

Reframing Stained Glass in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Culture, Aesthetics, Contexts

Jasmine Allen, Gareth Atkins, and Kate Nichols

Roundtable

We are standing in front of a window in the north aisle of the nave in Ely Cathedral (*Fig. 1*). It would be easy to pass by it without a second glance. In many ways it is a fairly standard example of stained glass in the Gothic Revival style. It depicts Jonah Preaching at Nineveh and was designed by John Pike Hedgeland (1792–1873) and made in 1856. In its colouring, architectural detail, and representation of a biblical scene, it resembles the thousands upon thousands of others installed in religious and indeed secular settings in Britain and wherever British people were found in the nineteenth century. The very familiarity, and indeed ubiquity, of this type of window has bred contempt for it; or at least a sense that it is rather unremarkable. This issue of *19* seeks to challenge that assumption head-on. It springs from the conviction that nineteenth-century stained glass has been unduly neglected in large sections of the academy. And it insists that its ubiquity as a medium provides us with numerous entry points into fascinating contexts and questions. To reflect upon just one window even for a moment or two is to begin to realize how much it can tell us about aesthetics, intellectual contexts, beliefs, production, and a host of other themes.

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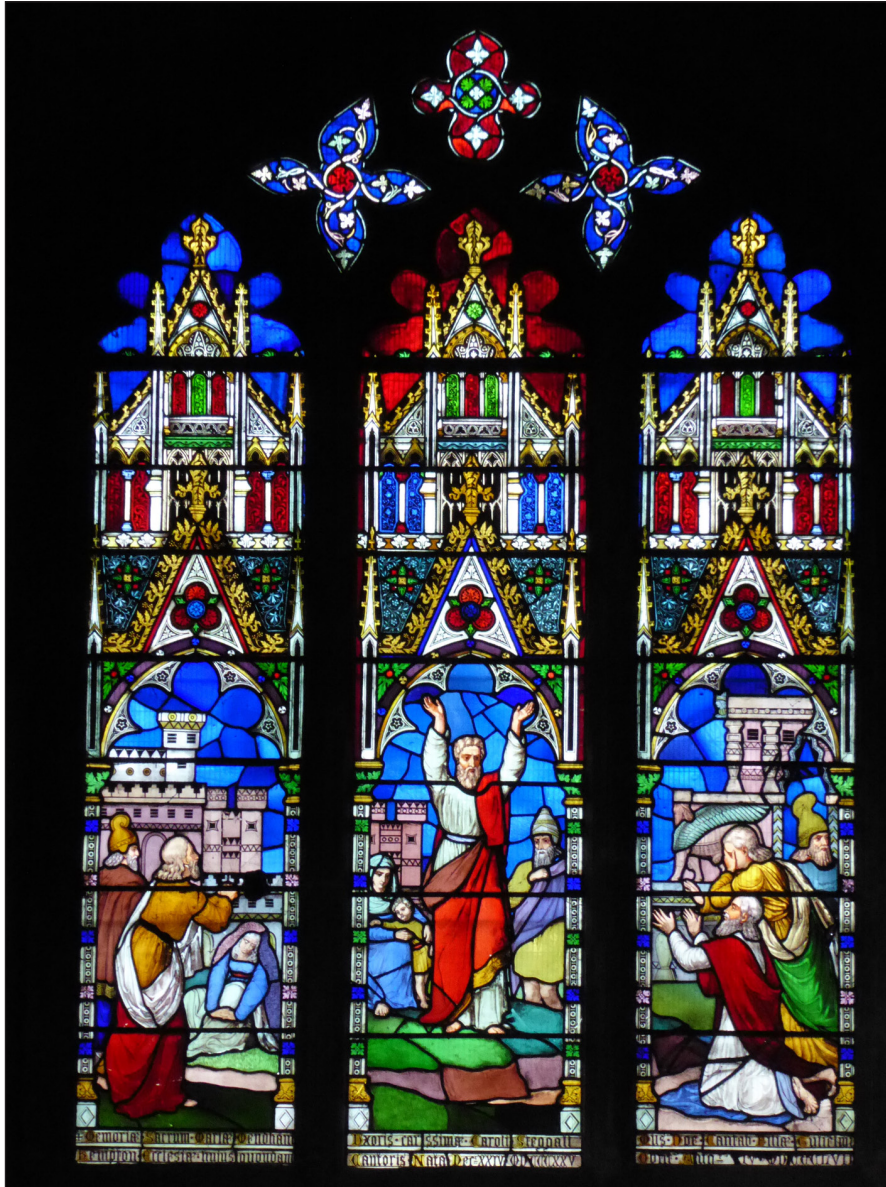


Fig. 1: John Pike Hedgeland, *Jonah Preaching at Nineveh*, nXXII, north nave of Ely Cathedral, Cambridgeshire, 1856. Photo © Jasmine Allen.

