, *Rome* (1881), to the Jubilee Naval Review at Spithead, 23 July 1887. This section will also examine a series of ship portraits by R. H. Neville-Cumming commissioned by P&O to mark this anniversary. Firstly, however, it will examine the company's display in the vestibule of the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, a year before the Jubilee, in 1886. The common representational themes underlying each of these displays are: national progress in steam communication and navigation; P&O's leading role in this development which enabled British commerce and ensured continued imperial security and defence. The question is, how do the different modes of corporate display differently articulate and disseminate these ideas, to whom and why?

1.1 The Colonial and Indian Exhibition (1886)

The Colonial and Indian exhibition was organised under the leadership of the Prince of Wales and the Royal Commission and it opened at South Kensington in London on 4 May 1886 (fig. 57). It attracted over five and a half million visitors.³¹⁷ P&O's presence at this important imperial event is significant both for the company but also for what it reveals about the increasing role of private enterprise in national and imperial politics. The company held a prominent place in the exhibition's vestibule, a transitional space symbolising the company's role transporting mail and passengers to and from colonial locations in India, China and Australia (fig. 58). More than its postal and civilian transport role, however, and in common with the shifting tone of much

³¹⁷ The Open University, 'Colonial and Indian Exhibition, 1886', *Making Britain Database*, published online by The Open University [http://www.open.ac.uk/researchprojects/makingbritain/content/colonial-and-indian-exhibition-1886, accessed 1 June 2015].

imperial display at the exhibition, P&O's display highlighted its political role in trooping and Colonial defence.

So that the Royal Commission could realise the planned exhibition without fear of bankruptcy, contributions, eventually exceeding £199,000, were sought from colonial governments and private parties. P&O was one such guarantor.³¹⁸ For Hoffenberg, the inclusion of private guarantors linked the showman-like aspects of imperial displays with institutional elites and suggests a merging of public and private interests.³¹⁹ P&O, for instance, extended their semi-official role when, on behalf of *The Executive and Reception Committee* for the exhibition, the company's Chairman and directors entertained 'a large party of Colonists and Indians'³²⁰ visiting the exhibition in June 1886, a sign of P&O's own increasingly complex intertwining of the public and the private spheres. This intertwining of interests helps explain in part the distinctive P&O aesthetic which, in this period, leans more towards an academic language of the traditional ship portraits than the emerging language of commercial travel. P&O preferred an authoritative and historic visual language which aligned the company with a national maritime past and expressed its current and official role in empire rather than a more popular commercial language which was emerging in advertising more generally.³²¹

³¹⁸ Peter H. Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display: English, Indian, and Australian Exhibitions from the Crystal Palace to the Great War* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2001), pp. 90-91.

³¹⁹ Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display*, p. 91.

³²⁰ Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display*, p. 254. In the P&O archive survives a menu from a special luncheon for visitors to the exhibition on 2 June 1886 held on board *Rome* (1881), *Parramatta* (1882), and *Chusan* (1854) in the Royal Albert Docks. See NMM/P&O/91/1 Advertisements and memorabilia from Special Trips, transferred to POH in 2015.

³²¹ Thomas Richards examines the representation of Queen Victoria in a host of kitsch advertisements from Velveteen to perfume bottles, arguing that advertisers at the time of the Jubilee exploited the image of the Queen, transforming her from a figure representing an outdated elite, into a powerful symbol of modern British consumerism. Because of P&O's imperial role and its primary passenger base (predominantly first class travel for the official and semi-official empire travelling British public) it tended towards the traditional and conservative rather than the kitsch and popular. See Thomas Richards, *The Consumer Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle, 1851-1914* (California: Stanford University Press, 1991).

The intertwining of P&O with an imagined imperial landscape, first identified in the 1837-1869 period, is extended at the 1886 South Kensington exhibition. In the entrance hall to the exhibition models, pictures and photographs of ‘the Company’s earliest and latest steamships’ were displayed alongside a full size plaster cast reproduction of a statue of the Prince of Wales in Bombay, and what the catalogue describes as ‘colonial views’.³²² The exhibition space therefore held a particular significance within a story about the expansion of British Empire. P&O’s entry in the exhibition catalogue emphasises the physical size and power of its fleet, ‘fifty-one full-powered ocean Steamers employed in carrying Mails and Passengers to India, China and Australia.’ The text also highlights the way in which selected vessels on display such as *Massilia* (1884) and *Rosetta* (1880) were ‘recently chartered and fitted up by her majesty’s Government and employed as armed cruisers for Colonial Defence’.³²³ In addition, we read that *Poonah* (1863) (whose model was exhibited previously at the 1862 International Exhibition) was currently employed in government transport. Company records confirm that in 1885-6 *Poonah* was on trooping voyages to South Africa and Egypt during the European powers’ Scramble for Africa.³²⁴

1.2 Neville-Cumming’s Ship Portraits (c.1887)

To mark P&O’s Golden Jubilee celebrations, Richard Henry Neville-Cumming (1843-1920) was commissioned to paint four polyptych paintings of historical and more recent vessels in the company’s fleet including all four of the new *Jubilee Class* of

³²² *Colonial and Indian Exhibition 1886: Official Catalogue* (London: William Clowes and Sons Limited, 1886), pp. lxvi-lxvii.

³²³ It was during a period of diplomatic tension with Russia in April 1885 that *Massilia* and *Rosetta* were converted to armed cruisers. NMM/P&O/65/209 Individual Ships: *Massilia*: Miscellaneous material, 1884.

³²⁴ NMM/P&O/65/276 Individual Ships: *Poonah*: Miscellaneous material, 1863.

vessels.³²⁵ The paintings represent key vessels in P&O history such as the *William Fawcett* (1828), traditionally identified as the first P&O vessel (fig. 59), and vessels which tell a national and imperial story. *Iberia* (1836) was the first vessel commissioned by P&O specifically to win the first mail contact to Spain and Portugal (fig. 60). *Hindustan* (1842) inaugurated the mail to India (fig. 61) and *Chusan* (1852) the first P&O ship to sail to Australia and inaugurated the mail service to Sydney (fig. 62).³²⁶ Alongside these historic vessels are represented the latest *Jubilee Class* vessels (e.g. *Victoria in the Thames*, fig. 63). This has the double effect of representing the company's own progress in the increasing size, power and capacity of its vessels but also in reminding spectators of the historic role P&O played in securing imperial communications and transport.

Building on a theme introduced in chapter one, P&O's ship portraits, also need to be understood in the context of the company's role in imperial defence. The picturing of vessels can be understood as a 'soft' element in imperial defence. Neville-Cumming's *Victoria off Gibraltar* (painted 1888, fig. 64) represents the first of the *Jubilee Class* of steamers and the largest ship yet built by the Company at 6,091 gross tons.

The image is quite different to the ship portraits from the late 1830s and 1840s by S. D. Skillett. Neville-Cumming works in watercolour and body colour and makes the most of the atmospheric perspective and precision which allows a greater sense of

³²⁵ POH, 'Golden Jubilee' (2013) online article [<http://www.poheritage.com/our-history/timeline/golden-jubilee>, accessed 1 June 2015]. Very little is known about Neville-Cumming or how P&O exhibited his paintings. Cadringer and Massey provide Neville-Cumming's dates, and note that he, 'was born in the North East of England' and 'produced many illustrations for shipping companies and in particular for P&O.' Cadringer and Massey, *Ocean Liner Posters*, p. 199. Neville-Cumming's Jubilee paintings were a feature of the company's Pavilion at the Royal Naval Exhibition, Chelsea (RNE), in 1891. See Artmonsky and Cox, *Across the Oceans*, p. 217. The paintings were also widely reproduced in the company's literature, such as the guidebook for passengers created for the RNE. The RNE will be discussed in this chapter, section 2.

³²⁶ NMM/P&O/65/102 Individual Ships: *Chusan*: Miscellaneous material, 1852.

pictorial space. This extends from the seagull nearest to the spectator in the foreground, to the vessel itself, the focal point of the picture in the middle distance, to the rock of Gibraltar in the background. To borrow two terms from the art historian Heinrich Wölfflin (1864-1945), the orientation of the spectator towards the picture plane has shifted from the planimetric organisation of space in Skillett to a recessional orientation in Neville-Cumming.³²⁷ Where Skillett's vessels are pictured in side elevation, Neville-Cumming pictures *Victoria* from an oblique angle enabling the artist to suggest and emphasise movement, speed and imply a sense of the efficient progress of the vessel through the water. This is emphasised further by the combination of the hard straight line of the ship's bow and the use of white to pick out the wash and spray it produces. In Neville-Cumming, the shift towards a recessional perspective encourages spectators to imagine themselves in the space rather than merely being spectators of it. The composition allows for a sense of imminence as well, since these pictorial devices allow us to imagine the vessel will shortly power past the spectator.

The picture also encourages an imagined correspondence between the vessel, the company, and the landscape of the Rock of Gibraltar. As was the case with Thackeray's *Notes* and the diorama of *The Overland Mail*, Gibraltar is more than a convenient backdrop for the vessel. Rather it functions as a geo-political imperial site, connected with other sites, within which the vessel, the company and its passengers operate.³²⁸ When a British mail ship arrived at Gibraltar it was marked by cannon fire.

³²⁷ Heinrich Wölfflin, *The Principles of Art History: The Problem of the Development of Style in Later Art*, trans. M. D. Hottinger (New York: Dover, 1950).

³²⁸ For discussion of Gibraltar within British imperial identity see Stephen Constantine, *Community and Identity: The Making of Modern Gibraltar* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009); Edward G. Archer, *Gibraltar, Identity and Empire* (Abingdon UK and New York: Routledge, 2006).

For some people this was ‘a pleasant, time honoured custom’,³²⁹ but it was also a highly aggressive and obsessive assertion of control. The sound of the guns and the sight of the British mail ship intertwine to impose a clearly militaristic and imperial order. In Neville-Cumming’s picture the vessel is not entering the harbour but instead leaving Gibraltar to continue its journey across the Mediterranean and eventually to Bombay, Australia or the Far East. In 1887 under the Admiralty’s Auxiliary Cruiser Agreement *Victoria* was in fact designed and subsidised by the Admiralty for easy conversion to an armed cruiser (although, in the end, this was never needed).³³⁰

In this context, the carefully and delicately constructed watercolour transforms into a vision of powerful militaristic and imperial defence. P&O’s steamship, named after the British Queen and Empress of India, designed and subsidised by the Admiralty for conversion into an armed cruiser, patrols not a neutral landscape but a jealously guarded British territory.

A second feature of the picture is the precise application of watercolour and body colour to draw attention to the highly ordered organisation of the ship such as the ship’s rigging. Photographs taken by a passenger on board *Rosetta* in 1884 can be contrasted with Neville-Cumming’s vision (fig. 65). In the painting it is as if every object - the life boats, the Red Ensign and company flags, the awnings, anchor masts and rigging - are perfectly ordered. Even elements beyond the company’s control - the neat path of smoke from the ships’ funnel, the ripples on the flags, the waves of the

³²⁹ P&O employee Jack Harley, ‘A Letter from Aden’, *About Ourselves* (September 1953), quoted in Artmonsky and Cox, *P&O Across the Oceans*, p. 79.

³³⁰ Stephen Cobb, ‘The provision of Armed Merchant Cruisers 1876-1900’, chapter 6 in Stephen Cobb, *Preparing for Blockade 1885-1914: Naval Contingency for Economic Warfare* (Surrey UK: Ashgate, 2013). See also NMM/MSS/85/193.1 (uncatalogued) for folders regarding the *Victoria* (1887) dated 1887. Cobb refers to relevant Admiralty documents now in the National Archives: ADM/116/271 Subvention of Merchant Steamers for employment as Armed Cruisers (1887); ADM 116/277 Subvention of P&O Co. Steamers (1887); ADM 16/375 Subvention of Merchant Cruisers (P&O Agreement) (1894). Other companies similarly involved included the Cunard Company, White Star Line, OSN, and Pacific Steam Navigation Company.

sea and the seagulls themselves - are all apparently in ordered harmony. These represented properties lend themselves to a conception of the company itself as ordered and efficient. This idea finds expression in numerous views of the company from both staff and passengers. A P&O Commander retiring in 1953 reflected that the company evolved 'a reputation for comfortable efficiency... an individual atmosphere compounded of welcome, warm but not effusive luxury, insidious but never blatant, and a certain distinction [...]'.³³¹ Ashley Randal first travelled with P&O in 1907 and later reminisced when on board P&O's *Canberra* (1961) about the special atmosphere of 'discipline and orderliness' he believed characterised life on board the company's vessels.³³²

The identification of comfortable efficiency and orderliness can be related to company circulars which imposed strict regulations on staff and on the day-to-day running of the ship. It can also be related to the passengers the majority of whom were military and naval personnel and colonial officials, familiar with hierarchy and regulation from their respective working environments. The evolution of a unique style of P&O on board design and the representation of a distinctive colonial way of life on board steamships will be explored further in this chapter, sections three and four.

1.3 Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee Naval Review (1887)

A Naval or Fleet review is an official event in which the principal vessels of the Navy are gathered *en masse* for inspection by the reigning monarch or closest representative. Most naval reviews have been held in the Solent off Spithead in Hampshire. The ships

³³¹ A P&O Commander reflecting (c. 1953), quoted in Howarth and Howarth, *The Story of P&O*, p. 56.

³³² P&O employee Ashley Randal reflecting (c. 1961), quoted in Padfield, *Beneath the House Flag*, p. 141.

are arranged in columns and the monarch or representative travels between the lines on a designated vessel to carry out the inspection (fig. 66). This format parallels naval and military troop inspections on land. Although formally speaking these are inspections, the events are also clearly an opportunity to demonstrate and display publically British naval power. Throughout its history P&O regularly played an official role in naval reviews sending ships to the merchant vessels section of a review, or transporting official and non-official guests to and from the events. At Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee Naval Review, on 23 July 1887, P&O sent its latest and largest vessel *Victoria*, (1887) and *Rome* (1881).³³³ On board these vessels P&O hosted 120 guests, including numerous figures from the political and financial establishment: The Speaker of the House of Commons, Rt. Hon. Arthur Wellesley; the Governor of the Bank of England, Sir Mark Wilks Collet; Secretary of State for War (and until January 1887, Secretary of State for the Colonies), and the Rt. Hon Edward Stanhope.³³⁴ P&O compiled a book of memorabilia of the Review which included a map marking the position of the fleet, guest lists, dinner menus, and programmes for musical concerts on board ship, (figs. 67 to 70). The musical programme included both more popular and classical music: *Trial by Jury*, the *Mikado*, *La Traviata*, and *Carmen*. A concert on board *Rome* included a piece written about the steamship itself 'Valse: Steamship *Rome*.'³³⁵

The design of the menus and concert programmes during the Review included two different company badges, one featuring a single steamship, the rising oriental

³³³ *Rome* was later refitted and renamed *Vectis* (1904) as the first P&O cruise liner. See NMM/P&O/65/291 Individual Ships: *Rome (Vectis)*: Miscellaneous material, 1881. Please also see chapter 4 for discussion of the emergence of the cruise liner as a new mode of sea travel.

³³⁴ NMM/P&O 91/11 and POH, 'Golden Jubilee' (2013), online article: [<http://www.poheritage.com/our-history/timeline/golden-jubilee>, accessed 1 June 2015].

³³⁵ P&O had earlier commissioned *The Chusan Waltz* by Henry Marsh to mark *Chusan* and P&O's arrival in Australia 1852, see NMM/P&O/91/71 Miscellanea: Music to 'Chusan Waltz', undated.

sun, and the other a quartered circle containing symbols for Britain, India, Egypt and China (respectively the symbols were: Britannia, an elephant, pyramids and a camel, and pagodas) (figs. 71 and 72).³³⁶ One of the badges incorporated the company's motto 'Quis Separabit' which translates as, 'who will separate us.' The motto can be read on a number of levels: who will separate the passengers from their loved ones; who will separate the company; or the passengers and the company. Also, however, as P&O's political role evolved and this become more deeply intertwined in its corporate identity, it can be read as who will separate the Empire? The origin of the phrase is biblical and in full reads, 'who will separate us from the love of Christ' including an implicit Christian meaning within the motto too.³³⁷

The Naval Review was widely covered in the national press including images of joyous spectators in the *Illustrated London News* (fig. 73). An effusive report of the 'Great Naval Review' from the *Daily Telegraph* newspaper on 25 July 1887, whose correspondent was on board P&O's *Victoria*, indicates how sympathetic spectators saw the event. It opens the account as follows:

In sunshine and glad summer glory of sea, and sky and land the Great Parade of the Home Fleet of England has been happily and successfully held. It would have furnished a noble and memorable spectacle if the weather had been as dull as it proved delightful, since no rough water or lowering atmosphere could have possibly detracted from the majesty of

³³⁶ The iconography for the quartered badge is not dissimilar to that of the Albert Memorial, Kensington Gardens, London 1872. At the four corners of the outer square of the memorial's footprint sit four statues representing Asia, Africa, America and Europe. At the feet of the four columns of the central monument sit four further statues representing agriculture, commerce, engineering and manufactures. P&O's badge shares with the Albert Memorial the idea that British commerce and engineering (specifically in P&O's case, its maritime commerce and engineering) unite the corners of the globe and Britain's Empire.

³³⁷ The Bible, Romans 8. 35. For more on P&O and the integration of the corporate with an imperial and religious imagination please see section 4 of this chapter.

this vast naval armament gathered to do honour to the Jubilee year of her Majesty's glorious reign.³³⁸

The newspaper correspondent notes 'the thunder of the saluting guns' but claims the fighting craft are gathered 'without the least vestige of a hostile feeling against any Power or powers, solely to greet the Sovereign upon the waters facing her own marine palace [...]'. As with the tradition of firing cannon to greet 'the English Mail' in Gibraltar, the firing of guns at the Review, is viewed as a time honoured custom. However their ceremonial firing can also be understood quite clearly as an implicit assertion of power. The correspondent continues by explaining what he sees as the significance of the event for national and global maritime history:

Nor is it possible to exaggerate the dignity, the significance, or the picturesqueness of the Sea Pageant which all these patriotic Britons here witnessed. Few indeed among them can have comprehended the full importance of the force marshalled before their eyes, although the right idea would generally prevail that nothing like it had ever been before beheld in maritime history.³³⁹

The Picturesque, taken literally, means in the manner of a picture and there is a sense in which pictures and pageants have a common ancestor in the roots of human vision and imagination. Traditionally the Picturesque mediates between the beautiful, which is the classical and harmonious, and the sublime, which is the grandiose and terrifying. The application of the idea to men-o'-war rather than, say, a mountain range may be disturbing, but it was and is still not an uncommon perception. Whatever its moral

³³⁸ 'The Queen and the Fleet. Great Naval Review at Spithead', *The Daily Telegraph*, 25 July 1887. See NMM/P&O 91/11 Miscellaneous: Royal Naval Review, *Victoria* and *Rome*, various inserts, menus, etc., 1887.

³³⁹ 'The Queen and the Fleet', NMM/P&O 91/11.

implications this clearly identifies a part of human experience which sees pride in national defence but also embodies a kind of terrific beauty.

The Daily Telegraph article makes clear the integration of corporate and national-imperial life. It describes the four sea miles of vessels of every category. These included twenty-six armour-clad fighting ships, thirty-eight first-class torpedo boats, and six naval training brigs. In direct support of these naval vessels the correspondent notes ‘a reserve close by of magnificent passenger, mail and merchant steamers built to Admiralty specification for use in warfare, and perfectly available as powerful belligerents.’³⁴⁰ A painting of the Review printed in the *Illustrated London News* also implicitly recognises the variety of naval vessels, its title describing ‘Types of Navy at the Royal Naval Review at Spithead,’ (fig. 66). The Review and P&O’s place within it, exemplify the way in which increasingly the company’s identity functions within a wider maritime-imperial image of Britain at the end of the nineteenth century.³⁴¹ This imperial status is confirmed and extended in greater richness four years later at the *Royal Naval Exhibition* in Chelsea.

2. Pictures and Models at an Exhibition (1891)

The largest and most significant single display the company had commissioned to date was an Oriental Pavilion at the *Royal Naval Exhibition*, Chelsea, in 1891 (RNE hereafter)³⁴². In contrast to previous displays in which P&O shared space with other exhibitors, at the RNE the company commissioned and built its own semi-permanent

³⁴⁰ ‘The Queen and the Fleet’, NMM/P&O 91/11.

³⁴¹ For an image of the 1897 fleet review at which P&O again participated, see Charles Edward Dixon, ‘In Honour of our Queen’ (fig. 74). Dixon also produced numerous paintings and designs for P&O and OSN (see chapter 4, fig. 158).

³⁴² After the exhibition, the Pavilion was sold and re-built in Devonshire Park, Eastbourne, where it had the title ‘Indian Pavilion’ and remained until 1963 [<http://www.poheritage.com/our-history/timeline/royal-approval>, accessed 19 September 2013].

structure in the grounds of the exhibition. The Directors' report from 31 March 1891 indicates the highest level of recognition and approval within the company's hierarchy:

The Directors have caused to be erected a Pavilion at the Naval Exhibition displaying models of the Company's ships, and other objects of interest connected with their service, which has proved to be a centre of attraction in this most interesting of national exhibitions.³⁴³

The Oriental Pavilion was clearly of great importance in the history of the company and as a sign of the new status of art, design and display within P&O. On another level the Pavilion, the guidebook for passengers (fig. 75) and corporate souvenir album (fig. 76) also form a case study in the convergence of the wider themes of the exhibitionary complex, new imperialism, and new navalism. Not only do these themes converge at the Pavilion but it also helps to refine these ideas and the nature of their interrelationship.³⁴⁴ The Pavilion highlights the way in which display is used to mediate a new form of national belonging: pride in the role of the merchant marine within a wider story of British Empire past, present and future. This section will examine how T. E. Collcutt's blend of Oriental inspired and Arts and Crafts design, worked in conjunction with the display of P&O's ship models to represent and emphasise the tradition of skill and craftsmanship of the merchant marine. The

³⁴³ P&O, 'Report of the Board of Directors', 9 June, 1891, p. 5. See NMM/P&O/6/12 Annual Reports and Biennial Reports of Proceedings, 1881-1901.

³⁴⁴ Although the relationship of these themes has not been widely discussed there are exceptions such as Pieter van der Merwe, 'Views of the Royal Naval Exhibition, 1891' *Journal for Maritime Research* 3: 1, pp. 146-156; and Jan Rüger's comparative discussion of ways in which the theatre of the navy was performed through fleet reviews and ship launches in Britain and Germany in the decades before the First World War. Jan Rüger, *The Great Naval Game: Britain and Germany in the Age of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). See also a paper which discusses aspects of nineteenth and twentieth century naval display, Kevin Littlewood and Beverley Butler, 'The Navy Displayed', chapter 1 of their book, *Of Ships and Stars: Maritime heritage and the founding of the National Maritime Museum Greenwich* (London and New Jersey: The Althone Press, 1998), pp. 1-32.

exhibitionary context of the Pavilion, however, makes clear that skill and craft were at the service of imperial power. This account refines generic conceptions of both the Arts and Crafts aesthetic and imperial propaganda.³⁴⁵

The RNE was held in the grounds of the Royal Hospital in Chelsea between 2 May and 24 October 1891. The event was very popular attracting 2,351,683 visitors. The maritime historian Pieter Van der Merwe describes the exhibition as a ‘maritime imperial ‘expo’ – part historical celebration, part modern armaments and shipping fair.’³⁴⁶ Its galleries displayed figures and events from British maritime history and modern engineering and weaponry. These included Robert Blake (1598-1657) ‘father of the Royal Navy’ and Horatio Nelson (1759-1805), a panorama of the Battle of Trafalgar, a full-scale replica of the hull of HMS *Victory* and mock sea battles performed on a lake in front of P&O’s Pavilion.³⁴⁷ Amongst these literally and figuratively massive symbols of British maritime supremacy were kiosks sponsored by private companies like P&O. Others sponsors included the Royal Mail Steam Packet Co., and the Thames Iron Works and Shipbuilding Company whose exhibits included yet more P&O items in the form of models of P&O vessels built by the company: *Nyanza* (1864); *Tanjore* (1865); *Nepaul* (1858); and *Poonah* (1862).³⁴⁸

The P&O Pavilion itself ³⁴⁹ was designed by T. E. Collcutt (1840-1924) who worked extensively for the company, designing a variety of interior spaces on a number of its vessels (from at least 1888), and also an extension to the company’s

³⁴⁵ This reading is in part inspired by Debora Silverman’s revisionary reading of Belgian Art Nouveau in the context of French Imperialism: ‘Art Nouveau, Art of Darkness: African Lineages of Belgian Modernism, Part I’ *West 86th: A Journal of Decorative Arts, Design History and Material Culture*, 18: 2 (Fall-Winter 2011), pp. 139-181.

³⁴⁶ van der Merwe, ‘Views of the Royal Naval Exhibition’, p. 147.

³⁴⁷ van der Merwe, ‘Views of the Royal Naval Exhibition’, p. 153.

³⁴⁸ It seems likely the model of Poonah was the same as the one displayed at the International Exhibition of 1862. See chapter 2, section 4.4.

³⁴⁹ For the official General Plan of the Exhibition with the location of P&O’s Pavilion marked, see fig. 79.

Leadenhall Street building (1893). Collcutt's initial architectural training was under R.W. Armstrong in London, followed by a position with Mills & Murgatroyd and he also worked with the acclaimed Gothic revival architect George Edmund Street whose buildings included the new *Law Courts* on the Strand (now *The Royal Courts of Justice*).³⁵⁰

As the first professional interior designer to be employed on a grand scale by the company, Collcutt's commission marks a new recognition and status for art and design within the company but is also a milestone in the evolution and development of interior design as a profession.³⁵¹ Collcutt along with J. J. Stevenson (1831-1908) for the Orient Line, and Richard Norman Shaw (1831-1912) for the White Star Line, marked 'the first phase of the professional interior design of ocean liners'.³⁵² This important development was made possible by the wealth generated by a new breed of Victorian shipping magnets and industrialists.³⁵³

It has been argued that Collcutt's Oriental Pavilion at the RNE in effect exemplified the company's picture of itself as playing a central role in British Empire.³⁵⁴ The company's presence at the exhibition was certainly important and it gained a great deal by association. To what extent, however, did the design of the Pavilion itself, its relation to other exhibits, and its mediation through exhibition guides enact this new corporate status? Also, what is the precise imperial significance

³⁵⁰ 'Thomas Edward Collcutt' in David M. Walker, Yvonne Hillyard, Leslie Harris and Abigail Grater, *Dictionary of Scottish Architects* (published online 2014) [http://www.scottisharchitects.org.uk/architect_full.php?id=202065, accessed 24 June 2015].

³⁵¹ Anne Wealleans, *Designing Liners: A History of interior design afloat* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 24-34.

³⁵² Wealleans, *Designing Liners*, p. 25.

³⁵³ Wealleans, *Designing Liners*, p. 25.

³⁵⁴ Wealleans, *Designing Liners*, argues that 'The P&O pavilion stood adjacent to the National Panorama pavilion and placed the company at the centre of the British Empire', p. 32; and P&O Heritage argues that 'For P&O, the exhibition provided an ideal opportunity to position itself in the heart of a national celebration of Britain's maritime history and empire'. POH, 'Royal Approval', online article [<http://www.poheritage.com/our-history/timeline>, accessed 06 July 2015].

of the company's presence at the exhibition? Van der Merwe places the RNE as a whole in a helpful context. The three decades preceding the First World War were a time of increased imperial naval rivalries: 'By the 1880s Britain had begun to fear that her supremacy at sea, taken largely for granted in the mid-century, was again being seriously challenged by France and Russia, and after 1900 by Germany.' One of the results was 'a sustained "navalist" political campaign aimed at raising awareness of, and reforming, the perceived weaknesses of the Royal Navy.'³⁵⁵ Van der Merwe says that while the various strands of British navalist propaganda at this time have been well surveyed, the RNE has not received as much attention. This is important since the exhibition contributes to different history: 'that of the great "improving" Victorian exhibitions of art and manufactures, and their role as precursors to the later formation of great public museums.'³⁵⁶ The specific case of the P&O Pavilion can help to refine the inter-relationship of new navalism and exhibitionary practice. Although it is not in the scope of Van der Merwe's paper, an important aspect of naval politics in this period is the increasing dependence of the navy on merchant shipping companies like P&O. As cited earlier in the chapter, Stephen Cobb has recently highlighted Admiralty papers on the subvention of Merchant Steamers for employment as armed cruisers and specific agreements with P&O during the thirty years preceding World War One.³⁵⁷ This is crucial context for understanding how and for what purposes P&O's Pavilion exhibited a picture of the company's central role in augmenting the Royal Navy. The display of a merchant corporation at the heart of naval empire speaks to the institutions of state upon whom P&O's continued success depended, but also to the imperial travelling and working public who constituted the greatest proportion of P&O

³⁵⁵ Van der Merwe, 'Views of the Royal Naval Exhibition', pp. 146.

³⁵⁶ Van der Merwe, 'Views of the Royal Naval Exhibition', pp. 147.

³⁵⁷ Cobb, *Preparing for Blockade*, chapter 6, pp. 131-160.

passengers. The exhibition extends and elaborates the increasingly complex interweaving of corporation, state and empire, at an institutional but also a cultural and imaginative level.

Of the private kiosks at the RNE, P&O's was one of the largest and most prominent. Unlike the other commercial participants P&O's Pavilion has its own dedicated chapter in the shorter illustrated guide to the RNE produced by the Pall Mall Gazette (fig. 77).³⁵⁸ The guide describes P&O's Pavilion as 'one of the prettiest and most interesting in the Exhibition'.³⁵⁹ The Pavilion was constructed of wood, brick and plaster and was described in the longer official exhibition guide as 'in a characteristic Oriental style'.³⁶⁰ It is interesting to note during his time in the office of Philip Causton Lockwood, borough surveyor for Brighton, T.E. Collcutt worked on the conversion of the Brighton Pavilion Dome buildings, perhaps the most iconic Anglo-Oriental buildings in Britain at the time.³⁶¹ Collcutt's own Oriental Pavilion for P&O consisted of a central dome crowning a rectangular body to the building. There were four minaret-like turrets framing the dome, each with ogee style crowns, a flagpole and flag (fig. 80). The principal entrance was formed by a large elevated veranda with a projecting porch and stairs (figs. 81 and 82).³⁶² The roof beneath the dome curves gently and tapers to a point overhanging the main structure. This, along with the predominance of plaster and wood building materials and a raised platform

³⁵⁸ 'The P&O Pavilion' in Pall Mall Gazette, *Royal Naval Exhibition 1891 The Illustrated Handbook and Souvenir* (Pall Mall Gazette: London, June 1891), chapter 10, pp. 27-29. See fig. 77.

³⁵⁹ Pall Mall Gazette, *RNE Illustrated Handbook*, p. 27.

³⁶⁰ Royal Naval Exhibition, *Official Catalogue & Guide Royal Naval Exhibition 1891* (London: W. P. Griffith & Sons), p. 524. For the front cover of the official guide see fig. 78.

³⁶¹ 'Thomas Edward Collcutt' *Dictionary of Scottish Architects*, online article [http://www.scottisharchitects.org.uk/architect_full.php?id=202065, accessed 24 June 2015].

³⁶² Yule and Burnell's nineteenth century glossary of Anglo-Indian words claims that, whatever its origins in Portuguese and Spanish, the use of the term veranda in England and France was 'undoubtedly' brought by the English from India. Henry Yule and Arthur Coke Burnell, *Hobson-Jobson: Being A Glossary of Anglo-Indian Colloquial Words and Phrases and of Kindred Terms; Etymological, Historical, Geographical and Discursive* (London: John Murray, 1886), pp.736-7.

on which the Pavilion sat, was reminiscent of features of traditional Chinese architecture. Adding to this effect, the building had considerable architectural and surface decoration, blending symbols of Britain (lions), P&O and shipping (a version of the company badge and image of its vessels), with symbols of ‘the Orient’, together rendered in an oriental style.

The Pavilion’s dome and walls were manufactured by Doulton & Co., to Collcutt’s designs. The interior of the dome was divided into a grid formation with plaster mouldings representing various animals such as an elephant (presumably representing India) and geometric and foliated patterns (fig. 83). There is a line of windows around the dome allowing natural light to flood the central exhibition space. One of the most striking features is the design of the domes’ supporting pillars which combine a version of a Corinthian capital with a larger, more abstract and oriental inspired form, buttressing the pillars and leading the eye to the dome (fig 83 and 85).³⁶³

The Pall Mall Gazette reports that beneath the central dome were eight large panels (about 12 feet long by 3 feet high) containing paintings by the artist Frank Murray. Four of the panels were positioned at the opposite points of the compass and these represented the four quarters of the globe. The East represented by ‘Eastern Junks and Canoes’; The North by ‘Vessels of Discovery in the Arctic Seas’; the South by ‘Prahus and Canoes of the Southern Archipelago’; and the West by ‘Vessels of the “P. and O.” fleet off Gibraltar.’ The imagined historical and geographical properties of the Rock were again used to correspond with P&O’s vessels, and by extension with

³⁶³ The style evokes Art Nouveau. For a reading of the distinctive lines and forms of specifically Belgian Art Nouveau as displaced colonial violence from the Belgian Congo see Silverman, ‘Art Nouveau, Art of Darkness’. Silverman quotes Henry van der Velde recalling the discovery of the modern line and art nouveau in the 1890s: ‘During the fin-de-siècle, Horta,... Serrurier and I ... revitalized line, at almost the same time, in nearly the same place. We seized line like one seizes a whip. A whip whose sonorous cracks accompanied our adventurous course, and whose blows lashed the skin of an indolent public’. Van der Velde quoted in Silverman, p. 170.

the characteristics and attributes of the company itself. The remaining four panels illustrate ‘the great epochs of maritime History’. These are represented as the *Caesarean Galleys* from the first Century; *the Vikings* of the tenth century, referred to as the ‘period of warlike adventures’; the Caravels of Columbus referred to as ‘the period of discovery’; and finally ‘A Three-Decker and Frigates’ representing ‘England’s Naval supremacy.’ This arrangement is clearly designed to emphasise the progress of maritime navigation and Britain’s place at its zenith. The positioning of paintings of P&O’s own vessels within and beneath these images also places the company within the historical narrative. Beneath the painting of the Southern Seas, for example, is an image of P&O’s *Ripon* departing Southampton for the Crimean War with the Grenadier guards on board in 1854 (fig. 84).

The display of P&O ship models in the space under the dome continued this story of historical maritime progress. Under the dome were placed scale models (1/4 inch to the foot) of four of the principal ships of P&O’s fleet (fig. 85). The models were placed on tables radiating from the centre of the room and represented the following vessels: *William Fawcett* (1829), *Massilia* (1884), *Victoria* (1887), *Oceana* (1887), and *Himalaya* (1891). Of the *William Fawcett* the catalogue tells us, ‘this model, being to the same scale as that of the larger ships surrounding it, serves to illustrate the gigantic strides made in ship-building since the foundation of the Company, some fifty years since’.³⁶⁴ The display thus emphasises not only a national story of maritime progress but highlights the company’s own significant contribution to that larger story. The implication of the logic of the display is that national maritime progress reaches its height in the present day with P&O’s vessels representing the corporation’s proud fleet within Britain’s continued Naval Supremacy. This view is

³⁶⁴ RNE, *Official Catalogue & Guide*, p. 524.

echoed in the company's *Guide Book for Passengers* printed for visitors to the Pavilion. In the publication the section 'Transport Work in War' highlights P&O's role in imperial defence. In the case of the Indian Mutiny, for instance, the guide tells us that, it was the arrival of troops on P&O ships that prevented the Mutiny from spreading to Bombay.³⁶⁵

Adjacent to and accessible from the main body of the Pavilion were two other noteworthy exhibits: a full size installation of the Smoking Room and two of the Cabins of the Company's new steamers *Himalaya* (1892) and *Australia* (1892) (fig. 86); and a model of the Suez Canal, (fig. 87). These full size installations were a significant new approach for P&O, enabling customers to inhabit and imagine the on board spaces of its ships while still in London. The model canal was lent for the occasion by the Suez Canal Company itself. Having invested massively in the old Overland Route, the RNE display showed that P&O could not only adapt but flourish in the context of the new arrangements. The closeness of the relationship between P&O and the Suez Canal Company is indicated by the fact that the Chairman of P&O, Sir Thomas Sutherland, was also a Director of the Suez Canal Company from 1885.³⁶⁶

Perhaps the highlight of the RNE, from the perspective of P&O's desired alignment with the organs of state and empire, was a formally posed and official photograph of Queen Victoria, Empress of India, with the assembled P&O Company outside the Oriental Pavilion (fig. 88). The photographic organisation enacts a structured and hierarchical ordering of both the internal relationships of the company and its relationship to the Queen. The company stand in organised lines looking outward toward the camera, top hats in hand, with the chairman Sir Thomas Sutherland

³⁶⁵ P&O, *P&O Guidebook for Passengers printed for the RNE 1891* [London: P&O, 1891], p. 54 for a copy see NMM/P&O/73/6 Passage Department: P&O Guide Book for Passengers, 1891.

³⁶⁶ At the end of the RNE a number of exhibits were transported and displayed at the Liverpool Naval Exhibition in 1892. For a photograph of the display see HE/BL11365/00.

near the middle of the group. In front of the Chairman, and centrally placed is the Royal party. The Prince of Wales, wearing his top hat, stands behind Queen Victoria who is the only seated figure and also the only figure to look away from the camera.³⁶⁷

This single event was a moment of the highest Royal and Imperial approval for the company, serving to formalise its own self-image as ‘the Empire line’. This was no mere self-interested commercial organisation; it was, so the photographic implication goes, a formally sanctioned body, directly carrying out the Royal will of Queen Victoria, Empress of India. It is interesting that there appears to be a small model of the Eddystone lighthouse next to the Queen. As a celebrated national symbol of reliability at sea nothing could have been more pleasing than the lighthouse as a national maritime ally for P&O.

3. East or West Home is Best (c. 1878-1903)

Mark Girouard describes a narrowing of the gap between the new middle class families of mid to later nineteenth century Britain and the older landed aristocratic families, arguing that representations of domesticity and the home played a key role in this closer alliance.³⁶⁸ Both groups were keen to show that ‘their houses, however, grand were also homes and sheltered a happy family life.’³⁶⁹ Girouard cites Lord and Lady Folkestone’s choice to be pictured singing ‘Home Sweet Home’ with their eldest son in the 1870s and also a portrait of Lord Armstrong, the wealthy arms dealer, who chose to be pictured reading the newspaper in the inglenook in his dining room at the family

³⁶⁷ In photographs Victoria was often positioned seated, upright, and looking to one side or other of the camera. This pose may suggest the tradition of profile and three quarter portraiture, stretching back to the Roman Caesars.

³⁶⁸ Mark Girouard, ‘The Moral House: 1830-1900’, chapter 10, in his *Life in the English Country House* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1978), pp. 267-298.

³⁶⁹ Girouard, ‘The Moral House’, p. 270.

house in Cragside.³⁷⁰ Over the fireplace is inscribed in vernacular ‘East or West Hame’s Best’ (fig. 89). For current purposes Armstrong’s portrait is suggestive of not merely the representation and experience of domesticity and homeliness in Britain, but its importance for those living abroad in Empire: wherever one finds oneself, at home or abroad, one’s home remains the locus of comfort and security and a sign of one’s civilisation. Robin Jones has examined both domestic and public spaces in the Indian subcontinent in the nineteenth century and first half of the twentieth, showing how the British imagined the domestic interior as a space of safety and retreat from the local environment but also how this project was undercut in various ways by continuous intrusions of local practice and custom, and that that this interaction was formative of a distinctive colonial culture.³⁷¹ But what of the case of steamships, those designed spaces that existed in the transitions between home and away, between notions of here and there, us and them?

One of the recurring themes of P&O’s corporate representation in the thesis so far has been the representation of steam vessels in ship portraits and the suggestion that a crucial way to understand their unique aesthetic is through the idea of reliable romanticism. This section extends the argument to explore how the idea of reliability and closely related feelings of safety and security were transmitted on board ship. The representation of corporate developments in marine architecture and engineering was one important element in corporate advertising. However, the following discussion will focus on the interior design and spatial organisation of P&O’s vessels and how this was used to foster a feeling of social and cultural security, essential to winning the

³⁷⁰ Sir William Armstrong (1810-1900) designed the rifled breech-loading 70-pounder guns pictured in the Naval Court at the International Exhibition, London, 1862, where the model of P&O *Poonah* was exhibited. See chapter 2, section 4.4 and fig. 55.

³⁷¹ Robin Jones, *Interiors of Empire: Objects, space and identity within the Indian Subcontinent c. 1800-1947* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2007).

trust and patronage of passengers. This develops the overall argument by investigating how the notion of imperial space enters into the design of ships and how this creates a socially and culturally secure environment for the empire travelling work force. As with Jones' investigation of interior spaces in the Indian sub-continent this will also examine tensions and complications in the space of the steamship and a gradual tightening up of the divisions of space. This reaches a further extreme in the following period (1904-1945) where virtual caricatures of cultural space demonstrate P&O's increasing anxiety about the future of empire.

3.1 Kipling's Exiles' Line (1892)

To help appreciate the evolution of P&O's distinctive on board style it is helpful to reconstruct the world of the typical mid to late nineteenth century P&O passenger. The poet Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936) was born in Bombay, returning to England to boarding school for five years from 1871, and working again in India between 1878 and 1882 as a journalist. He travelled many times to and from India on P&O, and his last recorded voyage with the company was in 1891 on board *Arcadia*, travelling from Aden to Brindisi and then overland to London.³⁷² In his early writings on the British Raj Kipling was popular and celebrated by many, including imperial soldiers, for a cynical realism about imperial life³⁷³. Kipling's 'The Exiles' Line' was written about P&O and the title of the poem prepares the reader for a cynical if affectionate realism concerning life on board the company's ships.

If P&O can be likened to an imperial postman and policeman, delivering mail and patrolling British shipping lanes, its lines can also be likened to a commuter route

³⁷² NMM/P&O/65/38 Individual Ships: *Arcadia*: Miscellaneous material, 1888.

³⁷³ Later in his career Kipling was criticised in anti-imperialist circles for what was seen as a belligerent patriotism or jingoism.

for the many workers the Empire required. These were the administrators, soldiers, sailors, civilians and families travelling to and from destinations in the east. Kipling's poem is a sympathetic elegy to these Anglo-Indian workers and their families long exiled from home.

Kipling creates a complicated picture, including feelings of excitement and romance which travel to India might inspire together with feelings of deep sorrow at departing home and leaving families: 'The restless soul to open seas aspires' is mixed with 'the midnight madness of souls distraught.' Workers travelling to India may well be leaving their homes and families for extended periods of time, months or even years. The historian David Gilmour says of the poem that 'Kipling recognised the degree of self-sacrifice required of such families. An official knew he would spend most of his career in India while his children were at school or in the care of governesses in England, and his parents had retired to Eastbourne or somewhere else on the south coast.'³⁷⁴

To some extent, Kipling's cynicism and realism represents the company as a part of the unfeeling machinery of empire:

Linked in the chain of Empire one by one,
Flushed with long leave, or tanned with many a sun,
The Exiles' Line brings out the exiles' line
And ships them homeward when their work is done.

Or:

Bound in the Wheel of Empire, one by one
The chain-gangs of the East from sire to son,
The Exiles' Line takes out the exiles' line
And ships them homeward when their work is done.

³⁷⁴ John McGivering and John Radcliffe, 'Notes on The Exiles' Line', *The Kipling Society*, September 2011, online article [http://www.kiplingsociety.co.uk/rg_exiles1.htm, accessed 22 June 2015].

And:

Yea, heedless of the shuttle through the loom,
The flying keels fulfil the web of doom.
Sorrow or shouting - what is that to them?
Make out the cheque that pays for cabin room!

This pictures at once a sense of wonder at the vastness of the imperial project, but also the grinding inevitability of the imperial system and the peculiar entrapment to which colonial subjects submit themselves. The image of the ships' flying keels fulfilling 'the web of doom' gives a rather different perspective on the image of the ship as commonly pictured in P&O's corporate ship portraits. At the same time, Kipling indicates how for the waif like British colonialist, continually in transit and never settled, P&O's vessels and the company flag come to act as a much welcomed surrogate for home:

But we, the gypsies of the East, but we –
Waifs of the land and wastrels of the sea –
Come nearer home beneath the Quartered Flag
Than ever home shall come to such as we.

It is this idea of P&O as a home-from-home which helps set the context for the evolution of a distinctive P&O on board style. This creates a familiar, sympathetic and secure cultural environment in which Kipling's waifs of Empire could happily and gladly identify as a community.