Coming from different disciplinary perspectives, we begin this issue with a roundtable thinking about our own engagement with nineteenth-century stained glass and what excites us about it. The window depicting *Jonah Preaching at Nineveh* undoubtedly fascinates us all, but it is instructive to explore the different reflections even this one window evokes in each of us.

JA: This is just one of a series of windows focusing on the Old Testament in the nave of Ely Cathedral. The work of many different British and French stained glass artists can be seen in the nave, resulting in a splendid collection of windows that reveal the subtleties of variance in style, approach to design, use of coloured glass materials, and technical ability. At the time that these windows were installed, stained glass was fast growing in popularity and, even within a few years, significant leaps and bounds were made by artists in their understanding of designing for this medium, and also by glassmakers who made improvements to the quality, translucency, and range of coloured glass available. For me, this window is a challenge to those who dismiss nineteenth-century stained glass as simply a pastiche of the medieval. Although the medieval influence is clear, this window is undoubtedly a product of the nineteenth century. Here, we see an artist approaching a well-known biblical tale in an original way, combining traditional tropes with ‘authentic’ oriental costumes and archaeological discoveries from the excavations of Austen Henry Layard (1817–1894) at Nineveh in the late 1840s.¹ In this sense the window is incredibly modern. If this were a painting on canvas, it might today be as well known as Holman Hunt’s *Finding of the Saviour in the Temple* (1854–60).

KN: I think this window is a brilliant example — and one intensified by the medium of stained glass — of the messiness of Victorian engagements with multiple pasts and geographies. In its evocation of Layard’s archaeological ‘proof’ of the Bible, it seems to be staking claim to a strict historicist vision. Yet it also seems to revel in its confusion of chronology and historical time and place, with a range of vaguely orientalist palatial structures and Greco-Roman dress, as well as its medievalizing form.² Further, as Jasmine points out, it is also definitively ‘modern’, drawing on the latest in archaeological knowledge, as well as on the newest stained glassmaking techniques. By 1856 Layard’s finds were also a well-established part of Victorian popular culture, and the inclusion of the ‘Winged Bull’ in this window might further encourage us to consider the wide range of audiences for stained glass in this period.³ For anyone interested in nineteenth-century readers/viewers, stained glass offers an incredible opportunity to reconsider non-elite interactions with the visual arts.

¹ See Sarah F. Baylis, ‘Victorian Stained Glass and Biblical Archaeology: The “Jonah” Window in Ely Cathedral’, *Apollo*, March 1989, pp. 162–67.

² On the refusal of artworks to abide by chronological time, see Alexander Nagel and Christopher S. Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance* (New York: Zone Books, 2010).

³ Shawn Malley, *From Archaeology to Spectacle in Victorian Britain: The Case of Assyria, 1845–1854* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012).

GA: Like Jasmine and Kate, I find the subject matter of the window arresting. But as a historian of religious culture in the nineteenth century, I'm drawn to the inscription at the bottom: 'Memoriae · Sacrum · Mariae · Wendham · Uxoris · carissimae · Carolus Steggall' ('in sacred memory of Mary Wendham, most beloved wife of Charles Steggall'). We know plenty about Charles Steggall (1826–1905): he was a well-known organist, composer, and hymnodist. But Mary died young: she was only twenty-five, as the inscription states. Who was she? Did she know this place? Why did her husband choose this window in particular to commemorate her? More broadly, what does the shift from chaste eighteenth-century textual memorials to the pictorialism we see here tell us about changes in theological and aesthetic tastes, about the shifting power dynamics of relationships between clergy and laity, and about how people expressed religious emotion and (re-)shaped the built environment to reflect this?