3.2 The evolution of a P&O on board style (until 1878)

Accounts from diary entries in the P&O archive show that steamers in the 1840s and 1850s provided basic accommodation in which the fundamentals were of most importance rather than overt considerations of style and aesthetics. A diary entry from 20 August 1846 which records a journey from Southampton to Alexandria on board P&O's *Oriental* (1840) describes the accommodation as basic. First we learn about the chaotic scene on boarding the ship at Southampton. This provides a stark contrast to the calm and ordered picture of control often found in official corporate representation:

All was hurry and confusion on board, passengers crying and lamenting on leaving their friends and relations, some hunting after their luggage without effect, pigs grunting, calves bellowing, cocks crowing, geese screaming, crew drunk, officers swearing, steam blowing off, other passengers seeking after their berths, in short a thousand like things, which made all confusion and riot.³⁷⁵

The author continues to describe the cramped and *ad hoc* arrangements for accommodation as he found it:

I now began to look after my berth and found (what I thought the day before a comfortable place) metamorphosed into a miserable place. Six passengers stowed into a cabin fit only for two. Temporary berths were erected which made it so small. When in bed I could scarcely turn without interrupting another passenger, and if I moved my feet I kicked another in the head, so close we were crowded together. For the six there was only

³⁷⁵ NMM/P&O/73/2 Passage Department: Un-named author, Account of a voyage from Amsterdam to Batavia in various P&O and other steamers, 1846. Unpublished account, typed manuscript, p. 2.

one washstand, one basin etc., and besides experiencing the inconvenience of waiting for each other, had actually not place sufficient to shave.³⁷⁶

The author blames the experience partly on his booking late in London (he says that the passengers who book early get the better cabins). However, mostly he blames ‘the sulky, grumbling, old Purser, old Soden by name’ for not enabling him to take advantage of empty berths preferable to his own. The entry continues, noting the difference between that which was shown and sold to him in the Passage Office in London and the reality as he found. ‘In London plans of the vessel and berths are shown you but this is shown on plan of upper deck, which shows all to advantage.’³⁷⁷ The deck plan of *Oriental* from Captain Barber’s *Guide-book* (fig. 90)³⁷⁸ shows no cabin with more than 4 berths, although the wording on the plan is telling; ‘most comfortable for 3 persons’ or ‘comfortable for 2 each’ saying nothing about the upper limits of comfort.

During the 1870s, the decade after the opening of the Suez Canal, P&O’s shipbuilding programme was very conservative. The opening of the Canal was not immediately advantageous to the company since until that date P&O had invested heavily and held a near monopoly on the Overland route. This included the transport of numerous trading goods such as silk, indigo and cotton. From 1869 the new canal opened up the route through Egypt to other shipping companies creating competition for P&O. This led to a fall in the company’s revenues and so there was a consequent

³⁷⁶ NMM/P&O/73/2, p. 2.

³⁷⁷ NMM/P&O/73/2, p. 3.

³⁷⁸ Captain James Barber, *The Overland Guide-Book; A Complete Vade-Mecum for the Overland Traveller to India via Egypt* (London: Wm. H. Allen and Co., 1850). For copies of the plans from the guide-book see NMM/P&O/61/3.

need to limit costs such as expensive new ship building programmes.³⁷⁹ As a result, the design of vessels remained the same for much of the 1870s:

... apart from the fact that by 1873 passengers, and after 1874 the mails too, were not landed for the overland route across Egypt, P & O continued to provide the recipe exactly as before. The first saloon remained aft over the throbbing screw and was furnished in traditional style with one or two long tables down its length. It remained the only public room for the First Class; if the gentlemen were granted a smoking room it was an improvised canvas shelter rigged on the quarterdeck and either taken in or blown down in heavy weather. There was no refrigerating plant, no electric light, few oil lamps, mainly candles in glass shades with weighted bases for the table, others arranged at the tops of pillars in the saloon and others swinging gimbals at the heads of the bunks in the cabins.³⁸⁰

As well as the fall in revenue, Padfield also suggests a corporate cultural perception, an attitude held by both the company and many of its passengers, which sought to distinguish the P&O from the Atlantic travelling liners. The view was that:

...the colonial and army officers, planters and 'box-wallahs'³⁸¹ who provided the bulk of passengers [on P&O] were a different breed from western ocean travellers, and would not welcome the innovations and

³⁷⁹ On becoming P&O Chairman in 1880 Thomas Sutherland reported that 'In 1869 the Company had almost a monopoly of the conveyance of silk from China at a rate of upwards of £20 a ton ... a monopoly of the steam carriage of indigo from Madras and Calcutta of about £18 a ton, and they seldom condescended to carry anything so low as a bale of cotton, but if they did so they did it at the very legitimate rate of £15 for forty cubic feet... Today the very highest article upon our tariff rarely exceeds £3 a ton, whilst the cotton which we despised in former years and would only accept as a matter of favour at £15 a ton, we now accept at £1 and sometimes less.' Thomas Sutherland quoted in Padfield, *Beneath the House Flag*, p. 48.

³⁸⁰ Padfield, *Beneath the House Flag*, p. 48.

³⁸¹ Yule and Burnell define a *box-wallah* as 'a native itinerant pedlar or packman, as he would be called in Scotland by an analogous term. The *Boxwālā* sells cutlery, cheap nick-nacks and small wares of all kinds, chiefly European. In former days he was a welcome visitor to small stations and solitary bungalows.' Yule and Burnell, *Hobson-Jobson*, p. 83.

increasing opulence that White Star Line and after them all of the other Atlantic steamship lines were offering.³⁸²

P&O was not immune to competitive pride, however, whether that came from the White Star Line or, closer to home, the Orient Line with whom P&O shared the Australian run, and so the company steadily improved the standards of comfort and even evolved their own distinctive brand of luxury: welcoming and warm but not effusive, as one employee later characterised it.³⁸³ As will be discussed, this was an aesthetic sensibility allied to a distinctive moral outlook, one revolving around the notion of service and duty, specifically service and duty to the empire.

The first ship to make a notable change to P&O's post-Suez Canal ship design was the *Kaiser-i-Hind* launched in 1878. A year earlier the Conservative Prime Minister, Benjamin Disraeli, brought about a politically expedient change in Queen Victoria's Royal title. In 1876 The Royal Titles Bill was brought before Parliament and in 1877 Queen Victoria was proclaimed Empress of India. This brought about a new official and legislated relationship between monarchy and empire,³⁸⁴ and P&O saw the opportunity to strengthen further its semi-official role as 'the Empire Line' naming its new ship *Kaiser-i-Hind*, which means Empress of India. The ship was the largest yet built by the company at 4,023 gross tons and was a great success with passengers, becoming known popularly as 'the Bridge to India'.³⁸⁵ Whether this

³⁸² Padfield, *Beneath the House Flag*, p. 48.

³⁸³ A P&O commander retiring in 1953, quoted in Howarth and Howarth, *The Story of P&O*, p. 56.

³⁸⁴ The anthropologist and scholar of the British colonial period in India, Bernard Cohen, writes that before the proclamation of Queen Victoria as Empress of India, the conceptual basis of British rule in India had already shifted with the Government of India Act, 2 August, 1858. This saw the British who had begun their rule as 'outsiders' become 'insiders' by vesting in their monarch the sovereignty of India. Bernhard S. Cohen, 'Representing Authority in Victorian India', chapter 5 in Eric Hobsbawm and Terrance Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 165-208.

³⁸⁵ Company records of the *Kaiser-i-Hind* record that 'She was nicknamed the "Bridge to India" by virtue of her comfort, distinctive outline and popularity'. See NMM/P&O/65/173 Individual Ships: *Kaiser-i-Hind*: Miscellaneous material, 1878.

affectionate nick-name originated with the company or the passengers is unclear, but it certainly added to the authoritative impression the company, and perhaps the passengers too, wished to give.

Wealleans cites a report in *The Home News* which highlights not just some of the organisational changes to the internal space of the *Kaiser-i-Hind* but a new and distinctive style with which the company experimented:

In her internal decorations the directors of the company have aimed at something different and more artistic than the usual style of cabin work. It has been considered that the improvements effected in our domestic arrangements by the revival of a taste for genuine art could be adapted to the fitting out of a first class ship... The refined and unobtrusive richness of decoration will be the characteristic of saloons and cabins, while in the more important essentials of substantial comfort such as bathrooms, remarkable elaboration has been bestowed. We are informed that this expensive type of vessel is viewed by the P&O company in the light of an experiment to test whether the Indian public really care to encourage a luxurious and, of course somewhat costly mode of travelling, rather than run after cheapness irrespective of comfort.³⁸⁶

A further indication of a new P&O aesthetic can be found in this description. An implicit distinction in taste is drawn between P&O's restrained luxury and, as it might be seen, the less tasteful baroque extravagancies of other lines. After *Kaiser-i-Hind's* success, P&O ships showed a steady increase in levels of comfort and particularly the employment of a more richly decorated, but characteristically 'refined and unobtrusive' style.

³⁸⁶ *The Home News*, 10 May 1878, quoted in Wealleans, *Designing Liners*, p. 28.

3.3 Home and Away: The Dialectics of Imperial Space and Identity (1878-1903)

While the Imperial metropole tends to imagine itself as determining the periphery (in the emanating glow of the civilising mission or the cash flow of development, for example), it habitually binds itself to the reverse dynamic, the powers colonies have over their ‘mother’ countries. For instance, empires create in the imperial centre of power an obsessive need to present and re-present its peripheries and its other continually to itself. It becomes dependent on its others to know itself.³⁸⁷

After the success of *Kaiser-i-Hind* one way of describing the evolution of the P&O fleet is through the gradual increase in standards of comfort and luxury. However, the standards of on board comfort in steamship design were being raised everywhere and so, as a theory of the evolution of P&O’s design, the quest for luxury does not reveal very much about why and in what ways P&O evolved its own style of ship. Neither would luxury by itself explain anything of the wider significance of design in the life of P&O’s steamships within wider imperial culture. Approaching P&O’s design through the lens of empire enables an appreciation of the way in which different aspects of British imperial identity were formed and the central role of design in that process.

The two ‘sister ships’ *Carthage* and *Rome* (both launched 1881) take their names from renowned classical Roman cities and align the vessels with the idea of an imperial heritage. Their interior design also employed a boldly neo-Classical and neo-Renaissance architectural language, providing an environment within which the imperial imagination of passengers could collectively identify. The first class Saloon

³⁸⁷ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, 2nd edn., (Abingdon UK and New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 4

on *Carthage*, which was built in part to compete with the Orient Line, appeared in an engraving showing a grand neo-classical space defined by a gently arched ceiling supported by two lines of fluted Doric columns (fig. 91).³⁸⁸ *Rome* employed a similar scheme for the first class Saloon (fig. 92) and also employed the well-known Siennese sculptor Carlo-Cambi (1847-c.1900) to carve details adding further to the vessel's neo-Renaissance pretensions (fig. 93).³⁸⁹ Many of the male passengers on board P&O, such as the army officers and colonial staff, would have been educated in British private schools and P&O's classical allusions would have gratified an educational background versed in classical history and culture.

The *River Class* of ships: *Clyde* (1881); *Thames* (1882); *Sutlej* (1882); and *Ganges* (1882) created a cultural contact-zone between notions of western civilization and its oriental other. On one level the evolution of P&O's on board music rooms can be seen as a practical development, to create interest and entertainment for long periods at sea. However, the development of such a space can also be read as an important cultural signifier. *Clyde* was the first vessel to introduce the idea of a Music Room above the Saloon, with an aperture joining the two levels, thus creating a greater

³⁸⁸ Unidentified author, 'The Journey - After Sail' Maritime Museum of Tasmania, 2011, online article [<http://www.maritimetas.org/collection-displays/displays/over-seas-stories-tasmanian-migrants/journey-after-sail>, accessed 19 June 2015].

³⁸⁹ Patricia McCarthy, 'From Torpedo Boat to Temples of Culture: Carlo Cambi's Route to Ireland', *Irish Arts Review Yearbook* 18 (2002), pp. 71-79. McCarthy says that Cambi had a large workshop in Siena with an international reputation. Between the early 1880s and the early 1900s Cambi was commissioned by Thomas Manly Deane to work on a number of buildings in Ireland including the National Museum, the National Library, and the Milltown Wing of the National Gallery. See also P&O's booklet 'The Three Himalayas 1853-1949' (NMM/UEC Box 25) which says of the 1892 Himalaya: 'Her interior fittings were distinguished, of course, by all the elaborate decorations of the late Victorian era, amongst which beautiful carvings by the famous Italian artist, Carlo-Cambi of Siena, took pride of place'. At this stage in P&O's design evolution, the difference between the design of first and second class was stark. Compare *Rome*'s first and second class Saloons (figs. 92, 93 and 94). Whereas the first saloon employed the detailed neo-Renaissance carvings of Cambi, the second saloon had bare exposed structural girders and pillars, and relatively plain seating. Principal decoration came from the punkahs and exotic potted plants. As the make-up of P&O's passengers changed away from the predominance of the first class, gradually this difference in design diminished, even disappearing entirely in the case of the 'one class' ships during the interwar period in the twentieth century.

sense of space and light (figs. 95 and 96). The Music Room over the First Saloon would become a feature of P&O design until the practice of home-made entertainment became unfashionable and was replaced by professional acts and performances.³⁹⁰ Before this point a ship's music room was one of the important public spaces, repeatedly photographed by the company and later forming an established part of the photographic publicity album (figs. 96 to 99). European Classical music, exemplified by the piano, was taken by many to be an embodiment of Western cultural sophistication. Herbert Compton, writing in 1904 advising British colonialists on home decoration said that the piano brought one 'face to face with western civilization.'³⁹¹ A typical advertisement for Steinway pianos, which appeared in a P&O publicity album indicates how piano concerts were moments of collective social and cultural occasion (fig. 100).

Sutlej (1882) was one of the first vessels on which the celebrated Arts and Crafts ceramicist William Frend De Morgan (1839-1917) worked. De Morgan brought with him an interest in the design aesthetics and traditions of making of Turkey, Persia and Syria. In 1879 De Morgan was commissioned by Sir Frederick Leighton, later Lord Leighton, the English painter and sculptor, to install various tiles collected during his travels into the Arab Hall at Leighton House (fig. 101). In placing together a surviving De Morgan tile from the Victoria and Albert Museum alongside a photograph of the Saloon on board *Sutlej* we can see that De Morgan's tiles were featured there, above the dado rail (figs. 102 to 104). These tiles and a number of other features in P&O's design set up a relationship between notions of British and western

³⁹⁰ NMM/P&O/65/105 Individual Ships: *Clyde*: Miscellaneous material, 1881. The development of professional entertainment on board P&O ships was largely a post-war development. See Howarth and Howarth, *The Story of P&O*, p. 65.

³⁹¹ Herbert Compton, *Indian Life in Town and Country* (London, 1904), pp. 157-60, quoted in Jones, *Interiors of Empire*, p. 1.

space with the spaces of other cultures. However, the nature of that relationship was far from clear or settled, it changed over time, even over the space of the last two decades of the nineteenth century. These changes were symptomatic of the wider change, instability, and contested nature of British imperial identity.

The curator and art historian Rebecca Wallis highlights a shift in appreciation of works such as De Morgan's which interpret Islamic art. Some nineteenth century critics bemoaned the proliferation of mass produced styles without any single clearly contemporary style emerging. For some the interpretation of Islamic design was considered to be merely copying from of a now dead art form. This failed to define an original nineteenth century style. Against this view, however, Wallis argues that many Islamic inspired examples, De Morgan's work being prime among them, evolved their own language of design. De Morgan's style was at once influenced by a Persian palette through its use of ogee forms and yet was firmly associated with a very English aesthetic in its distinctive shadowing, muted pallet and concentration on blues and greens – features which De Morgan made his own.³⁹²

Discussion of De Morgan's encounters with other cultures is further complicated by the use and display of his tiles on board ship. The extent to which De Morgan had any say in where and how his tiles were used is not clear. De Morgan's relationship and feelings toward the P&O Board were not entirely easy. In a letter to Halsey Ricardo, De Morgan's business partner, De Morgan described the P&O Board as '... a highly meddlesome pragmatic body.'³⁹³ So while De Morgan's designs

³⁹² Rebecca Wallis, 'Fact of Fiction: 19th Century European Interpretations of Islamic Decorative Arts', *Past in Present* online project, The Courtauld Institute of Art. [<http://pastinpresent.courtauld.ac.uk/past-in-present-v/>, accessed 09 June 2015].

³⁹³ Although De Morgan found the board meddlesome, his remarks remind us that the directors took a personal interest in design decisions and considered them to be important in creating what they saw as an appropriate on board environment for P&O's passengers. William De Morgan, letter to Hasley Ricardo, 18 February 1895, quoted in Wealleans, *Designing Liners*, p. 34.

demonstrate a sympathetic and original engagement with fifteenth and sixteenth century Insak ware, as Wallis argues, the use and display of the tiles by P&O tell a different story.

P&O's imperial-maritime identity was largely concerned with the representation of selected aspects of what it saw as British national identity and yet, as Mary Louise Pratt argues, knowledge of an imperial self depends upon the representation of its other. If P&O's vessels can be counted as the centre of its commercial empire then the representation and organisation of oriental spaces on board ship is revealing.

In the earlier River Class vessels *Clyde* and *Sutlej* oriental-inspired design is found in a number of different spaces including music rooms and first class saloons (figs. 95-97 and 102-105). In the discussion of the later Persia Class, however, Wealleans identifies a cultural partitioning of space, pointing out that where Eastern inspired decorative styles were employed on board ship they tended to be confined to spaces such as passageways and smoking rooms. Following this series of changes in the treatment of cultural space on board ship the last two decades of the nineteenth century saw a gradual tightening up of divisions and a confinement of the oriental to particular parts of the ship.³⁹⁴ This partitioning reaches a height in the 1904-39 period where two cultural and aesthetic caricatures emerge: historic Britishness and aestheticized Orientalism. This comes at the high point of empire but as much as a sign of imperial power and subjugation, the caricatures and cultural partitioning of

³⁹⁴ In a parallel case, Harriet MacKay examines the history of interior design aboard the vessels of the Union-Castle line in the context of colonial relations between Britain and Africa. She argues that Union-Castle design excludes any reference to Black Africa and instead inscribes wholly 'White' colonialist conceptions about emigration and nationhood. See Harriet MacKay, *Accommodating the Passenger Interior Design for the Union-Castle Line 1945-1977* (unpublished doctoral thesis, Kingston University, 2011). With reference to Mackay and Wealleans, *Designing Liners*, Heloise Finch-Boyer discusses the idea of spatial segregation on P&O's later ship the *Viceroy of India* (launched 1929) in 'Lascars through the Colonial lens', *Journal of Maritime Research*, 16: 2 (2014), pp. 251-268. This will be discussed further in chapter 4, section 3.1.

space, betray an implicit anxiety about its future and with it, P&O's traditional business model.

P&O's interior designs from its Jubilee Class onwards (1887-8), to S.S. *Malta* in 1895 begin this process of demarcated cultural zones, evolving a dialectic of English Art and Crafts classicism and Oriental otherness, much of which revolved around the work of T. E. Collcutt and William De Morgan working for P&O from the 1880s onwards.

In addition to designing P&O's successful Oriental Pavilion at the RNE, Collcutt also designed the interior spaces of a number of the company's vessels. Previous research has suggested that Collcutt worked on twelve ships for P&O between 1896 and 1903 but first-hand accounts show he worked for P&O from at least 1888 when he designed the saloon and drawing room on *Arcadia* (1888).³⁹⁵ Collcutt had worked for P&O's chairman Sir Thomas Sutherland as the architect of his Country House, Coldharbour Wood, in West Sussex from 1887³⁹⁶ (figs. 106 to 107) and a number of styles and themes from Sutherland's house also feature in Collcutt's on board designs. As an Arts and Crafts architect designing country houses for self-made industrialists like Sutherland, and as the architect chosen to design the *Imperial Institute* in South Kensington (figs. 108 and 109), Collcutt was an ideal choice of architect for P&O, socially, culturally and politically. Collcutt's distinctive neo-Renaissance approach to the language of Arts and Crafts design, and his experience

³⁹⁵ The NMM online catalogue suggests Collcutt began working for P&O in 1891, the year of the Royal Naval Exhibition [<http://collections.rmg.co.uk/collections/objects/20236.html>, accessed 23 July 2016]. Wealleans, *Designing Liners* pp. 31-32 dates Collcutt's on board designs for P&O from between 1896 and 1903. An article by a journalist aboard *Arcadia* launched in 1888, however, suggests Collcutt worked on earlier vessels and before the RNE commission. The report attributes the design of *Arcadia*'s saloon and drawing room to 'Mr T. Calcutt [sic], architect of the Imperial Institute.' Quoted in Padfield, *Beneath the House Flag*, pp. 52-53. This places the beginning of Collcutt's ship interior work for P&O to a year after the start of work on Sir Thomas Sutherland's country house, and a year after Collcutt won the competition for the design of the Imperial Institute.

³⁹⁶ Malcolm Sutherland, *Sir Thomas Sutherland: A Great Victorian* (Suffolk UK: Leiston Press, 2010). pp. 80-82.

of designing both private domestic and larger public and imperial buildings could be utilised to create the unusual blend of public-private space required on board ship.

The more private and domestic elements of Collcutt's design worked on two levels for P&O passengers. For the wealthier P&O passengers Collcutt's designs recalled the kinds of interior spaces they were familiar with and recognised from their own homes and lives in Britain. For passengers from more modest backgrounds the architecture was aspirational. For both groups the English Country House style created an implied inheritance of ancient aristocracy. This may have been particularly appealing to those passengers who were a part of the vastly expanded Victorian middle classes. With new wealth they sought to align themselves with the tastes and privileges of the older landed aristocracy, and at the same time distinguish themselves from the working class. One of the ways to achieve this alignment on land was in the realm of domestic architecture and furnishings³⁹⁷ and the same class tastes and tensions, divisions and aspirations found expression on board ship. In terms of large scale public architecture, Collcutt's association with official and iconic imperial buildings such as the *Imperial Institute* (1887-1891)³⁹⁸ signalled his place as a leading establishment architect, which would have been pleasing and gratifying to P&O's imperially minded passengers, aligning themselves with the institutional organs and cultural tastes of the Empire.

The first class Saloon on board *Himalaya* (1892) is an example of the gradual tightening and demarcation of ethnic spatial relations. Collcutt designed the First Class Saloon and its companionway, and the Sienese sculptor Carlo-Cambi, who had earlier

³⁹⁷ Girouard, 'The Moral House' in his *Life in the English Country House*, pp. 268-298.

³⁹⁸ The Imperial Institute was founded in 1887 on Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee and built on the site of the former Colonial and Indian Exhibition discussed in section 1 of this chapter. Figs. 108-109 show Collcutt's original building. Today only the Queen's tower of the institute remains, the bulk of the structure being demolished to make way for Imperial College in 1957.

worked on *Rome* (1881), provided the carved decoration on board, presumably to Collcutt's designs.³⁹⁹ A reporter in the *Rangoon Gazette* described the first class Saloon for the *Himalaya* (1892) and the stairs leading to it as 'absolutely works of art'.⁴⁰⁰ Of the Saloon the reporter writes, 'The walls and ceiling are white, and ornamented with carvings in relief of exquisitely-modelled heads and scrolls'⁴⁰¹ (fig. 110). P&O's historic imperial pretensions clearly created the right impression for the reporter: 'The state cabins are admirably fitted, and the lavatory, and especially the bath arrangements, have been carried out with a surpassing degree of luxury. The Romans might have been proud of the douches, sprays, and all the diversions of a modern Aqua Solis'.⁴⁰² The white plaster and carved relief style of the Saloon remained popular and was repeated in a number of other Collcutt vessels such as *Egypt* (1897) (fig. 111).

In the same way that the evolution of P&O's on board music room had cultural significance, so too did the evolution of P&O's smoking rooms. In the gradual tightening of the partition of cultural space described above, the smoking room – an all-male preserve – along with companionways⁴⁰³ and passageways was a site of Oriental imagination (figs. 105, and 112 to 115). On earlier P&O vessels men smoked on the hurricane deck and, if the weather was poor, were protected by nothing more than an awning. The evolution of a dedicated smoking room mirrors the emergence of smoking rooms within the Victorian country house. Girouard records that smoking had been out of fashion at the end of the eighteenth century but that it was revived as

³⁹⁹ P&O, 'The Three Himalayas 1853-1949' NMM/UEC Box 25.

⁴⁰⁰ 'The New *Himalaya*' *Rangoon Gazette*, 6 September 1892. No page numbers are available, however, please see an original copy of this newspaper report in NMM/P&O/65/155 Individual Ships: *Himalaya*: Miscellaneous material, 1892.

⁴⁰¹ 'The New *Himalaya*', n.p.

⁴⁰² 'The New *Himalaya*', n.p.

⁴⁰³ A Companion or Companionway is any stepped passageway on board ship used to move from one deck to another.

a result of Royal Patronage, in particular that of Prince Albert and Edward VII when Prince of Wales, both ‘inveterate cigar smokers.’⁴⁰⁴ Whilst there were still some who regarded smoking unfavourably, increasingly after mid-century smoking rooms started to appear in country houses rapidly becoming the most important features of Victorian houses.⁴⁰⁵ Girouard points to the interesting fact that smoking rooms were often highly decorated, with ‘Moorish style’ being a favourite choice.⁴⁰⁶ Impressive examples on board P&O’s vessels which featured De Morgan’s tiles included *Britannia* (1887); *Oceana* (1888); and *Arabia* (1898). Over the space of ten years these designs show a considerable rise in the prominence of Orientally inspired architectural features, the extent of patterning and ornamentation, and breadth of colour range. One of the most striking examples of DeMorgan’s tiles designs for P&O is the Galleon Tile Panel which was commissioned originally for P&O’s *Malta* (1896) and is now housed at the De Morgan Foundation (fig. 116).⁴⁰⁷

P&O’s on board imperial spaces may have been intended as fixed and absolute and there may have been a gradual tightening of spatial partitions, but a post-colonial re-reading shows evidence of a considerable spatial instability. In general P&O’s on board design at this time is concerned with creating a familiar and pleasing representation of home for the British Empire travelling public. However, there are complications to this comforting and controlled picture which may suggest something

⁴⁰⁴ Girouard, *Life in the English Country House*, p. 294.

⁴⁰⁵ Girouard, *Life in the English Country House*, p. 295.

⁴⁰⁶ Girouard, *Life in the English Country House*, p.297. In Victorian country houses Girouard cites another space in which the oriental imagination was sanctioned, the Billiards room. The obvious impracticality of billiards on board ship meant that these spaces did not evolve at sea. Other communal games and sports were however a very important part of imperial social and cultural life on board, and will be discussed in this chapter, section 4.3.

⁴⁰⁷ It is not entirely clear where in the vessel this panel was located. For further discussion of De Morgan’s work for P&O see ‘Galleon Tile Panel’ De Morgan Foundation, online article, [<http://www.demorgan.org.uk/collection/galleon-tile-panel>, accessed 25 July 2015] and Christopher Jordan, ‘Tile Panels by William De Morgan for the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigational Company’ *The Burlington Magazine*, 143: 1179 (June 2001), pp. 371-374.

of the complicated nature of colonial identity in relation to its other. In earlier vessels such as *Sutlej*, Oriental features do appear to migrate beyond the companionways and smoking room into the saloon and music room. In addition, there are also smaller everyday practices which make an absolute partition of space impossible. These include the display of tropical plants in oriental-inspired decorated ceramic pots (figs. 104, 118 and 119), vast oriental rugs and carpets and textiles (figs. 98, 99 and 117), decorated punkas (ceiling fans) (figs. 94 and 119), the company's celebrated curries, and the predominance of Asian over European staff employed by P&O.⁴⁰⁸ In each case these elements of oriental influence on life aboard ship existed in otherwise neo-classical and neo-renaissance, English Arts and Crafts spaces such as the ships' first class saloons and music rooms.

Collcutt's interior design and De Morgan's titles did not exist in a vacuum, and in this sense design is more than a set of objects to be measured and studied. P&O's design was interwoven with the daily lives of its passengers, and from this inter-relationship a particular a form of British imperial-corporate life evolved. The following section explores this inter-relationship through P&O's exploitation of new technologies of graphic reproduction, and the development of personal hand-held publications which imbued passengers with a collective and distinctively moral sense of imperial duty.

4. Illustrating the Imperial Body (c. 1888-98)

In the essay 'My Station and its Duties' published in his *Ethical Studies* of 1876, the British Idealist philosopher F. H. Bradley (1846-1924) outlined a picture of moral

⁴⁰⁸ There were greater numbers of Asian than European seamen working on board these vessels, however, it should be noted that, as a microcosm of Empire, the men at the top of the hierarchy organising the spaces and life within them, were always white and British.

philosophy. In his view, one is born into a station in one's life and there are certain duties defined by that station and one's flourishing is achieved in the realisation of those duties. This idea goes hand in hand with a corresponding view of the state. According to the contemporary political philosopher Jonathan Wolff, for Bradley, 'the state is not put together, but it lives; it is not a heap, nor a machine; it is no mere extravagance when a poet talks of the nation's soul'.⁴⁰⁹ In Bradley's view the metaphor of the body politic is taken very seriously: the state is like an organism made up of individual organs, and the individual organ is 'always at work for the whole'.⁴¹⁰ Wolff says 'your station and its duties are fixed as those of your own organs [...] your own duties are defined by your relation to society or the state as a whole. They are given to us, not created by our own actions.'⁴¹¹ In other words an individual can only be made real through the especially defined role the subject fulfils within a larger societal whole. Bradley's moral picture had widespread currency in Victorian Britain, and it can be applied to help explain the way in which the P&O community was bound together through a shared picture of duty and service to empire.

4.1 Souvenir Sketchbooks and Pocketbooks

In its corporate moral alignment with the larger imperial body, P&O was far from alone. Even apparently unconnected consumer products such as Eno's fruit salts encouraged the consumer (or imperial subject) to associate the company's products with rousing imperial ideologies and to identify in themselves the successes of the wider imperial project. An advertisement for Eno's in the *Illustrated Handbook* and

⁴⁰⁹ Jonathan Wolff, *Introduction to Political Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 200. For discussion of the influence of British Idealism across the British Empire and the United States see Will Sweet, 'British Idealism and its "Empire"', *Collingwood and British Idealism Studies*, 17: 1 (2011), pp. 7-36.

⁴¹⁰ Bradley quoted in Wolff, *Political Philosophy*, p. 200.

⁴¹¹ Wolff, *Political Philosophy*, p. 200.

Souvenir of the Royal Naval Exhibition (fig. 120), is boldly entitled ‘Nobility of life’ and its central theme is the absolute necessity of duty in one’s life and the forbearance of great suffering in its realisation. The advertisement quotes from a number of sources - historical, literary and royal - to show how Eno’s fruit salts prepare one for ‘the battle of this life’. The advert infuses a particular bodily feeling of revivification, brought about by ingesting the salts, to a proud moral-imperial conception of duty. This is helpful to contextualise P&O since Eno’s uses national maritime narratives in its advertising. The advert quotes the conditions laid down by Queen Victoria for the prize given by the Queen to the Marine cadets: ‘Cheerful Submission to Superiors ; self-respect and independence of Character ; Kindness and protection of the Weak ; Readiness to Forgive Offence ; A Desire to Conciliate the Differences of others ; and above all, Fearless Devotion to Duty and unflinching Truthfulness.’⁴¹² Perhaps the most famous moral call in British maritime history, and at this time one still in the collective cultural memory, was the signal sent by Nelson from the flagship HMS Victory as the Battle of Trafalgar was about to commence (1805): ‘England expects that every man will do his duty.’ This picture of heroic maritime service and self-sacrifice to nation (and empire) was repeatedly referred to in Victorian popular culture.⁴¹³ Although the world of P&O was quite different, more mundane, than the picture of Naval heroics inspired by representations of Nelson, the company nevertheless uses the more general idea of moral and religious duty, service and self-sacrifice and the greater imperial good, to underpin the representation of its on board community.

⁴¹² ‘Nobility of life’ Advertisement for Eno’s Fruit Salt. *Pall Mall Gazette, Illustrated Handbook and Souvenir, RNE*, p. 2.

⁴¹³ Nelson’s rousing call to duty featured, for instance, on flags and souvenirs at the RNE in 1891.

An entry in the minutes from the P&O Board Meeting, 31 October 1890, simply reads, ‘Resolved, that The Managing Directors be authorized to purchase the “Pencillings during a trip to India,” a specimen copy of which was submitted at this days Board.’⁴¹⁴ The *Pencillings During a Trip to India* was a sketchbook produced by the soldier-artist W. W. Lloyd while sailing on board P&O ships, mainly on board the *Arcadia* but also *Britannia*, between 1888 and 1890. The sketches were a sometimes humorous depiction of people, scenes and events which Lloyd encountered in his daily life on board ship. On his return, as the Board meeting minutes record, Lloyd sent a specimen copy of the sketches to P&O and the company purchased the sketchbook. In 1892 this was reproduced and published as *P&O Pencillings* (fig. 121). The sketches were well received and so popular that they were reproduced as a set of glass lantern slides (fig. 122).⁴¹⁵ A similar volume called *P&O Sketches* by the caricaturist Harry Furniss was published in 1898 (fig. 123).

Both books follow the same landscape format: hardback folios, 12 x 8¼ inches in size. Lloyd’s *Pencillings* contain a mixture of colour and black and white sketches, and include hand written and personal annotated observations of his encounters. There are also more formal and typed titles to the images. Furniss’ *Sketches* are black and white with red borders and accompanying typed text. The drawings are more caricatured in style than Lloyd’s. Both of these publications are consistent with the more general style of other works by the two artists such as Lloyd’s *Sketches of Indian Life* (1890) and Furniss’ satirical sketches for *Punch* (figs. 124 and 127).⁴¹⁶

⁴¹⁴ NMM/P&O/1/113, 31 October 1890.

⁴¹⁵ POH, ‘Pencillings’, online article [<http://www.poheritage.com/the-collection/galleries/Prints-and-Drawings/Pencillings>], accessed 21 July 2015].

⁴¹⁶ Lloyd’s own life was one lived within the military and maritime imperial world of late nineteenth century Britain. Lloyd may have been known to the company through his *Sketches of Indian Life* (1890, fig. 124) or his sketches of the Anglo-Zulu war of 1879 published in the *Illustrated London News*. Lloyd was a soldier in the 24th Foot Regiment and sailed to South Africa in July 1878 on board *S.S. Balmoral Castle* of the Castle Shipping Line. In 1896, after *P&O Pencillings*, Lloyd published a similar style of volume for the Union Shipping Line called *Union Jottings* (figs. 125 and 126). It is

The souvenir sketchbooks were unlike anything previously produced by the company either in form or content. The company had for a number of years produced passenger information booklets and a P&O Guide (in 1881) but these were formal and principally informative in intention and style. The sketchbooks' primary aim, however, was not to communicate information but to record and disseminate impressions of what life was actually like on board. In the introduction to his book, Furniss writes, 'The accompanying sketches do not profess to depict in any regular sequence the many interesting sights invariably to be witnessed during a voyage on a P. & O. steamer, but merely record the impressions of the Artist in a series of sketches, drawn on the spot, and illustrating any subject which appealed to him at the moment. ... the volume is presented, in the hope that it may afford some interest and amusement to the reader.'⁴¹⁷

In contrast to the highly ordered ship portraits and formal displays at national exhibitions, the sketchbooks are characterised by a striking new informality and joviality which was unprecedented in the previously more serious public face of the company. The first person nature of the sketched images by both Lloyd and Furniss does much to create the sense of the informal and personal, although the sketchbooks are no less official than any other corporate sanctioned image.

Kipling's *Exiles' Line*, with its stark representation of some of the more difficult realities faced by the company's colonial passengers, is a useful point of contrast to the informality and humour of the sketchbooks. For the colonial 'waifs of

also interesting to note Furniss' connections with the maritime sphere. Figure 127 is a sketch Furniss created for *Punch* at the Royal Naval Exhibition, Chelsea, 1891, where P&O's Oriental Pavilion featured. The sketch is amusingly called 'Horatio Larkins visits the Naval Exhibition' with a play on the domineering presence of the memory of Lord (Horatio) Nelson at the exhibition. It is possible that Furniss' name was known to the company from this time.

⁴¹⁷ Harry Furniss, *P&O Sketches in Pen and Ink*, (London: The Studio of Illustration, 1898), p. 3.

the land and wastrels of the sea’,⁴¹⁸ P&O’s publications suggest a good-humoured life on board which encourages a happier collective identification. The sketchbooks admit with frankness that the way of life can be difficult, including bouts of sea sickness and loneliness, but with humour and an uplifting picture of shared social and moral strength, the publications exemplify the way the everyday as much as the eternal bound the empire together. The remainder of this section will consider three ways in which a shared imperial-cultural framework is realised through the sketchbooks.

4.2 Stations and Duties

W. W. Lloyd’s sketch entitled ‘Some of the Passengers’ (fig. 128) shows the range of passengers found on a P&O ship at the end of the nineteenth century and it is clear that the majority were connected either directly or indirectly with the activities of the Empire. The sketch bears out F. A. Hook’s later claim that ‘every P&O passenger list is a mosaic of British activities, official and unofficial, in the vast and populous regions of the Eastern seas.’⁴¹⁹ Lloyd depicts the missionary going to China; the ‘Subaltern’ (or British junior army officer) returning to India from leave; the naval officer; the successful colonialist; ‘two little New Zealanders’; emigrants bound for Melbourne. There are also some humorous depictions of two unhappy babies described as ‘our foghorns’. There was an implicit hierarchy and snobbishness amongst the different groups of passengers. The majority of travellers on P&O during this period were first class who often considered themselves superior to emigrant passengers. Even within the select and privileged group of first class passengers there was a perceived order. This followed naval and military hierarchy and so the generals

⁴¹⁸ Kipling, *The Exiles Line*, verse 15 line 2.

⁴¹⁹ F. A. Hook, *Merchant Adventurers* (London: A & C Black, 1920), p. 38.

and colonels were held in higher esteem than the officers. At the bottom of this select group were the young women, almost always disparagingly referred to as ‘the fishing fleet’ because they were viewed solely in terms of their quest for a husband.⁴²⁰

The company’s *Pocket Books* (first published 1888) were designed to introduce P&O’s history and its current operations to passengers, but they are also clearly concerned to demonstrate the dutiful character of the company. Extracts from the ‘Book of Regulations’ were reprinted in the Pocket Books. These pages consisted of a list of the official roles on board, each providing a detailed breakdown of the attendant duties. The Commander’s role shows him to be the sole authority on board, and that he is responsible for ensuring ‘the proper and efficient discharge of duties by the several Officers of all departments’.⁴²¹

Lloyd’s ‘in the Red Sea – the Morning Wash’ (fig. 129) shows the regulations in action as Lascars wash a ship’s decks. In the regulations we read under the heading ‘Discipline’: ‘The operations necessary for Washing Decks at sea are not to commence before 6 a.m. All the available strength of the crew is at once to be devoted to the quarter-deck, so as to ensure it shall be clean and dry for passengers in good time, and, as a general rule, the Decks fore and aft should be finished and swabbed down by 8 a.m.’ It is noticeable that the Lascars are watched over by a British officer whose presence embodies the Foucauldian idea of panopticism – the omnipresent disciplinary gaze.⁴²² In this instance the officers’ gaze enacts a colonial authority. The reprinting of the company’s *Regulations* in passenger hand books suggests a similar interpretation where ‘inspection functions ceaselessly’ and ‘the gaze is alert

⁴²⁰ Lloyd’s notes next to the sketch of one young woman reads ‘Quiet but dangerous’ and another ‘one of our flirts’.

⁴²¹ *P&O Pocket Book*, (1888), p. 61.

⁴²² Michel Foucault, ‘Panopticism’, in his *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vantage, 1995), chapter 3, pp. 195-228.

everywhere.⁴²³ By publically defining and disseminating company regulations, roles and duties, passengers are inculcated into the disciplinary gaze, encouraged to partake in a culture of permanent surveillance (fig. 130).⁴²⁴

Other images display the variety of jobs undertaken on board and the range of people undertaking them. These include dock-side baggage handlers, sailors dealing with rigging and hauling, stewards organising and administering dock departure, officers ‘taking the sun’ and ‘heaving the log’ (figs. 131 and 132).⁴²⁵ Below deck, and at the other end of the hierarchy from the Commander, is a group of men referred to as the ‘seedies’ or ‘seedy boys’ from East Africa and who worked in the stokehole (fig. 133). Very little is recorded in company archives and literature about these men, although as indicated above, there were corporate instructions about how to keep a proper subordination.⁴²⁶ They worked shovelling coal into the furnaces to power the ships in what must have been the worst conditions of anyone aboard. If Kipling’s British exiles suffered difficult working lives it must be remembered that from the perspective of the men of the stokehole they lived lives of unimaginable and unobtainable privilege and luxury. The seedies had no (recorded) poet to publicise and sympathise with their appalling working conditions. Their representation without comment in Lloyd’s sketchbook indicates that the working conditions, and the lives

⁴²³ Foucault, ‘Panopticism’, p. 196.

⁴²⁴ Howarth and Howarth note what they describe as the deluge of written instruction continually sent to Commanders, Chief Officers, Chief Engineers and Pursers, informing them of their duties, what they should expect from their juniors and how to behave in terms of keeping order. Chief Engineers were advised: ‘you must keep a proper subordination by not mixing too freely or familiarly with [the stokers], but at the same time you should be careful to avoid harshness or any appearance of overbearing severity’. P&O, Circular to Chief Engineers (date unknown), quoted in Howarth and Howarth, *The Story of P&O*, p. 59.

⁴²⁵ In ‘taking the sun’ officers took a reading of the angle of the sun’s elevation in the sky enabling the ship’s location to be inferred. ‘Heaving the log’, was a way of measuring a ship’s progress through the water.

⁴²⁶ In addition to the ‘seedies’ from Africa there were also a limited number of British stokers who, reports show, were more difficult to control and discipline. See Howarth and Howarth, *The Story of P&O*, p. 59.

of the men more generally, can hardly have concerned the company or its passengers at the time.⁴²⁷ From the perspective of those higher up the imperial ladder theirs was just another job in the continually spinning wheel of empire. Judging from contemporary accounts ‘seedies’ were rarely seen by passengers, generally being confined to their punishing duties below decks. When they are referred to or drawn (fig. 134) it is usually on inspection day when they became aestheticised objects:

Though on six days out of the seven they are clothed but in apologies for dress, on Sunday they outvie the deck hands in the purity of their white garments, and added to this their gorgeously embroidered waistcoats and turbans render them particularly striking and picturesque objects. These Seedie ‘boys’ – who, by-the-by, are not boys but grown men – are a rollicking happy, merry lot of fellows, and heartily enjoy a joke...⁴²⁸

Lloyd and Furniss’ illustration of the various roles and duties carried out on board represent on one level the structured and disciplined service of the P&O staff to the passengers, the principal readers of the publications. On a different level, however, the representation of moral duty and self-sacrifice can also be understood as an allegory for the structured and regular functioning of the wider imperial system within which P&O’s staff and passengers together served.

4.3 Performing the Imperial Body

⁴²⁷ There is less recorded and written about this group than the Lascars from India who have themselves only recently become the subject of scholarly research. See Ceri-Anne Fiedler’s thesis *Lascars, c. 1850-1950: The Lives and Identities of Indian Seafarers in Imperial Britain and India*, (unpublished doctoral thesis, Cardiff University, 2011). This includes discussion of records of P&O’s Lascars. See also Finch-Boyer, ‘Lascars through the colonial lens’ which discusses the representation of Lascars mainly in P&O’s twentieth century interwar publicity photography.

⁴²⁸ Furniss, *P&O Sketches in Pen and Ink*, p. 8.

‘Muster’ on Sunday morning is quite a sight to be remembered, when the whole of the Crew, European and Native with the exception of the few immediately engaged in the navigation of the ship, turn out in their ‘Sunday best’ and ‘toe the line’ on the upper deck. [...] ⁴²⁹

In his famous essay Raymond Williams argued that culture is ‘ordinary’. ⁴³⁰ For Williams this meant that a bus stop could be as much a source of serious cultural interest as the Cathedral it sits outside. In P&O’s case, the company’s imperial culture was realised in the performance of everyday life on board its ships as much as in its official displays of maritime power and prestige at Naval Reviews and national exhibitions. These on board performances were of varying kinds and ranged from the formal ‘Parade’ or ‘Muster’ on Sunday mornings to the informal passenger organized games, entertainments and social events.

Both Furniss and Lloyd depict The Sunday Parade or Muster and Lloyd also illustrates ‘Divine Service in the Saloon’ which followed (figs 134 to 137). The Regulations stated that ‘The Crew are to be mustered in clean clothes, and inspected by the Commander every Sunday’ and ‘Divine Service is to be held on board the Company’s ships every Sunday – if omitted, the reason is to be stated in the Log Book.’ ⁴³¹ There was also a daily inspection of all parts of the ship at 11 a.m. undertaken by The Commander, accompanied by the Chief Officer, Surgeon, Purser, or Steward-in-Charge.

The inspections obviously have a practical purpose but they were also carried out as a performance and they became a part of the regular functioning and

⁴²⁹ Unnamed author, ‘En Route by An Old Traveller’ in *P&O Pocket Book* 2nd edn., (London: P&O, 1899), pp. 35-44. This ref., p. 39. A copy can be found in NMM/P&O/91/21/2.

⁴³⁰ Raymond Williams, ‘Culture is Ordinary’ in his *Resources of Hope: Culture, Democracy, Socialism* (London : Verso, 1989 [1958]), pp. 3-14, reprinted in Ben Highmore (ed.), *The Everyday Life Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), chapter 9, pp. 91-100.

⁴³¹ *P&O Pocket Book*, (1888), p. 63-4.

organisation of the ships. Inspection served to display and re-enforce the hierarchy of the ship, the control of the various officers and the ultimate power of the Commander. It also served to represent the standards of the company as a whole. At this point it may be helpful to recall that P&O was at root a commercial organisation with, in one sense, ordinary civilians on board. These were not vessels of the Royal Navy and yet the order and display of power was akin to naval or military inspections. Indeed, the Sunday parade was adopted from naval tradition. In these instances, visual performance and institutional ordering went hand in hand. Furniss writes:

Life on board a P&O steamer is one continual round of pictures kaleidoscopic in its quick change and variety of colour. Perhaps no scene is more typical or picturesque than the weekly parade [...] the Carpenter, the 'Bo'sun' and the Gunners and so on down to the Lascar crew, who appear in pure white, with red turbans bound around their curious straw hats, and with sashes around their waists. Backed by the deep blue of the Mediterranean Sea, they present a picture not easily forgotten.⁴³²

Parade was not merely a performance internal to the ships' crew, rather it was a celebrated public display of order, which passengers witnessed and thoroughly enjoyed. The performance represented a microcosm of the complicated hierarchical functioning of the wider Empire.⁴³³

Lloyd's drawing of *Divine Service* (fig. 137) shows passengers seated in the saloon, and as in naval tradition, congregating about a make-shift lectern consisting of a cushion draped in the Union Jack and on which the bible rested. Also shown is a

⁴³² Furniss, *P&O Sketches*, p. 6.

⁴³³ Lloyd depicts other military like performances such as the call to breakfast, tiffin and dinner which was ceremoniously called out by a uniformed crew member with a bugle (fig. 138). According to Yule and Coke Burnell 'Tiffin' was an Anglo-Indian and Hindustani term meaning luncheon: 'I was tiffing with him one day, when the subject turned on the sagacity of elephants...' John Shipp cited in Yule and Coke Burnell, *Hobson-Jobson*, pp. 700-1.

piano (or harmonium) to accompany the singing of hymns. The service was normally carried out by the Commander or, as appears to be the case in this image, a member of the clergy, perhaps travelling to India as a missionary. Although the focus of discussion so far has been on the more general moral picture of life on board, the doctrines of self-sacrifice and duty were also fully rooted within Victorian Christian theology. As Edwin Arnold's diary makes clear, P&O's Divine Service in the imperialist's imagination exemplifies the very fabric of empire. The extraordinary image Arnold conjures below demonstrates something of the world-view of empire as divinely organised, inspired and sanctioned. It represents the experience of an imperial sublime in contrast to the everyday drudgery faced by Kipling's exiles:

There are few religious functions, I think, more impressive than a service on the open waters in the saloon of such as vessel... the table draped with the Union Jack; the hymnals all 'coiled down' against the moment when the harmonium shall resound; ... the Captain himself, gallant and solemn his hair sable-silvered, [...]; the long rows of beautiful or gentle and highbred feminine faces, of brave and dutiful English gentlemen bound on the service of the Queen or the honourable toils of business abroad – all these assembled upon the bosom of the great deep for worship combine into a noble picture of British gravity and veneration. [...] the harmonium touched by skilful fingers, leads off a song of pious praise, and the sound of a hundred blended voices passes with the wind over the blue expanse upon which we are speeding. [...] the punkahs waving to and fro, the Indian boys at the window in snow-white garments and scarlet turbans, dreamily working them; the beat of the tireless screw; the hiss of sweeping seas; [...] and the ship's bell striking the watches furnish elements of grace, colour and incident to our little floating church, which deepen the solemn effect when the Captain's voice is heard praying for the peace and

welfare of the Queen and that glorious British Empire of which we are here a small, moving, isolated fragment...⁴³⁴

A distinct but not unconnected set of practices came in the form of on board games and sporting activities. The imperial historian J. A. Mangan's has shown how in British public schools from the 1850s sport and athleticism were intentionally developed as modes of social and behavioural control. By the 1880s Mangan argues that these formed part of a full blown ideology, complete with its characteristic rituals and symbols, its own literature and heroic stereotypes. Another imperial historian, John Mackenzie, argues that sports in Victorian schools became the prime medium for the development of group and institutional loyalties,'... the courage, 'character', fair play and self-control developed on the games field were seen as essential to the moulding of a ruling race.'⁴³⁵ The familiar and more idiosyncratic sports and games devised by P&O passengers and depicted in Lloyd and Furniss certainly helped passengers to identify themselves as 'P&O's':

I have heard people aver that travelling on a steamer is like living in a 1st class Hotel, but until someone can take me to a Hotel where the guests enjoy egg and spoon races, put the eye in the pig and indulge in 'Are you there Mike?' on the floor of the lounge I prefer to consider a sea voyage incomparably the more interesting.⁴³⁶

Drawing on the arguments of Mangan and Mackenzie, P&O's games and sports not only enact corporate and institutional loyalties but also performed and encouraged

⁴³⁴ Edwin Arnold travelling in P&O's *Parramatta* in 1886, quoted in Padfield, *Beneath the House Flag*, p. 69-70.

⁴³⁵ Mackenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, p. 229.

⁴³⁶ L. St Clare Grondona, *The Kangaroo Keeps on Talking* quoted in Padfield, *Beneath the House Flag*, p. 45.

imperial 'character' and virtues of participation, competitiveness and fair-play which were widely admired. Lloyd's picture entitled 'Cricket' shows the 'tap and run' version of the game played on board. The sketch entitled 'Sport's, or A P. & O. Race Meeting' shows some of the more idiosyncratic entertainments 'the water jump'; 'the barrels' and 'cock-fighting' (figs. 139 and 140). There were numerous such games devised by passengers each with their own intricate rules.

Lloyd illustrates a scene in the all-male smoking room (fig. 141) and further recollections from Edwin Arnold indicate the imperially infused conversations that took place there:

Conversations in the saloon and in the smoking room with us takes oftentimes an imperial and administrative tone. A military group gathers about a general officer who bore part in the second Burmese War and had interesting personal experiences to give of Mandalay, Rangoon, King Theebaw and the River Irrawaddy. Irrigation in India and the merits of the rival railway gauges absorb another knot of civil engineers. From another cool nook of our ever speeding steamer, where Indian shikaris⁴³⁷ are collected, float fragments of animated chat about jungle and forest; talk of the man eating tiger and the charging bison, while the merits of the Express rifle and different forms of the blade of a hog spear are keenly discussed [...].⁴³⁸

Gender played as much of a role in imperial identity as the representation of a racial other. To contextualise this, in a P&O privately circulated publication called *The*

⁴³⁷ According to Yule and Coke Burnell *Shikar* means sport in the sense of shooting and hunting. The related term *Shikaree* or *Shekarry* is a sportsman so engaged. The latter could be applied to a native expert or as in this case to European hunters: 'May I ask what has brought you to India, Mr Cholmondeley? Did you come out for shikar, eh?', from Trevelyan, *The Dawk Bungalow*, cited in Yule and Coke Burnell, *Hobson-Jobson*, p. 626.

⁴³⁸ Diary of Edwin Arnold travelling in P&O's *Parramatta* in 1886 quoted in Padfield, *Beneath the House Flag*, p. 74.

Himalaya Observer, we find the view that, in newspaper reading habits, men will probably be ‘centred in matters political, or connected with the business of daily life’ and women ‘may follow the latest styles and fashion in dress, or she may even show great interest in the list of sacrifices at the hymeneal altar...’.⁴³⁹ Elsewhere in *The Himalaya Observer*, we read of a debate that took place on 27 April 1896 asking ‘Should the Franchise be Extended to Women?’. Perhaps not surprisingly given the discussion so far, we read that ‘After a fairly good and interesting debate, a show of hands resulted in favour of the negative.’

Finally, it is important to integrate the discussion of formal and informal social behaviours as represented in P&O publications of the time, with that of P&O’s interior design outlined in section three. Understanding these together demonstrates the way in which life-as-lived and on board design conspired in imperial culture. The classically and by contrast orientally inspired spaces found in P&O’s saloons, music rooms and smoking rooms generate a sympathetic cultural environment, an appropriate sense of imperial place, which could nurture, inspire and sustain such politically loaded performances and conversations of imperial politics, administration and tiger shooting.

4.4 Humour and Harmony

Throughout the scenes depicted in both Lloyd’s and Furniss’ accounts, humour plays a central, perhaps defining role, in the general tone of the publications. This along with the informal nature of the artistic medium of ‘sketches’, and the first person perspective of the visual narrative, creates a very personal and intimate portrait of life

⁴³⁹ *The Himalaya Observer*, p. 3. (Hymeneal meaning of or pertaining to a wedding or marriage).

on board. Each of these features engages passenger-readers on an individual but also a communal level.

Humour functions successfully when it forges a level of consensus and community. It can create community by subversion, satirising events or prevailing attitudes and perceptions. A cartoon from *Punch*, 26 February 1875, for example, poked fun at the political deals made behind closed doors, when Disraeli bought Khedive Ismael's shares in the Suez Canal making Britain the largest single shareholder (fig. 142). Humour can also build consensus and community by gently mocking social habits and convention and yet, in so doing, re-assert and re-enforce the existing order. This is the role that humour plays in P&O's sketchbooks.

Despite the huge improvement P&O had made in the comfort and speed of its vessels, two weeks was still a long time to spend at sea⁴⁴⁰ and issues such as rolling ships, seasickness, limited space, stifling hot weather and boredom were testing for passengers. As with the underlying cultural ideology of games and music concerts, the use of humour in the sketchbooks reveals and re-enforces an implicit imperial world-view. Harry Furniss' sketch entitled 'Baggage day' (fig. 143) represents an occasion when passengers could request baggage be brought up from the hold in order to change clothes or retrieve other desired personal items. Furniss represents a woman travelling first class (judging by her elaborate dress and hat), who, according to Furniss, insists every baggage day that each and every piece of her baggage be brought up on deck, only to count them and have them returned. We see the lady leaning down to instruct the 'long –suffering fifth officer and his assistant upon whom this duty devolved'. Furniss shows but does not mention the lascars, struggling with the baggage in the

⁴⁴⁰ The second edition of P&O's *Pocket Book* from 1898 records fourteen days as the average time taken to travel from London to Bombay, this was down from twenty-three days in 1873. P&O, *P&O Pocket Book* (1898), p. 24.

background. Although the intention is clear - to laugh gently at the situation, the demanding women, the long suffering officer and lascars - it only serves to legitimise the existing gendered, social and ethnic hierarchies. The layering and inter-relationship of ethnic, class, age and gendered hierarchies within empire is complicated as there is no single and unchanging order. Different attributes from any grouping may have created different perceptions of status according to who is asking or looking. In this case, the white male officer trumps the male Asian lascars, but is subordinate to the white female first class passenger. However, in a sense, female status in the image is undercut by an assumed male practical rationality which represents her as, although first class, a vain and selfish woman wasting (male) time and resources.⁴⁴¹

Lloyd's 'More Board-Ship Hints' (figs. 144 and 145) warns a young man stepping onto his cabin mate below, 'Look before you leap when getting out of the top bunk'. As with 'Baggage Day' the hierarchy on board is a source of humour as the younger officer waves a foot in the senior man's face. On the same page gender returns to play a role in the drawing of a man with a bewildered expression on his face, standing in his pyjamas, and greeted by a woman with her arms folded and clearly not amused. The caption reads, 'See that you don't go into the wrong cabin when returning from your morning tub' (fig. 146).

Lloyd's 'Off Ushant' (fig. 147) is less about hierarchy than adherence to social code and convention even in the most difficult of circumstances. It depicts a man and separately a woman trying to dress for dinner in particularly unsettled seas. The man cuts himself shaving and the woman has dishevelled hair. Both fall victim to the rough

⁴⁴¹ For discussion of how ideologies of race and sex interact within the language and imagery of Nineteenth century Empire, see Joanna De Groot "'Sex" and "race": the construction of language and image in the nineteenth century', reprinted in Catherine Hall (ed.), *Cultures of empire: A reader*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 37-60.

and unpredictable seas but persevere and ‘make-do’. Other similar examples include ‘Down Channel’ (fig. 148) where we meet Jones and Smith who battle with sea sickness at the dinner table, and in ‘Chair Hunting’ (fig. 149) a man perseveres to secure a chair for a woman when the stack of chairs seem to be in an impossible mess. These representations of individual events ostensibly witnessed by the artist, are also clearly allegories of more general moral lessons concerning politeness, manners, social standards and decorum, often playing on social and gendered identities.

The sketchbooks help the company articulate and maintain a strong social fabric, beneficial to the smooth running of life on board, they fulfil the role of being attractive souvenirs which passengers and staff would find appealing and act as useful forms of informal publicity for the company at a time of increased competition. The humour and the informal tone and illustrative format of the publications also speak on a more personal level to staff, passengers and public. On a different level, the sketchbooks also function by representing a shared corporate and imperial cultural framework within which the P&O’s largely empire orientated passengers identify. Examples encapsulate a set of moral ideals which facilitate not only daily life on board but the wider empire and indeed life itself: the willing acceptance of hierarchy and one’s ‘station’ in life, self-sacrifice and the happy fulfilment of duty, full participation and sportsmanship, religious observance, and good humour in the face of adversity.

Conclusion

Between 1870 and 1903 P&O’s imperial narrative expanded greatly but it also significantly evolved in tone and content, illustrating the case for the pervasiveness but also the differentiated nature of imperial culture and identity in Britain towards the end of the nineteenth century. Chapter one argued that from its foundation in 1837

P&O had exploited a wide variety of art, design and display to create a corporate vision characterised by elevated public, national and imperial goals beyond narrow commercial self-interest. As the nineteenth century progressed, however, P&O's use of art, design and display greatly increased to articulate and promulgate its expanding strategic role within the communication, transport and defence networks of the British Empire. Moreover, during the period in which P&O's reputation as the empire line became firmly established, its corporate art, design and display played a greater constitutive role in forming a distinctive imperial-maritime culture which flourished in the spaces of mobility across and between Britain and its Empire.

In this period, P&O's paintings, exhibitions, interior design, corporate souvenirs, publications and wider policies and practices, furnished the everyday life of the company and its passengers with 'soft' but nonetheless persuasive imperial power. Beyond its formal agreements with the British Admiralty and Government, the day-to-day life of the company, on shore and at sea, was furnished with the political, social, moral and aesthetic fabric of British imperial-maritime culture.

In the context of P&O's increasing role in imperial defence, constructing its vessels as auxiliary armed cruisers, the company's ship portraits and their reproductions in brochures, advertising and on thousands of postcards travelling around the world, can be understood in terms of the role they played in picturing and patrolling the British Empire's maritime highway to India. To reliability and romanticism of the early ship portraits must certainly be added the 'terrible beauty' and power of P&O's fighting capabilities.

In the middle of the nineteenth century many in Britain had taken the nation's maritime supremacy for granted but as the century grew older there were increasing concerns that this was being seriously challenged by France and Russia and, after

1900, by Germany. P&O's increased role in official imperial and maritime events between 1870-1903 included: as exhibitor and official host for colonial ambassadors to the Colonial and Indian Exhibition (1886); as official transportation at the high profile Royal Naval Reviews (1887; 1889; 1897 and 1902); and its notable Pavilion in the grounds of the Royal Naval Exhibition in 1891. These events, among others,⁴⁴² helped to celebrate, consolidate and publically promote the furtherance of P&O's corporate-imperial status.

More than a purely symbolic or formal contractual relationship with Empire, the interior design of P&O's vessels during this period, also demonstrate the everyday and lived-aspects of P&O's corporate-imperial culture. In contrast to its earlier ships, on which the provision of basic physical comfort and necessity was the main concern, as the nineteenth century progressed P&O's interior design showed increasing concern with creating a culturally secure and comfortable environment for its largely British Empire travelling public. On one level, the interior design of its vessels in this period display an increasing partition of cultural space, between those such as the classically inspired first-class saloons and music rooms, and the carefully sanctioned oriental spaces of the smoking-rooms and companion ways. On another level, however, the absolute partitioning of cultural space proved impossible. Within these dynamics can be detected a deep seated colonial ambivalence and anxiety which will increase dramatically during the following inter-war period.

P&O exploited new techniques of reproduction to create and disseminate imperial ephemera such as corporate souvenirs and guide books. These everyday items circulated in and out of the lives of P&O's passengers and the wider public,

⁴⁴² Unfortunately there has not been enough room to discuss every instance of P&O's public display, such as its Pavilion at the internationally prestigious Exposition Universelle in Paris, 1900.

articulating a sense of corporate historical place, but also helping to express and re-enforce a broad, social and moral corporate imperial culture. These attitudes and beliefs included: the willing acceptance of formal and informal hierarchies and the idea of one's stations and duties; full participation and sportsmanship; religious observance and good humour in the face of adversity. These not only exemplified a localised on board culture and corporate ideology, but acted as allegories for participation and identification with the Empire at large.

At the very beginning of the twentieth century the developments in P&O's practices of corporate art, design and display outlined in this chapter had given cultural shape to the company's now powerful and firmly established reputation as 'the Empire line'. In the next period from 1903 to 1945 the British Empire reaches its greatest geographical extent and the P&O itself becomes the largest shipping company in the world. However, also emerging will be serious questions about what the proper nature of the British Empire in the twentieth century should be and uncertainty too about its long term prospects in any form, so how would P&O respond?

Chapter Four: Back to an Imperial Future (1904-1945)

Introduction

The rise of the Modern Movement has been one of the dominant means of exploring the history of twentieth century art and design in Britain and the theme of modernism at sea has also been employed as a powerful means of exploring the evolution of ocean liner design.⁴⁴³ In the case of P&O, however, this approach pre-emptively excludes much of the company's art and design and fails to appreciate the way in which more conservative alternatives to modernism retained widespread appeal in Britain throughout the inter-war period.

In a Modernist story of art and design, the First World War might be proposed as a turning point. Whereas the Edwardian period retained many of the attitudes and values of Victorian Britain, the terrible experiences of trench warfare and the mechanised death and destruction of the First World War persuaded many to reject the old order and embrace the principles of the modern and progressive *l'Esprit Nouveau*. This kind of argument, however, needs to be tempered by the acknowledgement of quite different stories unfolding at the same time.

In his discussion of English painting⁴⁴⁴ between 1914 and 1930, for instance, David Peters Corbett has argued that questions about the nature and status of English Modernism can only be resolved by moving beyond concern with stylistic distinctions and the radical polarisation of modernism and other practices. Instead he proposes a spectrum of complex practice, from the radical modernist avant-garde at one extreme to those whose concerns were essentially pre-avant-garde. For Peters Corbett this

⁴⁴³ Philip Dawson and Bruce Peter, *Ship Style: Modernism and Modernity at Sea in the 20th Century* (London: Conway, 2010).

⁴⁴⁴ English and British are not used indiscriminately or interchangeably here: Peters Corbett's study focuses explicitly on English painting.

enables discussion of modernist and other practices without prescribing an art that should have existed but did not.⁴⁴⁵ In discussion of British design of the 1920s, Jonathan Woodham (writing in 1980) argues that while the emergence of the modern movement has often been the focus of study, other factors such as indifference on the part of British government, manufacturer and consumer to modernism, and a deep rooted belief that the Empire rather than Europe would secure Britain's future economic prosperity, help explain the unique state of British design in the interwar period.⁴⁴⁶ In the case of liner design too, Walmesley and Wealleans have in different ways questioned an unqualified modernist narrative. Walmesley focuses on the design process, and the relationship and conflicts between designers and corporate commissioners of design, together with ideas about the design market, which, she argues, influenced the appearance of the interior spaces of Cunard's Queen Mary (launched 1936).⁴⁴⁷ Wealleans suggests more broadly that whilst it is tempting to see ocean liner interior design of the 1930s as a battle of styles 'reforming modernism and intransigent periodization',⁴⁴⁸ any shifts that occurred were gradual. Wealleans also argues that other factors, such as the theme of national identities, and the emergence of the figure of the interior designer as a professional person in his or her own right, are equally significant to the understanding of liner design during this period.⁴⁴⁹

⁴⁴⁵ David Peters Corbett, *The Modernity of English Art 1914-30* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1997), introduction, pp. 1-24.

⁴⁴⁶ Another reason Woodham identifies to help explain the state of British design in 1920s is the relative ineffectiveness of bodies such as the Design Industries Association and the British Institute of Industrial Art in comparison with European bodies such as the Deutsche Werkbund in Germany.

⁴⁴⁷ Fiona Walmesley, 'Pragmatism and Pluralism: the interior decoration of the Queen Mary' in Susie McKellar and Penny Sparke (eds.), *Interior design and identity* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2004), chapter 8, pp. 155-173.

⁴⁴⁸ Anne Wealleans (née Massey), *Designing Liners*, p. 103.

⁴⁴⁹ Wealleans, *Designing Liners*, pp.73-135. See also Anne Massey, 'Nationalism and Design at the End of Empire: Interior design and the ocean liner', in Penny Sparke, Anne Massey, Trevor Keeble, and Brenda Martin (eds.), *Designing the Modern Interior From the Victorians to Today* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2009), pp. 207-216.

Rather than pursuing a singular modernist trajectory therefore, this chapter examines how P&O fashioned what it saw as a distinctively modern identity for itself but one which was wedded to its long established imperial identity. Thus the chapter examines how P&O's modern twentieth century identity was in large part an extension and re-articulation of its nineteenth century imperial experience: it examines how the company looked back to an imperial future. The chapter also draws on debates in post-colonial studies to argue that despite this period being in many ways the height of P&O's imperial narrative, its art and design reveals underlying tensions and anxieties as much as it does an all-powerful hegemony.

1. Modern Publicity and Imperial-Maritime Tradition (1904-1918)

The Imperial Historian John MacKenzie suggests that the Edwardian age was a transitional period in which characteristics from the past survived into a time of considerable change. MacKenzie says that while it is often described as: 'the climax of the "long nineteenth century," as a final "Indian summer" of the social mores and political tone of the Victorian Era,' it has also been seen as a time of: 'palpable change'.⁴⁵⁰ The first section of this chapter traces this dual aspect through the continuation and re-formulation of P&O's imperial narrative until the First World War. It examines both traditional representational forms such as ships portraits and newer modes of publicity such modern cruising brochures, fleet booklets, and photographic publicity albums.

⁴⁵⁰ John M. MacKenzie, 'General Editor's Introduction', in Daniel Gorman, *Imperial Citizenship Empire and the Question of Belonging* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), p. xv.

1.1 F. A. Hook: Publicity Building on History (from 1904)

P&O's first publicity department was established in 1904, the same year as the company's first regular cruising programme began. Prior to this there had been a Printing Office⁴⁵¹ and Advertising and Stationary Department⁴⁵² since at least 1893. The first distinct Publicity Department annual report appears on 31 October 1905 showing that the department was founded on 31 October 1904.⁴⁵³ It was Sir Thomas Sutherland who, as Chairman of P&O, asked Mr. Frederick Arthur Hook (1864-1935): 'to "create" a Publicity Department.'⁴⁵⁴ (for a photograph of Hook see fig. 150). Under Sutherland's instruction and Hook's leadership, the department gradually employed the modern language and techniques of design and publicity and yet consistently blended this modern medium with traditional and historical styles and references. Both modernity and maritime tradition were employed side by side to lend different kinds of authority to P&O's corporate identity, eventually raising its imperial narrative to a propagandistic height in the interwar years.

Hook's professional background helps explain the nature of P&O's publicity as shaped by him until his death in 1935. He was not from an explicitly artistic or design background but had worked in various roles for P&O since 1889. Immediately prior to his role in publicity Hook had been Head of the Officers Department⁴⁵⁵ and so he was already a company man. He typified the reliable romanticism which had historically characterised P&O's aesthetic tradition. An assiduous, loyal and dedicated

⁴⁵¹ The company's departmental annual reports first record a printing office in 1893. See NMM/P&O/4/3 Departmental Annual Reports, 1893.

⁴⁵² Records from the 1902 departmental reports show that an Advertising and Stationary Department had existed since at least 1897. See NMM/P&O 4/11 Departmental Annual Reports, 1902.

⁴⁵³ NMM/P&O/4/12 Departmental Annual Reports, 1904-5.

⁴⁵⁴ NMM/P&O/4/21 Departmental Annual Reports, 1914-15.

⁴⁵⁵ 'Mr. F. A. Hook: Founder of the "Blue Peter"', obituary, *The Times*, 27 June 1935, p. 18.

worker,⁴⁵⁶ Hook had a romantic attachment to the sea, and specifically a romantic attachment to the history, adventure and achievement, as he saw it, of Britain's relationship with the sea. A colleague recalled: 'Through the many interests of his busy life [...] the call of the sea ran like an undertone. It sang in his mind and would not let him be [...]'⁴⁵⁷ This picture of a man devoted to his work through personal experience is echoed in *The Times* obituary which noted that Hook was: 'one of those fortunate men whose work accorded with his desires, so that it became a hobby and well as a duty.'⁴⁵⁸

In 1907 the publicity department produced a new type of publication: an illustrated *Fleet Book* (fig. 151). At the time of its publication Hook records that the booklet: 'excited much favourable comment in the press [...]'⁴⁵⁹ Hook also shows how copies of the *Fleet Book* were distributed, mostly through 'foreign agencies' around the world, but also with provincial agencies and hotels in Britain and Ireland with which P&O had recently established a regular arrangement.⁴⁶⁰ This suggests the new fleet books were designed to appeal to a wide variety of (wealthy) passengers, P&O's regular liner passengers, new cruise holiday passengers and those interested in round

⁴⁵⁶ It was reported that Hook: 'possessed above all things an infinite capacity for taking pains. Few men ever wooed perfection more untiringly. For long years he was among the first to reach his City office in the morning, and among the last to leave it when the day's work was done', and that: 'No trouble was ever too much for Hook to take where the interests of the P. & O. were concerned.' See, unknown author (signed 'C. E. C.'), 'In Memory of Frederick Arthur Hook Late Editor of "The Blue Peter"', *The Blue Peter*, 15 (1935); and 'Mr. F. A. Hook: Founder of the "Blue Peter"', obituary, *The Times*, 27 June 1935, p. 18.

⁴⁵⁷ 'C.E.C', 'In Memory of Frederick Arthur Hook. Also see NMM/P&O/96/1.

⁴⁵⁸ 'Mr. F. A. Hook', *The Times*, 27 June 1935, p. 18.

⁴⁵⁹ NMM/P&O/4/14 Publicity Department Annual Report, Departmental Annual Reports, 1906-7.

⁴⁶⁰ 'Foreign agencies' mentioned elsewhere in the report include in the French Riviera, Marseille, Monte Carlo, Gibraltar, New York and Toronto. P&O also had numerous other contacts across the world at its principal ports in Asia and Australasia. 'Provincial agencies' (in Britain) are not listed but it is reported that these were: 'liberally supplied with the company's prints, posters, printed envelopes etc.'. There were up to 210 provincial hotels across Britain and Ireland (from Aberdeen to Cowes and Killarney) with which P&O had an agreement. It is interesting to note that P&O was active in ensuring its publicity was employed in a way it deemed useful. Inspections of provincial agencies were regularly made: 'in order to ascertain that good use is being made of the company's printed matter' (NMM/P&O/4/14). Other publicity department reports show a similar publicity agreement was made with 'first-class' hotels abroad, such as in Cairo. Arrangements were also made with railway companies in Britain for P&O posters to be installed at stations (NMM/P&O/4/13).

the world tours. P&O used the modern, economical, easily reproducible, portable and colour-tinted booklet format to promote the company within a wider picture of British national and maritime history. The front cover of the book invokes a famous event in British military and naval history as re-told through no less a national cultural figure than William Shakespeare. The uppermost image on the front cover represents *The Siege of Harfleur* as depicted in Shakespeare's *Henry V*. This image reproduces a mural painted by Gerald Moira (1867-1959), which decorated a number of P&O's 'M class' vessels (figs. 152 to 154).⁴⁶¹ On the booklet, as on the ship's interior architecture, appears a quote from Shakespeare's re-telling of the siege: 'For so appears this fleet majestic'. The fleet in question is that raised by King Henry V in 1415 to attack Harfleur in Normandy during the Hundred Years War between England and France (1337-1453). The original painting shows the rousing scene as described in Shakespeare's play as the King and his fleet assemble at Hampton Pier in readiness to launch the attack on France.⁴⁶² In a strategy now familiar from P&O's nineteenth century practices of display, the corporation's vision of itself as a national and imperial flagship, is brought to life by fostering an imagined historical correspondence. As a well-known battle in English medieval history and one with the added cultural cachet of having been further mythologized by Shakespeare, P&O's historical re-imagining of *The Siege of Harfleur*, becomes a means for the company and its passengers to locate their own cultural identity. On the front cover of the *Fleet-Book* the majestic fleet of Henry V is mirrored below by a depiction of a contemporary P&O liner. The interior of the booklet follows a similar page layout with the same implied

⁴⁶¹ In total there were ten ships of the 'M class' built between 1903 and 1911. The 1907 fleet-book lists five 'M Class' vessels as displaying Moira's design: *Moldavia* (1903); *Mongolia* (1903); *Marmora* (1903); *Macedonia* (1904); and *Mooltan* (1905). The mural design was located on the forward facing barrel vault of the vessels' music room. The music room also contained a central balcony overlooking the Dining Saloon below, from where the mural would also have been visible.

⁴⁶² William Shakespeare, *Henry V*, The Chorus, Prologue, Act 3.

correspondence between two sets of images, the upper set containing representations of vessels from maritime history and the lower set depicting modern P&O vessels (figs. 155 and 156). The correspondence of the historic and modern is also evident in the range of typographic styles which feature versions of old English sitting happily alongside more minimal sleeker and modern typographic forms (fig. 157).

1.2 Cruising as Imperial Site-Seeing (from 1904)

The rise of cruising as a distinctive mode of transport saw the arrival of other new forms of publicity such as cruise brochures or artistic booklets, as they were called.⁴⁶³ P&O used these to appeal to a largely familiar passenger base in new and exciting ways.⁴⁶⁴ The images and text employed in brochures advertising cruises to the Mediterranean, for instance, often aligned the voyage with the admired tradition of the Grand Tour stretching back to the seventeenth century. One 1904 brochure for P&O's *Vectis* suggests that a pleasure cruise in the steam yacht could be called a: 'Grand Cruise of the Mediterranean.'⁴⁶⁵ This was a strategy familiar to P&O from Thackeray's account of his tour of the Mediterranean, fifty years earlier, where the writer made elaborate reference to classical myth and history. For a 1908 cruise programme P&O commissioned the respected maritime artist Charles Edward Dixon (1872-1932) to paint its front cover (fig. 158). Dixon's name would have been widely known as an artistic figure of national importance within Britain's maritime world having painted *In Honour of our Queen*, a representation of Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee review

⁴⁶³ Artmonsky and Cox, *Across the Oceans*, p. 223.

⁴⁶⁴ Although cruising was a new mode of travel, initially the cost meant that, in practice, the passengers were broadly similar to P&O's traditional upper-middle class passenger. It was not until 'One class' cruising after the First World War that the demographic of P&O's cruise market widened. See further, this chapter, section 3.

⁴⁶⁵ P&O, *A Pleasure Cruise to the Mediterranean*, cruise brochure, 22 October 1904, p. 23. Copy available NMM/P&O/44/5 P&O Ship Movements: Sailing Lists, passenger Lists and Cruising Itinerates for SY *Vectis*.

at Spithead, 26 June 1897 (fig. 159). Dixon's front-cover illustration for the steam yacht *Vectis* demonstrates how historical analogy continued to be used by P&O to draw correspondence between modern and ancient classical Empire. This correspondence imagined the modern British Empire as the natural successor and inheritor of ancient classical imperial power and tradition. The design consists of two seascapes as if viewed from the decks of the steam yacht *Vectis* on its journey. The two views are framed by a classical Greek architectural structure featuring bold Ionic fluted columns and a classical frieze. The main typography on the front cover, 'Autumn Cruises in the Mediterranean', is written in a version of Roman square capital, as if it were an inscription carved into the stone entablature of an ancient monument. In addition, the two selected seascapes imply an analogy between Constantinople as the historic seat of Byzantine and Ottoman Imperial power and Gibraltar, seen as the navy's strategic key to the Mediterranean. Shore excursions were organised for P&O by Thomas Cook and Sons and in a 1904 shore excursion leaflet describes Constantinople as: 'An enchanted city of dome, cupola and slender minaret, suspended between an azure sea and sky [...] There stands Byzantium of old, washed by the waters of the Golden Horn, the Bosphorus and the Sea of Marmora; the "dwelling of the gods" famed far and wide for its status and temples of divinities.'⁴⁶⁶

In another Thomas Cook shore excursion leaflet, Gibraltar is described as holding:

a remarkable place in Mediterranean history and none can fail to be struck by the impressive appearance of this majestic rock, honeycombed with fortifications, batteries and galleries and bristling with guns as it is, still a powerful menace to any hostile fleet. The fortifications are of course of paramount interest, and it is indeed little short of marvellous the manner in which the famous

⁴⁶⁶ P&O, *A Pleasure Cruise to the Mediterranean*, 1904, p. 23.

“Rock” has been converted into an almost, perhaps quite impregnable fortress.⁴⁶⁷

Passengers’ own travel journals and photographs, developed on board *Vectis*, provide a different but complementary type of evidence of the active role of visuality in the constitution of British imperial identities at the beginning of the twentieth century. A surviving diary by Elsie Watkins Grubb (1886-1954)⁴⁶⁸ provides a textual and photographic record of her cruise on *Vectis* during April and May 1909. The diary shows how the experience of Mediterranean holiday cruising became interwoven with Imperial identity. Watkins Grubb was about 23 when she compiled the diary. She was the daughter of Lt. Col. Alexander Grubb (1842-1925), and his wife Sara Mary Watkins (d. 1925), both of whom accompanied Elsie on the cruise and feature in the diary’s text and photographs.⁴⁶⁹ The inclusion of photographic darkrooms on board was a novel feature on P&O’s vessels. Letters advertising *Vectis* cruises emphasised that ‘no expense has been spared’ in adapting the vessel from its previous function as a liner.⁴⁷⁰ In addition to the usual suite of spaces on board: cabins, saloons, recreation, music and smoking rooms, the letter says that *Vectis* also included a photographic laboratory. A brochure for *Vectis* includes a photograph of the darkrooms with the caption: ‘there is every convenience provided for those indulging in the fascinating

⁴⁶⁷ P&O, *Pleasure Cruise of Steam Yacht ‘Vectis’ to Portugal, Madera, Gibraltar, Algeria, Balearic Islands &c.*, programme of shore excursions organised by Thomas Cook, 1904, pp. 17-18. Copy available NMM/P&O/44/5 P&O Ship Movements: Sailing Lists, passenger Lists and Cruising Itinerates for SY Vectis.

⁴⁶⁸ For a likeness of Elsie Watkins Grubb, drawn by a friend Vera Francis on board *Vectis*, see figure 160.

⁴⁶⁹ Lt. Col. Alexander Grubb was educated at the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich, he fought in the Maori Wars, served in Ceylon, Malta, Gibraltar and County Wicklow, gaining the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel in the Royal Artillery. See Hugh Montgomery-Massingberd, *Burke’s Irish Family Records*. London, U.K.: Burkes Peerage Ltd, 1976, pp. 524-6; referenced from *The Peerage Online* database [<http://www.thepeerage.com/p61911.htm>, accessed 19 August 2015].

⁴⁷⁰ A copy of the publicity letter, dated 25 April 1904, can be found in NMM/P&O/44/5. *Vectis* was formerly the liner *Rome* (1881), see NMM/P&O/65/291 Individual Ships: Rome (Vectis): Miscellaneous material, 1881.

and interesting pastime of photography, three darkrooms being provided, with all necessary fittings for developing, etc.,' (fig. 161).⁴⁷¹ Ship plans of *Vectis* show the darkrooms were located amidships on the main passenger deck, which indicates how central a role was envisaged for passenger generated photography on cruise voyages (fig. 162).⁴⁷² Watkins Grubb's diary contains a number of interesting photographs from her cruise and shore excursions which were almost certainly developed on board. The diary is a useful source giving a passenger's perspective, showing how the idea of modern cruising on P&O was interwoven with a wider imperial cultural outlook. Great significance was attached to touring ancient classical sites which represented the height of civilisation and acted as models for contemporary imperial citizenship.⁴⁷³ The interaction of text and image in the diary shows how modern photographic technology was used not just to record a geographical voyage but to create an imaginative and historical journey. In the following passage, Watkins Grubb records a shore excursion to the site of a Roman Amphitheatre in Pula, Croatia, with accompanying photograph and picture postcard (figs. 163 and 164):

Tuesday, May 11. By 'getting-up' time we found ourselves once more on the high seas, & after passing a poor ship wrecked lately on a rock, close to a lighthouse, we arrived at the harbour of Pola.⁴⁷⁴ A lovely morning, & warm once more.

A long voyage in the launch, all among Austrian battleships bought us to the quay & we walked up to the Amphitheatre. This

⁴⁷¹ P&O, *Vectis brochure*, undated [c. 1904] and unbound. A copy can be found in NMM/P&O/65/291 Individual Ships: Rome (Vectis): Miscellaneous material, 1881.

⁴⁷² The *Vectis* ship plan in Watkins Grubb's diary shows in that by 1909 there were then only two darkrooms but still amidships on the main passenger deck.

⁴⁷³ Richard Hingley has argued that between 1860 and 1930 British administrators, politicians and academics used images and the historical archaeological study of the Roman Empire to help them define the imperial identity and, as they saw it, imperial destiny of Great Britain. See his, *Roman Officers and English Gentlemen: The Imperial Origins of Roman Archaeology* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000).

⁴⁷⁴ Pola was the Roman name for what today is Pula in Croatia.

was built by the Romans in A.D. 150, & the outside of it remains solid & grand to this day. It has none of the inside tiers intact but the fact that the highest wall is still practically whole gives it a 'better-preserved' appearance even than the Colosseum. We saw the Porta Gemina & the Porta Aurea, both fine Roman gates of about the 2nd century A. D., & in the aftn. The Temple of Augusta⁴⁷⁵ which has fine Corinthian pillars. This Temple is venerable indeed since its date is B. C. We found Pola crammed with soldiers & sailors of all ranks, & these were as interesting to look at as the Roman buildings.

Evening on board the Vectis was heavenly, & I did nothing but talk & look at the sea, land & stars all the time.⁴⁷⁶

This account reveals the way in which contemporary experience was interlaced with historical imagination. The young British author describes the landscape through which she moves as populated by events and entities characterised by contemporary national and imperial rivalries. At the same time, however, this world is implicitly interwoven with the imagining and veneration of historical Roman imperial grandeur. Within the late Roman republic and subsequently Roman Empire, Pola had been an important town, port and administrative region, when the amphitheatre and twin gates featured in Watkins Grubb's diary were built (27 BC-68 AD). The city was subsequently a major port in the Byzantine Empire. At the time of Watkins Grubb's cruise in 1909 it was similarly a significant naval port within the Austro-Hungarian Empire and this explains the battleships: 'soldiers & sailors of all ranks', described in the diary. In the same way that Britain and Germany became involved in a naval contest in the years leading up to the First World War so were the navies of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Kingdom of Italy in a race for control of the Adriatic Sea (fig.

⁴⁷⁵ The writing appears to say: 'the Temple of Augusta' referring to the Temple of Augustus in Pola.

⁴⁷⁶ Elsie Watkins-Grubb, *Diary Kept on Board P&O's Vectis*, 1909, pp. 134-5, NMM/CC/JOD139.

165). In the context of intensified European rivalries the touring, collection and study of ancient civilisations became central to the articulation and propagation of one's own imperial greatness.

1.3 The Emperor's Line (c. 1911)

The widely reported sense amongst P&O staff and passengers that its service possessed a distinctive quality or a mystique is something which finds explicit expression in a letter to Sir Thomas Sutherland from J. Henniker Heaton, dated September 1913, and written on board *Medina*.⁴⁷⁷ Sir John Henniker Heaton (1848-1914) was a British-born journalist and Member of Parliament for Canterbury for twenty-five years. Early in his career Heaton was also a journalist in Australia and he continued to travel throughout his life between Britain and Australia where he had investments in land and newspapers.⁴⁷⁸ The letter to Sutherland was written during Heaton's final return voyage from Australia after twenty visits.⁴⁷⁹ After what amounted to a life-time of travelling with P&O, the letter demonstrates how the company fused national and imperial politics with personal feelings and emotions of shared status and achievement. The infusion of the notion of imperial service with a particular masculine character, defined by discipline, 'quiet self-dignity' and an historical feeling of 'assured position' is explicit:

⁴⁷⁷ *Medina* was the last and most prestigious of the 'M' class ships launched in 1911. (The first of the class had been launched in 1903). For *Medina* see NMM/P&O/65/213 Individual Ships: *Medina*: Miscellaneous material, 1911.

⁴⁷⁸ B. K. De Garis, 'Heaton, Sir John Henniker (1848-1914)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/heaton-sir-john-henniker-3745/text5897>, published first in hardcopy 1972, accessed online 19 September 2015.

⁴⁷⁹ On 31 January 1912, during his last visit to Australia, Heaton was created a Baronet of Mundarragh Towers in Sydney. See *The London Gazette*, 20 January 1914, p. 496.

My return voyage from Australia comes to an end today. After twenty visits this will be my final voyage, and the words I desire to say are not dictated for any selfish reason, but to render a just tribute to you and the magnificent fleet of the P&O Company, which you have securely and safely guided through so many dangers in the past years.

Every Britisher and Imperialist is proud of the Peninsular and Oriental Navigation Company. We feel it is part of the British constitution. You can only realize this by imagining what would happen if the whole fleet were to disappear tomorrow!

The splendid steamer *Medina* in which I have made the long voyage to and from Australia is an ideal ship with an ideal Captain, excellent officers, a really good, thoughtful Purser, and first class cook. The servants are good and attentive.

The secret of the high estimation in which the P&O Company is held may be attributed to various causes. In the first place passengers feel safer than in any other British steamship company because of the good officers, well trained, well disciplined and thoroughly alert and obedient.

What interests me about them is their manly character and the feeling that they have an assured position. You can only realize this by being an old traveller. There is no time-serving or servility, no grovelling, but a quiet dignity and common-sense treatment of all passengers alike without respect to wealth or position. The officers and men recognise this assured position won after nearly a century.⁴⁸⁰

Heaton and Sutherland would most likely have met and known each other through shared business interests and work in parliament.⁴⁸¹ As well as imperial pride Heaton's

⁴⁸⁰ Sir John Henniker Heaton, Letter to Sir Thomas Sutherland, December 1913 on board *Medina*, quoted in Padfield, *Beneath the House Flag*, pp. 86-87.

⁴⁸¹ Sir Thomas Sutherland was Member of Parliament for Greenock between 1884 and 1892 and, after unseating an opponent upon petition, again between 1892 and 1900. Sutherland, as Chairman of P&O, provided Greenock's large ship building yard with much valuable employment.

writing suggests an imperial nostalgia and sentimentalism. At this point in their lives, each man was coming towards the end of their respective careers working in and for the Empire, and Heaton's letter demonstrates how, whatever else it was, Empire was something viscerally lived and experienced by millions of people at a personal and emotional level. As the twentieth century progresses, and British Empire changes, retrospective imperial nostalgia becomes a gradually more prominent element in P&O's evolving identity.

Two years prior to Heaton's letter, *Medina* had been the focal point of a momentous imperial event. Immediately after the vessel had been built in 1911, it was commissioned as a Royal Yacht to carry King George V and Queen Mary to the Delhi Durbar where the King and Queen were crowned Emperor and Empress of India. Although there had been two previous Imperial Durbars (in 1877 for Queen Victoria, and 1903 for King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra), George V was the first (and last) British Monarch to travel to India for the event. More than merely 'The Empire Line' P&O was now The Emperor's Line. The Durbar was a carefully choreographed and massive imperial undertaking. A hundred survivors of the 1857 Indian Mutiny (in support of which P&O had transported vital troops) arrived to cheers in the main arena, as they had done in earlier Durbars.⁴⁸² In total an estimated 100,000 people passed to view the King and Queen with a further 250,000 spectators. The event as a whole occupied an area North of Delhi of 80 square miles, as Julie Codell calls it, a temporary city.⁴⁸³ The Durbar largely achieved its aim of strengthening support for British rule among Indian princes. In comparison to the event itself, relatively little has been said

⁴⁸² Julie F. Codell, 'Photography and the Delhi Coronation Durbars: 1877; 1903; 1911', introduction to Julie F. Codell (ed.), *Power and Resistance: The Delhi Coronation Durbars* (India and US: Mapin Publishing Pvt., and Grantham Corporation, 2012), pp. 16-43. For P&O's role in the Indian Mutiny see chapter 2, section 4.1 and 4.2.