An awareness of our shared interest, and of the different questions and perspectives that particular disciplines bring to bear on it, formed the starting point for this project. The conversation began in earnest at a colloquium in May 2017, which took place under the auspices of *The Bible and Antiquity in Nineteenth-Century Culture*, a European Research Council-funded interdisciplinary research project based at the Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences, and Humanities (CRASSH), at the University of Cambridge. That event brought together scholars from disciplines including history, Classics, literature studies, art history, theology, and the history of science, as well as specialist stained glass scholars and curators. The conversations that ensued undoubtedly highlighted variations in approach and expertise, but they also underlined the possibilities of genuine interdisciplinary cross-pollination. From that colloquium also emerged the conviction that there remains much more to say.

One thing that was clear from the very beginning was that no route into our subject was the same. And while at first that sometimes made for mutual incomprehension, the broader impression was one of fruitful and animated exchange. It might therefore be helpful for us to reflect on how each of us came to this subject, and how it relates to our wider research interests.

JA: While I was an undergraduate student, I took a module in Gothic Revival architecture and we visited a number of Victorian churches, town halls, and historic houses. I was rather taken with the architectural embellishments and highly decorated interiors of many of these buildings, and was especially drawn to the stained glass windows. Although these windows contributed a lot to the colour and atmosphere of these architectural spaces, I was surprised that stained glass was barely mentioned in architectural histories of the buildings. In contrast to Victorian painting or sculpture, there were then (and remain now) very few key books on stained

glass of this period to turn to. Martin Harrison's *Victorian Stained Glass* (1980) and Charles Sewter's *The Stained Glass of William Morris and his Circle* (1974) provided the standard introductions to the subject. When I was an undergraduate, Jim Cheshire's *Stained Glass and the Victorian Gothic Revival* (2004) was newly published: Cheshire's introduction particularly chimed with me since I am interested in what stained glass as a visual medium can tell us about wider nineteenth-century culture. Initially, my interest lay in understanding the circumstances of stained glass commissions, the individual roles of the artist, architect, and patron, and how these combined within a particular set of religious, social, and political contexts to influence the iconography of individual windows. While all these things remain crucial to our understanding of nineteenth-century stained glass, especially in ecclesiastical contexts, the widespread prevalence of stained glass in a number of other diverse settings, from public houses to libraries and country houses, generates a range of questions about the decorative, social, and cultural significance of this art form. How were these windows perceived, seen, and interpreted? Through postgraduate studies at MA and PhD level, my interest in these aspects of nineteenth-century stained glass was developed, in part by exploring the intersections between stained glass and exhibition culture. It was at this time that Isobel Armstrong's groundbreaking *Victorian Glassworlds* (2008) came to provide another point of reference. Armstrong's account focuses more on clear (transparent) glass than on coloured glass, yet reading this book raised important questions for me about how stained glass fitted into the wider glass cultures she uncovered.

KN: Armstrong's *Victorian Glassworlds* made me completely rethink a glassy entity that I'd spent five years researching: the Crystal Palace, originally erected in Hyde Park in 1851. I was entirely bewitched by the idea that the 242 miles of panes of glass that made up this colossal edifice were blown by human breath and would have borne tiny traces of its human creators in its lumpy, imperfect substance. Armstrong speaks of the 'anxiety of mediation' provoked by these qualities in nineteenth-century glass; it was both present and not present, a fascinating paradox which made me eager to learn more about glass in Victorian culture more generally.⁴

Serendipitously, while in this glassy frame of mind, I met Jasmine Allen; Jasmine's research on stained glass at international exhibitions really challenged me to consider the significance of stained glass in nineteenth-century culture. Victorian stained glass, I learned, provided a distinct and

⁴ Isobel Armstrong, *Victorian Glassworlds: Glass Culture and the Imagination 1830–1880* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 362. I began to examine the relationship between sculpture and glass in the nineteenth century in Kate Nichols, 'Art and Commodity: Sculpture under Glass at the Crystal Palace', in *Sculpture and the Vitrine*, ed. by John C. Welchman (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 23–46.

new perspective on a number of my existing research interests, which I had developed primarily in sculpture, audience reception, and museum studies. Victorian stained glass offers a spectacular example of the relationship between art and industrial production.⁵ The diverse locations of, and hugely varied audiences for, stained glass also offers a fascinating range of contexts for anyone interested in nineteenth-century cultures of display, providing significant examples of aesthetic engagement far beyond the museum and art gallery. I have long been interested in the reproducibility of sculpture, and the significance of multiple versions for our understandings of ‘individual’ artworks. I was fascinated to discover how widely stained glass designs were reused across the globe; versions of Henry Holiday’s *Hope*, initially produced in 1880 for James Powell & Sons, for example, could be found in Betws-y-coed (Wales), Bingley (Yorkshire), Dunlop (Scotland), Geneva (Switzerland), Albany (New York), Portsmouth (New Hampshire), and Mardan (now Pakistan).⁶ What might stained glass add to Victorian Studies’ recent engagement with the idea of replication?⁷ I have begun to understand Victorian stained glass as a medium which might be used to explore nineteenth-century ideas about design, the visual arts and religious feeling, revivalism, and the intersection between ‘ancient’ and ‘modern’, both ‘at home’ and in colonial contexts.

GA: I came to stained glass quite late. My methodological formation as a historian at A-level and as an undergraduate was pretty traditional: political and social history based on the study of written texts, with images being used chiefly to illustrate those texts. Unwittingly, I largely sidestepped the cultural and material ‘turn’. Later on, though, as a postgraduate, I came to focus on religion, and while here, too, I initially stuck chiefly to religious politics and networks, I have become more and more drawn to cultural questions. In particular, I am interested in the exemplars with which nineteenth-century people surrounded themselves. This was an epoch obsessed with the cultivation of individual character, and ventures such as the National Portrait Gallery, founded in 1859 (or, in a very different way, Madame Tussaud’s, established in 1835), bear witness to how virtues (and

⁵ See further, Jasmine Allen, “‘Why are the painted windows in the industrial department?’: The Classification of Stained Glass at the London and Paris International Exhibitions, 1851–1900”, in *Art versus Industry?: New Perspectives on Visual and Industrial Cultures in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, ed. by Kate Nichols, Rebecca Wade, and Gabriel Williams (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), pp. 61–80.

⁶ These are recorded in A. L. Baldry, *Henry Holiday*, *Walker’s Quarterly*, 31–32 (1930).

⁷ See *Replication in the Long Nineteenth Century: Re-makings and Reproductions*, ed. by Julie Codell and Linda K. Hughes (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017). See also, Will Abberley, ‘Introduction: Replicating Bodies in Nineteenth-Century Science and Culture’, 19: *Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 24 (2017) <<https://doi.org/10.16995/ntn.789>>.

vices) were thought to rub off on observers. Yet if this was an era of heroes and villains, it was also an era of saints. Not just Catholics and Protestants but freethinkers and unbelievers too invested their idols with the trappings and language of ‘sanctity’.⁸ Disciples of Charles Darwin (1809–1882) made pilgrimages to sit at the great man’s feet, and wept at the wisdom he imparted. Fans of George Eliot (1819–1880) suggested that the biblical quotations that decorated railway waiting rooms and other public spaces be replaced with excerpts from her writings. By far the most omnipresent and well-developed visual expressions of this urge were to be found in stained glass. In part this reflected urgent theological and aesthetic change: the appearance of churches of all mainstream denominations changed dramatically within just a few mid-century decades. But I am also interested in how such representations bled into other spheres too, acquiring further connotations as they went. Think, for instance, of the windows representing civic fathers (and sometimes mothers) in public libraries or depicting founders and fellow scholars in schools and colleges. The tropes and associations of stained glass could, then, evoke ‘sanctity’ in even the most modern settings, creating new communions of saints for a self-consciously go-ahead era.

Nineteenth-century stained glass remains a specialized field. Why is this? And what have we each learned from thinking about it? How has this project confirmed or challenged what we thought we knew about it?

JA: I think the fact that stained or decorative glass windows are commonly employed as architectural decoration within a building means that they are often overlooked as individual works of art. Stained glass is rarely represented in museum and gallery displays, but outside of these environs it is one of the most publicly accessible and dynamic art forms. At the same time, the large volume of stained glass windows made in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, geographically scattered, presents a daunting body of work. Attributing a window to a particular designer or maker can be difficult; manufacturers infrequently inscribed windows with their studio name or mark, and individual designers were rarely acknowledged, let alone the skilled painters and craftspeople whose handiwork created them. These individuals have been little researched and acknowledged in comparison with their counterparts in sculpture or painting.⁹ As a physical object stained glass is also much misunderstood. The term ‘stained glass’ is in itself misleading. Contrary to popular belief, most stained glass windows

⁸ See Gareth Atkins, ‘Introduction: Thinking with Saints’, in *Making and Remaking Saints in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, ed. by Gareth Atkins (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), pp. 1–28.