⁴⁸³ Codell, 'Photography and the Delhi Coronation Durbars', p. 30.

about the Royal voyage to the Durbar but it was as a crucial part of the wider imperial choreography.

The official narrative of the Royal visit and Durbar in India was written by the Hon. John Fortesque and it records the origins of *Medina* as follows:

The *Medina* herself was in November 1911 the latest edition to the fleet of the Peninsular and Oriental Company, built of steel, with reciprocating engines and twin screws; and her burden, measured by the standard of the mercantile marine, is thirteen thousand tons. Hired by the Admiralty to convey the King and Queen to India, she was commissioned, together with the four escorting cruisers, for particular service, and, when Their Majesties were not on board, carried the flag of Rear-Admiral Sir Colin Keppel who commanded the whole squadron.⁴⁸⁴

The 1911 official narrative continues, describing the vast array of personnel on board HMS *Medina*,

... the ship's full complement was thirty-two officers and three hundred and sixty petty officers and men of the Royal navy, over and above four officers and two hundred and six non-commissioned officers and men of the Royal Marines, including the band of the Royal Marine Artillery. The total number of souls of all classes and denominations on board the ship was seven hundred and thirty-three.⁴⁸⁵

⁴⁸⁴ John Fortesque, *Narrative of the Visit to India of their Majesties King George V. and Queen Mary and of The Coronation Durbar held at Delhi 12th December 1911* (London: MacMillan, 1912), p. 84. At P&O's Centenary Celebration Dinner in 1937, Lord Chatfield, then First Sea Lord and Admiral of the Fleet, reflected with pride on the events of 1911 when he had captained HMS *Medina* under Rear-Admiral Keppel. Lord Chatfield, 'The P. & O.' in P&O, *A Souvenir of the Centenary of the Peninsular & Oriental Steam Navigation Company 1837-1937* (London: Riddle, Smith & Duffus, Ltd., 1937), pp. 35-39. Please see further 'A Century of Progress', this chapter, section 4.

⁴⁸⁵ Fortesque, *Narrative of the Visit to India*, p. 84.

In a special photograph album recording the voyage, possibly compiled by P&O, an image of the collected personnel gives a visual indication of its great size (fig. 166).⁴⁸⁶ The album also contains images of the interior of the vessel showing special design modifications such as the addition of George V's Royal cypher, intricately carved and installed into a roundel over a main doorway (fig. 167).⁴⁸⁷ The Royal Suite of apartments was designed by T. E. Collcutt, one of the last vessels he worked on for P&O.⁴⁸⁸ Stressing the spaciousness, comfort and luxury of the ship, Fortesque says that having been built to accommodate about six hundred and fifty passengers of all classes: 'it may be guessed that the *Medina* afforded ample space for the King and Queen and their suite of twenty-two persons.' According to Fortesque the organisation of the Royal cabins proved to be: 'a bad arrangement', as they were apart from most of the other senior members of the party by 'the length of an immense saloon'. The Royal Cabins were also so far forward in the ship: 'as to be very trying in a seaway'. However, the cabins themselves were: 'in other respects [...] luxurious' and: 'No pains [...] had been spared to ensure the comfort of all.'⁴⁸⁹ Although P&O was not directly involved in the voyage itself, the selection and positive identification of the company in official documentation, narratives and photography, and in extensive coverage in the national and imperial press, consolidated and extended the company's preferred

⁴⁸⁶ P&O, HMS *Medina* (1911) NMM/CC/ALB0482. It is not clear how this album was used. There is no inscription on the upper cover, nor any title pages or printed descriptions of the photographs, which suggest it was not a widely reproduced album, perhaps a unique record for the company archive or one of a limited number to be displayed at company offices.

⁴⁸⁷ Unfortunately the photograph is unlabelled and so it is not certain where in the ship the doorway was located. Judging by other photographs in the album it may have been one of two doorways in the saloon companionway with stairs leading to and from what would have been *Medina*'s music room.

⁴⁸⁸ Artmonsky and Cox, *Across the Oceans*, p. 116.

⁴⁸⁹ Fortesque, *Narrative*, p. 85.

image of itself as intimately connected with the official national and imperial order (fig. 168).⁴⁹⁰

To mark the passage of the King and Queen on board HMS *Medina* P&O commissioned a ship portrait from one of the most celebrated maritime painters of his generation, William Lionel Wyllie (1851-1931) (fig. 169). At the time of his commission Wyllie had already achieved a solid reputation. Wyllie was a figure associated with a distinctively national pictorial maritime tradition. After the death of Queen Victoria in 1901, Wyllie was present to record the passing of the Queen's body from the Royal residence at Osborne House on the Isle of Wight to Portsmouth on board the Royal Yacht *Alberta*. The painting was exhibited at the Royal Academy in the same year.⁴⁹¹ Wyllie was later selected to paint a panorama of the *Battle of Trafalgar* shown in the Victory Museum in Portsmouth (now the National Museum of the Royal Navy, Portsmouth). The site of the panorama was close to the resting place of HMS *Victory* itself, Nelson's celebrated ship from the battle, and the painting was unveiled by King George V in 1930.⁴⁹² In choosing Wyllie, P&O therefore echoed its historic preference, not merely for prestigious maritime painters, but for artists with

⁴⁹⁰ For a range of material concerned with the Royal voyage to India, including photographs and press cuttings, see NMM/P&O/65/17A and NMM/P&O/65/17B Individual Ships: HMS *Medina*: correspondence, memoranda, etc., in connection with the temporary conversion of this P&O ship into a royal yacht, 1911; NMM/P&O/95/16 Photograph of HMS *Medina* sailing with Royal Party for the Indian Durbar, 11 Nov 1911; and also NMM/UEC: Box 77.

⁴⁹¹ William Lionel Wyllie, *The Passing of a Great Queen*, oil on canvas, 1527 x 2143 mm, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool. Wyllie witnessed the event from the Royal Naval flagship HMS *Majestic*. What is possibly a preparatory study for the painting can be seen at NMM/CC/PAH4066. See also E. H. Archibald, *The Dictionary of Sea Painters of Europe and America* (Suffolk, UK: Antique Collectors' Club 2000), pp. 237-238.

⁴⁹² See Archibald, *Dictionary of Sea Painters*, pp.237-239; Roger Quarm, with foreword by Sir Hugh Casson, *W. L. Wyllie: Marine Artist, 1851-1931* (London Beetles, 1988); and 'W. L. Wyllie's Panorama of Trafalgar', online article from the National Museum of the Royal Navy, Portsmouth, where the panorama can still be seen [<http://www.nmrn-portsmouth.org.uk/wl-wyllies-panorama-traffic>, accessed 27 July 2016].

established reputations within a national tradition of maritime painting: W. J. Huggins, J. C. Schetky, Thomas Goldsworthy Dutton and Charles Edward Dixon.⁴⁹³

King George V had announced his intention to journey to India in his first speech to Parliament 6 February 1911. The coronation was on 22 June 1911 in Westminster Abbey and the Royal Party was due to depart for India 11 November 1911. Wyllie's painting shows a scene, a little after half-past two on 11 November, when three tugs hauled HMS *Medina* out from the jetty at Portsmouth to embark on the Royal voyage to India. According to Fortesque, on departure the weather at Portsmouth: 'had grown more threatening, the wind was blowing fairly hard from the south-west with every symptom of freshening, and the rain had begun to fall in angry stinging drops.' Nevertheless: 'all adverse circumstances notwithstanding the scene was a remarkable one.'⁴⁹⁴ He suggests that the bunting with which every ship in the harbour was dressed, strove in vain against the wind and the rain and that there was a salute from the guns of HMS *Victory* which: 'could not but, from old association, be stately and solemn.' The Royal salute is a standard naval tradition, but coming from the guns of HMS *Victory* created an additional layer of symbolism, stressing at once modern progress and historical continuity in Britain's maritime history and identity. Throngs of people with and without umbrellas stood and watched from the shore: 'to see the last of the King, who was conspicuous upon the upper bridge.'⁴⁹⁵

⁴⁹³ Almost as companion pieces to Wyllie's oil painting for P&O, Charles Dixon executed two watercolours, now in the Royal Collection, of King George and Queen Mary's return voyage from India in January 1912. Dixon represents *Medina* on its journey past the familiar imperial site of the Rock of Gibraltar. This further consolidates the suggestion that in its choice of artists and sites P&O saw itself participating in, and contributing to, a wider national maritime pictorial tradition. Charles Dixon, *HMS Medina, Gibraltar, 30th January 1912, returning from India*. Buff paper, wash, with bodycolour c.1912, 263 x 755 mm, RCIN 450812; and Charles Dixon, *HMS Medina at Gibraltar, returning from India, 30th January 1912*, watercolour and bodycolour, 215 x 753 mm, RCIN 450723.

⁴⁹⁴ Fortesque, *Narrative*, p. 81.

⁴⁹⁵ Fortesque, *Narrative*, p. 82.

Wyllie's painting for P&O depicts this carefully choreographed departure, and despite the reported poor weather emphasises the clean white hull of *Medina*, a bright and bold contrast against the murky skies. Hulls of P&O's vessels in 1911 were usually painted black but for this special purpose *Medina* was given a new Royal livery. In its departure from Portsmouth, Wyllie chooses to depict the moment when HMS *Victory*, pictured to the left of the composition fires its gunned salute. From P&O's perspective Wyllie's representation further secures the national and imperial pictorial maritime tradition its art and design had been developing for over seventy years. To have Nelson's *Victory* on one side of the painting, saluting the transformed P&O *Medina* on the other, transporting the British King and Queen to be crowned Emperor and Empress of India, was an extraordinary imperial accolade. In terms of the level of imperial prestige this can be seen as a companion piece to P&O's photograph of Queen Victoria, giving Royal sanction to the company's Oriental Pavilion at the Royal Naval Exhibition in 1891 (fig. 88).

An addendum to this episode, is that when Wyllie died in 1931, P&O's magazine of sea travel, *The Blue Peter* included two photographs and a short paragraph describing in nostalgic terms: 'Wyllie's Last Journey'. The two photographs showed a sombre scene from Wyllie's funeral, as his body was transported: 'appropriately enough, in a twelve-oared galley manned by Sea-Scouts', from Portsmouth to Porchester, to be buried in a family grave. Figure 170 shows the galley: 'passing H.M.S. *Nelson* and H.M.S. *Champion*', and 'on the extreme right are the masts of the *Victory*', the famous vessel whose restoration Wyllie had campaigned for and depicted on numerous occasions, not least in his painting of HMS *Medina* for P&O in 1911.

2. 'Making the Empire Come Alive'⁴⁹⁶ (1918 - c. 1939)

In May 1926, the British government established a new department called the *Empire Marketing Board* (EMB). Stephen Constantine has argued that the foundation of the EMB needs to be understood against a backdrop of concerns, which had been growing since the late nineteenth century, amongst businessmen and politicians about the condition and future prospects of Britain's economy. From this period Britain's supreme position as a leading industrial society, as the workshop of the world, faced serious competition from rapidly developing industrial and agricultural rivals, such as the United States, Germany and later Japan. Other factors such as the introduction by foreign nations of tariff barriers further damaged Britain's trade, especially after the First World War. These things, together with rising unemployment and growing discontentment among many working people with depressed living standards created an atmosphere of great concern for many observers at home:

In this situation, particularly by the 1920s, many businessmen and many politicians of all persuasions, including some in the Labour Party, looked to the British Empire overseas for salvation. [...] Judiciously developed, the Empire might become much more economically self-sufficient, less vulnerable to foreign competition. Here, then, was a route to Britain's long-term economic survival, to her political security in the wider world, to higher standards of living in Britain and perhaps, some hoped to social harmony, social stability and political acquiescence at home.⁴⁹⁷

⁴⁹⁶ The professional advertising journal *Commercial Art* ran an article by W. S. Crawford entitled 'Making the Empire "Come Alive"' in 1926, discussing the posters of the *Empire Marketing Board*. This section borrows the title to investigate P&O's own imperial propaganda during the inter-war period. W. S. Crawford, 'Making the Empire "Come Alive"' *Commercial Art*, 4: 6 (December, 1926), pp. 241-247.

⁴⁹⁷ Stephen Constantine, *Buy and Build: The Advertising Posters of the Empire Marketing Board* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1986). See also Stephen Constantine, 'Bringing the Empire Alive: The Empire Marketing Board and Imperial Propaganda 1926-33' in John MacKenzie

At the same time, however, after the dreadful experiences of trench warfare in the First World War, the taste for brash jingoistic appeals to the British Empire, which had characterised earlier pronouncements, had lessened, and a strategically re-branded version of the Empire emerged. Rather than as an arena for military prowess, the Empire was re-presented as trusteeship (rule that should be specifically for the benefit of the ruled) and as ‘an actively interacting economic and cultural community’.⁴⁹⁸

In its own imperial narrative during the inter-war period P&O was at the forefront of imperial propaganda. The following passage from F. A. Hook’s 1921 history of P&O’s service in the First World War, *Merchant Adventurers*, which contains a foreword by P&O’s Chairman Lord Inchcape,⁴⁹⁹ indicates something of the new idea of imperial fellowship and community, but also the growing propagandistic intensity of the company’s imperial pronouncements:

The traffic of the P. and O. Company is peculiar in that its ships ply almost exclusively between the mother country in the West and the gates of British Empire in the East. There are to be found on board its vessels, in their comings and goings, the men whose work and wisdom make, in the grand aggregate, for British prestige and for British freedom and justice among the native races with whose destinies Great Britain stands charged. Every P. and O. passenger list is a mosaic of British activities, official and unofficial, in the vast

(ed.) *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), pp. 192-231.

⁴⁹⁸ Karl Hack, ‘Selling Empire: The Empire Marketing Board’ *Open Learn*, The Open University, [<http://www.open.edu/openlearn/history-the-arts/history/world-history/selling-empire-the-empire-marketing-board#>], accessed 9 September 2015].

⁴⁹⁹ Lord Inchcape who had been Chairman of BIS succeeded Sir Thomas Sutherland as P&O’s Chairman when the two companies merged in 1914. Sutherland called the merger ‘a policy of the most vital character [...] in the interest of British commerce throughout our Eastern Empire.’ Although Inchcape was sixteen years younger than Sutherland he was also deeply rooted in the Victorian and Edwardian culture of Britain’s maritime Empire having forged his reputation the shipping company Mackinnon-Mackenzie in India between 1874 and 1894.

and populous regions of the Eastern seas. It is inevitable that a maritime service so constituted should have produced amongst its officers and officials a corporate tradition and individual quality remarkable in character and degree; that its personnel would be deeply impregnated with the sense of empire citizenship and the privileges and duties which that citizenship implies; and that in a field where two men may serve for a lifetime and never meet face to face, the pride in a house-flag which is something more than the flag of a house may yet hold men in an unseen bond of fellowship.⁵⁰⁰

The following sections examine three case studies which elaborate this increased propagandistic style of P&O's narratives: the company's architectural interventions at 14-16 Cockspur Street in the creation of P&O House 1918-20; its display at the British Empire Exhibition in Wembley, 1924-5, and associated designs; and the work of Lord Inchcape and Frederick Hook in the establishment of *The Blue Peter: A Magazine of Sea Travel*, 1921-38.

2.1 Service and Sacrifice at P&O House (c. 1918-21)

Titled persons, viceroys, pro-consuls, Governors, Maharajahs, merchant princes, dowagers, missionaries, planters, and such like – a cross section of Empire – would always travel by P&O; that imposing office and all it stood for seemed as immutable and fixed as the stars in their courses.⁵⁰¹

⁵⁰⁰ F. A. Hook, 'Service, Honours, and Awards' in his *Merchant Adventurers* (London: A & C Black, 1921), chapter 4, pp. 38-39.

⁵⁰¹ Olaf Leganger Buggé recalling 'P&O House' in 'Closed but not forgotten', *Wavelength* (March 1973), pp. 50 & 52, quoted in Artmonksy and Cox, *Across the Oceans*, pp. 50-1.

The architectural life of a building is not set in stone but is as fluid and changeable as the people who inhabit and invest their lives in it.⁵⁰² In the case of 14-16 Cockspur Street, what had been a symbol of German maritime prestige in the heart of London before 1918 was remodelled by P&O for British national and imperial ends, highlighting the service and sacrifice of the British merchant marine within a wider national and imperial imagination.

After the significant loss of British merchant vessels and sailors in the First World War the call for national recognition of the merchant service became louder. It was not until 1928 that King George V announced that the Mercantile Marine would henceforth be known as the Merchant Navy. In the same year Queen Mary unveiled the Merchant Navy Memorial at Tower Hill (fig. 171).⁵⁰³ It had been a decade earlier, however, in the immediate aftermath of the war, that P&O created its own architectural commemoration of the company's imperial service and sacrifice.⁵⁰⁴

As P&O's main booking office in Britain, 14-16 Cockspur Street was of utmost importance to the company. More than merely a place to buy a ticket, 'P&O House' (as it was called) was the company's main point of contact with the public on-shore. The experience of the passenger here could determine opinions of the company and excite expectations of the voyage yet to come. In common with P&O's Leadenhall

⁵⁰² Discussion of an anti-essentialist approach to architecture can be found in Jeremy Till, *Architecture Depends* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: MIT, 2009). Till argues that despite the claims of autonomy, purity and control often made by architects, architecture depends for its existence on things outside itself and is subject to the uncertainty and contingency of everyday life.

⁵⁰³ The monument at Tower Hill was designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens (1869-1944) whose own career could be seen as serving the Empire, having designed a number of important buildings in New Dehli such as the India Gate and Viceroy's House (Rashtrapati Bhavan).

⁵⁰⁴ P&O's normal operations and publicity ceased during the First World War and so this period is not discussed in detail in the thesis. The First World War had a significant impact on the company in general however. Forty one ships, approximately two-thirds of the fleet, served in various capacities, as troop carriers, and hospital, communication and supply vessels. P&O lost 25 ships and the lives of 258 employees. Including associated companies the numbers rose to a loss of 94 ships and 989 lives. This loss was keenly felt by the company and, as discussed in this section, after the war ended P&O used the company's experience of war to bolster its corporate image of heroic national and imperial service. See, POH, 'The First World War', online article: [<http://www.poheritage.com/our-history/timeline>, accessed 13 January 2015].

Street offices, a post-colonial spatial reading of P&O House shows how the site participated in a wider historical shaping of London's metropolitan imperial geography. In 1850 P&O's Leadenhall Street office had located the company favourably in relation to the prestigious East India Company, and in 1918 the Cockspur Street building placed the company's premier booking office at the north-west side of Trafalgar Square, increasingly seen by many in Britain as representing the heart of its Empire.⁵⁰⁵ The Square and its immediate environs contained numerous state and imperial buildings, monuments and statues which had been built within the lifetime of the company and would have held pleasing symbolic and corporate significance for P&O. There was the famous monument to Nelson, his life, and victory and death at the Battle of Trafalgar (completed 1843), and also statues of General Sir Charles Napier (1856) and Major General Sir Henry Havelock (1861) which make specific reference to their contributions to British Imperial activity in the Indian sub-continent.⁵⁰⁶ From the 1860s new government buildings close to Trafalgar Square such as George Gilbert Scott's Foreign, Colonial, India and Home Offices (1868-73), the Admiralty extension (1895), and Admiralty Arch (1911) further announced it as a place at the very heart of the institutions of state and Empire. The presence of P&O's booking office within this constellation of spaces was highly significant for the company and is also case study in the intertwining of corporation and state in London's historic imperial architectural geography.

Originally built for a German bank⁵⁰⁷ 14-16 Cockspur Street was substantially re-modelled between 1906-8 for the German owned shipping company Hamburg-

⁵⁰⁵ See Rodney Mace, *Trafalgar Square: Emblem of Empire* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1976).

⁵⁰⁶ For discussion of these statues and Trafalgar Square more generally within imperial discourse see Deborah Cherry, 'Statues in the Square: Hauntings at the Heart of Empire', *Art History*, 29: 4 (September 2006), pp. 660-697.

⁵⁰⁷ Artmonsky and Cox, *P&O, Across the Oceans*, pp. 50-2.

America Line to the designs of the architect and architectural historian Arthur T. Bolton (1864-1945) with exterior sculpture by William Bateman Fagan (1860-1948).⁵⁰⁸ A photograph from 1907 shows the building under construction for Hamburg-America and another from 1909 shows how the large windows on the ground floor of the façade formed an impressive display space for the presentation of the company's ship models and itineraries (figs. 172 and 173).

At the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, in common with a number of other German offices in London, the British Government commandeered the headquarters of Hamburg-America transforming it into a recruiting station (fig. 174).⁵⁰⁹ At the end of the war the building was retained by the Government as part of German reparations. P&O purchased and remodelled the building to suit its own interests, values and narratives (figs. 175 and 176).⁵¹⁰ In a promotional booklet, P&O suggested the national significance of the new building for Britain's travelling public: 'The offices, which face the Haymarket, were in pre-war days an active centre of German shipping business in London, and their new uses will doubtless prove a source of satisfaction and convenience to the British travelling public.'⁵¹¹

Surviving photographs of the original and remodelled building enable us to see how P&O retained many of the original features but made decisive alterations to both the exterior and interior space, re-directing the building's existing maritime themes to

⁵⁰⁸ It is thought that the sculptures are by Fagan but this is not incontrovertible. 'William Bateman Fagan', *Mapping the Practice and Profession of Sculpture in Britain and Ireland 1851-1951*, University of Glasgow History of Art and HATII, online database 2011 [http://sculpture.gla.ac.uk/view/person.php?id=msib2_1203542346, accessed 28 Aug 2015]

⁵⁰⁹ Stuart Hallifax, 'Commandeered: German Offices in London', *Great War London: London and Londoners in the First World War*, online article, [<https://greatwarlondon.wordpress.com/2013/10/21/commandeered-german-offices-in-london/> accessed 27 August 2015].

⁵¹⁰ As part of reparations, Hamburg-America was also forced to relinquish its famous liners *Imperator*, *Vaterland* and *Bismark* becoming respectively Cunard's *Berengaria*; the United States Line's *Leviathan* and White Star Line's *Majestic*.

⁵¹¹ P&O, *P&O House 14. 15. & 16. Cockspur St. London S.W.1.*, publicity booklet [1918], p. 3. NMM/LC/PEA0415.

the service of British shipping and Empire in the East. Both the exterior and interior re-modelling were undertaken for P&O by Arthur T. Bolton, the same architect who had worked on the building for Hamburg-America Line ten years earlier.⁵¹² According to P&O: 'The architect, while preserving the principal structural features, has removed a considerable amount of superabundant enrichment both from the inside and from the exterior of the building'⁵¹³ and was responsible for a new overall scheme which was: 'symbolic of the activities of the P. & O. Company.'⁵¹⁴ For the exterior of the building, the sculptor Ernest Gillick (1874-1951) was commissioned to create a larger than life-size bronze sculpture of two towering, caryatid-like figures, which replaced a similar but much smaller sculpture (figs. 177 and 178). In P&O's sculpture one female and one male figure represent the Orient and Britain respectively (fig. 179). The male figure represents Britain as a Roman imperial soldier, wearing a distinctive helmet with cheek guards, an armoured breast plate, ankle length tunic and sandals. On the breast plate are three lions representing the Royal Arms of England. In an overtly gendered dialectic the Orient is feminized and, rather than warlike, is a sensuous figure, wearing a tasselled garment which clings and thus reveals more closely the form of the female body, in contrast to the armoured male counterpart. The figure of the Orient also wears ornamental jewellery and upward turning slipper-shoes. This gendered-ethnic dialectic finds further expression in P&O literature. F. A. Steel in *Notes for a tour through India* written for a P&O pocket book, implies that for the

⁵¹² Bolton was a fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects and is perhaps best remembered as an architectural historian and curator of the Soane Museum (from 1917 until his death in 1945). Tim Knox, a recent director at the Soane museum says: 'Bolton is remembered as one of the greatest of all the museum's custodians, and his scholarly publications on Soane and Adam are still classics of their kind'. See Tim Knox, *Sir John Soane's Museum, London* (London and New York: Merrell, 2013), p. 41. For Bolton's work as an architect see Jill Lever, 'A. T. Bolton, architect' *Architectural History*, 27 (1984), pp. 429-442. For a short paragraph on Bolton's work for Hamburg-America Line and P&O see pp. 29-30.

⁵¹³ P&O, *P&O House*, p. 3. NMM/LC/PEA0415.

⁵¹⁴ P&O, *P&O House*, p. 7. NMM/LC/PEA0415.

assumed male reader – the liberal British colonialist or traveller - a rewarding and sympathetic relationship with India is analogous to: ‘the loving of a beautiful woman’.⁵¹⁵ In the middle of the two figures appears a P&O monogram, accompanied by two smaller cherubim-like figures, and the company’s familiar rising oriental sun and moto, *Quis Separabit*,⁵¹⁶ joining as it were Britain and the Orient.

Figures 180 and 181 show two photographs of the interior of the booking office taken thirteen years apart.⁵¹⁷ The first photograph was taken when Cockspur Street was owned by Hamburg-America in 1908, and secondly in 1921 after re-modelling by P&O. A comparison of the two photographs shows that the interior space is broadly retained.⁵¹⁸ The major alteration came in the form of a series of paintings commissioned by P&O from the artist Frederick Samuel Beaumont (1861-1954).⁵¹⁹ Beaumont had been a student and exhibitor at the Royal Academy and at P&O House he executed a scheme originally conceived by Commander Geoffrey Stephen Allfree.⁵²⁰ The scheme was neatly integrated into the existing interior architecture, adorning the previously monochrome plaster ceiling roundels and wall surfaces. More than a superficial re-decoration P&O made the most of the opportunity and re-deployed the space to communicate a clearly national and imperial story, highlighting

⁵¹⁵ ‘For a tour to India should never be regarded as a mere holiday excursion; it is, or may be – as Steele called the loving of a beautiful woman – a liberal education in itself.’ F. A. Steel, ‘Notes for a Tour through India,’ in *P&O Pocket Book* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1908), p. 52.

⁵¹⁶ ‘Quis’ is inscribed as ‘Qvis’ to continue the Roman theme.

⁵¹⁷ Figure 182 show the same view today and figure 183 a watercolour print of the interior of the booking office appearing in P&O brochures in the 1920s.

⁵¹⁸ Perhaps surprisingly this included instances of an America-Hamburg Line monogram (fig. 184).

⁵¹⁹ P&O, ‘Frescoes at P&O House’ *The Blue Peter*, 1: 2 (September 1921), pp. 38-40.

⁵²⁰ Allfree, aged 29, had drowned on active service in 1918. He was a typical choice of artist for P&O being ‘one of the official artists recording the Naval side of the Great War [...]’. See P&O, ‘Frescoes’, *The Blue Peter*, p. 39; See also Denys Brooke-Hart, *Twentieth Century Marine Painting* (Suffolk, UK: Antique Collectors Club, 1981), p. 303. Brooke-Hart records that Allfree was a Lieutenant in the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve rather than Commander as recorded by P&O. A number of Allfree’s paintings survive in the Imperial War Museum.

its own corporate history, and particularly its most recent service in the First World War.

The first paintings to be completed were the ceiling roundels which included depictions of Poseidon (Greek God of the Sea); St George and the Dragon (representing England), and a turbaned figure in a chariot being pulled by tigers (representing India) (figs. 185 to 187). Other additions included paintings representing China, India, Egypt and Australia thus jointly symbolising P&O's four corners of Empire (fig. 188). After the First World War the strained economic conditions in Britain saw a number of people seek new lives abroad, and increasingly Australia provided a prime destination for P&O's shipping and trade. P&O installed a highly decorated and ornate gold clock which featured one main clock face displaying the time in Greenwich, and six smaller clock faces, showing the time at the company's major ports and destinations: Perth, Sydney, Bombay, Calcutta, Hong Kong and Yokohama. As such the clock can be read as a symbol of the centralising and unifying nature of Imperial time and capital with London at its centre (fig. 189).⁵²¹

According to P&O's the keynote of the pictorial scheme at Cockspur Street was the paintings which 'illustrate the historical development of the P. & O. by episodes, selected at about twenty year intervals, during the eighty years of its existence.'⁵²² The first painting (fig. 190) represented an unidentified 'early liner off the coast of Madras with the native boats setting out from the shore.' The second (fig. 191) is another unidentified early vessel but one in which: 'the war service of the P.

⁵²¹ One of the themes in E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* is the difficulty arising from different attitudes and practices with regard to time and notions of punctuality in the Anglo-Indian and Indian communities. In the interaction between Major Callendar and Dr Aziz in chapters two and three, Callendar expects clock-like punctuality and becomes impatient when Aziz is delayed after an accident with his bicycle. In contrast, for Aziz, courtesy, but not necessarily punctuality, is an admired virtue.

⁵²² P&O, 'Frescoes at P&O House', *The Blue Peter*, 1: 2 (September 1921), pp. 38-40. This ref. p. 38.

& O. in the Crimean days is recalled'. The liner is pictured as an auxiliary cruiser, conveying troops to the war front. The two modern ships which followed in the scheme, demonstrate the historical continuity of P&O's service to nation and Empire, and the progress made in technology, enabling larger and more prestigious vessels. P&O explained that the third scene (fig. 192): 'conveys more than a hint of the vast development of the ensuing period, the stately *Medina*, escorted by war ships, has arrived at Bombay with George V on board, on his way to the Delhi Durbar. [...] The artist has contrived to give something of the animation and stir that accompanies an historical event of this character.' The fourth picture (figs. 193 and 194) returns to the theme of defence: 'war has again succeeded to peace, and in a grey and stormy atmosphere the auxiliary cruiser, strangely lined with the war clothing of the dazzle-painter, is seen firing from the stern gun at a submerging enemy submarine [...] The sinking hull of a tramp recently torpedoed is visible on the horizon.'⁵²³ Such a belligerent image of warfare is extraordinary to imagine in any modern booking office but it indicates the propagandistic power of national and imperial tropes in inter-war Britain, and how P&O wished to be seen by the public as a commanding auxiliary naval power.

Figures 195 and 197 echo Gillick's exterior sculpture. Figure 195 shows Britannia towering triumphantly over a doorway and she appears symbolically in front of a dockside scene of P&O staff working on a moored liner. Among the crowd of workers can be seen another popular symbol of Britain, the Bulldog. Britannia is waving what appears to be a White Ensign (fig. 196), the flag of the Royal Navy, which constitutes a particularly pointed reference to P&O's view of its service and

⁵²³ P&O, 'Frescoes at P&O House', p. 38-9. Not all of P&O vessels in the First World War continued under the Red Ensign, the flag of the British merchant navy. Nine vessels became armed merchant cruisers. See Rabson and O'Donoghue, *P&O A Fleet History*, p. 169.

sacrifice as deserving equality of status with the British Royal Navy. Above are two roundels depicting Sir Thomas Sutherland and his successor as Chairman, Lord Inchcape. Mother India (fig. 197) appears in a traditional sari and is accompanied not as normal by a lion, but instead by a peacock, a bird traditionally depicted in Indian literature, art and history.⁵²⁴ Beneath her are represented Indian workers carrying the tea and other trading produce to be shipped around the world on board P&O's vessels. This image has striking thematic parallels with images produced a decade later by the Empire Marketing Board promoting trade with the Eastern Empire (fig. 198). Figure 199 depicts HMS *Victory* opposite a modern Royal Navy battleship or battlecruiser, firing its powerful guns, presumably on active service during the First World War. Above these are two smaller roundels which represent the corporate badge (also appearing in the stained glass, fig. 200) and one of the company's founders, Arthur Anderson, who had served in the Royal Navy. This barrage of visual imperial propaganda from the imposing façade to the smallest details of stained glass and ceiling plasterwork left visitors in little doubt about the values and traditions of British Empire and the service and sacrifice of the P&O.

2.2 Back to an Imperial Future (c. 1924)

Adela thought of the young men and women who had come out before her, P. & O. full after P. & O. full, and had been set down to the same food and the same ideas, and been snubbed in the same good-humoured way until they kept to the accredited themes and began to snub others. 'I should never get like that,' she thought, for she was young herself; all the same she knew that she had come up

⁵²⁴ In 1963 the peacock was declared the national bird of India. Krishna Lal, *Peacock in Indian Art, Thought and Literature* (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 2006).

against something which was both insidious and tough, and against which she needed allies.⁵²⁵

For Dawson and Peter's account of modernism and liner design it is the 1925 *Paris Exposition* and Le Corbusier's *Pavillon de L'Espirit Nouveau* which is crucial to understanding the evolution of liner design.⁵²⁶ The British Empire Exhibition (BEE) of a year earlier, however, which has received less critical attention, suggests a different story of liner design, unfolding at the same time as the Paris Exhibition. This involved the articulation of a quite different new spirit, that of a modern and reformed British Empire. The design historian Jonathan Woodham has suggested that while the BEE has received a relative lack of attention, it is significant as an indicator of the increasing insularism of Britain in the 1920s and 30s with regard to Europe and the greater emphasis accorded to the might and grandeur of Empire as the gateway to the nation's future.⁵²⁷ Although there is limited surviving photographic evidence of P&O's display at the BEE, its presence there signalled the company's absolute commitment to the Empire as the primary source of Britain's future economic, social and cultural security. For Mackenzie: 'Wembley was the greatest of all the imperial exhibitions – in area, cost, extent of participation, and probably, popular impact.'⁵²⁸ The exhibition covered 216 acres of North West London, involved expenditure of over £4.5 million and attracted 17.5 million visitors in its first season and a further ten million in its second year.⁵²⁹ As a sign of the revived idea of the British Empire, the

⁵²⁵ Adela Quested in E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1962), p. 47.

⁵²⁶ Dawson and Peter, *Ship Style*.

⁵²⁷ Jonathan Woodham, 'Design and Empire: British Design in the 1920s', *Art History*, 3: 2 (1980), pp. 229-240. This ref. p. 232.

⁵²⁸ Mackenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, pp. 107-112. This ref. p. 109.

⁵²⁹ Despite these extraordinary figures Woodham, writing in 1980, says that the BEE has not received much attention from design historians. This relative lack of attention, in contrast to the role of the 1925 Paris exhibition in the rise of modernism, for instance, perhaps reflects a residual tendency to be

1925 exhibition catalogue opens by imagining the Empire as a ship: ‘the ship that found herself’, a phrase taken from the short story of that name by Rudyard Kipling.⁵³⁰ To cite Kipling is already to identify the Empire from its proud historical roots in the high Victorian era, but the catalogue uses this historic starting point to suggest a different Empire for the twentieth century:

For the first part of her voyage she was a collection of highly individualised parts, the work of countless firms and many highly skilled brains. On a sudden she ceased to be things apart from one another and became the ‘Ship that found herself,’ that had, if the term be permissible, found her soul. As it was with the ship in the story so it is with the British Empire Exhibition in 1925. [...] It was, it is true, a revelation of infinite wealth, tireless energy, unbounded potentialities.

The four main aims of the organisers of the exhibition were: to emphasise to the public that the exploitation of the raw materials of Empire could produce much needed new sources of wealth; that in fostering inter-imperial trade Empire could become a secure self-sufficient economic unit; to open new markets for Dominion and British products; and to foster interaction between different cultures and peoples of Empire.⁵³¹

The P&O and BIS joint pavilion was at the eastern entrance to the Madras Court within the India Section of the exhibition (fig. 201).⁵³² The India Pavilion itself exceeded 133,000 square feet and was designed and built in the Indo-Saracenic

drawn to the progress of art and design, rather than a more sociological or anthropological approach to the everyday life of design. Woodham, *Twentieth Century Design*, p. 90

⁵³⁰ Rudyard Kipling, ‘The Ship that found herself’, originally published in *Idler Magazine*, December 1895, and collected in Kipling’s *The Day’s Work*, 1898.

⁵³¹ The Open University, ‘1924 British Empire Exhibition’, *Making Britain Database* [<http://www.open.ac.uk/researchprojects/makingbritain/content/1924-british-empire-exhibition>], accessed 9 September 2015].

⁵³² P&O’s guide says the company’s exhibit can be found: ‘at the Southern entrance to the Madras Court’, but the official map of the India Pavilion shows it located to the east.

style,⁵³³ evoking the Jama Masjid in Delhi and the Taj Mahal in Agra (figs. 202 and 203). The white building was divided into 27 courts each representing an Indian Province.⁵³⁴ There were also individual exhibits dedicated to raw produce such as Tea and Cotton, and also displays of transport, which is where P&O's pavilion was located, adjacent to displays concerning the Indian Railways.

The design of P&O's pavilion was a mixture of historicism and exoticism, being described as oblong, with a central motif of: 'palm trees and palm leaves', but also featuring an 'ornate frieze, each face bearing centrally, on a medallion, the Companies arms'.⁵³⁵ In the pavilion were displayed ship models of four new ships, each intended to represent a group of sister ships. For P&O: *Mooltan* (1923) (also representing sister ship *Maloja* (1923)); *Cathay* (1925) (also representing sister ships *Comorin* (1924) and *Chital* (1925)); and *Rawalpindi* (1925) (also representing sister ships *Rajputana* (1925), *Ranpura* (1925) and *Ranchi* (1925)). On behalf of BIS there was also a model of *Tairea* (1924)⁵³⁶ (representing sister ships *Takliwa* (1924) and *Talamba* (1924)). P&O's own guide contains no images of the pavilion, indeed no images at all, but an impression of the space can be gained from a photograph in the illustrated *Souvenir of the Indian Pavilion and its Exhibits* (fig. 204). Although unidentified by its caption, the ship model featured centrally in the photograph appears to be BIS's distinctive three-funnelled *Tairea* (fig. 205), with one of the two-funnelled P&O vessels displayed behind, most likely the *Mooltan*. The models of P&O's

⁵³³ British Empire Exhibition, *India: Souvenir of Wembley 1924* (London: British Empire Exhibition, 1924).

⁵³⁴ The Open University, '1924 British Empire Exhibition', p. 1.

⁵³⁵ P&O, *British Empire Exhibition, India Section, The P&O and British India Steam Navigation Companies' Exhibits*, exhibition booklet, copy available NMM/LC/PEA0416.

⁵³⁶ Ship portrait, interiors, and deck views of *Tairea* can be found in BIS, 'British India Steam Nav. Co. Ltd. Bombay to Africa and Persian Gulf', photograph album, NMM/ALB0498.

Mooltan and *Rawalpindi* from the exhibition both survive today and can be seen in the collection of the National Maritime Museum (figs. 206 and 207).⁵³⁷

The interior design of many of these vessels exemplify what Jonathan Woodham has called the popular but critically despised tradition and tastes of ‘Old England’. Related to the argument concerning the BEE as a whole, Woodham has argued that while many have bemoaned this ‘false tradition’ it has nevertheless played a significant role in the sociology of British design. Woodham cites: ‘the style of housing and furnishings purchased by millions in the interwar years, or in many aspects of the official projection of British values, history and heritage at home and abroad.’⁵³⁸ The ‘R’ Class vessels, as represented at the exhibition by the model of *Rawalpindi*, exemplify this tradition. The first class smoking rooms of the vessels uniformly followed what brochures described as a ‘Tudor scheme’⁵³⁹ (fig. 208). P&O’s passengers in this period were largely unchanged from Kipling’s nineteenth century exiles,⁵⁴⁰ and understood from this perspective, P&O’s interior spaces continued to function successfully by fostering a feeling of cultural longevity, continuity and security.

⁵³⁷ Unknown maker, Model of *Mooltan* (c. 1923) Passenger/cargo vessel; Liner, NMM/CC/SLR0036; and on loan from P&O, unknown maker, Model of TSS *Rawalpindi* (c. 1925) Passenger/cargo vessel; Liner, NMM/CC/SLR0031. The estimated dates of creation suggest these models are the same as those displayed at BEE. It is almost certainly the case that only one 1:48 scale model of each of these ships would have been made by the builders due to the sheer cost involved.

⁵³⁸ Jonathan M. Woodham, *Twentieth-Century Design*, (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press), pp. 89-96. This ref. p. 90.

⁵³⁹ P&O, *P&O Cruises, The Book of the Ranchi*, cruise brochure (1927), p. 29, NMM/P&O/42/21.

⁵⁴⁰ Padfield says that in the 1920s at least, P&O’s passengers: ‘were still the same kind of people - civil servants who administered the eastern Empire, army officers, planters - tough, independent characters, one or two of whom could be relied upon to have their first “pegs” at breakfast and drink their way steadily through each day of the voyage - those taking up posts or going on leave from the great commercial firms, “the *taipans* and the *tuans*, the old China hands and the *burra sahibs* of Bombay” - and of course their memsahibs and their children and nannies or ayahs. These together with the many Australians going to or from “the old country” were recognizably the type of traditional P & O passenger’. He suggests that it was the Second World War and the extension of air travel to the east that: ‘ushered in radical changes in the type of passenger and way of life’, Padfield, *Beneath the House Flag*, p. 128.

E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* published in 1924,⁵⁴¹ the same year as the BEE opened, indicates how traditional imperial sympathies were far from universally accepted amongst the British during this period. However, the text also indicates that, within certain sections of British society, imperialism and conservative attitudes remained deeply entrenched. One of Forster's main characters, Adela Quested, quoted at the beginning of this section, suggests that life on board P&O was one such arena of cultural conservatism. In *A Passage to India* Adela was uncomfortable with what she understood to be the established tastes and patterns of behaviour of the generations of Anglo-Indians who had travelled to India with P&O. Even within the narrow social band that was P&O's upper-middle class clientele, Adela's ambivalence in the novel indicates shifting attitudes across different generations of Anglo-Indians. Despite her youthful idealism, that 'I should never get like that', Adela says that 'she had come up against something which was both insidious and tough, and against which she needed allies.' In 1924 far from nearing its end, many in Britain, and in Adela's world by far the majority, believed that the Empire provided Britain with new economic opportunity. The BEE and P&O's interior architecture of Old England fostered and sustained such a world-view providing an environment of cultural security for those who wished to imagine a new imperial future.⁵⁴²

⁵⁴¹ E. M. Forster, *A Passage to India* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1962 [1924]).

⁵⁴² P&O's BEE display needs to be understood in the context of the newly branded Empire. P&O's ship models appeared in the context of other displays dedicated to India's tea production and the craft traditions of Khairpur (fig. 209). This highlighted the company's role in trade and cultural exchange and was different in tone from its earlier displays of corporate empire at the India and Colonial Exhibition (1886) and the Royal Naval Exhibition (1891). Trade was an element of these earlier displays but this was combined with P&O's fighting capabilities and role in colonial defence.

2.3 A Magazine for Maritime Empire (1921-1939)

Two of Frederick Hook's most important and original contributions to P&O's new professionalised approach to publicity, were the formation in 1913 of the *Lamson Advertising Agency*, and the foundation from 1921 of the associated journal *The Blue Peter: A Magazine of Sea Travel*. These innovations, which functioned very successfully for P&O until around 1939,⁵⁴³ were intended to improve efficiency in the company's publicity operations, saving both time and the extra expense of dealing with external advertising agencies. In addition to purely economic considerations, this arrangement also enabled Hook greater control of advertising and publicity content and strategy, and this became a considerable advantage for the company. The professional relationships nurtured by Hook, together with the nature of articles, book reviews, paintings, illustrations and advertisements commissioned under the new arrangements, show how P&O represented itself within a wider historical and cultural picture of British maritime Empire and global dominance. This occurred during a period when Britain's place as a global power was increasingly questioned and challenged.⁵⁴⁴

After the foundation of P&O's first publicity department in 1904 we learn from subsequent departmental reports that: 'A proposal was put forward in 1906 to take newspaper advertising more immediately under the control of the Department,

⁵⁴³ It is unclear precisely when the Lamson Agency ceased to operate but there are no posters attributed to the body after the Second World War. It may have brought its operations to a close with or around the same time as the last volume of *The Blue Peter* in 1939, shortly after Frederick Hook's death. *The Blue Peter* was succeeded by *The Trident* in May 1939, which ran until December 1959. For dates of publication for *The Blue Peter* and helpful background information see Robert Hampson, 'Conrad, Curle and *The Blue Peter*', in Warren Chernaik, Warwick Gould and Ian Willson (eds.), *Modernist Writers and the Marketplace* (Hampshire, UK: Macmillan, 1996), pp. 89-104.