⁹ Many of these facts were observed by Charles Sewter in ‘Victorian Stained Glass’, *Apollo*, December 1962, pp. 760–65.

are made from pot-metal glass which is coloured throughout, but often painted and stained, and held together with lead. To engage with the materiality of a stained glass window requires some understanding of these specialist techniques. Photographs, even with the use of digital technologies, cannot replicate the texture and colour of the glass material as the eye sees it. We are reliant on the eye of the connoisseur and the discernment of the craftsperson. Yet this issue of *19* demonstrates the significant potential in bringing together the connoisseur, the craftsperson, historian, and theologian, to foster exchange, enhance understanding, and encourage further dialogue and collaboration to unpick and challenge this body of work, and suggest future possibilities for stained glass studies across multiple disciplines.

KN: At a time when activist students and academics are calling for the academy to be urgently decolonized, and asking ‘why is my curriculum white?’, a polemical focus on the neglect of stained glass perhaps seems a little parochial.¹⁰ However, I do think there is much to be gained from reflecting on any lacuna in the academy (and, on the topic of decolonization, studying stained glass also offers the largely neglected opportunity to flag up the colonizing roles of this medium, and to analyse, for example, the peculiar ways in which this medium portrayed and reproduced images of people of colour).¹¹ The ecclesiastical context of much stained glass has undoubtedly contributed to its marginalization, considering the general lack of engagement with religion, and especially religious material culture within Victorian Studies. I would argue too that the art/industrial crossover so crucial to stained glassmaking (what I regard as a large part of its potential interest!) has also been off-putting. Although most art historians now

¹⁰ For an overview, see *Decolonising the University*, ed. by Gurminder K. Bhambra, Dalia Gebrial, and Kerem Nişancıoğlu (London: Pluto, 2018). Anti-racist activism on university campuses has in fact included stained glass representing enslaved people. See Zoe Greenberg, ‘Yale Drops Case against Worker who Smashed Window Depicting Slaves’, *New York Times*, 12 July 2016 <<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/13/nyregion/yale-worker-john-c-calhoun-window-slaves.html>> [accessed 19 June 2020].

¹¹ For an overview, see Jasmine Allen, *Windows for the World: Nineteenth-Century Stained Glass and the International Exhibitions, 1851–1900* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018), pp. 168–76. Stained glass does not feature in the vast, multimedia survey *The Image of the Black in Western Art*, ed. by David Bindman and Henry Louis Gates, Jr., new edn, 5 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), iv: *From the American Revolution to World War I, Parts 1 and 2*. Stained glass may also provide further, hitherto unexamined evidence of the Black presence in Victorian Britain; although it is very obviously different from documentary photography, as examined by Caroline Bressey, it remains an under-researched source. See Caroline Bressey, ‘The City of Others: Photographs from the City of London Asylum Archive’, *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 13 (2011) <<https://doi.org/10.16995/ntn.625>>.

consider a vast range of different media in their research, oil on canvas still dominates, and Victorian stained glass remains almost entirely neglected within British art studies. The one exception is the work of William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones, and it could certainly be argued that the focus on the windows produced by ‘The Firm’ has served to further relegate the majority of windows produced in the period. The conversations that this project set up between stained glass specialists and those working more broadly in nineteenth-century culture were incredibly illuminating. The inclusion of stained glass specialists has really alerted me to how cautious the interested historian/art historian without this specialist knowledge must be. Like all artistic media, we cannot simply analyse stained glass as though it was a painting; nor can we simply dissolve it into its historical context. It has its own internal aesthetic history and specific modes of communication unique to the medium. But it also has huge potential. Stained glass offers vast visual repertoire, all mediated anew, including biblical narratives, animals, saints and heroes, enslaved peoples, monarchs, labourers, missionaries, and decorative ornament. It might entirely transform older questions about the representation of all sorts of different groups in this period. But the medium can also contribute to, and help us to reconsider, our understandings of a wide range of questions in nineteenth-century cultural studies.