⁵⁴⁴ In the interwar period British imperial power and dominance faced challenges from increasingly assertive nationalist movements in Ireland, Egypt, Iraq and India. See Philip Murphy, 'Britain as global power', in Andrew Thompson (ed.), *Britain's Experience of Empire in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), particularly pp. 40-48.

with the object of economy and increased efficiency.’⁵⁴⁵ The proposal was not immediately adopted and P&O continued to use external advertising agencies. However by 1911-12 the situation and concern with reduced efficiency and loss of control of advertising content again became an issue. Hook cites an example of an advertisement for cruises on board *Mantua*:

In 1911-12 a new style of newspaper advertising in connection with the cruises of the ‘Mantua’ proved profitable in its appeal to the travelling public. These announcements occupied relatively large spaces, a single advertisement sometimes costing as much as £40.; they were created entirely in this Department, which further supplied the newspapers with a complete plate from which to print them, the Agents’ part in the matter consisting solely in drawing commission.⁵⁴⁶

As a result Hook records that the ‘Lamson Publicity Service’ was formed in 1913: ‘for the purposes of handling the Company’s display advertising with a view to saving commission.’⁵⁴⁷ This arrangement came at a time when P&O merged with BIS and so, Hook argued, further efficiency was achieved when the Lamson Agency assumed responsibility for the advertising of both bodies.⁵⁴⁸

Both the Lamson Agency and *The Blue Peter* were ultimately designed to promote P&O and its associated shipping companies, yet their presentation as semi-autonomous entities lent a degree of perceived independence from P&O which brought a number of advantages to the company. The agency and magazine had a

⁵⁴⁵ NMM/P&O/4/21 ‘Publicity Department’ Annual Report in Departmental and Agency Reports, 1915.

⁵⁴⁶ NMM/P&O/4/21.

⁵⁴⁷ NMM/P&O/4/21.

⁵⁴⁸ BIS retained its own separate identity until 1971 but there was a policy of joint advertising and publicity. This explains, for instance, the joint display at BEE, in Wembley in 1924.

separate business address at 12 St Mary Axe⁵⁴⁹ and *The Blue Peter* was marketed as: ‘a magazine of sea travel’ (the sub-title of the publication) rather than specifying exclusively or explicitly on corporate content. The magazine was freely available on board P&O ships in reading rooms and libraries but it was also for sale to the general public, and there is a clear sense of an intended community of readers beyond the confines of the P&O. A note appeared inside the front cover of very early editions which indicated the corporate nature of the magazine and explained its dual purpose, without identifying any particular companies:

This publication is intended to serve as the official magazine of a group of shipping companies, whose identity the reader will readily discover. Its further aim will be, in outline or in detail, as the occasion may demand, to place before the travelling public some account of the manifold aspects of the important world-travel system over which, now that war conditions are passing away, the ships of the grouped companies are plying once more, in the service of itinerant mankind, his mails and merchandise.⁵⁵⁰

While the British Empire is not explicitly referred to, ‘the important world-travel system’, ‘the service of itinerant mankind’, and ‘mails and merchandise’, were all intrinsic imperial functions. Such a description is also strongly reminiscent of Kipling’s poetic evocation of the P&O in *The Exiles’ Line* (1892). This note of explanation soon disappeared from the magazine leaving only the emblem of the joint-flags of the P&O, and its associated companies, to identify the group (fig. 210). This

⁵⁴⁹ St. Mary Axe is a side road leading to Leadenhall Street, adjacent P&O’s headquarters. P&O’s first offices had been on St. Mary Axe before the move to Leadenhall Street. The address appears in editions of *The Blue Peter* after about March 1922. Prior to this the address given was 7 Gt. St. Helen’s, which was also close to 122 Leadenhall Street.

⁵⁵⁰ Editorial note, *The Blue Peter: A Magazine of Sea Travel*, 1: 1 (July 1921), p. 1.

identifying symbol disappeared by 1923 leaving no explicit corporate identifier (fig. 211). The magazine seamlessly integrated romanticised articles concerning Britain's maritime history and stories of colonial life, with equally romanticised stories about the history of P&O and its associated companies. Alongside these sat colourful advertisements for the P&O group's liner and cruise voyage programmes. Rather than an exclusively in-house magazine, which might risk appearing overtly or gratuitously self-interested, *The Blue Peter* thus intentionally and successfully appealed to lovers of the sea and the Empire-travelling public at large, whilst at the same time locating the P&O group very favourably within a national maritime-imperial culture.

The interaction of word and image was a central feature of the magazine. As a general magazine of the sea, Hook was able to attract famous names and maritime enthusiasts such as Joseph Conrad to write for the publication.⁵⁵¹ Hook was also instrumental in linking the painter Jack Spurling with the maritime author and enthusiast, Basil Lubbock (1876-1944). From their work together at *The Blue Peter*, the two men published an important and very popular three-volume history of the clipper ship, with Hook acting as editor.⁵⁵²

The painters and illustrators who featured on its front covers such as Charles Dixon, Jack Spurling and Frank Mason, aligned images of modern ocean liners and cruise ships with a notion of the romance of the clipper ships and the historic naval and merchant sailing ships of Britain's maritime past. This created a strong sense of tradition but also of progress. Figure 212 shows an encounter between P&O's *William*

⁵⁵¹ Conrad's contributions included a personal tribute to the *Torrens* (1875) a clipper ship carrying passengers and cargo between London and Port Adelaide on which he had served. For discussion of the writings of Joseph Conrad (1857-1924) and also the Scottish author Richard Curle (1883-1968) for *The Blue Peter*, see Hampson, 'Conrad, Curle and *The Blue Peter*', pp. 89-104.

⁵⁵² F. A. Hook (ed.), Basil Lubbock (text) and Jack Spurling (illustrations), *Sail: the Romance of the Clipper Ships*, vols. 1 and 2 (London: Blue Peter Publishing Co., 1927-36); and, after Hook's death, A. Campbell (ed.), Basil Lubbock (text) and Jack Spurling (illustrations), *Sail: the Romance of the Clipper Ships*, vol. 3, (London: Blue Peter Publishing Co., 1936).

Fawcett (1837) and two ships of the Royal Navy. The ship on the right of the picture is almost certainly HMS *Victory*. This is most likely a fictional encounter but it echoes the iconography at P&O House, and again suggests the place of P&O's merchant fleet within an imperial-maritime tradition (compare fig. 199). The theme of the merchant marine in national and imperial life was a recurrent one within the magazine. Stories and illustrations, such as "'4.7" A Merchant Gunner in Wartime' by H. G. Gawthorn, echoed wider campaigns to highlight the role of the merchant navy in national defence and transport (figs. 213 and 214).⁵⁵³

The overtly modern typography of the magazine's title often co-existed with very traditional ship portraits (fig. 212). This echoed the theme of tradition and progress. It is not clear where the distinctive typeface originated but it is strikingly modern for 1921. Its characteristic forms (clean sans-serif lettering, rounded typeface, and consistent thickness of line) resemble elements of Herbert Bayer's typography from the 1920s (figs. 215a and 215b).⁵⁵⁴ Cover images of *The Blue Peter* proved so popular that as early as 1923 a notice appeared inside the magazine saying that many requests had been received for colour prints of the paintings and that the magazine would make these available at 1 shilling and 6 pence each.

Hook's obituary in *The Times* reported that he was successful in his bid to create a wider general readership for the publication, and also suggested that the foundation of the magazine was one of his most outstanding achievements: '[Hook's] idea of establishing a monthly illustrated magazine of sea travel was extraordinarily

⁵⁵³ For more on Gawthorn see 'Henry George Gawthorne,' in *Benezit Dictionary of British Graphic Artists and Illustrators*, vol. 1 (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 445.

⁵⁵⁴ This is merely to indicate the modern style of P&O's typeface and not to suggest any direct link. There are clear differences between the two typefaces. On the evidence of the Bauhaus lettering, it may be thought that the 'B' and 'P' of *The Blue Peter* would correspond more consistently within a Bayer scheme. Also, it is not obvious that the radical 'E' solution, and the joining of letter frames in *The Blue Peter*, would fit within a Bayer scheme. As such *The Blue Peter* is a more playful typeface and this suits its intended popular magazine context.

happy, and he had the immense satisfaction of finding that the magazine appealed to a steadily increasing number of travellers and others throughout the world who were concerned with the sea.’⁵⁵⁵ Initially published bi-monthly, by 1923 new numbers of the publications appeared every month. By 1930 the magazine’s subtitle had changed from ‘A Magazine of Sea Travel’ to ‘The Magazine of Sea Travel’, and its own figures claim that circulation exceeded 11,000 copies a month by 1931.⁵⁵⁶ Hook’s obituary also praised the role of the magazine in raising the public profile of the merchant navy, arguing that *The Blue Peter* did much to: ‘stimulate interest in many of the fine sailing ships that helped to earn fame for the British Merchant Marine.’⁵⁵⁷

3. Modernism, Nostalgia and Imperial Ambivalence (1929-1939)

Adopting the idea from the field of psychoanalysis, the post-colonial theorist Homi Bhabha has argued, contra Edward Said’s *Orientalism*, that colonial discourse is characterised less by its singular power and hegemony than by ambivalence. For Bhabha ambivalence is an implicit but, from the point of view of the authors of colonial discourse, an unwelcome presence, creating a fundamental disturbance within its intended authority.⁵⁵⁸ Whatever one makes of the claim in general, it is helpful for detecting changes and nuances within P&O’s own particular imperial narrative.

To some extent ambivalence and anxiety can be seen in P&O’s imperial narratives from the very beginning. On the one hand P&O repeatedly represents itself proudly as a great national undertaking and the Empire line, but on the other it is clearly constrained by that same role and identity, wishing on numerous occasions to

⁵⁵⁵ ‘Mr. F. A. Hook’, *The Times*, 27 June 1935, p. 18.

⁵⁵⁶ *The Blue Peter*, 11: 106 (January 1931), p. 1.

⁵⁵⁷ ‘Mr. F. A. Hook’, *The Times*, 27 June 1935, p. 18.

⁵⁵⁸ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994); Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 2003); and also Edward Said, *Imperialism and Culture* (Vintage, 1994).

be free from the demands of the mail contracts.⁵⁵⁹ Kipling's poem *The Exiles' Line* also clearly expresses the ambivalence among passengers on board P&O - the romantic imperial desire and aspiration that is riven with the sadness and sorrow of those exiled from home, and the mundane, repetitive rhythms of colonial existence.

During the inter-war period, however, the ambivalence and anxiety of P&O's imperial discourse becomes explicit in its art and design. During this period P&O's maritime Empire and the British Empire as a whole achieve their respective heights. Yet, changing social, political, cultural and commercial contexts create much uncertainty and apprehension about the future of Empire - and with it P&O's imperial business. There emerges a clear cultural retrenchment and anxious repetition of metropole-periphery cultural binaries, which reveal an attempt to revive and reassert a perceived Edwardian and Victorian imperial order.

3.1 From Cultural Security to Sanctuary: The Viceroy of India (1929)

Leaving England was really worse than going back to school. Amongst the many topics we discussed on the voyage out was how long the Raj was going to last and the general consensus was, 'well at any rate it'll last about 25 years which will entitle us to proportionate pension.' We were fully conscious that we were on a sinking ship, as it were.⁵⁶⁰

⁵⁵⁹ See Harcourt, 'Burdens and privileges of the mail contractor', in *Flagships*, pp. 1-3.

⁵⁶⁰ Sir Pendral Moon, recalling sailing on P&O's *Viceroy of India* in 1930. Quoted in Neil McCart, *Famous British Liners, SS Viceroy of India. P&O's First Electric Cruise Liner* (Cheltenham, UK: Fan Publications, 1993), p. 24. The ODNB gives the full name and spelling as Sir (Edward) Penderel Moon (1905-1987), describing him as an administrator in India and writer. According to the historian and philosopher Sir Isaiah Berlin, (who spells the name Penderell) Penderel Moon played an: 'original, fearless and admirable part in India'. See Philip Mason, 'Moon, Sir (Edward) Penderel' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: OUP, 2004); and Isaiah Berlin, and Henry Hardy (ed.), *Personal Impressions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 85. There is a likeness of Penderel Moon at the National Portrait Gallery in London, ref. NPG/Ax142011. For Penderel Moon's writing on the British Empire in India see his, *The British Conquest and Dominion of India* (London: Gerald Duckworth & Company, 1989). For helpful review of the book, discussing Moon's necessarily

P&O's *Viceroy of India* (*Viceroy* hereafter) was not one of a class of ships but was unique, designed for the prestigious Bombay service, the vessel also became popular as a cruise ship. The ship was ordered in 1927 and launched in 1928 by Lady Irwin. Lady Irwin was the wife of Lord Irwin who held the position of Viceroy and Governor-General of India, the head of British administration in India, after which the ship was named. Photographs from the launch show Lord Inchcape standing proudly next to Lady Irwin the Vicereine (fig. 216). After trials the vessel was delivered to P&O 7 March 1929.⁵⁶¹ Much existing scholarship has tended to emphasise the historicist interior design of *Viceroy* and its wider spatial organisation as a symbol or microcosm of the British Empire.⁵⁶² The interpretation offered here, however, examines the shifting contexts of British Empire in the 1920s and 1930s to detect underlying imperial ambivalence, anxiety and instability rather than purely themes of imperial security, control, power and subjugation. It also examines the role of *Viceroy* in

involved account in the context of more recent academic debate, see D. R. SarDesai, *Albion*, 23: 3 (Autumn, 1991), pp. 606-608.

⁵⁶¹ The vessel was originally going to be called *Taj Mahal* but this was changed to avoid possible confusion regarding mail sent to the Bombay hotel of the same name and also apparently to avoid offence to a section of the Indian population, see NMM/P&O/65/355 Individual Ships: *Viceroy of India*: Miscellaneous material, 1929.

⁵⁶² Wealleans' *Designing Liners*, was the first academic text to highlight the importance of the interior design of the *Viceroy*. As Wealleans says, *Viceroy* had not previously featured prominently in mainstream publications on ocean liners, mainly because it did not sail on the prestigious transatlantic route. Countering the transatlantic emphasis, Wealleans highlights the importance of *Viceroy*'s predominantly first-class accommodation, explaining its design in terms of a distinctive upper class British taste, combining British tradition with mild modernism. This she relates directly to the typical *Viceroy* passenger: the civil servants and army officers travelling between Britain and India. Wealleans also highlights the shifting attitudes towards female designers and the central role of Elsie MacKay, Lord Inchcape's daughter, in the design of *Viceroy*'s interiors. In some earlier accounts MacKay had not been credited at all. Heloise Finch-Boyer extends discussion of the *Viceroy* and Empire examining publicity photographs of P&O's Lascars on board *Viceroy* in the context of 'the colonial gaze', and discusses issues arising for the display of such material in museums today. As part of the discussion Finch-Boyer uses *Viceroy*'s ship plans to emphasise the spatial partitions on board, not only between passengers and crew but between European and Asian crew. For Finch-Boyer, when understood together, these sources show how *Viceroy* formed a microcosm of wider European imperial control and subjugation. See, Wealleans, *Designing Liners*, in particular, pp. 81-85 and Heloise Finch-Boyer, 'Lascars through the colonial lens: reconsidering visual sources of South Asian sailors from the twentieth century', *Journal for Maritime Research*, 16: 2 (2014), pp. 251-268.

fashioning a particular relationship between Scotland and India, rather than seeing imperialism and culture as a single undifferentiated façade.

As in the period 1870-1904 the idea of home and cultural security continues to be an important element in the design of *Viceroy*. Promotional advertising posters from the 1930s in *The Times of India*, targeted the British colonial work force, exclaiming ‘Travel British!’ and describing the P&O line as ‘The Way Home’ (fig. 217). In this poster the *Viceroy* is the middle ship with P&O’s traditional black hull, stone-coloured upper works, and black funnels. Pictured alongside the *Viceroy* are the later so-called White Sisters; *Strathnaver* (1931) and *Strathaird* (1932). The introductory paragraph to the advertisement is designed to reassure the colonial traveller of the comfort and service of the P&O: ‘When you would plan your homeward trip, call on or write to the P. & O. Agents, who will be glad to relieve you of all trouble and to make arrangements for your personal comfort. In the P. & O. or B. I. ships you will enjoy the best that ships can offer - willing personal service in all departments; an excellent and varied a-la-carte table; roomy, thoughtfully appointed cabins; handsome, comfortable saloons; perfect ventilation; spacious decks for rest or sport; convenient daily baggage arrangements; and a voyage in the happiest conditions.’

However, there is also a changed qualitative tone to P&O’s use of design and this, in conjunction with the changed commercial and political circumstances in which the designs came to life, suggests a differentiated imperial reading. No longer did the interior spaces merely provide a safe, secure and comforting home environment as they had done in the nineteenth century when: ‘the British Empire seemed to be eternal and the stream of passengers from Britain to India and back seemed also likely to last

for ever.⁵⁶³ Rather, as the reminiscences of Sir Pendral Moon show,⁵⁶⁴ conversations on board the *Viceroy* included the stark acknowledgment that the Raj itself was likely be short lived. As such it can be argued that the design and life of P&O's *Viceroy* was as much about a psychological refuge from disillusionment with the current state of the British Empire and its future prospects, as it was about imperial power and hegemony. What *Viceroy* offered was a retreat into the securities of an imagined past.

Viceroy's historicism was far from generic however. A brochure from 1929, the year the vessel was handed over to P&O, indicates the historical frame of reference for the first-class smoking room (figs. 218-220). We learn that:

The scheme of decoration is based upon 'the Bromley-Room,' taken from the old palace at Bromley-by-Bow built by James I and preserved at South Kensington. Oaken wall panelling and hammer beams in the dome develop the decorative theme, which is completed by a fine fire-place, with carved overmantel of ornate but dignified character, and handsome leaded windows bearing stained glass escutcheons.⁵⁶⁵

Comparison between the *Viceroy's* fireplace and the original, which as the brochure identifies is now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, shows the *Viceroy's* design is a closely copied homage (fig. 221).⁵⁶⁶ This was more than a convenient historical reference since the politics and style of the Jacobean period had distinct resonance with P&O's own historical and political identity. In the Jacobean period, the joining

⁵⁶³ Howarth and Howarth, *The Story of P&O*, p. 107.

⁵⁶⁴ Sir Pendral Moon, quoted at the beginning of this section and cited in McCart, *Famous British Liners, SS Viceroy of India*. p. 24.

⁵⁶⁵ 'P&O Cruises The New Turbo-Electric S. S. "Viceroy of India" 19,500 tons.', publicity brochure, 1929, p. 3. A copy can be found at NMM/UEC/Box 8.

⁵⁶⁶ The VAM collections were used as reference for the design of other areas of the ship too, such as the textile coverings of furniture in the main dining saloon. P&O, *P&O Cruises. The New Turbo-Electric S.S. 'Viceroy of India'*, brochure (1929), p. 1. For a copy see NMM/UEC/Box 8.

of the crowns of England and Scotland and the later Act of Union were important in consolidating the power of the two nations, and the subsequent prominence of Scotland within the British Empire has long been recognised. Indeed shipping and colonial administration in India are two arenas in which Scotland's imperial work and influence were most clearly demonstrated.⁵⁶⁷ Key figures within P&O and BIS such as Arthur Anderson, Brodie Magee Willcox, Sir William MacKinnon, Sir Thomas Sutherland and Lord Inchcape were all Scottish and contributed greatly to the flourishing of this relationship.⁵⁶⁸ Thus, for Inchcape, under whose eye the designs were executed, the Jacobean period which saw the union of the crowns and the establishment of regular maritime trade between Britain and Asia, was a powerful historical frame of reference for the combined P&O and BIS companies. While, in 1929, P&O's own recent history had seen the profits from transporting goods such as silk from Asia diminish dramatically, this interior scheme imagined the company from within the security of a much longer romantic tradition of imperial British maritime trade and commerce.

The imperial relationship between Scotland and India was also of close personal significance for Lord Inchcape, and so too his daughter Elsie MacKay who designed the smoke room and other key public rooms on the *Viceroy*. Lord Inchcape was born in Arbroath in Scotland in 1852 and for twenty years between 1874 and 1894 lived and worked in India forging a considerable professional reputation with Mackinnon MacKenzie, the shipping agents in India. It was while Inchcape was in India that Elsie was born, in Simla in 1893. In 1907 Inchcape purchased a new family home, Glenapp Castle in Ayrshire, which may have provided some of the inspiration

⁵⁶⁷ Nick Robins, *Scotland and the Sea: The Scottish Dimension in Maritime History* (Barnsley, UK: Seaforth 2014).

⁵⁶⁸ *Viceroy* was also built in Scotland, by Alexander Stephen & Sons in Glasgow. See NMM/P&O/65/355.

for MacKay's designs. Later in his life, after the untimely death of Elsie MacKay aged only 35, it was to Glenapp Castle that Lord Inchcape retreated, distraught at the death of his daughter⁵⁶⁹ and increasingly disaffected with his business and political life, believing Britain's Imperial relationship with India to be deteriorating badly.⁵⁷⁰ In this context *Viceroy's* design can be seen as a form of reparation and restoration for increasingly fragile imperial bonds.⁵⁷¹

Other major public spaces on board the vessel such as the first class Reading and Writing Room confirm such a view (fig. 223). What might appear to be a generic Adamesque space makes specific reference to Robert Adam's work at Kedleston Hall (fig. 224). Adam was a prominent Scottish Architect, who, from his studies of classical antiquity in Rome, evolved a distinctive classical language which on a general level suited P&O's imperial ideals.⁵⁷² More specifically, however, Kedleston Hall was the family seat of the Curzon family. Before he died in 1925, Kedleston was the home of George Nathaniel Curzon, Lord Curzon, Viceroy and Governor General of India (1899-1905) (fig. 225). Curzon had travelled on board P&O's *Arabia* (1898) in December 1898 to take up his prominent position which began formally, 6 January 1899. Before he left for India, on 2 December 1899, P&O had organised a special luncheon for Lord Curzon to be held at Leadenhall Street and to mark his appointment.⁵⁷³ Although there is no explicit evidence from P&O to this effect, it

⁵⁶⁹ In the chapel on the estate Lord and Lady Inchcape commissioned a stained glass window in memory of their daughter (fig. 222). Lord Inchcape's yacht *Rover*, on which he died in 1932, also featured a figurehead representing Elsie. See 'Lord Inchcape's Yacht Sold' *Dundee Courier*, 3 January 1933.

⁵⁷⁰ Stephanie Jones, *Trade and Shipping Lord Inchcape 1852-1932*, (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1989), p. 197.

⁵⁷¹ The notions of reparation and restoration are drawn from Melanie Klein, *Love, guilt and reparation: and other works 1921-1945* (London: Virago, 1988).

⁵⁷² The fireplace to which Elsie Mackay pays specific homage was a later addition to Adam's work by another Scottish architect George Richardson.

⁵⁷³ For a surviving menu from the luncheon see NMM/P&O/96/1. For P&O's record of Curzon on *Arabia* see NMM/P&O/65/37. *Arabia* had only been registered in 1898, and so would have been a

seems plausible that its 1929 *Viceroy* was in small part a tribute to Curzon's work and his particular vision of Empire. It was certainly a vision with which Lord Inchcape had great sympathy. Inchcape himself had pretensions to the Viceregal role, 'the only official position which Inchcape had ever wanted',⁵⁷⁴ and it is also true that he was less pleased by some of the more recent developments in Britain's relationship with India under Irwin's Viceroyalty:

As the First World War coloured Inchcape's attitudes to home affairs it inevitably underlay his outlook overseas, especially in relation to India. He could not cope with the increasingly nationalist and anti-British attitudes current in India, and was frustrated by Britain's decreasing ability to do anything about the situation. If only he had been viceroy, he would never have 'kowtowed' to Gandhi the way that Irwin did.⁵⁷⁵

The argument offered above adds a layer of complication to recent interpretation of *Viceroy's* art and design. With reference to the *Viceroy's* ship plans, Heloise Finch-Boyer has argued there was a deep ethnic segregation throughout the ship which helps reveal the implicit colonial gaze through which publicity photographs of Lascars serving on board the *Viceroy* were viewed (fig. 226). The argument offered above suggests that there were numerous and competing conceptions of colonial relations in Britain during this period, (Finch-Boyer tends to assume 'the colonial gaze' is one thing) and that the rigid and caricatured imperial microcosm on board P&O's *Viceroy*, embodies as much a growing imperial anxiety and desire to retreat to a fictionalised imperial past as it does hegemonic colonial power and control.

new ship for Curzon's journey. For a photograph of the First Saloon Smoking Room on board *Arabia* see fig. 114 (NMM/CC/ALB0506).

⁵⁷⁴ Jones, *Trade and Shipping*, p. 197.

⁵⁷⁵ Jones, *Trade and Shipping*, p. 197.

An important and revealing photograph from 1931 (fig. 227), around the same time as the photograph of the *Viceroy's* Lascars, shows Mahatma Gandhi on board P&O's *Rajputana* with its Captain H. M. Jack. Gandhi was sailing from Bombay to Marseilles on his way to the Second Round Table Conference in London to discuss the future of India's Independence.⁵⁷⁶ Although no firm results came from the conference with regard to India's constitutional future, only the most stubborn Imperialist would deny that Gandhi's voyage to London and the subsequent negotiations, did not raise considerable questions about the future of Empire. Inchcape's pronouncements at the time indicate that although he clearly recognised change was in the air he deeply regretted it. At the P&O Banking Corporation's Eleventh Ordinary Meeting, 13 July 1931, just a month before Gandhi's voyage on P&O's *Rajputana*, Inchcape, as Chairman of the banking corporation, addressed the meeting under the title 'Anxiety in India'. Inchcape opened the address as follows: 'The whole business community in India is greatly worried by the events of the past year and awaits with much anxiety the result of the next few months.' He refers to the millions of pounds of British investment in India - in banks, shipping, coffee plantations, and mills for jute, cotton, wool, paper and rice, and house and office property - and expresses incredulity and incomprehension at recent challenges to the Imperial status quo.

I went to India seven and forty years ago and resided there for many years. I have frequently visited it since I gave up residence there. I served for a number of years on the Legislative Council of the

⁵⁷⁶ According to P&O's records Gandhi departed Bombay 29 August 1931 arriving at Port Said 7 September and then Marseilles 11 September 1931. See NMM/P&O/65/281. The conference began 7 September and ran until 1 December 1931. Gandhi's first speech at the conference was 15 September 1931. See Indian Round Table Conference, *Gandhiji in England: and the proceedings of the second Round Table Conference* (Madras: B. G. Paul & Co., 1932).

Viceroy and was a member of the Council of the Secretary of State for 15 years, and am closely associated with India still. The European community has always worked in the most amicable and friendly way with their Indian fellow-subjects. I will endeavour to speak moderately, but this I will say: there is no country in the world which has been more peaceful, where over 300 millions of people of vastly different religions and ideas have received absolute and impartial justice without discrimination between the various sects or between Europeans and Indians. Some two or three years ago the Government to a great extent ceased to function and pandered to a wretched, seditious fanatic whom they released from gaol after he had been imprisoned for preaching civil disobedience.

On getting his freedom he set himself up to turn the Europeans out of the country and to usurp the place of the Viceroy, the representative of His Most Gracious Majesty the Emperor of India. Let us hope that the Government of India will now revert to its previous position and continue to govern with a firm hand and keep law and order in the country, which is the brightest gem in the British Crown. If they do not, disaster will follow, and it will be the break-up of the British Empire. I am not a politician, but I feel certain that the British Parliament, no matter which party is in power, will never give up India or agree to that most unfortunate suggestion of Dominion Status.⁵⁷⁷

P&O's *Rajputana*, whose name signifies an administrative and supposed ethnographic region in British India, was another vessel designed by Elsie Mackay with historicist interiors (figs. 208 and 228). In the same vein as the *Viceroy*, the *Rajputana* (1925) can be understood within the broader imperial political climate, less in terms of an undifferentiated concept of the omnipotent and subjugating power of British Empire,

⁵⁷⁷ Lord Inchcape, 'Anxiety in India', The Eleventh Ordinary Meeting of the P. & O. Banking Corporation, Limited, 13 July 1931, 122 Leadenhall Street, London. Printed in *The Blue Peter* 11: 113 (August 1931), Steamship Supplement No. 113, p. xxiii.

and more as sign of its increasing fragility in the interwar period. The historicist designs, as with the *Viceroy*, reveal a subconscious desire to retreat from current anxieties and return to the psychological sanctuary of a remote and fictionalised imperial past.

3.2 Imperial-Modern: The ‘Strath’ Liners (1931-1939)

Historicism was not the unique means by which P&O asserted an authoritative imperial narrative. In a way which would seem incoherent from a design historical trajectory built around the concept of modernist progress alone, P&O characteristically blended its use of historicism with modernist elements. In the case of *Viceroy*, the prototypical historicist liner, there was no apparent contradiction in advertising and other promotional material which celebrated the vessel as an icon of modernity. An advertisement by ‘Michel’ for cruises on the *Viceroy* was rendered in a distinctly modern style (fig. 229) and a 1939 brochure for the *Viceroy*, designed by H. Frank Ball, framed *Viceroy* in a very ‘new horizon’ of a Surrealist landscape (fig. 230). Alongside photographic images of its historicist interiors other brochures and publicity albums proudly feature its modern engines and proclaim that the *Viceroy* was: ‘the first large liner constructed in England in which the turbo-electric drive was adopted, with consequent greater stability and absence of vibration’ (fig. 231). This is true also of the high standard of modern luxury provided on board: ‘Electric heating is provided and, for warmer weather, there is the punkah-louvre ventilation in all cabins.’⁵⁷⁸ Each of these instances demonstrates that the development of an Imperial-

⁵⁷⁸ P&O, ‘Accommodation Pictures: Viceroy of India,’ advertising booklet [c.1929], copy available, NMM/UEC Box 8.

Modernism, in which elements of the historical rubbed shoulders with the modern, was anything but inconsistent for P&O.

The blending of historical and modern elements evolved further with the design and publicity for the 'Strath' Liners: *Strathnaver* (1931); *Strathaird* (1932); *Strathmore* (1935); *Stratheden* (1937); *Strathallen* (1938). One of the most distinctive features of the Straths, was their break with P&O's traditional black livery. The Straths made a bold departure, featuring white hulls, which in itself made the new class of ships seem like a break with the past.⁵⁷⁹ A brochure for the first two white sisters, *Strathnaver* and *Strathaird*, published in 1931, exemplifies P&O's imperial-modernism which saw elements of both modernity and tradition collectively recruited to articulate its new vision (fig. 232).⁵⁸⁰ Instead of the traditional ship portrait, the front cover of the brochure employs a strikingly modern Art Deco style to represent the two vessels. The composition employs a low level perspective, a popular device in numerous publicity images of ocean liners of the period, designed to emphasise the sheer massive physicality of the ships' hulls. The abstract quality of the representation also lends itself to an idea of the large-scale modern industrial processes of ship construction. The ship here is a symbol of the physical power, style and progress of modernity. The brochures' title page continues in the modern style with a reference to the influence of Japanese prints in the evolution of Art Deco, reproducing a distinctively Hokusai-like wave and three diving fish (fig. 233). The very first photograph inside the brochure, however, which illustrates the First Class Lounge on board the two vessels, makes it clear that eclecticism rather than stylistic unity is a priority. In combination with the triumph of modern technology, engineering and

⁵⁷⁹ It is likely that with this change P&O was copying other shipping lines in the inter-war period, but there was also an element of historical reference back to the white hull of P&O's *Medina* when the vessel had been fitted out as a Royal Yacht in 1911.

⁵⁸⁰ Unfortunately there are no records to identify the designer of this particular brochure.

style, the First Class Lounge offers the classical repose of an Italianate lounge (fig. 234).⁵⁸¹

Another element in P&O's more modern outlook to publicity and design which garnered favourable comment in the advertising press, was its use of stylistically simplified, humorous advertisements in the 1930s (figs. 235-237). This style of advertisement bears no explicit reference to the Empire but the familiar themes of passenger comfort and reliable service are represented. This was a period of depression and economic downturn and also the point at which P&O introduced 'tourist class' on the *Straths* and other ships, and so the more light-hearted advertisements were attempting to appeal to a wider market than the company's traditional clientele.⁵⁸² The humour recalls P&O's illustrated books by W. W. Lloyd and Harry Furniss of the late nineteenth century, without the explicit imperial baggage and foreshadow the more light-hearted design which would emerge more consistently post-1945. Chapter five will examine the extent to which this new playfulness nevertheless needs to be understood as an integral development of the corporation's imperial past, rather than an entirely separate or unconnected development.

⁵⁸¹ *Strathnaver* and *Strathaird* also had three funnels, two of which were dummies. These were unnecessary additions and gave the vessels a traditional rather than resolutely modern profile (see fig. 217).

⁵⁸² A brochure for *Strathnaver* and *Strathaird* from 1931 says that: 'The recent institution of the P. & O. "Tourist-class" Service by conversion of the *Moldovia* and *Mongolia* (17,000 tons) as wholly tourist-class ships, in conjunction with the provision in the *Strathnaver* and *Strathaird* of tourist-class as well as first saloon accommodation, opens up a new era of economic ocean travel between Europe, India and Australia.' P&O, *P&O. The White Sisters*, brochure (1931), n.p. A copy is available NMM/LC/347.792P.

3.3 ‘So different from the old days’⁵⁸³ (c. 1921)

In 1921 P&O commissioned a portrait of its celebrated Chairman Lord Inchcape which sets out to represent the imperial vision and achievement of a great man, and thus a great company, which Inchcape was to lead for eighteen years (fig. 238). It was painted by P. A. de László (1869-1937) a Hungarian portrait painter who had settled in England in 1907. In 1921 at the time of P&O’s commission De László was a widely celebrated society and establishment portrait painter.⁵⁸⁴ His three quarter length portrait of Inchcape revives the grand tradition of male portraiture reaching back to Reynolds and earlier. There are interesting compositional, symbolic and historically evocative parallels with the sixteenth century portrait of Sir James Lancaster, the prominent Elizabethan trader and privateer who commanded the first East India Company voyage in 1601 (fig. 239). According to the maritime writer Nick Robins, BIS, where Inchcape built his early reputation and eventually became Chairman, ‘quickly became the natural successor of the East India Company as the vehicle of Empire in the Far East’. This provides important context to the visual cultural resonance between the two portraits. As with Lancaster’s portrait, Inchcape’s hand hovers over a globe, a symbol for world trade and adventure. In Inchcape’s case his

⁵⁸³ Towards the end of his life, in an address to P&O proprietors in 1932, Inchcape reflected rather sadly: ‘I have never known such a period of depression as that through which we have passed in the last 18 months. It has been heart-rending to see the steamers leaving London, week after week [...] with thousands of tons of unoccupied space – so different from the old days.’ The address was read out not by Inchcape but by his son-in-law and successor as Chairman, Hon. Alexander Shaw. Quoted in Howarth and Howarth, *The Story of P&O*, p. 129.

⁵⁸⁴ In 1900 de László won international acclaim for his portraits of several members of the German Imperial Family, and of Pope Leo XIII which won him a medal at the Paris Exhibition that year. Having received commissions from King Edward VII, including half-length portraits of the King and Queen (now in the Royal Collection), de László was created M.V.O. (Member of the Royal Victorian Order) by Edward VII in 1909. In 1930 he was elected to succeed Walter Sickert as the President of the Royal Society of British Artists. See Caroline Corbeau-Parsons, *Philip de László, Portraits* (London: National Portrait Gallery Publications, 2010); and Duff Hart-Davis and Caroline Corbeau-Parsons *Philip de László, His Life and Art* (London: Yale University Press, 2010). In addition to Lord Inchcape’s portrait, De László also painted a portrait of Elsie MacKay under her married name, Mrs Dennis Wyndham, in 1931. Philip de László, *Catalogue Raisonné* available online [<https://www.delaszlocatalogueraisonne.com/>, accessed 3 October 2015].

hand comes to rest near India, the country where he spent much of his life, devoted, as he saw it, to the country's development. In its pleasure at putting on the clothes of imperial status, Inchcape's portrait has resonance with a different portrait, of Lord Curzon, painted by John Singer Sargent six years earlier (fig. 240).⁵⁸⁵ In his portrait, Inchcape is depicted in his full robes of state, awarded for service to commerce and country. Hanging from his collar, Inchcape wears the highest order, the *Knight Grand Commander*, of the *Most Exalted Order of the Star of India*, which was the senior order of chivalry associated with the Indian Empire. He also wears the Grand Cross's insignia of the *Most Distinguished Order of Saint Michael and Saint George*, awarded to men and women who hold high office or render extraordinary or important non-military service in a foreign country. Lord Inchcape's portrait is clearly intended as a visual argument celebrating the achievements of the great man in shipping and in Empire. A more nuanced view, however, parallels the line of argument offered for the interior design of P&O's *Viceroy of India*. Understood within the increasingly anxious political context of the British Empire in the interwar period, the portrait's grandiloquence can be understood as a sign of Inchcape's deep disaffection with current developments, and a desire to return to the security and comfort of an imagined past, rather than merely a sign of imperial dominance and power.

4. 'A Century of Progress' (c. 1937)

P&O's centenary year in 1937 provided the corporation with an opportunity to display further its favoured self-conception as proud imperial servant. The centenary follows the pattern of much of P&O's interwar art and design. It can be seen as the

⁵⁸⁵ Singer Sargent also painted Inchcape's predecessor as P&O Chairman, Sir Thomas Sutherland, POH/AC/02133/00. This is a more modest painting in terms of Sutherland's dress, closer in this respect to the earlier portraits of the company's founders by T. F. Dicksee, discussed in chapter two. See figs. 35, 37, 38.

propagandistic height of P&O's imperial narrative, and was distinct from earlier periods by the stridency of the message. This apparent confidence, however, belied barely repressed fears and anxieties about the future of the Empire and the corporation in its traditional form. The centenary year coincided with the Coronation of George VI and, as it had with Queen Victoria's Jubilees, the company exploited this coincidence to full effect, continuing the story of its Royal association and service. Immediately after the Coronation service in Westminster Abbey the route of the State Procession to Buckingham Palace, extended to allow or encourage the public to see the new King and Queen, passed up the Victoria Embankment to Trafalgar Square and then along Cockspur Street and past P&O House. The company therefore used the opportunity to decorate the façade of its famous building to celebrate its own centenary and express its loyalty to the new King (fig. 241).⁵⁸⁶ Although the status of the British Empire had changed considerably since King George V's Coronation in 1911, it still played a major, even defining, role in the 1937 event. On the guest list were Premiers of the Dominions (now holding legislative equality with the United Kingdom after the 1931 Statute of Westminster), and leading colonial administrators and ambassadors.⁵⁸⁷ P&O's architectural display included the Royal cypher of King George VI, placed at the very top of the building, and each of the main columns of the façade held the monogram of each of the major companies in the P&O group: P&O, BIS, New Zealand Steam Ship Company, Union Steam Ship Company, and OSN. Below these were presented the companies' major destinations: India, Africa, New Zealand, Australia and Ceylon, all, of course, key destinations of the British Empire and Dominions. Appropriately enough, the procession past P&O's offices included large

⁵⁸⁶ Artmomsky and Cox, *Across the Oceans*, pp. 226-7.

⁵⁸⁷ Roy Strong, *Coronation: a history of kingship and the British monarchy* (London: Harper Collins 2005).

numbers of military and naval personnel from across the Empire who would have travelled on the company's vessels. The news film commentaries following the procession from the Abbey, across Trafalgar Square and past P&O House, were filled with rousing Empire propaganda.⁵⁸⁸ In this context it is clear that despite many changes in imperial politics and growing anxieties and doubts about its future, P&O still played a major role in what the establishment saw, with baroque pride, as Britain's leading position and achievement on the world stage.

4.1 Painting Between the Academic and Commercial (1937)

Two ship portraits to commemorate the centenary were commissioned from the celebrated maritime artist and poster illustrator Norman Wilkinson (1898-1971). While serving in the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve during the First World War, Wilkinson had developed the 'dazzle' technique designed to camouflage British ships at sea from German submarines and enemy warships. British vessels were painted with bold irregular zig zag patterns so that the precise form of the ship would be difficult for German submarine crews to determine, making them less easy targets.⁵⁸⁹ As a figure whose artistic skills had played a recognised role in Britain's maritime defence, Wilkinson made an ideal artist to create P&O's centenary ship portraits.⁵⁹⁰

Wilkinson was commissioned to paint P&O's fabled *William Fawcett* (1837), and *Stratheden* (1937) the fourth of the five celebrated 'White Sisters' (figs. 242 and 243). In the centenary year the paintings were also reproduced as limited edition prints

⁵⁸⁸ See for example, British Pathé, 'The Coronation of Their Majesties King George VI and Queen Elizabeth', news film, 1937, British Pathé 84459 [<http://www.britishpathe.com/video/coronation-of-george-vi-and-queen-elizabeth-reel-2/query/coronation+George+VI>, accessed 31 July 2016].

⁵⁸⁹ The painting by F. S. Beaumont of a P&O vessel at sea during the First World War installed at Cockspur Street (1918-20) illustrates the appearance of the dazzle technique (figs. 193 and 194).

⁵⁹⁰ Wilkinson was a favourite choice for P&O. The company commissioned him to record various events in the Second World War that involved its ships. See this chapter, section 4.3 'Lest we forget', and fig. 251: Norman Wilkinson, *Rawalpindi under fire in the North Atlantic*, 1940, oil on canvas, 1002 x 1513 mm POH/AC/02056/00.

and distributed widely to business and political associates. Passengers at sea received a copy of the *William Fawcett* picture in the form of special celebratory dinner menus.⁵⁹¹ The paintings are important in part because they are hybrid-like objects, siting between the academic traditions of ship portraiture and the more modern language of graphic design and advertising. Wilkinson's paintings tend towards the academic, which corresponds to the wider tendencies of P&O's centenary self-image, gaining prestige from historical achievement as much as from modern fashions and tastes.

P&O reproduced Wilkinson's paintings in commercial advertising contexts such as on dinner menus (fig. 245), postcards and in publicity brochures. Historically the reproduction of academic style work in commercial contexts had become a characteristic feature of P&O public identity. A useful contrast can be made with Wilkinson imagery produced for the French shipping company *Ligne Allan* thirty six years earlier, which clearly aligned the French company with more popular imagery and contexts (fig. 244). This was not a misunderstanding on P&O's part, a failure to understand different art and design contexts, or an aesthetic myopia failing to appreciate the modern language of design. Rather, it demonstrates a commercial and pragmatic sense of the company's primary market. The paintings by Wilkinson, and the covers of *The Blue Peter* by Jack Spurling and Frank Henry Mason, deliberately occupied a place between the academic and commercial because this more conventional style appealed to the more staid and conservative tastes of many of P&O's passengers, still largely rooted in the company's imperial past.⁵⁹²

⁵⁹¹ P&O, Press Office publicity letter, 31 August 1937, NMM/P&O/91/16/1.

⁵⁹² There is also a more general trend amongst some twentieth century British artists, such as C. W. R. Nevinson, Edward Bawden, John Piper, Paul Nash, Eric Ravilious and Charles Pears whose work spanned the fine, decorative and graphic arts. Wilkinson fits into this group and P&O exploits this flexibility pragmatically for its own multifarious ends.

4.2 Thanksgiving and Champagne (1937)

On 14 October 1937 at 12 noon, P&O held a centenary commemoration service in the church of St. Andrew Undershaft, St. Mary Axe, near to the company's Leadenhall Street office, and at the heart of maritime organisations in the City of London. The order of service described St Andrew Undershaft as the 'Parish Church' of the company (fig. 246). There is a foreword written by P&O's Chairman, The Rt. Hon. Lord Craigmyle (who had taken over following Lord Inchcape's death in 1932) and the address was given by the Right Rev. G. Vernon Smith, Bishop of Willesden and the Rector of the Parish. Craigmyle's foreword begins:

The first mail Contract for the conveyance of Mails to the Far East by the P. & O. was dated in August, 1837, at the beginning of the reign of Her Majesty Queen Victoria. From that date to this – over a period of one hundred years – the story of the Company is a record of courageous enterprise, of faithful service in the Empire and the constant devotion of its countless servants to the high claims of duty. It is fitting that Thanksgiving should be offered to Almighty God at the Commemoration of this Centenary.

A handwritten amendment to the draft Order of Service by Lord Craigmyle reveals an acute awareness of changing circumstances in the imperial order but at the same time the desire for continuity. The passage describes the proposed nature and tone of commemorative centenary services to be held on board the company's vessels, and the first draft reads: 'On a convenient Sunday the order of Service will be used on board the Company's ships. Passengers and crew will thus be able to bear their part in a common act of thanksgiving and prayer.'⁵⁹³ In Craigmyle's amendments, the second

⁵⁹³ On its first page the manuscript is signed and dated with the instructions: 'As per phone message 16.7.37', three months before the service was held. NMM/AC: P&O/91/17.

sentence reads: 'Passengers and crew will thus be able to bear their part in a common act of thanksgiving for the past, and prayer [sic] that Almighty God may grant them in the future new opportunities of devotion and service to the Empire.' This amendment is an implicit acknowledgment that the historical Empire as the company had known it for most of its life, was considerably changed, and the prayer is that new imperial opportunities will emerge.

After the Church service, in the evening of the 14 October 1937 in the Savoy Hotel in London, the Chairman and Directors held a centenary dinner for around 400 guests (fig. 247 and 248). There were 27 peers in attendance, the Chinese, Japanese and Belgian Ambassadors, and members of the Cabinet among many luminaries. The Prime Minister had been invited but was unable to attend as he was already engaged at the Chamber of Commerce Dinner in Manchester.⁵⁹⁴ The invited speakers were The Rt. Hon. Sir John Simon, The Chancellor of the Exchequer; The Rt. Hon Oliver Stanley M.P., President of the Board of Trade; and The Rt. Hon. Lord Chatfield, First Sea Lord. Each spoke in celebration of the company, its work and ideals, demonstrating the high regard and position with which the corporation was viewed within the organs of state. In this respect the dinner was an extraordinarily carefully choreographed piece of advertising. One of the tables at the dinner (each named after a famous vessel from its past and present fleets) was reserved for representatives of the British press including from the *Daily Mail*, the *Journal of Commerce*, *Lloyd's List*, The Press Association, Reuters, *The Daily Telegraph*, and *The Times*.

P&O had arranged that, the day after the dinner, attendees would receive complimentary prints of the ship portraits by Norman Wilkinson and a copy of Boyd

⁵⁹⁴ Lord Craigmyle refers to this in an anecdote from his speech at the dinner. See P&O, *A Souvenir of the Centenary of the Peninsular & Oriental Steam Navigation Company 1837-1937* (London: Riddle, Smith & Duffus, 1937) p.14. A copy is available NMM/UEC/Box 25.

Cable's *A Hundred Year History of the P&O*. The letters of thanks and congratulations received by the company are highly complimentary and affirm the ideal of service P&O had promoted for a hundred years. A letter addressed to Lord Craigmyle from the Belgian Ambassador in London is typical:

Dear Lord Craigmyle, I feel I must write and thank you again for the most enjoyable evening I spent yesterday at the Savoy Hotel. The whole affair was well up to the best P. & O. traditions, and a worthy celebration of the hundred years of progress of the P. & O. Line. These hundred years of progress are most happily portrayed in the two charming prints and the delightful 'Hundred Year History of the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Co' that I received this morning, as a memento of the Centenary, and I would like to take this opportunity of telling you how much I appreciate them and the ideals of progress and service for which they stand. Believe me, Yours Truly [...].⁵⁹⁵

As well as the event in London, numerous other dinners and receptions were held on board its vessels across the Empire. These included: a reception for 1000 people each in Melbourne and Sydney on board *Mooltan*; a tea party for 1000 of the company's 'Indian Supporters' and 'one or two cocktail parties' for 800 European guests in Bombay on board *Strathnaver* (note again the separation); a dance for 600 guests in Colombo on board *Strathaird*; a dinner party for 300 people in Yokohama on board *Naldera*; and cocktail parties for between, variously, three and seven hundred guests in Marseilles, Gibraltar, Port Said, Hong Kong, Singapore and Yokohama. As with the London dinner, the formal institutional and official nature of these events is

⁵⁹⁵ NMM/P&O/91/16/1 P&O Centenary: book of congratulatory letters and telegrams, 1937.

demonstrated in a surviving photograph which shows the Mayor of Marseilles, on board *Strathmore*, raising a toast: 'to the Prosperity of the P&O' (fig. 249).

In addition to the Wilkinson paintings and prints, the Church service, a special supplement of *The Times* newspaper,⁵⁹⁶ formal dinners, dances and cocktail parties, there were also radio programmes broadcast across the Empire regarding the history of the company and its 'century of steam'.⁵⁹⁷ Finally there is evidence of a television programme which appears to have been the suggestion of Sir John (later Lord) Reith, the first Director General of the British Broadcasting Corporation, who had been a special guest at the Savoy Centenary Dinner in London.

In his invitation to Reith, Craigmyle draws a parallel between the common imperial purpose of the two organisations: 'Friends tell me that the P&O is not the largest Shipping Group in the world; but this to my mind does not matter very much. What does matter is that for a hundred years the Company had been of real service to the Empire. It would give my colleagues and myself great pleasure if you, as the Head of another Imperial Service, could be with us on the occasion.'⁵⁹⁸ It seems that initially Reith considered broadcasting the speeches from the dinner but without the presence of the Prime Minister was in some doubt as to whether the speeches would sustain listener interest. Then in consultation with a man he refers to as Graves⁵⁹⁹ Reith suggests: 'a special programme about the P. & O. much on the same lines as we did

⁵⁹⁶ 'P&O Centenary Number', *The Times*, 7 September 1937. See NMM/P&O/91/17 Miscellanea: Material relating to the P&O Centenary, 1937.

⁵⁹⁷ The company archive holds a manuscript for a talk broadcast from Hong Kong on 30 September 1937 entitled: 'A short account of the Peninsular & Oriental Steam Navigation Co.'. See NMM/P&O/91/17. There is also a one-sided '78' Gramophone Record of a talk entitled: 'A Century of Steam', P&O Centenary, 1937. See NMM/P&O/97/19.

⁵⁹⁸ Craigmyle to Reith, 16 July 1937, NMM/P&O/91/16/1. For discussion of the BBC as an imperial service during this period see John M. MacKenzie, "'In touch with the infinite": the BBC and the Empire, 1923-53' in MacKenzie (ed.), *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), pp 165-190.

⁵⁹⁹ Likely to be Sir Cecil George Graves (1892-1957) who, in 1937, was Controller of Programmes at the BBC.

in connection with G. W. R. a year or two ago – this to be broadcast during the week in which your Dinner takes place. This is really a much more effective way of handling a thing of this kind, as dinner speeches are rarely satisfactory broadcasts, nor do they command anything like the same audience as a special programme.’⁶⁰⁰ Reith asks Craigmyle to recommend someone in the P. & O. to help with the historical side of the company and preferably someone who: ‘is also of an imaginative turn of mind.’ In reply Craigmyle recommends Boyd Cable who had written the *P&O A Hundred year History* and was in fact a pseudonym for Colonel Ernest Andrew Ewart 1878-1943, P&O’s publicity manager at the time.⁶⁰¹ Craigmyle says of Cable: ‘You could not have a more suitable collaborator. He has had a wonderful career as a war correspondent, a novelist, a journalist, and a literary man generally, and is full of the history and romance of the P&O Company’s hundred years of effort.’⁶⁰² Here the surviving correspondence finishes, but another file entitled: ‘Television Picture Page’,⁶⁰³ outlines a transcript for the programme.

The proposed date for the broadcast from Alexandra Palace was Wednesday 15 September 1937.⁶⁰⁴ The transcript shows that an interviewer was joined by Commander Elliott, a Royal Naval Reserve and P&O Chief Officer, and it explains that the camera shots alternated between the two speakers and two of P&O’s ship

⁶⁰⁰ Reith to Craigmyle, 23 July 1937, NMM/P&O/91/16/1.

⁶⁰¹ Rabson and O’Donoghue, *P&O A Fleet History*, p. 175. Adrian Room says Ewart was ‘a tireless traveller and sea voyager so that the name Boyd Cable may be a pun on “buoyed cable”’. See Adrian Room, *Dictionary of Pseudonyms: 13,000 Assumed Names and their Origins* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, 2010), p. 85. Cable also edited *The Trident* magazine which incorporated Hook’s *Blue Peter* from 1939. See ‘Death of Boyd Cable’, *The Advertiser*, 16 August 1943, p. 2.

⁶⁰² Craigmyle to Reith, 26 July 1937, NMM/P&O/91/16/1.

⁶⁰³ P&O, ‘Television Picture Page: P&O Models’, unpublished transcript (1937), pp. 1-3. For the transcript see NMM/P&O/91/17 Miscellanea: Material relating to the P&O Centenary, 1937.

⁶⁰⁴ A radio programme of the same title was broadcast on the BBC National Programme (forerunner of the BBC Home Service) on Wednesday 6 October 1937, at nine twenty in the evening. See listings in *The Radio Times*, 731 (1 October 1937), p. 54. This reference is available online at: <http://genome.ch.bbc.co.uk/d96e20a4071c4fe38b47880cb9e511f8>, accessed 7 November 2016. A ‘78’ gramophone record, apparently of the broadcast, survives at NMM/P&O/97/19.

models: the *William Fawcett* (1837) and *Strathmore* (1935). Although no footage appears to survive from this very early television broadcast, it seems very likely that the model of *Strathmore* in the collection of the National Maritime Museum, made in 1935 by the ship builders Vickers-Armstrong Limited, is the same model (fig. 250). It is possible too that the model of the *William Fawcett* now in the Science Museum was also used but this is less certain (fig. 8).⁶⁰⁵ The narrative of the programme was a comparison and contrast between the two vessels and the considerable developments in speed, size and comfort of the journeys. Commander Elliott tells viewers that the journey to India which took 70 days in 1837, takes only 11 in 1937. Also prevalent, as Reith and Craigmyle had planned, is ‘the history and romance of the P&O Company’s hundred years of effort.’⁶⁰⁶ To this end the Commander refers to the Overland journey P&O’s early passengers took across the Isthmus of Suez, travelling from Alexandra for 50 miles by barge to the Nile, then in a river steamer as far as Cairo. He continues, ‘After that they had to cross a hundred miles of desert to Suez in horse carriages while their baggage and the ship’s cargo was carried by camel trains.’⁶⁰⁷ The interviewer’s didactic conclusion about the story of the route is that: ‘It all increases my respect for our forefathers.’⁶⁰⁸ The Commander finishes by emphasising how the company had made ‘all possible improvements for passengers’ comfort.’⁶⁰⁹

⁶⁰⁵ The two models are built to the same scale and so would have been useful for comparative purposes.

⁶⁰⁶ Craigmyle to Reith, 26 July 1937, NMM/P&O/91/16/1.

⁶⁰⁷ P&O, ‘Television Picture Page’, p. 2.

⁶⁰⁸ P&O, ‘Television Picture Page’, p. 2.

⁶⁰⁹ P&O, ‘Television Picture Page’, p. 3.

4.3 ‘Lest we forget’⁶¹⁰ (1939-1945)

As in the First World War, so between 1939 and 1945 P&O’s normal commercial operations ceased and its passenger and cargo liners were requisitioned by the British Government. Its ships were put to different uses and in various locations, as armed merchant cruisers (AMCs), troopships, and cargo ships. P&O began the Second World War with 36 vessels and lost half, emerging with only 18. Even then these ships remained in the possession of the Government until troops had been relocated and repairs and reconditioning had been finished. It is estimated that it took four years after the end of the war for all of P&O’s vessels to be fully operational again.⁶¹¹ The company’s Roll of Honour lists 123 names of P&O European employees who died on active service.⁶¹² Including those who died in prison camps and on-shore, the reported total rose to 161. Unfortunately there is no record of the names or number of P&O’s lost Asian seamen.⁶¹³ The vessels lost included many of the company’s famous liners such as the *Viceroy of India* (1929, sank in 1942), *Rawalpindi* (1925 sank in 1939) and *Strathallan* (1938, sank 1942). Although normal operations ceased, including its advertising and publicity department, once the war had finished P&O commissioned a number of war service ship portraits, such as *Rawalpindi under fire in the North Atlantic* by Norman Wilkinson (1940) (fig. 251). These images were not critiques of the war or about its horrors as such but rather affirmations of the virtues of corporate

⁶¹⁰ Sir William Crawford Currie, *Foreword* to George F. Kerr, *Business in Great Waters: The war History of the P. & O. 1939-1945* (London: Faber and Faber, 1951).

⁶¹¹ POH, ‘On His Majesty’s Service’, online article, n.d. [<http://www.poheritage.com/our-history/timeline>], accessed 1 August 2016].

⁶¹² For a list of the European men on P&O’s Roll of Honour and a record of the Honours and Awards received, see Kerr, *Business in Great Waters*, appendices 1 and 2, pp. 172-185.

⁶¹³ Rabson and O’Donoghue, *P&O, A Fleet History*, p. 177. P&O was not alone in this omission. Unfortunately, it is only more recently that the range and variety of roles of Indian men and women in the Second World War in general is being widely recognised. See Yasmin Khan, *The Raj at War: A People’s History of India’s Second World War* (London: Vintage, 2016).

honour, courage, service and sacrifice, and to that extent they cohere with P&O's wider ideal of imperial service.

Conclusion

The first aim of this chapter has been to interrogate the rise of modernism as the leading explanatory force in the evolution of British art and design in the twentieth century. The chapter has sought to show that this approach fails to acknowledge the continuing economic, political and cultural importance of the Empire for many in Britain during the 1920s and 1930s. In P&O's case, much of its art and design would simply be designated as conservative and retrograde. There would be an accompanying failure to understand how and for whom P&O's distinctive and popular imperial-modern style evolved. The second aim of the chapter has been to question the idea that imperial culture was simply crude and undifferentiated propaganda, globally disseminating a singular picture of imperial power, control and cultural subjugation.

Instead the chapter has argued that between 1903 and 1945 P&O evolved a distinctive imperial-modern eclecticism which functioned very successfully for the company and its Empire travelling public. This was not a mere style but helped to create and sustain an appealing imperial cultural sanctuary at sea, quite distinct from the gleaming modernism of the Atlantic travelling liners. However, despite extending and elaborating the inter-relationship of corporation and Empire, P&O's art and design from this period displayed characteristics which were distinct from the tenor of its nineteenth century narrative.

In some senses it could be argued that the period from 1903 to 1945 was the zenith of P&O's imperial narrative. During Lord Inchcape's series of acquisitions

from 1914, P&O acquired more than a dozen ship-owning subsidiaries, and grew to become one of the largest shipping combines in the world. After 1918, the British Empire also expanded to reach the greatest extent of its territorial possessions, and Britain's trade with the Empire doubled as a proportion of total trade between 1913 and 1938.⁶¹⁴ At this moment of Imperial climax, so the argument would go, P&O's art and design exemplified a triumphant command and control of other cultures by British Imperial power. Typically this might be represented by P&O's 1929 *Viceroy of India* with its distinctive blend of British historicist traditions and mild modernism, and Lord Inchcape's magisterial portrait, with its overt pleasure in putting on the clothes, status and successes of British Empire. However, this risks oversimplifying the nuances and long evolution of the cultural relationship between P&O and the British Empire, and the changing texture of Empire itself.

Rather the period needs to be understood in terms of increasing imperial anxiety and ambivalence within the company and in imperial circles more broadly, and growing criticism from outside. Civil servants on board P&O's ships questioned how much longer the Raj would exist; Lord Inchcape grew increasingly disillusioned with recent developments in imperial policy and commerce, while Mahatma Gandhi travelled on board P&O to London to discuss Indian independence. In this context, P&O's gradually more blatant and bombastic art and design can be seen as an expression of its increasing apprehension about the future of the Empire and the desire for the restoration of an older imperial order as much as a sign of its assured position, authority, and control. After the Second World War, the rate of political, commercial and cultural change in Britain and its maritime world would only accelerate with the rise of commercial air travel and the formal end of the British Empire itself in 1949.

⁶¹⁴ Nigel Dalziel, *Historical Atlas of the British Empire*, p.111.

How would P&O respond and what role would its art, design and publicity play in negotiating such radically changing and challenging circumstances?

Chapter Five: Echoes Beyond Empire (1946-1969)

Introduction

The British Empire may (or may not) have been won in a fit of ‘absence of mind’, but as far as the majority of the population was concerned it was given away in a fit of collective indifference.⁶¹⁵

One of the last historic links between Britain and her imperial past parted without fuss this weekend, when the P&O liner Chusan slipped out of Southampton Water, dropped in at Rotterdam, and pulled out on the long trail, the trail that is always new, to Bombay.⁶¹⁶

One of the most striking suggestions in the historiography of the British Empire has been that whatever conclusions are drawn about the Empire itself, the end of Empire was an unremarkable set of events. This has been called the minimal-impact thesis of Empire. The suggestion was that the administrative and formal processes at the end of Empire were conducted by the British with very little fuss and that these events had very little impact on the majority of the population in Britain. Decolonisation was something which only happened overseas.⁶¹⁷ Over the last fifteen years or so, however, increasing evidence and argument has suggested, on the contrary, that Empire had been such a fundamental part of everyday life in Britain, from school textbooks to the theatre and the cinema, that its experiences, values and interests persisted in many areas of British culture well beyond the formal end of the Empire in 1949. Moreover,

⁶¹⁵ David Cannadine, ‘Apocalypse When? British Politicians and British “Decline” in the Twentieth Century’, in Peter Clarke and Clive Trebilcock (eds.), *Understanding Decline: Perceptions and Realities of British Economic Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 261-2, cited in Ward (ed.), *British Culture and the End of Empire*, p. 3.

⁶¹⁶ Philip Howard, ‘The last long voyage of the exiles’ line’, *The Times*, 12 January 1970, p. 3.

⁶¹⁷ Ward, *British Culture at the End of Empire*, identifies the minimal impact thesis and contains useful background discussion, see pp. 1-20. For examples of the minimal impact thesis Ward cites Cannadine, ‘Apocalypse When?’, and Bernard Porter, *The Lion’s Share: A Short History of British Imperialism, 1850-1995* (Harlow: Longman, 1996).

it has increasingly been suggested that the loss of the Empire has also had a far greater impact upon wider perceptions of Britain's national identity and status after 1949 than was at first identified.⁶¹⁸ The old centrifugal metropole-periphery model of Empire came to be criticised for its assumed distinction between the mother country and the overseas Empire, and this too placed considerable doubt on the view that British culture 'at home' could be conceived apart from its long and complex overseas imperial relations. Similarly, discussion of British art and design post-1945 has, until recently, been dominated by themes such as the rise and evolution of modernism, and expansion of mass and popular culture, with little or no reference made to whether, and how, these new developments might be understood and related to Britain's recent imperial history and identity. Focusing on British art of the period 1939-60, Tickner and Peters Corbett have urged that this gap needs to be filled: what is required is a closer examination of 'the working through of a sense of Britain's diminished place in the post-war world, a sense exacerbated by the loss of an imperial role, the disruption to established systems of British society'⁶¹⁹

From 1946 onwards, P&O, with its intimate and complex hundred and thirteen year relationship with the transport, communication and defence networks of the British Empire, provides an important case study for investigating the persistence of imperial culture, and the longer term impact of the loss of empire within national culture, representation and identity. This is particularly so given the importance of the maritime sphere within Britain's historical image of its Empire. How did P&O respond

⁶¹⁸ See Ward (ed.), *British Culture at the End of Empire*. It might also be suggested that the minimal impact thesis was itself a species of national and imperial identification: the idea that, in whatever circumstances, carrying on without fuss is itself a national characteristic and one which is, paradoxically, informed by the imperial experience.

⁶¹⁹ Lisa Tickner and David Peters Corbett, 'Being British and Going ... Somewhere', introduction to their edited collection of papers, 'British Art in the Cultural Field, 1939-1969', *Art History*, 35: 2 (April 2012), pp. 206-215. This quote p. 210.

to the rapidly changing political and commercial circumstances at the end of the Second World War? How did its imperial self-image and identity evolve without an empire to serve, and what does this reveal about changing notions of British national, maritime and corporate identity, after empire?

The final chapter of the thesis examines these questions through P&O's continued and extensive use of art and design from the end of the Second World War until the termination of the company's liner voyages in 1969. It examines the extent and nature of the sometimes radical changes in P&O's corporate identity against the backdrop of rapidly changing political, commercial and cultural circumstances. During this period, P&O re-orientated its corporate identity away from overt representations of empire, and using modern forms and means evolved a new and different way of asserting corporate status, prestige and identity. However, the chapter also suggests that echoes of empire can be heard in the re-iteration and nostalgic reformulation of ideas, images and narratives which had defined and served the company so well for over a century. Together, the strands of change and continuity in P&O's post-war identity can be understood as a collective means of managing, and to some extent compensating for, the loss of its historically powerful imperial role, the associated loss of corporate status and identity, and a means of allaying fears about an increasingly unfamiliar future.

1. Change and Continuity at the end of Empire (1946 – c. 1960)

Between 1946 and 1960, P&O's identity displayed a number of clear breaks with its past as the company sought to define a more modern corporate outlook. These alterations were partly in response to wider political and cultural changes but were also due to concerns regarding a perceived decline in public recognition, in particular

a lack of recognition beyond its traditional and slowly diminishing imperial passenger base. This more modern identity did not represent a *volte-face* however. Instead a number of the corporation's established imperial ideas and images persisted and returned, re-imagined in modern forms for changed circumstances. This first section explores the themes of change and continuity between 1946 and 1960 when P&O merged with the OSN creating a new passenger brand P&O-Orient Lines.⁶²⁰ The starting point for the discussion is P&O's involvement at two quite different national events which encapsulate the two strands of corporate change and continuity: the Festival of Britain (1951) and the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II (1953). The second section discusses the evolution of what was called the company's first 'common styling plan', in effect its first systematic corporate identity, designed by Edward Burrett in 1955. The final section examines how at such a time of great change, P&O also returned and re-imagined its imperial past as corporate heritage and as a source of security and strength.

1.1 P&O and the Shifting Discourses of National Identity (c. 1951)

Jo Littler has described how the Festival of Britain has been the site of many different readings and conclusions concerning Britain and its post-war national identity. For some, the Festival was the Festival of the left, marking the last call of social democracy before a conservative revival in the 1950s. In a different context, in design history, it has been read as the emergence of a new, modern, and mass market aesthetic. Littler

⁶²⁰ P&O had a controlling share in OSN since 1918. As it did with most of its subsidiaries, however, P&O allowed OSN to operate as a separate entity with its own distinctive identity. OSN's managers, Anderson, Green and Company Limited, were brought under the P&O umbrella in 1949, but the two still retained separate identities. In 1960 P&O acquired the remaining shares in OSN, thus forming the new P&O-Orient Lines brand. OSN's reputation in the twentieth century was as a flagship of modernism, quite distinct from P&O's more conservative eclecticism. For OSN's art and design see Veronica Sekules, 'The Ship Owner as Patron: Sir Colin Anderson and the Orient Line 1930-1966', *Journal of the Decorative Art Society* (1986); and Ruth Artmonsky, *Shipboard Style: Colin Anderson of the Orient Line* (London: Artmonsky Arts, 2010).

suggests, however, that less has been said about the Festival's visual culture in relation to the effects of decolonisation and the formation of the Commonwealth. Drawing in part on the work of Becky Conekin, Littler argues that the Festival employed different registers which were used to negotiate the legacy of colonialism. Littler concludes that while the Festival did represent an important break with Britain's past away from 'the grandiose swagger of imperialism', Festival narratives also rearticulated more familiar discourses of national greatness.⁶²¹ P&O participated in this high profile national and international event, and given the company's long history of imperial display, what does its 1951 contribution reveal about changing attitudes towards national and maritime identities and the legacies of Empire in post-Imperial Britain?

The Festival of Britain was a vast undertaking, consisting of what was described as 'a constellation of events' across the country and P&O had displays in both London and Glasgow. The Festival catalogues show that P&O's model of 'R. M. S. *Chusan*'⁶²² was displayed in the Sea and Ships pavilion on London's Southbank, and that the 'Passenger Liner, "Chusan"' (1950) (representing P&O and BIS) was displayed in the Hall of Shipbuilding and Railways, at the Exhibition of Industrial Power in Glasgow (figs. 252 to 259).⁶²³ P&O's presence at the Festival was more modest than its historical predecessors with only two models, each exhibited

⁶²¹ Jo Littler, 'Festering Britain: The 1951 Festival of Britain, decolonisation and the representation of the Commonwealth', in Simon Faulkner and Anandi Ramamurthy (eds.), *Visual Culture and Decolonisation in Britain* (London: Ashgate, 2006); and Becky E. Conekin, '*The Autobiography of a Nation*', *The 1951 Festival of Britain* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2003) in particular, chapter 7, 'The place that was almost absent: The British Empire', pp. 183-202. For more recent discussion of the Festival, see Harriet Atkinson, *The Festival of Britain: A Land and its People* (London and New York, I. B. Tauris, 2010). For Littler and Conekin and the theme of Empire at the Festival, see Atkinson, p. 12, and footnote 14.

⁶²² At different points in its history P&O owned three vessels named *Chusan*. The first was handed over to the company in 1852, the second in 1884, and the third in 1950. The Festival catalogues offer no dates for the ships represented but given that BIS did not join with P&O until 1914, the Glasgow model must have represented the 1950 *Chusan*.

⁶²³ There are no surviving photographs in P&O's business records of either of the company's displays at the *Festival of Britain*. It is possible that the model of *Chusan* pictured on display at P&O's Cockspur Street offices in 1956 (fig. 254) was displayed five years earlier at the Festival.

separately and only as a single element within a wider exhibitionary story. In contrast, P&O had constructed its own corporate pavilions at the Royal Naval Exhibition (1891), The Paris Exposition Universelle (1900) and the British Empire Exhibition (1924-5).

In addition to the quieter corporate presence of 1951, the tone of the exhibition was notably different from its predecessors. In the nineteenth century ‘the power of the P&O’, had meant the fighting capability of its ships, the carrying of armaments, the patrolling of Britain’s sea lanes, the transferal of troops and prevention of the spread of rebellion. Corporate pride had meant being proud to fight and defend the Empire, to augment the power of the navy and maintain Britain’s maritime supremacy. Service had meant serving the Empire. In the inter-war period of the twentieth century, the tone had shifted toward the Empire as a mutually beneficial trading arrangement, but P&O still imagined itself as flag bearer of ‘British freedom and liberty’ enabling ‘the enlightenment of native races’.⁶²⁴ By 1951, at the beginning of the post-colonial era and in the context of Britain’s declining global influence, this kind of language was now seen as anachronistic and distasteful.

The Sea and Ships pavilion in 1951 highlighted traditional skills in shipbuilding, and technical developments and achievements which enabled larger, more efficient and reliable ships (fig. 257). Pride here was pride in the practical skills of shipwrights and designers. The organisers were also keen to point out that unlike many predecessors the Festival was not a trade fair: ‘nowhere in these halls will you find stands set aside for commercial exhibitors.’ This explains the absence of corporate information, leaflets and booklets about the commercial operations of P&O which had been produced at previous exhibitions. Instead, ‘The exhibition has been planned,

⁶²⁴ Hook, *Merchant Adventurers*, p. 38.

from the turnstiles to the exit, to tell a story – the story of Britain’s tremendous contribution to heavy engineering and the people who use them. It sets out to show not only British inventiveness, but the effect it had on the world.’ In the Hall of Shipbuilding and Railways, where P&O’s model was displayed, the catalogue tells us that, ‘A great ship like structure runs the length of the hall with galleries and staircases carrying the story on various levels’⁶²⁵ (figs. 258 and 259). The story, as in London, focuses on native British skill, in areas such as shipbuilding and navigation and in particular highlights the people involved and their inventiveness. It does describe ‘the inventors, administrators, and adventurers who from the earliest times, have gradually built up Britain’s supremacy of seas’ but there is only one mention of warfare: ‘Hawkins who built many of the ships which defeated the Armada.’⁶²⁶ Drake, Raleigh and Nelson are listed too, but there is a conspicuous absence of the emotive language of naval attacks, glorious death or greatest victory which P&O had used in the past to rouse the emotions of its British passengers. Instead, names such as Baker, Pett, Watt, Parsons, Brunel, and Froude were identified and celebrated for their skill and inventiveness in ‘the great traditions of British shipbuilding.’⁶²⁷ *Chusan* was displayed in a group of eleven models which exhibited ‘the kind of ships Britain builds’. The group contained representatives of ten different kinds of sea-going vessel which were built in the shipyards of Scotland and the north of England, including a cargo liner, a trawler, a tug, a whaler, a dredger, and a cable ship.⁶²⁸ There were no warships represented in the display. The fact that P&O’s *Chusan* was chosen as the only

⁶²⁵ Festival of Britain, *Exhibition of Industrial Power*, pp. 36-37.

⁶²⁶ Festival of Britain, *Exhibition of Industrial Power*, p. 37.

⁶²⁷ Festival of Britain, *Exhibition of Industrial Power*, p. 37.

⁶²⁸ Festival of Britain, *Exhibition of Industrial Power*, pp. 38-39. The model of *Chusan* was exhibit GH502. Also displayed in this group was a model of *Rangitane* (1949) (exhibit GH503). *Rangitane* in fact belonged to one of P&O’s subsidiaries, the New Zealand Shipping Company, although this is not recorded in the guidebook. For *Rangitane*, see further, NMM/NZS/27/27: Technical records and certificates of *Rangitane*, 1949-62.

passenger liner in this selection of Britain's maritime fleet gave the company a noted prominence. The model was displayed, however, not as a vessel of a proud commercial company with a long history of service to nation and empire, but rather as a first class exemplar of a modern passenger liner, skilfully designed and constructed in Britain.

Despite P&O's quieter corporate presence in 1951, and the Festival's contrast with P&O's traditionally more bombastic maritime identity, elements of the Festival's modern approach to design, ships and the sea, would go on to shape and influence the evolution of P&O's corporate identity over the next twenty years. A number of Festival designers such as Edward Burrett and Sir Hugh Casson would go on to work for P&O, the style of the Festival's typography would be influential for P&O's common styling plan (1955), and the narrative shift in emphasis towards celebrating the skills of peoples associated with ships and the sea, would shape P&O's own publicity narratives in *Men of the Ship* (1958) and *A Great Ship* (1962).⁶²⁹

At the same time as these re-orientations, P&O also maintained many of its traditional approaches to publicity such as courting and maximising Royal association and approval. To mark the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, P&O held a party for invited guests in its Cockspur Street Offices on the route of the Coronation procession, returning from Westminster Abbey. The company also ensured that a photograph was taken to record the moment as the newly crowned Queen, escorted in The Gold State Coach, passed P&O's windows (fig. 260). Sir William Currie took the opportunity formally to announce the corporation's 'heart-felt good wishes' to the Queen, and at the same time carefully align the company with a vision, popular in much of the British

⁶²⁹ P&O, *A Great Ship*, publicity film, directed by John Reeve for P&O and Harland and Wolff, (UK: Rayant Pictures, 1962). The film will be discussed in section 3.3 of this chapter.

press at the time, of a 'New Elizabethan Era', highlighting historical maritime associations:

Within a few days there takes place the historic and hallowed ceremony of the Coronation of Her Majesty The Queen, Elizabeth the Second. To her go out the heart-felt good wishes of countless millions of people. To those of us concerned with the sea, [...] there can be no better augury for the coming years than the name Elizabeth. May Her Majesty be long spared to give to us the inspiration which that name engenders.⁶³⁰

Earlier in the same year when the young Queen, yet to be crowned, was in John Brown's Clydebank yard having launched the Royal Yacht *Britannia*, P&O arranged for a Royal viewing of the model of its latest ship *Arcadia* (1954), being built at John Brown's yard at the time. Again P&O chose to record the event photographically (fig. 261). A final example of P&O's continued courting of Royal approval and association comes when one of P&O's famous pre-war liners, *Strathnaver*, was chartered by the Government to take guests to the Coronation Naval Review at Spithead, 15 June 1953 (fig. 262). The Commander of *Strathnaver* on the day, Captain C. E. Pollitt, recalled:

For those of us who were privileged to take part in this wonderful pageant, it was indeed a happy and memorable occasion which will never be forgotten, of ships both great and small, men-of-war and merchant ships, joining in an act of loyalty and homage to our Gracious Queen.⁶³¹

⁶³⁰ Sir William Currie, P&O Annual General Meeting, 27 May 1953, reprinted in *About Ourselves* 1: 1 (June 1953), p. 121. P&O-Orient Lines was later to name one of its big new liners *Oriana* (1960), the popular name of Queen Elizabeth I, continuing the New Elizabethan Era theme.

⁶³¹ Captain C. E. Pollitt, 'Some Impressions of the Coronation Naval Review' in *About Ourselves*, 1: 6. (September 1953), pp. 162-163. This ref., p. 162.

Apart from the overt absence of empire, these words reiterate the familiar and long established picture of the P&O as at one with the Royal Navy in loyal service to the Queen. As such they could have been written about P&O's role at Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee review more than sixty years earlier (1887).⁶³² In the post-war world the subservient tone of such speeches was increasingly seen as anachronistic. In seeking to understand the buoyant public reception of the 1953 Coronation, it was suggested by an American observer at the time that, in part, it had been 'put on by the British for a psychological boost to their somewhat shaky empire'.⁶³³ In its repetition of long established but gradually redundant narratives and practices there is certainly an element of this psychological reparation and restoration in P&O's post-1945 cultural expressions.

1.2 'The "P&O" is not the household word it once was'⁶³⁴ (c. 1953-55)

After the declarations of independence in India, Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and Burma (Myanmar), the numbers of passages arranged by the UK high commission gradually diminished, and so too did P&O's traditional passenger base.⁶³⁵ In these changing circumstances the manager of P&O's Chief Passage Office sounded a note of alarm in 1953, concerned at a perceived decline in public recognition of the company name:

⁶³² After the Second World War, P&O continued to act as advocate for the Merchant Navy. It commissioned a memorial window in the Seamen's Chapel at All Hallows-by-the-Tower and the officers and men of *Canton* (1938) represented the company when Queen Elizabeth II unveiled the Merchant Marine Second World War Memorial at Tower Hill in November 1955 (figs. 263 and 264). These were acts of memorial and commemoration but were, even so, more sombre and modest in comparison with the grand and militaristic tone of P&O's pictorial commemoration of its role in the First World War, installed at P&O House between 1918 and 1921.

⁶³³ Quoted in David Cannadine, 'The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: The British Monarchy and the 'Invention of Tradition', c. 1820-1977, in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003 [1983]), p. 157.

⁶³⁴ NMM/P&O/4/67: Annual Reports, 1952-3, Chief Passage Office, 30 September 1952, p. 27.

⁶³⁵ NMM/P&O/4/64: Annual Reports, 1949-50, Bombay Agency, p. 7

...the happy position which has existed since the war when ships automatically filled to capacity, has changed very rapidly, and we are no longer able to look with equanimity upon the prospects of filling all First Class accommodation except in full season. The tourist Class situation is a good deal better, but here again Waiting Lists are shrinking ...⁶³⁶

The manager recommended 'strenuous efforts' to attract new traffic and key amongst the recommendations is that the company, 'embark upon an intensive publicity campaign.' He asked the Board to give serious consideration to a new poster campaign covering the national road network, the Underground in London, and railway stations across the whole country. He also offered a diagnosis of the problem faced, 'I have a strong feeling that the "P. & O." is not the household word it once was, and the House flag, except to passengers who have travelled with us and to the Shipping fraternity in general, is just another flag.'⁶³⁷ The report suggests that P&O pursue a new advertising strategy:

Our present-day posters, whilst very artistic, are, to my mind, not bold enough in their conception and although numerous Agents have commented upon their artistic presentation, they state that from a window display point of view, they cannot be identified from across the street. I believe that a "slogan" poster bolder in design and possibly less artistic which could be available for universal use and display in all countries served by the Company's vessels as well as in U.S.A and Canada, would be a distinct advantage.⁶³⁸

⁶³⁶ NMM/P&O/4/67: Chief Passage Office Report, p. 26.

⁶³⁷ NMM/P&O/4/67: Chief Passage Office Report, p. 27.

⁶³⁸ NMM/P&O/4/67: Chief Passage Office Report, p. 27.

The report's author goes so far as to include a rough sketch – very rough he says – of an idea (fig. 265). He explains, 'I merely put this forward as a suggestion, but if something along these lines could be produced by our Publicity experts I feel it would go a long way to restoring the P. & O. name to its pre-war prominence.'⁶³⁹ In its 'bolder', 'less artistic' manner, designed for 'universal use and display', what the Chief Passage Office manager tentatively calls 'a "slogan" poster', strongly resonates with a more graphic style of visual communication familiar from modern advertising and publicity, and his comments shows some inkling of what is now familiarly known as corporate branding and corporate logo design.⁶⁴⁰ This is something which other companies, such as OSN, had put into practice thirty years earlier. For P&O, however, and its typical passenger of the time, this approach to modern design would likely have been thought unnecessary and undesirable.

In 1955 P&O employed the publicity consultancy firm, Galitzine and Partners run by Prince Yuri Galitzine, to undertake a public opinion survey.⁶⁴¹ Between 1 January and 7 March 1955, the survey canvassed a range of people who had 'definite and regular contact with the Company' and these people were grouped under eight headings: Government; Political; Financial; Passengers & Shippers; Press, Films and Radio; Shipping Industry; Travel Industry; and Overseas Contacts in the U.K. A total of 492 people were interviewed and the questions asked were designed to 'bring out,

⁶³⁹ NMM/P&O/4/67: Chief Passage Office Report, p. 27.

⁶⁴⁰ In its call for a bold universal 'slogan' the report embarks on a line of thinking about corporate identity which leads to later professional corporate identities such as the famous identity created for P&O by Wolff Olins in 1975 (fig. 266).

⁶⁴¹ P&O, *Public Opinion Survey*, 1955, NMM/P&O/39/12-13. P&O's use of a public relations consultancy in 1955 is interesting, not only as a sign of changing attitudes within the company but also of the changing status of the public relations profession in Britain at the time. Prince Yuri Galitzine (1919-2002) was an important figure in the development and professionalization of public relations in Britain in the 1950s and went on to play a role in the setting up of the *Public Relations Consultants Association* (PRCA) in 1969. See Jacquie L'Etang, *Public Relations in Britain: A History of Professional Practice in the 20th Century* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2004). For Galitzine and the PRCA see L'Etang chapter four, 'The Shape of Things to Come: The Emergence of Consultancy, 1948-1969', pp. 99-133, in particular pp. 121-122.

as far as possible, the public's opinion of the character and personality of the Company.'⁶⁴²

Galitzine's 'summary of general trends'⁶⁴³ is a helpful indicator of public opinion of P&O in the 1950s and also helps to understand subsequent changes in corporate identity. The summary suggested that while P&O had 'a reputation of High Standing', other features of the company's profile had caused a critical opinion amongst the public. These included: growing competition from international shipping lines and airlines; 'the effects of past success diminishing'; the company's tendency towards conservative policies and attitudes; and a certain 'lack of tolerance', 'arrogance and snobbishness' amongst some management and staff. The company was considered to be, 'out of touch with contemporary thought', and to have an 'inflexibility of mind' which represented 'a lack of understanding (and certainly sometime non-acceptance) of the social changes of the post-war world'. More positively, the survey reports a 'consciousness of change' within the company, and that P&O was 'starting to unbend towards its public'.⁶⁴⁴

Question 9 of the survey asked, 'Has the design of P&O ships, offices or printed material left any particular impression on your mind, and do these three things appear to be linked in any way in respect of their design?' Although the survey reports that this question was most difficult to analyse 'as many of those interviewed did not

⁶⁴² The survey was originally intended to continue until 22 April 1955 but P&O stopped the survey early on 7 March, against the advice of Galitzine, 'in view of certain departmental apprehensions that the Survey might cause misunderstanding'. P&O, *Public Opinion Survey*, 1955, NMM/P&O/39/13, p. 3.

⁶⁴³ P&O, *Public Opinion Survey*, 1955, pp. 5-6.

⁶⁴⁴ There are intriguing pencilled comments in the margins of the survey, presumably by William Currie, Donald Anderson or members of the Board, which suggest a stubborn refusal to accept many of the comments. There is doubt expressed (p. 6) that P&O has less than friendly relations with travel agents even though the feedback from the travel industry with regard to P&O's attitude toward the public suggested that it held: 'a "don't care a damn", snooty attitude'; that it was 'aloof and lordly'; 'very Victorian and retarded as against modern standard' [sic]; and 'as opposed to air lines, shipping Companies are very off-hand and unhelpful to the point of rudeness.' (p. 25).

understand its full import' the survey's authors explain the potential importance of design for the company: 'The impact of a Company's Public Relations policy can either be through the activities and calibre of its personnel, or through the presentation of itself in its equipment, premises and printed material. Presentation through design is a most important item in any organization to-day, as design is a clear reflection of personality.'⁶⁴⁵ The survey then explains the importance of consistency in corporate design: 'it is usual to-day to try and link every aspect of an organization through a common style of design, to achieve the maximum impact, so this question was framed to discover what effect the P&O had made up to now in this respect.'⁶⁴⁶ Galitzine summarised its findings in three areas of corporate design: ships, offices and printed material.⁶⁴⁷ In the case of ships 'there is obvious approval of the design of all the new ships. Such criticism as there was is almost certainly based on ships which are obsolescent.' There were positive comments about ships such as *Chusan* (1951) (p. 62) and criticism of *Strathmore* (1935) which was 'too old', and lacking light and air. Some comments, however, expressed a desire for a return to the older style of ship (p. 63), indicating that some of P&O's passengers retained more conservative tastes. There was criticism of the 'old fashioned atmosphere, layout and equipment' of P&Os' offices and opinions of the printed material were mixed. Some comments praised the menu cards as 'most commendable' while other comments suggested the company was 'conservative in advertising' or had 'no distinctive style' (p. 63). For some respondents, printed material was 'very dated' (p. 64) and was not 'breathing the spirit of the latest modern methods' (p. 61).⁶⁴⁸

⁶⁴⁵ P&O, *Public Opinion Survey*, 1955, p. 60.

⁶⁴⁶ P&O, *Public Opinion Survey*, 1955, p. 60.

⁶⁴⁷ P&O, *Public Opinion Survey*, 1955, p. 60-69.

⁶⁴⁸ This can be placed in the context of a new modernizing agenda in post-war Britain supported by bodies such as the Council of Industrial Design, established in 1944, but also the increasing cultural influence of the United States of America. See Woodham, *Twentieth Century Design*, pp. 119-121.

1.3 ‘A Newly Established Sense of Public Relations’⁶⁴⁹ (c. 1955-60)

In January 1955, the very same month as the public opinion survey, P&O launched what was in effect its first systematic corporate identity designed by Edward Burrett (figs. 267 to 268).⁶⁵⁰ In his autobiography, published in 1976, Burrett recalled his work for P&O and explained how he was employed to create a ‘corporate image’ for the company:

One of the most rewarding retainers I had was with P&O – the huge shipping concern – who invited me to establish a Corporate Image for their company. A Corporate Image literally means establishing a distinctive identity in visual terms and carrying it through every facet of publicity. So that the world will recognise the ‘hand writing’ – rather like compound interest – each element of publicity will build on to the other so that in the end a collective, distinctive and powerful impact is created. Remembering that when a P&O ship sails, something like 75 different pieces of printed matter are produced both for passengers and crew, you will appreciate how much more effective it is if each item is designed in the same ‘house style.’⁶⁵¹

Burrett continues to describe what he sees as the hallmarks of a successful design, and how the process worked for P&O:

If Corporate Image is to succeed, it should have its own colour scheme and standardisation of typefaces to be used in every

⁶⁴⁹ ‘Public Faces: P&O’, *Design* (January 1960), available in NMM/P&O/91/37.

⁶⁵⁰ For information on Burrett see his autobiography, *Full Point: A Typographer Remembers* (Esher, Surrey: Penmiel Press, 1976). Here Burrett recounts his life and work as a designer, typographer and print maker including his commission with P&O. Burrett also discusses other notable commissions, such as the Festival of Britain Official Book and his work with the Penmiel Press, of which he was a founder member. See also, The Society of Typographic Designers, *Edward Burrett and the Penmiel Press: a founder member and his private press* (Pangbourne: Gaillet Press, 1995).

⁶⁵¹ Edward Burrett, *Full Point*, p. 17.

circumstance possible. One begins with the design of P & O (as a logotype), the stationary, and follows through to the business forms, passenger tickets, menus, bar mats and even the funnel of the ship. For seven years this styling programme continued [...]⁶⁵²

Burrett also recalls that his designs won an award. 'In 1958, I redesigned the Annual Report and Accounts for P&O and the Report won the Accountant award for its presentation'.⁶⁵³ Sir William Currie collected the award on behalf of the company (figs. 269 to 270). According to an article in *The Times*, no doubt heavily informed by P&O's publicity department:

Peninsular & Oriental Steam Navigation have won the annual award made by the Accountant for the most informative and best presented set of accounts issued in 1957. P. & O. undoubtedly deserve this recognition of the immense strides made in the form of accounts over the past few years. Always informative the company's report has now been dressed up in a more colourful way which adds to the clarity of the vast amount of detail given of virtually all aspects of the group's activities.⁶⁵⁴

P&O produced two large handmade volumes which record and display what it called the company's 'Common Styling Plan' (fig. 271).⁶⁵⁵ The plan officially commenced 1 January 1955, but in true P&O style, this was adopted only gradually, with examples of older symbols (such as the 1937 Coat of Arms) regularly re-appearing. The two volumes presented specimens of the old and new styling alongside each other for comparison. The first volume contained specimens of 'functional stationary' such as

⁶⁵² Edward Burrett, *Full Point*, p. 17-18.