GA: Although it is a caricature, there remains a lot of truth in the notion that mainstream historians feel more comfortable with texts and archives than images or material sources. If it is invoked at all, stained glass tends to be used to illustrate a point rather than being examined in its own right. And even when historians do engage more closely with such sources, they tend to try to distil ‘the meaning’ from them rather than thinking about processes of production, the materiality of the material, how they change the feeling and meaning of space, and how spatiality, situation, and the observer themselves ‘make’ meanings out of the object. In that sense, this project has been an education to me and a challenge to consider visual and material subject matter in new ways. Of course, none of this will be new to dedicated scholars of nineteenth-century stained glass. But they have sometimes struggled to make themselves heard in the broader historical profession, in part for the reasons just sketched, but it is also probably because traditional religious institutions do not currently set scholarly pulses racing. The issues stained glass students raise are often bracketed – unfairly, perhaps, especially given that stained glass was to be found in a host of non-religious contexts – as narrowly ecclesiastical (and often Anglican) in focus. While there remains plenty of room for new work on stained glass outside churches, it is heartening that new questions are also beginning to be posed about ecclesiastical contexts, underlining the care with which such buildings were used by the Victorians to shape beliefs,

emotions, bodily practices, and a host of other things. Alex Bremner's *Imperial Gothic: Religious Architecture and High Anglican Culture in the British Empire, 1840–70* (2013) and William Whyte's *Unlocking the Church: The Lost Secrets of Victorian Sacred Space* (2017) have both been widely reviewed, are being cited, and appear to have attracted a wider readership.

There are, then, reasons to be optimistic about stained glass as a subject of interdisciplinary study. This issue of *19* seeks not just to offer examples of this, but to provide pointers towards potential next steps and prompts to further thought beyond that. How do the contributors to this roundtable envisage the field developing in the next ten years? What new areas need to be opened up?

JA: There is so much potential for research on all aspects of post-medieval stained glass. Starting with the basics, a national corpus or inventory would be invaluable not only to the researcher but as a means of better protecting our stained glass heritage, much of which remains in situ and therefore vulnerable to changes in a building's use or environment.¹² Stained glass studies remains behind its sister arts, and further research on individual artists and makers, as well as better contextual studies of nineteenth-century stained glass within wider art movements and different settings, is to be welcomed. Alongside the more empirical research, close looking and contextual cross-disciplinary approaches could provide some really fresh, and exciting, thinking. I would like to think that in ten years' time stained glass studies has become more interdisciplinary and less niche!

KN: The field is really open to all sorts of methodological and disciplinary approaches. I would love to see a queer reading of stained glass, for example, which might perhaps reflect on the medium's distorting and subversive possibilities and uses. As an art historian interested in the ways in which imperialism facilitated the making of 'British' art, I think questions of transnationalism, empire, mobility, and the global contexts of 'British' art making would certainly prove germane areas of further research.¹³ Considering stained glass as part of the technologies of vision of the nineteenth century — as [Karen Burns](#) introduces here — must surely have huge potential.

¹² The British Corpus Vitrearum research project is dedicated to recording medieval stained glass in Great Britain and their online picture archive includes a growing number of post-medieval windows.

¹³ Virginia Raguin's study is an important step in this regard. See Virginia Chieffo Raguin, 'Transnationalism and the Nineteenth-Century Painted Window', in *A Seamless Web: Transatlantic Art in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Cheryll L. May and Marian Wardle (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), pp. 21–38. For a useful overview of writing on art and imperialism, see Natasha Eaton, 'Art', in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Modern Imperial Histories*, ed. by Philippa Levine and John Marriott (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), pp. 472–85.

The numerous people, materials, and places involved in making stained glass in this period could be used to decentralize one artistic ‘genius’ figure and, more broadly, to acknowledge the wide range of agents (human and non-human), and the vast geographies that enabled nineteenth-century ‘British’ visual culture. Further scrutiny of the materials of stained glass might also offer opportunities to open up new avenues in social and environmental histories. I would like to see stained glass integrated — without its specificities being overlooked — into nineteenth-century cultural studies more broadly, so that whatever questions arise in the next decade are also applied to, but also carefully nuanced by, the study of stained glass.

GA: I am increasingly drawn towards the study of ‘lived religion’ in the long nineteenth century: how ‘ordinary’ men and women experienced worship, belief, and the host of other day-to-day practices that comprised their faith. In many ways this feels like a gap in current scholarship.¹⁴ While it would be unfair to say that historians studying nineteenth-century religion have stuck to institutional (‘ecclesiastical’) issues and questions, it is also broadly true to say that there are things they tend to take for granted: how church- and chapel-going felt, looked, and smelled; the emotions and associations evoked by buildings or words or music; the books and objects people surrounded themselves with; how they saw the world. Although it is a truism to say that religion was not a substance poured from the pulpit or the altar into the minds of unthinking lay vessels, the accessibility of sources and the nature of the questions that historians have tended to ask have often given a different impression. Yet if this is a problem, it is also an opportunity. As the ‘Christian Britain’ imagined by the Victorians recedes further into the past, and fewer and fewer students have an instinctive sense of its values and preoccupations, there’s more space and indeed more need for evocative and innovative study to bring it alive. This brings with it huge potential for the development of new narratives about, and insights into, the vibrant, consumer-driven marketplace of nineteenth-century faiths. It is no coincidence that much of the most innovative anthropological research on modern religion has focused on America.¹⁵ Bringing insights from that scholarship to bear on the jostling, innovative religious contexts of nineteenth-century Britain would be fascinating. What does this mean for the study of stained glass? I would like to see it being used as source material for better, more fine-grained social, intellectual, and cultural histories of

¹⁴ Although see *Material Religion in Modern Britain: The Spirit of Things*, ed. by Timothy Willem Jones and Lucinda Matthews-Jones (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

¹⁵ Colleen McDannell, *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995); *Lived Religion in America: Toward a History of Practice*, ed. by David D. Hall (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); and Robert A. Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880–1950*, 2nd edn (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).

religion. For that to happen, we need two things. One is the permeation of technical and material scholarship into the academic mainstream. The other is a better toolbox for understanding how to read stained glass: the literacy that will open up its theological and cultural content; the feelings it inspired; biblical texts it referenced; the associations it conjured in its viewers and patrons. I hope that this issue of *19* might provide some helpful pointers.

These thoughts are not, of course, exhaustive. Much more could and, we hope, will be said about our subject in all its manifestations. Nevertheless, this discussion has sought both to highlight the necessity of reappraising nineteenth-century stained glass as a neglected art form, and to hint at its as yet untapped possibilities.

Themes

This second section turns away from broad discussion in order to think in a more focused way about the state of the field, and to lay out the themes that underpin the articles that follow.

The long nineteenth century witnessed a revolution in the design and production of stained glass. It became omnipresent in a range of religious and secular settings across Britain and the wider world. Yet despite its ubiquity, nineteenth-century glass remains neglected and often misunderstood. Chief among the reasons for this are disciplinary politics. Dedicated stained glass scholarship has remained until very recently a small and rather exclusive topic of study. Technical developments and stylistic influences during this period have been well mapped.¹⁶ Yet despite and perhaps because of this it has not always found a ready place in the academy. In part this can be ascribed to definitional lines that were already being drawn in the nineteenth century, for stained glass came to be seen as a craft more than an art; a merely decorative product made by teams of people rather than an inspired individual, and which could be bought off the peg for so many shillings per square foot (Cheshire, pp. 163–68). With a few notable exceptions, then, historians of art have tended not to have much time for it, while scholars of religion, literature, and culture more broadly have lacked both the expertise and the inclination to make much of it. The articles that follow seek to remedy this.

¹⁶ See, for example, Martin Harrison, *Victorian Stained Glass* (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1980); Jim Cheshire, *Stained Glass and the Victorian Gothic Revival* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004); William Waters and Alastair Carew-Cox, *Angels & Icons: Pre-Raphaelite Stained Glass 1850–1870* (Abbots Morton: Seraphim, 2012); and William Waters and Alastair Carew-Cox, *Damozels & Deities: Pre-Raphaelite Stained Glass 1870–1898* (Abbots Morton: Seraphim, 2017).

With this in mind, we have brought together scholars from across a range of disciplines in order to examine stained glass from the widest possible variety of perspectives. This is a timely project: the last monograph to survey the field was Martin Harrison's *Victorian Stained Glass* in 1980, a magisterial but narrowly framed book that is also now exceedingly rare. Since then, a handful of publications have shed more light on individual makers, movements, and styles, but none have approached the medium from an interdisciplinary context.¹⁷ There also remains a prevailing assumption that stained glass is an ecclesiastical medium (and a pretty niche one at that). Against that caricature, this issue insists that stained and coloured glass was not just an optional extra but was central to the decorative schemes and didactic iconography that were so dear to nineteenth-century designers and architects and their patrons and consumers. To be sure, it proliferated in religious contexts, but in many ways this marked not humdrum continuity but a radical departure from staid, inherited Protestant norms: one that rapidly transformed the appearance and meaning of church buildings during the middle decades of the century. It also flooded railway stations, museums, schools, homes, and civic buildings with many shades of light. Hence these articles aim to do for decorative coloured and painted glass what Isobel Armstrong's *Victorian Glassworlds* did for transparent glass and plain glazing — exploring its design, production, and marketing alongside perceptions of it as an architectural, artistic, decorative, commemorative, and devotional medium. Nothing like it has been attempted before. We aim to demonstrate the rich potential of new interdisciplinary approaches to stained glass and to provide pointers towards exciting lines of enquiry that we hope scholars in a range of fields will follow.