⁶⁵³ Edward Burrett, *Full Point*, p. 17.

⁶⁵⁴ *The Times*, 9 May 1958.

⁶⁵⁵ NMM/P&O/91/36 and NMM/P&O/91/37.

letter headings and corporate cards (figs. 272 and 273), and the second, ‘all other printed matter’. This included photographs of Burrett’s original designs, the Annual Reports, Chairman’s Address, passage tickets, a wide range of information leaflets and notices, Christmas Cards, dinner menus and an attractive set of baggage labels (figs. 267 to 268, and figs. 274 to 276). The wide ranging nature of the styling plan is illustrated in the volume which included its application on a very large scale (such as the new architectural neon sign which lit up Cockspur Street Booking Office, figs. 277 and 278) and a very small (such as matchbox designs, fig. 279).⁶⁵⁶

A summary and review of P&O’s new identity in the journal *Design* from January 1960, shows that the new identity was phased in over a period of five years. The review notes and approves of the modern outlook for the ‘old-established shipping company’ and its ‘newly established sense of public relations’. It describes how ‘Face lifting, over the last five years, has given the P&O a new nameblock, a simpler symbol and stylish typography’ and continues to say that:

The old P&O symbol was such an essentially Victorian concept (complete with Latin motto) that any attempt to modernise it was almost foredoomed to failure. The new simplified version is as neat as one would expect from a competent and sensitive designer, but, lacking the richness of the old symbol, it has nothing to justify its retention except the P&O’s awareness of history. The symbol is not now used in advertising matter, but only on the more ‘institutional’ items.⁶⁵⁷

⁶⁵⁶ The volumes also contain samples from the new *P&O-Orient Lines* passenger brand created in 1960.

⁶⁵⁷ ‘Public Faces: P&O’, *Design* (January 1960). The second sentence of the quote is a little confusing. It presumably means that other than awareness of history there was nothing to justify retaining the old symbol, rather than being a criticism of Burrett’s new design.

The reviewer identifies P&O's new lettering initials as reminiscent of the Swiss Profil typeface 'though differing from it in almost every detail'⁶⁵⁸ (fig. 280). The new logo is also reminiscent of another typeface which would have been very familiar to Burrett and which would have had powerful cultural associations for P&O. In 1951, four years before the P&O styling plan, Edward Burrett had designed the Festival of Britain's Official Book incorporating Abram Games' Festival Star (fig. 281). As a festival designer, Burrett would have been familiar with 'A Specimen of Display Letters Designed for the Festival of Britain 1951' written by Charles Hassler, the Chairman of the Festival's Typography Panel (fig. 282).⁶⁵⁹ Examination of Hassler's style guide, intended for distribution to Festival architects and designers, shows a distinctive bold slab serif typeface, with potential for three dimensional and italic possibilities (figs. 283 and 284). A comparison with Burrett's designs for P&O's new logo four years later (fig. 267) shows a clear affinity. There is no explicit written evidence that the Festival's typeface was a source for Burrett's P&O logo, and yet the proximity of Burrett to both designs suggests there was a cross-fertilisation of typographic influences.

In P&O's search for a new, modern and bold corporate identity, the positive visual association with the Festival as a symbol of a modern and re-branded Britain was an excellent solution to the problem of its old and tired corporate image. However, the typeface not only had a modern association but, according to Hassler, it was modelled on 'the Egyptian types cut by Figgis, Thorne and Austin between 1815 and 1825' and that, 'nothing could be more British in feeling than the display types created

⁶⁵⁸ 'Public Faces: P&O', *Design* (January 1960).

⁶⁵⁹ For more on the Festival's use of typography, and on Hassler and the organisation of the Festival typography panel, see Atkinson, *The Festival of Britain*, pp. 133-140.

by the early nineteenth century typefounders.’⁶⁶⁰ Burrett’s new typeface therefore encapsulated perfectly P&O’s desire for modern renewal without abandoning its sense of national and historical place.⁶⁶¹

1.4 Look Back With Pride: Empire as Heritage (from 1946)⁶⁶²

Despite public criticism of P&O’s resistance to change, its snobbish perpetuation of ‘past glory’, and its attempts to combat such perceptions with a new corporate identity, the company was reluctant to relinquish its historic sense of pride and place within Britain’s national and imperial story. Indeed, the historical tendency within the company accelerated just as these other changes were occurring, suggesting that the corporate desire to preserve the past became even stronger in unfamiliar and uncertain circumstances. P&O had long employed company history as a means of displaying valued corporate characteristics to the public. As earlier chapters have demonstrated such accounts found expression in a wide range of outlets such as newspaper articles, brochures and displays in national and international exhibitions. Perhaps with an eye to more permanent displays, the company had also developed longstanding relationships with national museums such as the South Kensington Museum (now the Science Museum).⁶⁶³ However, between 1946 and 1972, the historical tendency within

⁶⁶⁰ Charles Hassler, ‘A Specimen of Display Letters Designed for the Festival of Britain 1951’, p. 3. A copy is available in the Charles Hassler Archive, Museum of Domestic Design and Architecture, ref., CH/1/1

⁶⁶¹ It is at least interesting that a similar italic version of Egyptian bold was employed from 1960 by the BBC at Television Centre, White City. As described in this thesis, chapter 4, Lord Cragmyle had expressed in a letter to Lord Reith, that he saw P&O and the BBC as national institutions with a common purpose in the service of empire. The BBC’s choice of a Festival of Britain style typeface in 1960 perhaps signifies a comparable corporate desire in the post-war cultural climate: to represent a modern Britain but one not uninformed by its past. For BBC Television Centre’s original architectural type see fig. 285.

⁶⁶² The original phrase, ‘look back with justifiable pride’, is from William Currie’s, ‘Chairman’s Address at the 117th Ordinary General Meeting of the Proprietors’, 17 April 1957, p. 12. See NMM/P&O/91/37.

⁶⁶³ Artmonsky and Cox, *Across the Oceans*, p. 236.

the firm accelerated, gaining a greater sense of urgency and importance at the time when the company was changing most radically and when its own future direction and survival was increasingly uncertain. In 1944 P&O's Chairman William Currie joined the Board of the National Maritime Museum (NMM), and in 1952 P&O launched its first Staff Journal and established a company museum. These initiatives became important forums for the public dissemination and remembrance of P&O history, in which the company represented and reiterated its sense of elevated place within national and imperial maritime history.

The NMM opened to the public in 1937, and from Currie's appointment P&O went on to develop a very close relationship with the museum which remains to the present day. This is evident through historic loans, collaborative exhibitions and displays, corporate sponsorship, and the legacy of personnel who moved between the two institutions. The NMM's own ideological foundations, discussions about its purpose and remit, along with its collecting policies, show an often complex relationship between notions of the sea, the maritime sphere, and national and imperial sentiments. The history of P&O's relationship with the museum can be seen as an important part of that complexity.⁶⁶⁴ The first of P&O's ship models to be lent to NMM was that of the *Rawalpindi* (1925) which arrived at the museum in 1947 (fig. 207).⁶⁶⁵ As chapter four discussed, *Rawalpindi*, with its name taken from a town in

⁶⁶⁴ For discussion of the ideological foundations of the NMM, see Kevin Littlewood and Beverly Butler, *Of Ships and Stars: Maritime Heritage and the founding of the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich* (London and New Brunswick: Athlone Press, 1988). Also, for the origins and histories of the various painting collections at the NMM, see Geoff Quilley (ed.), *Art for the Nation: The Oil Paintings Collections of the National Maritime Museum* (London: National Maritime Museum, 2006). Both these publications originate with the museum, which demonstrate clearly that in recent decades the museum has been more critically aware of its own history and displays in questions of maritime, national and imperial identity. Indeed, the current project has also only been possible thanks to the institutional support of the museum.

⁶⁶⁵ *Rawalpindi*, ship model, NMM/CC/SLR0031. See also Brian Lavery and Simon Stephens, *Ship Models: Their Purpose and Development from 1650 to the Present* (London: Zwemmer, Philip Wilson, 1995). p. 54.

the Punjab province of British India, had been one of the company's premier imperial liners. It was launched in 1925 at the height of the British Empire, and was employed on the prestigious London to Bombay mail service, later transferring to the route between London and the Far East. Other P&O items at NMM include a model of *Mooltan* (1923) which was gifted to the museum in 1952, and apparently sent from the company's Leicester offices in order to save space (fig. 206).⁶⁶⁶ Before arriving in Greenwich, the models of *Rawalpindi* and *Mooltan* had been displayed at the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley (1924-5). Today there are a total of fifteen P&O ship models at the NMM.⁶⁶⁷ Other associations with the NMM during the 1960s included the appointment in 1964 of a former member of P&O sea staff as a Research Assistant at the Planetarium, and a donation of £250 for a 'skyline silhouette' at the Planetarium in recognition of the appointment and in memory of William Currie's long relationship with the museum.⁶⁶⁸ These relationships illustrate that while P&O embarked on new business interests and a modern identity after the Second World War it retained a wide ranging conception and ambition for its corporate history. P&O's relationship with the NMM was evidence of the company's continuing vision, of what it saw as its exemplary national and imperial service, and its desire to be recognised and remembered in the permanent national memory and record.⁶⁶⁹

⁶⁶⁶ *Mooltan*, ship model, NMM/CC/SLR0036. See also Lavery and Stephens, *Ship Models*, p. 54.

⁶⁶⁷ Lavery and Stephens, *Ship Models*, p. 54.

⁶⁶⁸ Littlewood and Butler, *Of Ships and Stars*, p. 181.

⁶⁶⁹ Although outside the timeframe of the current research, between 1971 and 1979, P&O deposited its entire business archive on loan to the museum and subsequently transferred a member of its own staff, Mr Stephen Rabson, to the museum to manage the archive. The archive has been the primary archival source for the current project and, although now retired from his post at the museum, Stephen Rabson's extensive knowledge of corporate history, and the complex P&O archive at Greenwich, has been of great help in the development of this thesis. In 1987 P&O's 150th anniversary was held at NMM and included an exhibition, a scale replica of *William Fawcett* moored on the Thames in front of the Royal Naval College, a firework display, and a gala dinner on board *Pacific Princess* (1971) attended by Queen Elizabeth II. In the 1990s the company was a significant donor to the museum's Neptune Court galleries. Among these, the Passengers Gallery displayed items from the P&O group such as a full hull model (scale 1: 48) of *Grand Princess* (1998). The model was not from P&O's collection but the company facilitated its manufacture for the museum. The ship was promoted at the time as the largest and most expensive passenger vessel in history. For information, thank you to John

In 1952 P&O established its first staff journal, *About Ourselves*, (fig. 286). This was principally intended as a means of communication between staff and management who were dispersed widely across the globe. C. W. Aston, the journal's first editor, later recalled that it was around 1951 that he became convinced, 'some form of publication was needed to which the staff could contribute and which would help in staff relations'.⁶⁷⁰ More than this, however, *About Ourselves* became an important and valued place for the telling and retelling of corporate stories and histories, and for collective remembering and identification. The first volumes of the journal for instance, contain a series of articles about the history of the company, written by the Chairman, which recall the company's past, often in historically romantic tones. Even the apparently more prosaic notices reveal much about the company's sense of identity at the time. The journal reprinted the company's *Regulations, Instruction and Advice for Officers* which were re-written around 1952 (fig. 286 (right)). What appears to be an editorial comment about the new regulations begins by quoting the long established company motto, 'Quis Nos Separabit' and indicates the delicate balance that the company was seeking between revival and renewal:

Who shall break up the Company? No one – except perhaps ourselves. It will not happen through force. It may happen through lack of it. The traditions – standards – atmosphere of the Company must be living things not fossilised remains. And if they are living things, they are constantly being renewed and imperceptibly undergoing a continual change. Our traditions are rooted in the past,

Graves, curator of Passengers Gallery (personal communication, 6 April 2016). See also NMM/CC/ZBA1367 and POH, '1980s Gallery', online exhibition [<http://www.poheritage.com/our-history/timeline/1980s-gallery?Decade=1980s>, accessed 3 August 2016].

⁶⁷⁰ C. W. Aston, 'Note about the origin of the staff journal', NMM/P&O/99/8.

but we must see that they are growing into the present and out into the future [...] ⁶⁷¹

In addition to its association with the NMM, P&O established its own corporate museum in Leadenhall Street in 1952. This was the same year that *About Ourselves* was launched and it seems likely that the two initiatives came from a similar desire to unite the company at a time of great change. Two surviving photographs of the museum (figs. 287 and 288) show that its displays included original paintings, photographs of vessels, ship models and other artefacts. It is interesting to consider why particular items were chosen and how they spoke to the company in the 1950s. Three of the paintings on display are W. J. Huggins, *P&O's Liverpool coming to the rescue of Banka off the Portuguese Coast in 1845* (fig. 289); Unknown artist, *SS Ripon leaving Southampton (in 1854) with the Grenadier Guards* (fig. 47); and Norman Wilkinson, *Rawalpindi under fire in the North Atlantic* (fig. 251). The latter two paintings, almost a hundred years apart, mark the length of the company's service to the nation and Empire at times of war, and the first painting represents the power of steam and the bravery and honourable acts of the early company. One of the largest models on display in the museum was of P&O's *Delta* which had represented P&O at the ceremonial opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. Reviews and articles publicising the museum appeared in the press, highlighting P&O's historic achievements. In the newspaper, *East End News*, the museum was described as 'a tribute to both the men and to the ships of past generations that have done so much to build up the traditions of the company and of the P&O group.'⁶⁷² The article describes the items on display and the effect: 'Old press notices, books, menus, articles and nautical descriptions of

⁶⁷¹ 'This is Our Company, (no. 6)', in *About Ourselves*, 1: 6 (September 1953), pp. 168-170.

⁶⁷² 'A Museum of Shipping and Maritime Records', *East End News and London Shipping Chronicle* [dated by P&O, 4 November 1960], see NMM/P&O/90/4.

many kinds, charts and paintings all combine to play their part in presenting to the visitor a record of seafaring which extends over a century.⁶⁷³

2. Serving the Consumer and the Commonwealth (c. 1950 - 1960)

Gradually in Britain's post-imperial world there was a subtle but telling shift in P&O's ideal of service which had been the company's commercial, political and moral centre of gravity for over a century. In 1850 when the diorama of the Overland Route to India had displayed the 'public advantages of the enterprise', it was referring to the economies of time in communication between Britain and India. As a result of the service, 'the commercial relations of the two empires have been immensely multiplied and the cause of good government materially promoted.' In that context the notion of public advantage was inextricably intertwined with the good of the nation and the Empire. In 1937, Lord Craigmyle was still able to claim that 'the story of the Company is a record of courageous enterprise, of faithful service in the Empire and of the constant devotion of its countless servants to the high claims of duty.' After the Second World War concepts of imperial duty and service seemed outdated and gradually disappeared as the political and social structures within which these forms of collective identification made sense, came to an end. The general idea of 'proud service' remained however, and its meaning gradually shifted from serving the Empire to serving the consumer. Service to the Commonwealth also featured prominently in P&O's post-war publicity, and this drew heavily on two old imperial ideas of promoting mutual economic benefit, and the emotional appeal to maintaining family bonds. By contrast, the old imperial narrative of transporting political freedoms and moral enlightenment ended since this language was clearly obsolete in a world of

⁶⁷³ 'A Museum of Shipping and Maritime Records', NMM/P&O/90/4.

independent nations. The following sections explore these changes through two of P&O's design initiatives in the 1950s: the marketing of cruise holidays to attract new passengers, and a modernised approach to the company's window displays in Cockspur Street.

2.1 'We discover Cruising' (c. 1958)

'Today no one *has* to use a ship, and so we have to adjust our thinking and planning to this fact.'⁶⁷⁴

'We are interpolated, that is to say - addressed by social authority - not as subjects who should do their duty, sacrifice themselves - but subjects of pleasures. Realise your true potential. Be yourself. Lead a satisfying life.'⁶⁷⁵

P&O did not passively observe changes in its traditional and familiar operating circumstances but employed its corporate art and design to affect change. Carefully designed cruise brochures and publicity films were designed to appeal to new passengers with more recognisably modern tastes and values. Two key examples included, a cruise brochure, *We Discover Cruising* (1953), and the film, *Holiday with Everything* (1954).

Cruise voyages were not new to P&O in the 1950s. A century earlier P&O had trialled the idea, and had commissioned the fashionable writer and novelist, William Makepeace Thackeray, to publish an account of a journey between London and Cairo. Cruising voyages in the modern sense, however, only became a regular part of P&O's service from 1904, and after 1945, cruises again offered new possibilities with the rise

⁶⁷⁴ Sir Donald Anderson speaking in 1961, quoted in Padfield, *Beneath the House Flag*, p. 138

⁶⁷⁵ Slavoj Žižek, *The Pervert's Guide to Ideology*, directed Sophie Finnes (Zeitgeist Films: UK, 2012).

of air travel and decline in liner passengers. The Advertising Department report for 1958-9 describes a new publication, *We Discover Cruising* (fig. 290) which, ‘was aimed at the newcomer to cruising and told him much of what he needed to know about sea holidays.’⁶⁷⁶ This was joined in the following year by another, similarly targeted publication, called *All about Cruising*, written for P&O by the author, humourist and Member of Parliament, A. P. Herbert (1890-1971) (fig. 291). A sign of the importance placed on this new initiative, is demonstrated by the fact that *We Discover Cruising*, had its own column in the annual expenditure record, constituting almost an eighth of the company’s overall annual expenditure on publicity and advertising in 1957-8.⁶⁷⁷

The front cover for *We Discover Cruising*, designed by the illustrator Ferguson Dewar,⁶⁷⁸ can be compared and contrasted to a typical brochure from around seven years earlier (figs. 292 and 293). Both designs show a man and a woman sitting together on the deck of a ship enjoying a sea trip from the comfort of sun-recliners. Between 1951 and 1958, however, there is a considerable change in approach. The earlier design is cruder in appearance, consisting of a black and white photograph of a couple, relaxing on deck chairs and conversing amicably. The figures have been cut and pasted onto a plain background and combined with textual details of the voyages on offer.⁶⁷⁹ In contrast, Dewar’s brochure would be considered a more integrated design by modern standards, and its illustrative style and vivid colour suggests a more relaxed and informal on board environment. Rather than jackets, shirts, ties and shoes,

⁶⁷⁶ NMM/P&O/4/72, p. 2.

⁶⁷⁷ In 1957-8, *We Discover Cruising* cost £5,127 to produce, and the overall expenditure on advertising and publicity was £39,816.

⁶⁷⁸ There is presently very little available information about who Ferguson Dewar was.

⁶⁷⁹ Further investigation reveals that the figures had been cut and pasted from a brochure from the 1930s which explains in part the dated appearance. See ‘Rest in the Sunshine’, from *P&O Winter Cruises*, cruise brochure (1937), p. 6. See NMM/P&O/42/32: Publications, bound volume, 1937 (now returned to POH).

Dewar's couple wear tinted sun glasses, and matching soft deck shoes. The man wears shorts and a t-shirt, the woman a colourful sleeveless dress, sun hat and holds a fan. Both hold fruit-laden cocktail drinks. The couple's informal fashion choices are echoed in the typography: the fluid hand-written style of the invitation to 'discover cruising' follows a meandering and serpentine line, both formal features which contribute to the intended message of pleasure and fun. Edward Burrett's new corporate logo is also visible on the front cover, clearly identifying the company in its bold and universal form. The full name of the company, or its old Latin inscription, would appear cumbersome and quite out of place in this context. The new logo is also placed directly beneath the two main figures, and its red colour corresponds to the man's red neck scarf and the woman's red dress, adding to a sense of the unity of the design.

A. P. Herbert also introduced a film called *A Holiday with Everything* (fig. 294). The involvement of Herbert in these initiatives was something approaching a celebrity endorsement for P&O. Herbert's Father, Patrick Herbert, had been a civil servant in the India Office, and no doubt travelled on P&O vessels. A. P. Herbert had a strong connection to the maritime community serving in the First World War in the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve, and in the Second World War enrolling himself and his cabin cruiser *Water Gypsy* in the River Emergency Service.⁶⁸⁰ He was the Member of Parliament for Oxford University between 1935 and 1950, and had been knighted in Sir Winston Churchill's resignation honours in 1945. In 1947 Herbert became a trustee of the National Maritime Museum, and through this connection would have known P&O's Chairman Sir William Currie.⁶⁸¹ Herbert represented the traditional

⁶⁸⁰ Brian Lavery, *We Shall Fight on the Beaches: Defying Napoleon & Hitler, 1805 and 1940* (London: Conway, 2009), p. 233.

⁶⁸¹ For Herbert's appointment to the NMM Board see Littlewood and Butler, *Of Ships and Stars*, p. 124. For Herbert's autobiography see A. P. Herbert, *A.P.H.: His Life and Times* (London: Heinemann, 1970).

face of P&O but he was also well known for his humorous writing and his personable appearance in the film functioned as a light-hearted and non-threatening introduction to the idea of a cruising holiday. His character and maritime associations would have had the added virtue in P&O's eyes of appealing to both the traditional and newer generations of passenger.

Holiday with Everything was commissioned by P&O's Public Relations Department, and the film lasted around 25 minutes. It was first shown in the Royal Commonwealth Society's Cinema in Northumberland Avenue (18 February 1959) to an invited audience of travel agents. It was presented as 'a documentary for cruising' and was created by a team of producer, actors and cameramen, who were taken on a Mediterranean cruise on board *Arcadia* in September 1958. Elements of the film make it seem like an educational documentary but weighty historical narratives, either corporate or national, feature a great deal less than in P&O's earlier publicity. The general emphasis is instead on sun, relaxation and freedom from formality and worry. P&O's staff magazine *About Ourselves* explains how the film centres upon, 'a family of four [...] going cruising for the first time,' and also explains how, 'the preliminary scenes were designed to give help to an audience similarly placed.' A publicity leaflet accompanying the film describes its opening scenes:

The Henley family just can't make up their minds. The same old holiday as usual – or something different this year? Pretty young Susan (supported by brother David) suggests a cruise. Mother is wary – Father tempted... Finally Father tosses a coin... And for the rest of their lives they'll never regret the outcome. A P&O Cruise in the liner *Arcadia*, the Henleys find is the holiday with everything.⁶⁸²

⁶⁸² P&O, 'Holiday with Everything', promotional leaflet (c. 1959), for a copy see NMM/P&O/91/37.

In this opening sequence there are a number of important features which are designed to appeal to new generations of cruise holiday consumers, but which also contain references to an older national historical maritime culture. Like much of P&O's publicity at the time, the film has a dual aspect, facing both backwards and forwards. The family is represented as middle class, a middle aged Mother and Father with two teenage children, and crucially, none of them has been on a cruise holiday before (fig. 295). The characters give voice to the kinds of concerns a family in their situation might entertain and the polite family debate acts as a mechanism to persuade the doubtful. Mrs. Henley worries about domestic practicalities: 'We practically promised Mrs. Strudwick we'd be back'. Mr Henley is concerned about the cost: 'A Cruise? Hark at the girl. Lucky we're millionaires.'⁶⁸³ However, they gradually allow themselves to be seduced by the idea of the ease, comfort, romance and luxury of a cruise, in comparison to the complex and less romantic alternatives. The children's voices are also used to appeal to parents watching the film. Susan says, 'Why don't we go on a cruise then? It is all fixed up for you and you don't have the bother of hotels', and full of excitement, David says, 'Think of it! It would be like stepping out of bed and straight on to the end of the pier every morning!'

The background scenery plays an important role at two moments of maritime romance in the sequence, creating a space in which a romantic national maritime past can be re-imagined. While David is talking, in the background sits a model of an old sailing ship, presumably British, with its connotations of historic and romantic maritime adventure (fig. 296). Also, when Father adventurously tosses the coin, relishing the possibility of abdicating responsibility for the family's more practical and

⁶⁸³ The gender depictions are absolutely standard for 1950s Britain: Mother is concerned with domestic practicality and Father with cost.

mundane worries, including poor Mrs. Strudwick, behind him hangs a painting depicting another historic sailing ship (fig. 297). In this context the historic ship symbolises the romance and adventure of the open sea. Gone are the narratives of the ship as a defender of Empire, of speed and reliability in imperial transport and communication. Similarly the symbol of Britannia, as depicted on the old one penny piece, has changed its meaning. The nineteenth century figure of Britannia as a bombastic, maritime power, dominating the seas is recast as a plucky, romantic adventurer of the open seas (figs 298 and 299).

One of the major themes throughout the film, is the transformative experience of the cruise holiday, which is represented as a place out of ordinary and everyday time, but also a place designed for collective relaxation. There is an implicit contrast made throughout the film between ‘the ordinary time of the work-a-day world’ which one leaves behind, a place of clocks, calendars and reminders of everyday work and worry, and the ‘dream like procession of days on a cruise’. This representation of savouring time on board a cruise is in sharp contrast to earlier representations of time on board P&O’s imperial steamers. In the 1850s it was time saved and not time savoured that was of crucial importance to P&O and its passengers. For colonial passengers on board P&O’s nineteenth century liners time could be monotonous and lonely. The days were filled with structured activities and performances of hierarchy and duty. By contrast, for the Henleys, time is represented as free: ‘the days at sea are lazy and delightful, you can do [just] about anything you like, or do nothing at all.’⁶⁸⁴

Finally another implicit narrative of transformation can be read through the clothing and clothing changes of the characters. This is illustrated through a sequence in which Mr Henley is unpacking his suitcase having arrived on board *Arcadia*. He

⁶⁸⁴ A. P. Herbert speaking in *Holiday with Everything* (1959), 0.55 minutes.

picks up a new shirt still carefully wrapped in its protective covering, and looks guiltily over his shoulder to see if his wife is looking (fig. 300). Since she is busy unpacking her own case, he takes a moment to inspect the shirt, beaming at it in appreciation (fig. 301). In contrast to his normal and formal brown three piece suit, complete with pocket handkerchief, the new shirt is short sleeved, black, with bright yellow tropical type leaves and a repeated white motif creating a strikingly contrasting pattern (fig. 302). The implication is that in normal circumstances Mr Henley would never allow himself to wear or be seen in such an expressive and daring shirt but on a cruise holiday he can afford to relax a little. Adding to the gentle humour, the camera shows the audience that Mrs Henley has in fact seen her husband admiring the shirt. She smiles and shakes her head as if to signal amused acceptance of the less formal attire (fig. 303). Later the shirt is the cause of further amusement for Mr Henley and his male friends as they sit down and relax over a drink on deck (fig. 304).⁶⁸⁵ At the other end of the spectrum of formality there is the dressing for a formal dinner (figs. 305 and 306), but this is formality represented as the enjoyment of a special occasion, a performance of sophistication, taste and luxurious lifestyle, rather than an oppressive requirement which it might have been in the past. The end of the film shows Mr Henley laughing and knowingly holding the coin which sent them on the cruise in the first place. This recalls the formal and slightly tense discussions from the opening scene and emphasises the new state of happy relaxation afforded by the cruise. A comparison of Mr Henley's clothing from the beginning and the end of the film exemplifies the intended picture of healthy transformation and relaxation (figs. 307 and 308).⁶⁸⁶

⁶⁸⁵ This is an interesting change towards a more modest and light-hearted representation of masculinity away from proud imperial masculinity.

⁶⁸⁶ As well as appealing to a new kind of passenger, the film's narrative might also be understood as corporate sublimation: a self-reflexive story about the transformation away from its more pompous and snobbish tendencies, and reliance on past imperial glories, toward a happier, more modern and welcoming outlook.

2.2 ‘You won’t know yourself’: Corporate Window Displays (1949-1960)⁶⁸⁷

‘The illuminated window as stage, the street as theatre and the passers-by as audience – this is the scene of big-city night life’⁶⁸⁸

From the construction of its first building at 122 Leadenhall Street in 1850, P&O consistently exploited the architectural forms and interior spaces of its offices to communicate a gratifying corporate image. Since it inherited the booking offices at Cockspur Street in 1918, P&O had used the large front windows to display ship models and notices of sailing times and dates (fig. 309). From the 1950s, however, the windows at Cockspur Street evolved to play an increasingly important role in the re-orientation of P&O’s post-war identity.

A publicity department report from 1949-50 dedicated a section to window displays and explained that, ‘this side of the Publicity Department is receiving increased attention.’⁶⁸⁹ Mr Allen, the manager of the department at this time, noted a change in the corporation’s arrangements for creating window displays and asked the board for an increase in expenditure, which was agreed. In the past, Allen says, ‘displays have cost comparatively little as they have been made by our own carpenters’ however, ‘it is felt that we should now have at least four displays a year for the Cockspur Street Windows which should be made by professionals.’ Allen continues

⁶⁸⁷ ‘You won’t know yourself’, a P&O Window Display, Cockspur Street, c. 1957, see NMM/ALB615.

⁶⁸⁸ Wolfgang Schivelbusch, ‘Shop Windows’ in his *Disenchanted Night: The Industrialization of Light in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Angela Davies, (Los Angeles and London: University of California Press), pp. 143-54, reprinted in Ben Highmore (ed.), *The Design Cultures Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009) pp. 193-198. This ref., p. 196. Although Schivelbusch is referring to an earlier period of gas lighting, as opposed to the electric lighting of the twentieth century shop window whose properties he interprets differently, this quote captures the way shop window light creates a new and commercialised, transitional space, between the shop and the street, drawing in passers-by and re-creating them as consumers of the goods on display.

⁶⁸⁹ NMM/P&O/4/64, p 4.

to explain how, despite the increased expenditure on the more ‘elaborate’ windows, savings can still be made because the displays would be designed to be split into separate units, and then be re-displayed in other locations such as at the City Offices and Travel Agencies in London. From this point onwards corporate recognition of the publicity advantages of its Cockspur Street window displays only increased. In 1953-4 the publicity department noted that, ‘the two windows at Cockspur Street by reason of their central position [on Pall Mall just off to Trafalgar Square] command a great deal of attention’.⁶⁹⁰ In 1960-1 when the advertising department was requesting a sizeable increase in the expenditure on window displays of over £2,000 per annum, it sought to reassure the P&O Board that this was a reasonable figure: ‘bearing in mind the number, size and importance of the windows in Cockspur Street and Leadenhall Street’.⁶⁹¹ The increase was agreed.

Figure 310 shows a window display from 1952 and figure 311 shows the same windows five years later. The most obvious difference between the two photographs is perhaps the large scale changes in the company’s architectural typography. In 1952 the longer ‘Peninsular and Oriental Co.,’ was rendered in a classical type face which had been added to the building when the company moved in nearly forty years earlier (fig. 309). With Edward Burrett’s common styling plan in 1955, this lettering was replaced with the identifying letters ‘P&O’ created in Burrett’s distinctive italic Egyptian bold lettering.⁶⁹² This architectural type was also modern in that it was illuminated at night, as were the window displays (fig. 277). As Schivelbusch has

⁶⁹⁰ NMM/P&O/4/68, p. 3.

⁶⁹¹ NMM/P&O/4/75, p. 1.

⁶⁹² Although fig. 321 does not show it, the ‘P&O’ lettering was accompanied by ‘B.I.’ (for British India Steam Navigation Company) above the window display of the office next door which had previously belonged solely to OSN. In between these two logos appeared the historically evocative ‘Steam Navigation Companies’. These words were significantly smaller and rendered in the same modern italic-bold typeface.

argued,⁶⁹³ light itself played an important role, forming a new space ‘in between’ the shop and the street, a space in which passers-by became already-involved cruise consumers, without stepping foot inside the booking hall.

The displays themselves also demonstrate a clear change. Figure 312 shows a detail of the 1952 ‘old fashioned’⁶⁹⁴ window, which featured a mock theatre or gallery like display case. In the central frame is a modern re-drawing of an historical map from the age sail and global exploration. The inscription beneath the map reads, ‘P&O 1837-1952 One Hundred and Fifteen years of Service’. At the top of the frame in an ornamented pediment is the company’s 1937 coat of arms with its old ‘four corners of the globe’ iconography. In the bottom left of the display is a reproduction of a print of one of P&O’s famous ships, *Lady Mary Wood* (1842), on which Thackeray had travelled in 1844, and which had opened the mail service to Hong Kong in 1844-45 (fig. 313).⁶⁹⁵ Opposite this is a modern liner. This historical trajectory and progression was a very well established approach within P&O advertising. The traditional approach would come under pressure from ultra-modern airline advertising which presented shipping companies with a serious challenge. In 1951, P&O’s Sydney office reported no real cause for concern, stating that, ‘we have never considered that air travel presents a serious challenge to shipping on long sea routes, also at present we regard it as more complimentary than competitive.’⁶⁹⁶ By 1957-8 the Advertising department reported that: ‘everywhere air lines are our great competitors, especially for first class travel.’⁶⁹⁷ The report says that the year had proved difficult for passenger traffic and that ‘the tendency has been for us to increase our publicity expenditure

⁶⁹³ Schivelbusch, ‘Shop Windows’, in Highmore, *Design Cultures Reader*, pp.193-198.

⁶⁹⁴ The words “‘Old fashioned” window’ are pencilled on the reverse of the photograph in fig. 312.

⁶⁹⁵ NMM/P&O/65/185.

⁶⁹⁶ NMM/P&O/4/65.

⁶⁹⁷ NMM/P&O/4/72.

throughout the world, so as to keep our name and services before a public subjected to an intense system of propaganda from the air-lines.’ To combat the challenge of air travel, the report says that the established sea carriers like P&O will need to, ‘employ every promotional artifice to maintain sales levels.’ An advertisement by British Overseas Airways Corporation (BOAC) in 1948 demonstrates this publicity challenge directly (fig. 314). The tagline for BOAC’s advertisement reads, ‘It’s a Smaller World by Speedbird’. The minimal and modern ‘speedbird’ logo symbolised a BOAC aeroplane, moving swiftly around the world, leaving behind it the ‘old world’ represented by a map uncannily similar to the one P&O would use a few years later. Unlike P&O, however, BOAC’s use of the map was entirely pejorative, a caricature of shipping as a mode of transport stuck in the distant past and essentially now redundant. Not only was P&O’s advertising in 1952 doing nothing to combat this narrative, it still saw the company’s historical narrative as its strength.

By 1957, however, P&O’s window displays show a distinct change with the virtual disappearance of corporate history. As if addressing itself as much as its new public, a P&O tagline from 1957 reads, ‘You won’t know yourself’ (fig. 315). The display takes the form of a more modern, graphic language of design, with a lively variety of sketched and photographed scenes of life on board, and of ships’ destinations. There is no mention of corporate history. Pencilled comments on the original sketch for the design indicate another social attitude which was gradually changing, but one which P&O was not yet ready to accept. The pencilled comment points towards the drawing of a man in swimming trunks, relaxing on a deck chair and it reads, ‘We want to avoid nakedness: he could look almost as well better clothed’ (fig. 316). A decade later no such concerns existed (fig. 317).

P&O's offices in Leadenhall Street also illustrate the move towards modernisation in the 1950s, seeing an apparently radical transformation when the old shop front at St Helen's Court made way for a modern ground floor façade designed by Theodore H. Birks in 1957 (figs. 318 and 319). Within the modern design there was room made for a model of one of the company's historic paddle steamers, (appearing in a smaller window to the left of the main display (fig. 320)). P&O also created displays for the windows of prestigious and fashionable London retailers in the late 1950s. These included the department stores Barkers of Kensington (figs. 321 and 322), and Peter Robinson in Oxford Street, known for selling fashionable ladies clothes and accessories (fig. 323). P&O's display in Barkers (estimated date c.1958) appeared within the context of the distinctly modern Art-Deco building designed by Bernard George in 1937-38 (completed 1958). The tag-line in the Peter Robinson display 'the International look' implied not only a fashionable and modern outlook but also a less parochially British perspective which, despite its global maritime empire, P&O had tended to rely on in the past and to which it continually returned. These displays clearly appealed to fashionable young or middle aged women by equating cruising with the latest in modern women's fashion. This was another new strategy for P&O which recognised wider social changes in British society, in this case the empowerment of women. It is a particularly notable development since Britain's maritime world had historically been depicted as a male domain.⁶⁹⁸ This change, however, was a slow one for P&O. The company published a book in March 1960 which contained 'a series of prestige advertisements featuring personalities who serve

⁶⁹⁸ Mack describes how ships in Western maritime traditions have historically been considered male spaces. He also points out layers of gendered complication. Ships are always described as being 'manned', but ships themselves are understood to be female - referred to in English with the pronouns 'she' or 'her' rather than 'it'. Mack also identifies other gendered terminologies, such as 'East Indiamen' and 'men-of war'. See Mack, *The Sea: A Cultural History*, p. 163.

in the company's ships'. It was called *Men of the Ships*, even though it featured Miss D. W. Macaire, Stenographer aboard *Chusan*; Miss Helen Hinson, Children's Hostess' and an unnamed female nurse.⁶⁹⁹

2.3 'There's a welcome "down under" for you'⁷⁰⁰ (c. 1952-60)

'The mission on which I am now embarking, is vital to the nation. I
am going abroad to seek ships for immigrants.'⁷⁰¹

Dai Morgan's Kangaroo poster designed in 1952 was much admired by his colleagues in P&O's publicity department (fig. 324). At the time, Morgan was P&O's resident artist and the warm and light-hearted poster, which originated from a scribble on the back of notebook, became a publicity department favourite after being selected for reproduction in *Modern Publicity*, the trade annual of *Design Magazine*.⁷⁰² The publicity department manager admitted, perhaps surprisingly, that normally the task of producing 'copy' for display advertising was a 'routine job', but on this occasion he felt that the freedom merely to scribble had enabled the company to take a 'fresh approach' of which 'we are all especially proud.'⁷⁰³ As well as a successful and joyful poster, however, the Kangaroo and the joey can be seen as a moment in a much wider corporate development, not simply to be more modern for the sake of it, but to try to maximise commercial opportunities which were emerging as a result of political developments within the Commonwealth after 1945.

⁶⁹⁹ P&O, *Men of the Ships*, (London: P&O, 1960).

⁷⁰⁰ This is a quote from a P&O advertising poster promoting 'Boomerang tickets' between Britain and Australia. See fig. 330.

⁷⁰¹ Arthur Calwell, Australian Minister for Immigration, Speech promoting the 'Populate or Perish' policy in 1945: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NpCiGc-xdyE>, accessed 12 January 2015.

⁷⁰² P&O, 'This is Our Company: 8. The Publicity Department' in *About Ourselves*, 2: 8 (March 1954), p. 31-34. This ref. p. 32.

⁷⁰³ P&O, 'This is Our Company: 8. The Publicity Department', p. 32.

From 1945 the Commonwealth Government of Australia sought to act on serious concerns that had arisen following Japan's expansion in the Second World War. Arthur Calwell, the Australian Minister for Immigration, said in 1945, 'If Australians have learned one lesson from the Pacific War ... it is surely that we cannot continue to hold our island continent for ourselves and our descendants unless we greatly increase our numbers.' Calwell explained the thinking: Australia had only 7 million people, on 3 million square miles of land, a population density of only 2.5 persons per square mile, and that, 'While the world yearns for peace and abhors war, no one can guarantee that there will be no more war...'. He concluded that 'Our first requirement is additional population. We need it for reasons of defence and for the fullest expansion of our economy.'⁷⁰⁴ Calwell's position became known as the policy of 'Populate or Perish' and ships were the primary means of transport by which Calwell's aims were to be realised (figs. 326 and 327).

As P&O was looking to re-build after the war it recognised the opportunities the Australian market offered, in immigration, trade and as a cruise holiday destination. Morgan's Kangaroo can be seen in this context as emblematic of a thirty year mutually beneficial relationship which developed between P&O and the Commonwealth of Australia.⁷⁰⁵

P&O's old motto *Quis Separabit* found new expression in the context of Commonwealth migration. Figures 329 and 330 show two posters designed by

⁷⁰⁴ Arthur Calwell, Minister for Immigration and Minister for Information, 'Ministerial Statement on Immigration,' at the House of Representatives, 2 August, 1945. *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Hansard, Vol. 184 pp. 4911-15, reprinted in John Lack and Jacqueline Templeton, *Bold Experiment, A Documentary History of Australian Immigration since 1945* (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 17-21. This ref., p. 17.

⁷⁰⁵ There was a lull in Australian immigration numbers in 1953 when the new Liberal Government reduced immigration quotas. But in general this trade served P&O well until 1968 with a peak of 600,000 new arrivals in Australia from Great Britain. Henderson et. al., *A Photographic history of P&O cruises*, pp. 76-82. For another P&O poster produced under this initiative, depicting the distinctive koala of Australia, see fig. 325.

Johnston from the mid-1950s.⁷⁰⁶ The design of each poster is exactly the same but there are two different tag-lines. This enabled the relevant poster to be displayed in either Australia or Britain, appealing to Australian emigrants, or their families remaining in ‘the mother country’. As in the nineteenth century, the implication was that the company’s service acted as a lifeline, keeping friends and families together (fig. 328). The trips and tickets between Australia and Britain were given a distinctive name ‘boomerang trips’ and ‘boomerang tickets’ and the theme of the boomerang featured in many poster and window displays (figs. 331 to 334). In 1954-5 business year the Sydney Office reported that the Boomerang excursions ‘have proved extremely popular’ and that ‘A total of 1,899 persons travelled homewards from Australia’ amounting to earnings of £196, 492. The office was very pleased with the results and wrote to the board saying ‘we trust you will agree the results are satisfactory.’⁷⁰⁷

As P&O had used art and design to associate itself with British India before the end of empire, it now pursued opportunities to associate itself with the officials and organisational institutions of the Commonwealth of Australia. Between 28 January and 8 February 1958, P&O created a joint display with Orient Line for the flagship Selfridges store in London’s Oxford Street (figs. 335 and 336).⁷⁰⁸ However, the temporary installation formed more than a convenient commercial partnership between the fashionable department store and the two shipping lines. The display formed part of a larger collaborative exhibition organised by Australia House, the High Commission of Australia in London. It was called Advancing Australia and was intended to promote Australian goods. The exhibition was visited by the High

⁷⁰⁶ POH/AC/04017/00 records only the name Johnson, the artist’s forename is unknown.

⁷⁰⁷ NMM/P&O/4/69 Sydney Agency Report, 1954-5.

⁷⁰⁸ NMM/ALB/615

Commissioner for Australia Sir Eric Harrison who himself travelled between England and Australia with P&O (fig. 337). The tagline for the Selfridges exhibition was ‘Go by Sea to Australia’ and ‘For Comfort, Go By Sea’ indicating a marketing approach which finally sought to combat the narratives of speed adopted by the airlines: going by sea was more comfortable than long haul air travel.

The interior design of P&O’s post-war cruise ships also focused new kinds of cruise passenger and destinations. A press release for *Iberia*, which was launched in 1954 for the UK to Australia route, said: ‘Contemporary and comfortable are the best words to describe her. The ship is not ultra modern, the chairs being made to sit in, not perch on, and no consciously “period” design had been allowed to dominate the schemes which evoke an atmosphere of rest and relaxation for the traveller.’⁷⁰⁹ These two terms, contemporary and comfortable, exemplify the new face of P&O which attempted to some extent to reach newer and younger generations but retain an appeal to passengers with more conservative tastes. The interior decoration on *Iberia* was in part inspired by what it called the trade route between Britain and Australia. P&O was here again signalling its own role not just in cruising but in Commonwealth commerce too.

Kenneth Rowntree, then head of mural painting at the Royal College of Art, created a large central mural painting in *Iberia*’s First Class Dining Room which represented the journey between Britain and Australia (figs. 338 and 339). The mural was located at the after end of the room and consisted of five panels. Two of the panels were devoted to Great Britain and two to Australia, with ‘the central link illustrating the seas which divide, yet join, them’. The two panels representative of the United

⁷⁰⁹ P&O, ‘P&O “Iberia” Furnishing and Decoration’ press release for U.K. Agents p. 1 in NMM P&O/96/3 *Iberia* Fitting Out Publicity. Entertainments and Maiden Voyage.

Kingdom depicted, ‘industry as well as a typical village scene with all that is associated with the countryside at its loveliest; wild roses, an oak tree and browsing cattle’, and the Australian scenes represented, ‘a feeling of far greater distance and more open country, broken only by gum and blackboy trees – the latter grotesque yet oddly attractive – merino sheep and grazing stock and in the background, the inevitable salt bush.’⁷¹⁰

Amongst the Australian iconography, P&O did not forget its imperial past and continuing links with India especially since *Iberia* called regularly at Bombay. *Iberia* displayed four eighteenth century pictures of India by Thomas and William Daniell (figs. 340 and 341).⁷¹¹ These were a small selection of 116 paintings by the Daniells which P&O had purchased in 1952.⁷¹² Although neither the artists nor paintings were directly connected to the company, its press releases concerning the work indicate P&O’s still romanticised view of the history European colonisation.⁷¹³

3. ‘The Outward and Visible Signs of Total Modernity’⁷¹⁴ (c. 1960-69)

In 1960-61 there were a number of significant changes at P&O and it might be argued that these events marked a dramatic alteration in P&O’s corporate identity. In 1960,

⁷¹⁰ NMM P&O/96/3.

⁷¹¹ NMM/P&O/96/3.

⁷¹² P&O, ‘P&O Museum: Watercolour Drawings of India’ in *About Ourselves* [No. 3?] (1952-53), p. 87; and Artmonsky and Cox, p. 230 (Artmonsky and Cox give 108 as the number of paintings purchased).

⁷¹³ P&O describe the Daniells’ work in the Romantic tradition of the European explorer-artist: ‘[The Daniells] penetrated into the Himalayas, cross mountains where there were no roads and had often to travel accompanied by a strong escort of troops. The results of their efforts give us today a wonderfully clear picture of India of those days, the mighty temples, splendid palaces or humble wayside shrines, of foaming torrents and water falls depicted faithfully and with considerable skill.’ P&O, ‘Indian Paintings for the “Iberia”’ Draft press notice, publicity department, 24 August, 1954, in NMM P&O/96/3 *Iberia Fitting out Publicity*.

⁷¹⁴ The title of this section is taken from the narrator’s script for P&O’s publicity film about the building of *Canberra* called *A Great Ship* (1962). The phrase occurs at 23 minutes 15 seconds when the narrator is describing *Canberra*’s public rooms.

the argument would proceed, P&O's long standing chairman Sir William Currie retired having been with P&O since 1932, and associated with the company (through BIS) since 1914.⁷¹⁵ Currie's career had been 'uncannily similar'⁷¹⁶ to Lord Inchcape's, and he had shared Inchcape's lifelong belief in imperial service. Currie was succeeded by Sir Donald Anderson who offered a more modern approach to the business. In May 1960, under Anderson, P&O fully merged with OSN creating a new passenger brand name, P&O-Orient Lines.⁷¹⁷ The resolutely modernist vessels *Oriana* and *Canberra* were handed over to OSN and P&O in 1960 and 1961 respectively, *Canberra* in particular marking a distinct break from previous P&O ship designs. These changes in leadership and ship design and style, the argument would conclude, represented a significant departure for P&O and marked a distinct break with its older imperial corporate identity. These changes, however, did not occur out of the blue in 1960-1. Donald Anderson was a very different style of Chairman to William Currie, but he was far from a new broom, having been with P&O since 1934 and having acted as deputy Chairman since 1950. Before 1960-1 Anderson himself had already embarked on some of the changes in P&O business such as the move into tanker shipping in 1955. As for the P&O and OSN merger, P&O had held the controlling interest in OSN since 1918, and since the mid-1950s the two companies had been coordinating their businesses more closely. The two flagships *Oriana* and *Canberra* were ordered as part of a combined strategy in 1956 three years before William Currie's retirement. If there

⁷¹⁵ For a portrait of Currie, see fig. 342.

⁷¹⁶ Howarth and Howarth, *The Story of P&O*, p. 136. Currie was born in India in 1884, went to school in Scotland, university at Cambridge in England, and returned to India to work. Following almost exactly the pattern of Inchcape's career Currie was an assistant and then partner in Mackinnon Mackenzie and Company, and Sherriff of Calcutta and President of the Bengal Chamber of Commerce. He was knighted in 1925, and became President of the Chamber of Shipping in 1929 before joining P&O as a director in 1932. As Howarth and Howarth suggest, Currie and P&O were 'made for each other'.

⁷¹⁷ Perhaps due to the unwieldy nature of the new title the company reverted to 'P&O' in 1966. Rabson and O'Donoghue, *P&O A Fleet History*, p. 215.

was an apparent change in corporate identity and outlook in 1960-1, it was already underway in the mid-to-late 1950s. Signs of change in corporate identity already discussed have included Galitzine's public opinion survey and Burrett's common styling plan in 1955. Furthermore, this section will suggest that the modern outlook embodied in P&O's *Canberra* did not constitute a clean break with the underlying conception P&O had of itself as the Empire line. Echoes of the Empire narrative remained until at least the end of the company's liner voyages (1969 to 1973). P&O's modernism was, paradoxically, a medium for re-formulating old imperial ideas and interests, as 'a Commonwealth lifeline', as much as it was a break with the past.

3.1 Taking part in the revolution: Colin Anderson at P&O-Orient Lines (1960)

'...we have been born into an age of revolution in the arts and we have to take part in the formation of the new pattern.'⁷¹⁸

Sir Donald Anderson's younger brother Sir Colin Anderson (1904-1980) was also a prominent figure in shipping. Colin Anderson joined the family firm Anderson, Green and Co., straight from university in 1925 and by 1930 had risen to become junior director. Anderson Green and Co., was the managing company for OSN and when P&O and OSN merged in 1960 the two brothers then worked under the same corporate banner.⁷¹⁹ Unlike his brother, Colin Anderson had a lifelong interest and personal commitment to modern and modernist art and design which informed much of his professional life and work in shipping, and his influence would be felt at P&O particularly after the merger in 1960.

⁷¹⁸ Sir Colin Anderson, foreword to, Gollins Melvin War Partnership, *Architecture of the Gollins Melvin Ward Partnership* (London: Lund Humphries, 1974).

⁷¹⁹ For portraits of the two brothers, see figs. 343 and 344.

Colin Anderson's interest in modern art was encouraged by his long friendship with Kenneth Clarke, the British art historian, with whom he had shared adjoining rooms at university. It was not until around 1932 that this influence was directly felt however, as Ruth Artmonsky explains:

Whereas at Oxford Clark's aesthetic influence on Anderson was rather by unconscious osmosis, from 1932 onwards the influence was direct. Through Clark, Anderson was to meet artists such as John Piper, Graham Sutherland and Henry Moore, amongst many others whom he was to commission at Orient and later P&O-Orient, and whose works he collected. Clark was at the centre of the London art scene and was to act as Anderson's guide and mentor thenceforth.⁷²⁰

As a young director at the OSN in 1934, Colin Anderson oversaw the commissioning and design of Orient Line's *Orion*, which he believed to be the first truly modernist British passenger ship.⁷²¹ By contrast this was the period in which P&O's flagship was the *Viceroy of India* (1929) with its eclectic period interior design schemes. In an article written in 1967, Anderson himself draws a comparison between OSN and P&O's interior design of the 1930s, an account which clearly favoured his own modernist preference. Recalling the state of the typical interior design of passenger liners in the 1930s, Anderson says that, 'the standard of interior design had become almost equally fuddy-duddy over the whole field of British passenger vessels.' In *Orion* by contrast Anderson says:

⁷²⁰ Artmonsky, *Shipboard Style*, p. 13.

⁷²¹ Colin Anderson, 'Ship Interiors: When the Break-Through Came', *Architectural Review*, June 1967, pp. 449-452.

‘... we were setting out to escape not only from the shape of every handle but the dominance of brass as a material. We were a spearhead of the use of white metal at sea [...] We were fighting the baroque figuration of veneered panelling and insisting that straight and uneventful grain was what we must have. We were rejecting all the damask patterns, all the floral patterns, the cut velvet, plush and chintz, the ‘galon’, the bobbles, and the vaguely Louis cutlery.’⁷²²

Anderson makes a direct comparison between *Orion* and P&O’s *Stratheden* (1937) (figs. 345 and 346). Where *Stratheden*’s First Class Reading and Writing Room contained classical columns and round headed arches in dark veneers, ornamented surfaces, floral patterned furniture textiles, and intricate ‘Turkish’ oriental carpets, *Orion*’s First Class Lounge was characterised by straight architectural lines and unornamented surfaces, plain and white pillars, light veneers, light and monochrome furniture textiles, and a striking abstract carpet design interweaving bold, minimal and abstracted forms. The carpet was designed by the modernist designer Marion Dorn and her husband, Edward McKnight Kauffer, designed a mirror in the First Class Dining Saloon (fig. 347). Although these designs were well received in modernist circles, what Anderson’s argument misses is that from the perspective of P&O and the more traditional and conservative community of taste it had established with its passengers in the inter-war period, the designs and accompanying publicity (fig. 348) would have been seen as cold and stark, lacking the warmth of familiar ornamentation and traditional design.

By the late 1950s however, and with the merger imminent, P&O was seeking a more overtly modern outlook and Anderson’s knowledge, experience and art world

⁷²² Colin Anderson, ‘Ship Interiors: When the Break-Through Came’ *Architectural Review* (June 1967) pp. 449-452. This ref., p. 452.

contacts made him invaluable.⁷²³ When Sir Hugh Casson was working on the design of *Canberra* he was unsure of how modern P&O's directors wanted the vessel to be. Ruth Artmonsky explains Casson's dilemma: 'although the P&O had provided comfortable interiors for their own fleet they had, up to that time, no particular reputation for Modernism'.⁷²⁴ In a letter to Sir Donald Anderson, Casson suggested a sub-committee be appointed to agree design decisions. Sir Donald replied that the Board were relying on Casson to make decisions in matters of taste, but that, 'There is no one better fitted than my brother Colin to guide decisions on anything on which you want a ruling and he will be glad to do so... You are responsible for choosing and Colin for authorising.'⁷²⁵

3.2 'Like Mad Man':⁷²⁶ *Canberra's* Pop sophistication (1961)

The considerable advertising and publicity effort accompanying the launch of *Canberra* (1961) presented the vessel as a radical, even shocking, break with the traditional P&O ship. *Canberra* was not merely marketed as a modern ship but as a ship of the future, shaping the way ahead for others to follow. In the official brochure for the launch of *Canberra* the opening sentence heralds the vessel as 'Tomorrow's Ship Today',⁷²⁷ and in an exhibition at the Company's Leadenhall Street office,

⁷²³ Anderson held a number of prestigious post in the worlds of art and design. In 1951 he was elected to the Council of Industrial Design and in 1952 joined the Council of the Royal College of Art. He was Vice-Chairman of the Trustees of the Tate Gallery from 1953, and then Chairman from 1960. In 1967 he became the first Provost of the Royal College of Art and in 1968 Chairman of the Royal Fine Art Commission. He was knighted in 1969 and in 1978 donated his collection of Art Nouveau to the Sainsbury Centre for the Arts at the University of East Anglia. See Artmonsky, *Shipboard Style*, p. 153.

⁷²⁴ Artmonsky, *Shipboard Style*, p. 124.

⁷²⁵ Sir Donald Anderson to Hugh Casson, quoted in Artmonsky, *Shipboard Style*, p. 129.

⁷²⁶ These words appear on the wall of *Canberra's* Pop Inn designed by David Hockney.

⁷²⁷ P&O, *Canberra*, Publicity Brochure, 1961, NMM/P&O/96/12.

featuring a large scale model of the ship, it was presented as ‘The Ship that Shapes the Future’ (figs. 349 and 350).⁷²⁸ A reviewer in *The Times* wrote that:

So much has been written about, and claimed for Canberra during her four years’ construction at Belfast that it only remains to ask if the execution fulfils the expectations aroused by her imaginative conception and design. The consensus of opinion on board is that she does – with honours. Inside as well as out she is a visually exciting ship, full of radically new ideas [...] The décor of the Canberra is essentially in the idiom of the sixties – there is no mock Tudor, neo-Georgian, or bogus country club. The accent is on simplicity, cleanliness of line with here and there splashes of colour and excitement even shock.⁷²⁹

Canberra’s maiden voyage seemed to underline, literally, the new ground being broken, visiting Sydney, Auckland, Honolulu, Vancouver, San Francisco, and Los Angeles before returning to Southampton.⁷³⁰ The organisation of the ship was quite distinct from previous P&O vessels and this can be understood in terms of its newly-dedicated function, fulfilling a mixed programme of cruise holiday and liner voyages to and from Australia. Speaking in his last address as Chairman in 1960, William Currie had explained the distinction between P&O’s older and newer passengers as the difference between what he called ‘the passenger travelling on duty’ and the passenger travelling for ‘pleasure, holiday or rest’. He explained that those ‘to whom speed particularly appeals’, those travelling for ‘duty’ or work reasons, will be

⁷²⁸ P&O, ‘Canberra News’, *About Ourselves*, 4: 30 (December 1959), p. 246.

⁷²⁹ *The Times* 22 May 1961 p. 4 quoted in Wealleans, *Designing Liners*, p. 150.

⁷³⁰ NMM/P&O/65/85 *Individual Ships: Canberra, Miscellaneous material, 1961*; and Padfield. *Beneath the House Flag*, p. 139.

increasingly attracted to air travel. P&O needed to focus on pleasure travel and *Canberra* was an embodiment of this new corporate interest and identity.⁷³¹

One of the clearest differences between *Canberra* and earlier P&O ships was that the ship's engines were located aft, rather than amidships. This enabled the central part of the ship to be dedicated to passenger accommodation and recreation space. Viewed from above (fig. 351) one can see the space available on the upper decks for sport, recreation and relaxation, including an 'amazing expanse of sundecks'.⁷³² On the games deck, in place of the engines and funnel amidships, there was now the large first class 'Bonito' swimming pool. The passenger's pleasure, rest and relaxation was now literally as well as strategically at the centre of the company's new thinking and design.

The newly available internal space was exploited by the design team under Sir Hugh Casson. At the time Casson was already widely acclaimed, as Professor of Interior Design at the Royal College of Art (RCA) and as having led the design of the Royal Yacht *Britannia* (1954). Casson had also been the Director of Architecture at the *Festival of Britain*. Casson formed one of a number of links between *Canberra*, the Festival, and the RCA, which associated the company with modern British design. The main public rooms entirely eschewed any historicist references familiar from older P&O liners, and instead embraced resolutely modern materials. The rooms became showcases for modern art and design. The tourist class Peacock Room, for instance, which was the responsibility of John Wright, contained a large geometrical canopy designed by the English sculptor and designer Robert Adams (1917-1984) (fig. 352). The repeated geometric forms of the design play with the positives and negatives

⁷³¹ P&O, 'Chairman's Address, at the 120th Ordinary General Meeting of the Proprietors', 30 March 1960, pp. 7-8. Copy available in NMM/P&O/91/37.

⁷³² A *Canberra* passenger quoted in Padfield, *Beneath the House Flag*, p. 139.

of the ceiling space and with the visual resonance that comes from repetition and variation – perhaps a modernist imagining of the effects of Peacock feathers. Adams was known for his interest in Constructivism and the canopy can be seen as a commercial application of the artist’s more general creative interests at this time (fig. 353). The geometric and abstract theme of the canopy was echoed by a ‘bas-relief’ mural, also by Adams, opposite the bar opening. This abstract and geometric playfulness was unprecedented on board P&O ships. The Peacock Room was designed for quiet sitting, smoking and reading, and it had two adjoining cardrooms ‘for the more serious player.’⁷³³ The walls were curved and were covered in a dyed blue wood veneer, as was the ceiling. The curtains had matching blue stripes with gold and orange. The press information for *Canberra* highlighted the use of modern materials such as the bent plywood furniture covered with leather, and the playfulness of the larger ‘club’ easy chairs which could be joined together to make ‘a serpentine sofa’. The flooring of the Peacock Room was white, and the dance floor was marked with diagonal black stripes, a counterpart to Adams’ abstract canopy above.

Another of the characteristically modern spaces was the *Pop Inn*. Not only was this a new kind of space for P&O, which catered for a newly recognised passenger, the teenager, but its decorative scheme verged on the anarchic (fig. 354). The emergence of youth culture in Britain has recently been seen as occurring earlier than the traditional focus on the 1950s and 1960s, including interwar student movements and even Edwardian cults of youth.⁷³⁴ However, P&O’s *Pop Inn*, constitutes a clear shift in P&O’s recognition of the teenager as a distinctive entity. It also indicated a wider changing corporate attitude in Britain towards the teenager as a consumer. This

⁷³³ The following descriptions of the public rooms draws largely on the information in the Press Pack P&O produced for *Canberra*’s launch, a copy of which is available in NMM/P&O/96/12.

⁷³⁴ David Fowler, *Youth Culture in Modern Britain, c. 1920- c. 1970; From Ivory Tower to Global Movement – A New History* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

was in contrast to P&O's film *Holiday with Everything*, released only a year before *Canberra*. In the film, the children, David and Susan, had been depicted as essentially small versions of their parents. This was made manifest in clothing which saw David match his Father's white shirt, tie and yellow knitted waistcoat. Susan's clothes did not match her mother's as precisely, but were nevertheless clearly in the same style. *The Pop Inn*, however, began to recognise the teenager was forging his or her own identity and could therefore be catered for separately (figs. 355 and 356).

The *Pop Inn* offered teenagers drink-dispensing machines and a juke box and included spaces for table tennis, fruit machines, and dancing. The materials were modern and included bar tops made of hundreds of strips of coloured perspex and glowing fluorescent strips. The upholstery was nylon fur in a leopard skin pattern, and the room was lit by a 'continuous multicoloured strip in the shape of a "scribble" on the ceiling'.⁷³⁵ The walls were made of deal wood and the wall scheme was designed by David Hockney who was still a student at the RCA. The designs were burnt into the wood using a hot poker in a radical use of pyrography. The designs were created free hand and resembled anarchic graffiti, recalling images and phrases from popular and everyday culture. These included a man called Butch, lying horizontally above the drinks dispensers, smiling and resting his hands on his stomach. The words 'Hollywood' and 'Broadway' appear, and next to Broadway the phrase 'on the wings of song'. A couple called Massie and Jack are accompanied by the words 'you're never alone in the Strand ... or Piccadilly'. A bald cartoon man, beaming with a smile wider than his face and waving his arms in the air is accompanied in capital letters by, 'like mad man' with the emphasis on mad. A number of heart symbols and scrawled Union Jack flags appear. This is a radical contrast to earlier examples of P&O's on board

⁷³⁵ P&O, *Canberra*, Publicity Brochure, 1961, n.p. NMM/P&O/96/12.

iconography. This room also contrasted with the smooth corporate modernism of the rest of the ship. Hockney's images and phrases revelled in the sub-cultures and potential anarchy of big city life.⁷³⁶ The original intention of the design was that the teenagers would add their own drawings and text. According to P&O, within a year the panels had been 'defaced by signatures in pencil, biro, ink, red lead, and paint, and amongst the signatures there was a considerable selection of the most objectionable kind of public lavatory remark'.⁷³⁷ As a piece of interior design at sea it was nothing short of revolutionary.

The notion of unity and consistency in design (perhaps apart from Hockney's *Pop Inn* decoration) was another new aspect in the company's approach in building *Canberra*. This new unity saw attention paid to every facet of life on board from the typeface defining the name of the ship, to the design of chairs, drinking glasses and cutlery. In P&O ships of the past, items such as crockery may well have borne P&O crests and logos but the notion that design unified the ship, or that the design of the crockery should be in functional harmony with furniture design, was an entirely new and modernist inspired approach.⁷³⁸ The following description of *Canberra's* glassware shows how the company conceived of design as fundamental to the ship's overall modernity (fig. 357):

These wine glasses were specially designed by Ronald Stennett-Willson MSIA for the *Canberra*. He had also designed tumblers, oil and vinegar bottles, celery holders, vases (these won a Design Centre Award in 1960) and ashtrays for the ship. All the glassware

⁷³⁶ The references to American city life and popular culture can be understood in relation to *Canberra's* new strategic role in the American cruise market. The style of *Canberra's* brochure too showed the influence of American graphic art and drawing (fig. 361).

⁷³⁷ Unnamed source quoted in P&O, *Online Exhibition: Canberra A Design Classic* available at: [<http://www.poheritage.com/the-collection>, accessed 25 February 2015].

⁷³⁸ This sort of co-ordination had been one of the strikingly original features of Orient Line's *Orion* in 1935 and so the approach was by no means a new phenomenon at sea, simply new for P&O.

is handmade and forms part of the integral design policy of this pace-setting liner.⁷³⁹

Lady Casson, Hugh Casson's wife, designed a set of tableware (fig. 358) and the ship even had its own brand of cigarettes with packaging by Package Design Associates (fig. 359). Edward Burrett who had designed the company's logo in 1955 was commissioned to provide the official lettering for Canberra (fig. 360). In his autobiography, Burrett recalls the functionality of his design and indicates his satisfaction with the outcome:

[I designed] an alphabet and set of numerals for the new cruise ship 'Canberra' for use throughout all its decks. It was used to denote Up or Down, Push or Pull, cabin door numbers, even the name on the prow of the ship itself (size 10 feet deep). The sans serif design was completely functional and without peculiarities. Incidentally, I had the name plate of my house at 'Full Point' made, using Canberra lettering.'⁷⁴⁰

Burrett's lettering for *Canberra* abandoned the historic Victorian associations of the 1955 logo, and adopted a more defiantly modernist design – a clean, clear, minimal, sans-serif and functional typeface.

Canberra's brochure continued the theme of modern and futuristic difference (figs. 349 and 351). The front cover displayed a new boldness, simplicity and minimalism. There was no conventional ship portrait, no full name of the company, no decorative borders or ornamented typography, simply the ship's name rendered in an italicised version of Burrett's typeface and the company flag. The simplified and

⁷³⁹ P&O, *Canberra Press Kit*, NMM/P&O/96/12.

⁷⁴⁰ Burrett, *Full Point*, pp. 17-18.

bold piece of design can clearly be related to the suggestions of the Chief Passage Office nearly a decade earlier (fig. 265).

3.3 'A Great Ship'⁷⁴¹ (1957-1969)

Exclusive focus on *Canberra* as a Modernist icon risks overlooking the ways in which the ship was as much an expression of more established corporate interests and ideas as it was a break with the past. There were historical references in *Canberra's* on board design, such as the William Fawcett Room, named after the ship traditionally considered P&O's first, and a model of the *William Fawcett* in the foyer outside the room.⁷⁴² In the Century Bar there was an exhibition of images representing life in the nineteenth century and there was the on board pub, The Cricketer's Tavern.⁷⁴³ There were also signs of a basic conservatism about elements of *Canberra's* modernism too. The company's original design statement for *Canberra* stipulated 'a sharp break with all that is outdated' but it also cautioned against anything 'revolutionary',⁷⁴⁴ and when the teenagers of the Pop Inn 'defaced' the Hockney designs with 'the most objectionable kind of public lavatory remark', P&O 'cleaned-off' the Hockney panels, and covered them 'with hard plastic'. This was undertaken in the very first refit of the vessel in 1962.⁷⁴⁵ These examples, however, cannot be considered a full-scale historical revivalism. Hockney was not replaced with Doric columns, and the *William Fawcett* room, despite its historical associations, was as resolutely modern as the rest of the ship (fig. 361).⁷⁴⁶ Instead, investigation of P&O's commercial motivations, the

⁷⁴¹ P&O, *A Great Ship*, publicity film (1962).

⁷⁴² Neil McCart, *Canberra The Great White Whale* (Patrick Stevens: Cambridge, 1983), p. 87.

⁷⁴³ Wealleans, *Designing Liners*, p. 152.

⁷⁴⁴ Artmonsky and Cox, *P&O: Across the Oceans*, p. 130

⁷⁴⁵ Unnamed source, quoted in POH, 'Homage to Hockney' in its online exhibition *Canberra: A Design Classic*, available at: <http://www.poheritage.com/the-collection>, accessed 17 May 2016.

⁷⁴⁶ The William Fawcett Room was open plan in organisation and featured fountains and tinted mirror glass murals designed by Robert Goodden, then Professor of silversmithing and jewellery at the RCA. P&O, *Canberra Press Kit*, NMM/P&O/96/12.

company's wider conception of the ship, and the implicit narratives of its publicity, show that *Canberra* was imagined, in all its modernist glory, as a commercial and cultural lifeline for the Commonwealth in much the same way P&O's earlier liners had formed 'the Empire line'.

Canberra takes its name from the capital city of Australia, and the name means 'meeting place' which reflects the ships' primary function as a link between the UK and Australia. *Canberra* was launched by Dame Pattie Menzies, wife of Sir Robert Menzies, the Australian Prime Minister, and on the launch day, Sir Robert wrote a note to P&O registering what he called the historic nature of the occasion. *Canberra*, he wrote, 'enriches the long and happy association between the Company and Australia'.⁷⁴⁷ P&O had originally invited Queen Elizabeth II to launch the vessel but when she was indisposed her private secretary suggested the company request a note to be read at the launch. P&O's telegram to the Queen made absolutely clear its conception of *Canberra* as serving the Commonwealth. The telegram, which sounded Victorian in its subservience, read as follows:

'With humble duty I beg to send loyal greetings and good wishes to your Majesty from all the company assembled in Belfast where Dame Pattie Menzies is to name our new liner Canberra and so link the ship always with the Commonwealth of Australia which she is designed to serve, William C. Currie, Chairman, P&O Company'.⁷⁴⁸

The Queen replied, again with direct reference to the Commonwealth, 'Please convey to all assembled in Belfast for the launching of *Canberra* by Dame Pattie Menzies my

⁷⁴⁷ Sir Robert Menzies quoted in POH, *Canberra: A Design Classic*.

⁷⁴⁸ Sir William Currie, letter to Lieutenant Colonel The Hon. Martin Charteris, Assistant Private Secretary to Queen Elizabeth (1952-72), dated, 10 March 1960. See NMM/P&O/91/19: Miscellaneous relating to the launch of Canberra, 1960.

warm thanks for their kind and loyal message of greetings. I send my very best wishes for the future of this fine ship as a link between the countries of the Commonwealth, and for the good fortune of all who sail in her' (fig. 362).

Canberra had been ordered in 1956 when William Currie was still Chairman, and the ship was launched two weeks before his retirement. Currie's pronouncements at the time show that he believed the decision to build *Canberra* was a risky but courageous one which continued in the traditions of the company's forefathers. In 1957 he described what he admired about the attitudes of P&O's founders: 'The risks they took, their initiative, their foresight, their courage, are attributes to which we look back with justifiable pride.'⁷⁴⁹ In a similar address in March 1960 - his last address as Chairman and weeks before *Canberra's* launch - Currie's vision of P&O's historic imperial role is shown to be inextricably bound to his view of the company's present circumstances and future prospects:

The fortunes of British Shipping were founded on the conquest and colonisation of Empire, and the complete reliance of this country and its economy on overseas trade. [...] Today we face the world as a Commonwealth of associated free peoples. Shipping, as the link between the furthestmost parts of Empire and Commonwealth has been intimately connected with every stage of their development. The political "ups and downs" of progress towards self-determination have been reflected in the success or fortune of our operations. So it is with an intimate personal knowledge of much of that which has been achieved and a deep sense of conviction that I say that what our company has done in the last fifty years represents the greatest contribution to mankind of any nation in the world's history. Great Britain has established English as the foremost language, it has helped countless millions to freedom and

⁷⁴⁹ P&O, 'Chairman's Address', 17 April 1957, p. 12. See NMM/P&O/91/37.

democracy, and still we remain friends with the world. No other Empire can claim such as record. [...] Now Great Britain embarks on a difficult future, [...] I am not downhearted however. The gradual increase in the standard of living must bring with it increased demand for goods and services which will be required of shipping. I leave this Chair more firmly convinced than ever that we shall continue to adapt circumstances to our own interests, and be justified in our faith in the future of our shipping.⁷⁵⁰

Currie's deeply committed imperial world-view was not lying underneath the new and modern interiors of *Canberra* as it were, rather *Canberra* was its new expression.

Reading *Canberra* in this way - as a new Commonwealth expression of the company's older Imperial ideas and attitudes - enables a different reading of on board spaces such as the Cricketer's Tavern. John Wright who designed the tavern counted cricket as one of his hobbies but the sport's imperial history provides a richer context for understanding its significance for P&O, the Anglo-Australian travelling public, and for the fostering of Commonwealth culture more broadly.⁷⁵¹ P&O's brochure for *Canberra* explained that the tavern was designed to incorporate 'the all-important atmosphere of a "pub"' with the theme of 'a floating cricket museum in miniature.'⁷⁵² *Canberra's* press information pack says that Mr. Wright 'created a friendly room not only for cricket lovers but for all passengers who like the convivial atmosphere of this Commonwealth sport.' The designation of cricket as a 'convivial sport' had been historically important. In imperial contexts, the social and behavioural qualities cricket was supposed to encourage, such as honourable and fair play, have been interpreted

⁷⁵⁰ Sir William Currie, 'Fifty Years in Retrospect' in P&O, 'Chairman's Address, at the 120th Ordinary General Meeting of the Proprietors', 30 March 1960, pp. 12. NMM/P&O/91/37.

⁷⁵¹ Wealleans, *Designing Liners*, suggests such an interpretation: 'This celebration of cricket reinforced the British national identity as a sporting nation with a Commonwealth rather than an Empire [...]', p. 155.

⁷⁵² P&O, 'Press Information', in *Canberra Press Kit*, see NMM/P&O/96/12.

as fulfilling a unifying role in the imperial family of nations.⁷⁵³ This role was not confined only to the nineteenth century. It has also been suggested that:

In the decades leading to the outbreak of the Second World War, cricket became entrenched as one of the cornerstones of Englishness and the accompanying centrality of Empire within such a vision. Cricket, the test matches that were played between England and her colonial nations, and the values of fair play that were enshrined in the game, all combined to make the sport a powerful symbol of empire.⁷⁵⁴

Cronin and Holt also suggest that in the wake of the Second World War, English cricket seemed to emerge as strong as ever: ‘the 1950s were seen as a golden age of domestic cricket, and the test matches against the various touring nations demonstrated how strong the imperial bond was.’ From around 1953 to 1959, the period just before *Canberra’s* construction and during its initial planning and building stages, English cricket seemed to flourish once again before a sharp decline:

Hutton’s successful Ashes side of 1953 was followed by victories against Australia in 1955 and 1956. A powerful performance against the West Indies side in 1957, with the amateurs May and Cowdrey breaking the record for an England partnership in the first test, seemed to show that the gentlemen could still compete at the highest level.⁷⁵⁵

⁷⁵³ Mike Cronin and Richard Holt, ‘The Imperial Game in Crisis: English Cricket and Decolonisation’, chapter 6 in Stuart Ward (ed.), *British Culture and the End of Empire*, pp. 111-127.

⁷⁵⁴ Cronin and Holt, ‘The Imperial Game’, p. 119.

⁷⁵⁵ According to Cronin and Holt after this ‘Indian summer [...] the prestige and popularity of the England team went into sharp decline.’ p. 119.

It is therefore noticeable that for the design of *Canberra's* Cricketer's Tavern, Colin Cowdrey, as the hero of the moment, was 'called in as consultant and as a specialist.' As such the Cricketer's Tavern re-articulated the old and familiar imperial picture of cricket as a gentleman's game, it drew on the idea of the game's 'convivial atmosphere' in order to foster a 'congenial' quality to the room.⁷⁵⁶ In a manner not dissimilar to the old imperial liners of the past, *Canberra* thus created an environment in which the virtues of Commonwealth friendship and fellowship were intended to thrive.⁷⁵⁷

The vision of *Canberra* as a Commonwealth lifeline is brought to life in P&O's promotional film *A Great Ship*, released in 1962. In the film, *Canberra* is imagined as the continuation of a great corporate, and national maritime, tradition. The film opens with a scene at sea, showing a small fishing vessel being tossed violently on a stormy ocean. This is accompanied by an historical retelling of man's interaction with the ocean (figs. 363 and 364). As the waves crash, the narrator describes how for countless generations the ocean was a god to be venerated and feared, and for a thousand years 'a grim adversary to merchant and seaman alike'. In the next sequence, *Canberra* can be seen gliding smoothly through a calm sea as the narrator describes how, for scarcely more than a hundred years, the ocean has been transformed into 'a safe highway for the great ships that descend in direct line of accumulated experience from the argosies

⁷⁵⁶ P&O, 'The "Cricketer's Tavern"', in P&O, *Canberra Press Kit*, n.p. NMM/P&O/96/12. It is interesting to note that the tavern featured a series of caricatures by Arthur Mailey of what P&O's press kit describes as Douglas Jardine's famous 1932 test side which travelled to Australia on *Orontes* (OSN, 1929). It fails to mention the less than convivial and congenial approach which that side employed with its highly controversial bodyline tactics. This saw the English bowlers pitch the ball so that it would rise sharply towards the body of the Australian batsman in a style which many players and commentators at the time regarded as aggressive and dangerous. If Cricket was supposed to embody a spirit of imperial unity this series represented a far more unpleasant side of English imperial character and attitude.

⁷⁵⁷ It is also interesting that the space was fashioned as a 'pub' rather than a bar. In an earlier related development in the 1950s, P&O had commissioned F. W. Baldwin (1899-1984) to produce a series of dinner menus of the inns of England which can be seen as a nostalgic retreat in the securities of 'Old England'. For copies of Baldwin's menus see NMM/P&O/74/5.

of the merchant adventurers who first went voyaging for trade into the distant unknown east' (fig. 365). This cinematic sequence is similar to the contrast drawn in chapter two between Turner's paintings of the sea, in which 'drowning rather than ascendency' is the theme, and the romantic reliability of P&O's early ship portraits. *Canberra* is at once a sign of modern progress in shipbuilding and an accumulation of past knowledge and experience. There is no explicit mention of the British Empire and yet the sequence evokes a romantic picture of British maritime trade and adventure which was bound up with stories of Empire and recalled the ideal historical spirit in which P&O continued to imagine itself. The visual transformation away from the chaos of the sea can also be seen as a metaphor for the civilizing effects of British shipping, trade and Empire, on the wider world.

The central narrative of the film tells the story of the building of *Canberra*. The implicit message, shaped in part by a rousing full-orchestral soundtrack, is that *Canberra*'s magnificence is the result of 'a great human effort', the hard work, knowledge and skill of a globally collaborative community – the Commonwealth.⁷⁵⁸

The film begins in the heart of the City of London, the Board Room in P&O's Leadenhall Street office, and the decision to construct: 'the largest passenger liner to be built in Britain since the war' (fig. 366). The spectator is then introduced to an array of people with different roles in the construction of the vessel including: Bill Duncan a crane driver based at Harland and Wolff shipyard in Belfast who lays the ship's keel; and the Clancy family in Australia, farming sheep on their homestead which will produce the wool to make *Canberra*'s cabin fabrics (figs. 367 to 369). According to

⁷⁵⁸ This narrative approach to the sea and ships was very similar to the Festival of Britain's approach ten years earlier with its a story of the building of a ship, and its emphasis on the skills of the ship's builders and operators. *A Great Ship* adds the meta-narrative of the economic benefits of Commonwealth resources and co-operation which was not such a prominent feature at the Sea and Ships pavilion in 1951.

the narrator, misty Belfast and the hot shadows of the homestead in Australia are 13,000 miles apart ‘but it is by and with each other that they live and prosper.’ The film next visits the border of Burma and India where trees are felled and pulled by elephants, eventually to be fashioned into *Canberra*’s decks and panelling (fig. 370). Finally, spectators are informed about bauxite from Ghana, used to make aluminium for *Canberra*’s superstructure, and are introduced to Jack, the Canadian stevedore who will be handling the vessel in Vancouver docks (figs. 371 and 372). The Commonwealth is not explicitly identified but with the exception of a foundry in Bochum, in West Germany at the time, all of the countries featured were in the Commonwealth. The ‘great human effort’ is an advertisement for the benefits of inter-Commonwealth economic co-operation and trade. *Canberra* was a resolutely modern ship but its role in mobilising the commerce and culture of the Commonwealth clearly echoes late nineteenth and early twentieth century ideas of imperial citizenship, and of the Empire as an actively interacting economic and cultural community. The film concludes by saying that with the building of *Canberra*: ‘unshaken courageous faith in the future of British seaborne trade has been this day so triumphantly, so unequivocally vindicated.’ The confidence in Britain’s seapower recalls established historical tropes of Britain as a truly maritime nation and empire. As with P&O’s grand imperial pronouncements under Lord Inchcape, however, the propagandistic tone indicates a barely concealed anxiety about how secure that future was.⁷⁵⁹

⁷⁵⁹ In 1962, the same year *A Great Ship* was released, the British government, concerned about the future of Britain’s shipbuilding industry, established the Shipping Advisory Panel. A number of reports and committees followed, and the 1962 Rochdale Committee identified a number of innovations and improvements that British ports required. The National Archives, ‘Shipbuilding Decline and Resurgence’ [<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/cabinetpapers/themes/decline-resurgence.htm>, accessed 14 January 2015]. In the year of its release *A Great Ship* was selected for exhibition at the 16th Edinburgh Film Festival (fig. 373).

This chapter has tackled the idea that the British parted with their Empire ‘without fuss’, suggesting that this interpretation of the end of empire was itself a means of coping with the loss. For a corporation such as P&O which had evolved a long and complex relationship with the commercial, political and cultural networks of the British Empire, rapid decolonisation after the Second World War posed a number of challenges to established identities and attitudes. For P&O, as a prominent shipping company, the issue of the rise of time-efficient commercial air transport in the late 1950s and 1960s posed further questions regarding the company’s future prospects. This chapter has explored how the corporation’s tradition of art, design and display was redeployed to negotiate these changes. Strategies such as the company’s first systematic corporate identity, window display policies, and the modernist flagship *Canberra* helped to formulate a contemporary corporate outlook and open up new sectors of the market, in particular the rise of the cruise holiday industry. At the same time, a more nuanced reading of P&O’s post 1945 changes, has shown how Empire was nostalgically re-branded as corporate and cultural heritage, and how Imperial ideas and attitudes familiar from the corporation’s past were reformulated in the context of Commonwealth commerce and culture. P&O’s modern and modernist identity was as much a new expression of older corporate ideas and attitudes as it was an unambiguous break with the past.

Conclusion

‘[...] the boat has not only been for our civilisation, from the sixteenth century until the present, the great instrument of economic development [...] [it] has been simultaneously the greatest reserve of the imagination.’⁷⁶⁰

Moving beyond conventional business history, Freda Harcourt’s research has explored the extraordinary way in which P&O as a private company evolved a long and complex relationship with the politics of the British Empire.⁷⁶¹ In its commercial interests, and in the acquisition of mail and other government contracts, P&O established a unique role as a non-state imperial agency, in particular, in the communication, transport and defence networks of the Empire in the east.

Until now, however, very little has been said concerning the contribution of P&O’s extensive practices of art and design in realisation of its imperial life. The starting point for this thesis was a single object – a souvenir sketchbook created for P&O by the artist and illustrator Harry Furniss. The sketchbook depicted a vivid and distinctive imperial culture on board and prompted an investigation of the corporation’s everyday use of art and design. What was the role of the corporation’s art and design in the realisation of its commercial and imperial aims and interests? How did P&O’s cultural practices shape and sustain its public image as a powerful and celebrated imperial organisation? What does this reveal about wider attitudes

⁷⁶⁰ Michel Foucault, ‘Des Espace Autres’, *Architecture, Mouvement, Continuité*, 5 (October 1984), pp. 46–49 trans. Jay Miskowiec [from an original lecture, March 1967]. [Available online at: <http://foucault.info/documents/heteroTopia/foucault.heteroTopia.en.html>, accessed 13 September 2015].

⁷⁶¹ Harcourt focuses on the period from 1837 to 1914. See Harcourt, *Flagships* for the period to 1867. For the additional unpublished manuscripts carrying research through to 1914 see NMM/P&O/101/18 [not yet included in the NMM online catalogue].

toward Britain's maritime empire and identity in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries?

These questions contribute a different perspective to existing debates which have not focused on the role of everyday corporate art and design in Victorian maritime empire, the persistence of empire in the twentieth century, or the impact of decolonisation on Britain's maritime identity and culture after 1949.

From corporate ship portraits and office architecture to baggage labels and cruise brochures, this thesis has demonstrated the pervasive and fundamental role that P&O's art and design played in the formation of the corporation's proud public image as 'the Empire Line'. Drawing on developments in post-colonial studies following Edward Said's foundational work, the five chapters have demonstrated further that this is far from a single, undifferentiated programme of hegemonic imperial propaganda. Between 1837 and 1969 P&O consistently presented itself as a proud and moral servant of the Empire and Commonwealth, strategically elevating its status above that of a mere self-interested commercial organisation. What emerges from this consistent corporate effort, however, is less a picture of Empire as a fixed, monolithic order, than as a shifting, changeable and often unstable cultural practice.

P&O's earliest images promoted the possibilities of Empire and the virtues of its steam navigation service for rapid and reliable imperial trade and communication. As P&O's imperial role grew so too did its art and design practice, highlighting the company's place in imperial defence and aligning it favourably with the institutions of Empire. By the end of the nineteenth century the company had also embedded itself in a wider social, moral and cultural vision of the Empire. The company's increasingly assiduous organisation of imperial space and time during this period can be seen as a sign of colonial ambivalence rather than unassailable control. This was exemplified in

Kipling's poetic metaphor which imagined the company and its hapless colonial passengers inescapably 'bound in the wheel of Empire'.

In the twentieth century the rise of European Modernism was a powerful force in shaping a new political and aesthetic spirit. However, until the Second World War, P&O, like many in Britain's establishment, preferred to look back to the future, promoting a re-branded imperial spirit of citizenship and commercial co-operation. P&O's imperial rhetoric reached a crescendo in this period but its bombastic tone needs to be understood in the context of accumulating anxiety about developments in imperial politics and uncertainty about the future. After 1945, the end of Empire and the rise of commercial air travel saw P&O's imperial-maritime paradigm gradually superseded by the cruise holiday, and its vision of the sea as a place of pleasure and relaxation. Until at least 1969, however, P&O's modernity, and its repositioning as 'a Commonwealth Lifeline', were a means for the company to extend its proud corporate tradition. These developments represented the return and reformulation of established ideas and attitudes as much as a clean break with the company's imperial past.

Appendix A:

The Exiles' Line, Rudyard Kipling
(*Civil and Military Gazette*, 8 July 1892)

Now the new year reviving old desires,
The restless soul to open sea aspires,
Where the Blue Peter flickers from the fore,
And the grimed stoker feeds the engine-fires.

Coupons, alas, depart with all their rows,
And last year's sea-met loves where Grindley knows;
But still the wild wind wakes off Gardafui,
And hearts turn eastward with the P. & O's.

Twelve knots an hour, be they more or less—
Oh slothful mother of much idleness,
Whom neither rivals spur nor contracts speed!
Nay, bear us gently! Wherefore need we press?

The Tragedy of all our East is laid
On those white decks beneath the awning shade—
Birth, absence, longing, laughter, love and tears,
And death unmaking ere the land is made.

And midnight madnesses of souls distraught
Whom the cool seas call through the open port,
So that the table lacks one place next morn,
And for one forenoon men forego their sport.

The shadow of the rigging to and fro
Sways, shifts, and flickers on the spar-deck's snow,
And like a giant trampling in his chains,
The screw-blades gasp and thunder deep below;

And, leagued to watch one flying-fish's wings,
Heaven stoops to sea, and sea to Heaven clings;
While, bent upon the ending of his toil,
The hot sun strides, regarding not these things:

For the same wave that meets our stem in spray
Bore Smith of Asia eastward yesterday,
And Delhi Jones and Brown of Midnapore
To-morrow follow on the self-same way.

Linked in the chain of Empire one by one,
Flushed with long leave, or tanned with many a sun,
The Exiles' Line brings out the exiles' line
And ships them homeward when their work is done.

Yea, heedless of the shuttle through the loom,
The flying keels fulfil the web of doom.
Sorrow or shouting—what is that to them?
Make out the cheque that pays for cabin room!

And how so many score of times ye flit
With wife and babe and caravan of kit,
Not all thy travels past shall lower one fare,
Not all thy tears abate one pound of it.

And how so high throe earth-born dignity,
Honour and state, go sink it in the sea,
Till that great one upon the quarter deck,
Brow-bound with gold, shall give thee leave to be.

Indeed, indeed from that same line we swear
Off for all time, and mean it when we swear;
And then, and then we meet the Quartered Flag,
And, surely for the last time, pay the fare.

And Green of Kensington, estrayed to view
In three short months the world he never knew,
Stares with blind eyes upon the Quartered Flag
And sees no more than yellow, red and blue.

But we, the gypsies of the East, but we—
Waifs of the land and wastrels of the sea—
Come nearer home beneath the Quartered Flag
Than ever home shall come to such as we.

The camp is struck, the bungalow decays,
Dead friends and houses desert mark our ways,
Till sickness send us down to Prince's Dock
To meet the changeless use of many days.

Bound in the wheel of Empire, one by one,
The chain-gangs of the East from sire to son,
The Exiles' Line takes out the exiles' line
And ships them homeward when their work is done.

How runs the old indictment? "Dear and slow,"
So much and twice so much. We gird, but go.
For all the soul of our sad East is there,
Beneath the house-flag of the P. & O.

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⁷⁶² These are mainly unpublished sources but P&O's business archive also contains published items such as brochures, P&O pocket books (NMM/P&O/91/21/1), and the staff journal (NMM/P&O/99).

⁷⁶³ For ease of navigation, I have not included full reference to individual items within each series. Individual items are included in relevant footnotes in the main text. A number of items from the archive have been returned to POH. Where possible, a note of this has been made in footnotes.

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