Our intention from the outset of the project has been to promote discussion and encourage new approaches. Most of the articles published here began as papers presented at a colloquium held in May 2017. Others commissioned since aim to pick up on key questions raised at the colloquium and to enhance our coverage. In the process we have deliberately assembled a blend of established and emerging scholars from across a wide disciplinary range, including historians of art, architecture, and religion, literary scholars, cultural historians, and theologians. The involvement of stained glass conservators brings an extra dimension, allowing us to reflect on the materials and techniques of nineteenth-century glass, how it is treated and thought about today. All of the contributions have benefited from the cross-disciplinary conversations that the colloquium sparked. The resulting collection spans the entirety of the long nineteenth century, from multiple perspectives and at a level of detail that no single-authored study has yet matched. It is not, however, exhaustive. And it does not seek to

¹⁷ For example, Peter Cormack, *Arts and Crafts Stained Glass* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015).

offer a definitive account of the overall stylistic and technical development of stained glass in this period, which has been well illustrated by others, such as Harrison, Cheshire, William Waters and Alastair Carew-Cox, and Peter Cormack, as already cited. Like the recent issue of *19* on sculpture (June 2016), our issue is intended to inspire and to equip other people to study nineteenth-century stained glass and to provide some suggestions as to how they might go about it. It divides naturally into three sections.

Making and Mending investigates the production and conservation of stained glass. In existing scholarship this is probably the best-examined facet of the subject, but such research runs along predictable lines. It tends to privilege a handful of leading studios and their best work, and focuses on familiar schools of thought — Pre-Raphaelitism and the Arts and Crafts Movement above all. Accordingly, the articles in this section seek to uncover debates about the status of stained glass and its practitioners, debates that drove and were driven by wider cultural questions about the nature of art, craft, industry, technology, science; about the developing divide between the amateur and the professional. Together, they problematize the notion that stained glass occupied a backward-looking space in contemporary culture and craft. So, while [Sarah Brown's](#) article examines the skills developed to conserve or imitate medieval glass, [Thea Goldring](#) considers the development of scientific discourses in handbooks detailing the chemistry of colour for stained glass practitioners in Britain and France. [Jim Cheshire's](#) close analysis of one very striking window reveals the incongruous effects of trying to combine imperial and royal dynastic themes within a medieval idiom. In the process he underlines the coeval development of photography and stained glass as technologies, showing the possibilities and pitfalls of transferring images from one medium to another. [Jasmine Allen](#) explores the place of stained glass in artistic and technical education, considering how it was once integrated into the iconography of the South Kensington Museum (today known as the V&A). [Tom Küpper](#) looks in detail at some of the work of the many skilled amateur stained glass artists whose work has often been passed over or patronized, but which demonstrates the designing and making of stained glass windows as an act of worship as well as a response to the ecclesiastical movement.

Consumers and Contexts aims to reconnect stained glass with the diverse contexts in which it was consumed. For as well as transforming the 'look' of churches, chapels, and synagogues to an extent that modern scholars often find hard to appreciate, stained glass also colonized a staggering range of new settings. It appeared increasingly in the home as well as in the civic, recreational, and educational buildings that were such features of the urban environment, being marketed and exported through catalogues and pattern books, and installed in banks, railway stations, and other commercial environments across the British Empire. [Alex Bremner's](#)

photoessay, for instance, offers a conspectus of how imperial themes — missions, commerce, connections — were expressed in windows both at home and abroad. [Karen Burns](#) examines the stained glass at the railway station in Melbourne, Australia, arguing that its motifs reflect a preoccupation among Arts and Crafts designers with scientific models of communication and transmission. [Veronica Smith](#) uses the Rochdale Library, Museum, and Art Gallery as a case study to explore how stained glass was used to decorate public space and thereby to articulate civic ideals, notions of gendered space, and educational self-improvement. It is also important to think about how stained glass was seen and exhibited: as decoration, public spectacle, and commercial advertisement. As [Sally Rush](#) demonstrates, for Edinburgh, there was an intimate relationship between chemical technology, technologies of viewing, and the notion of spectacle. In showing the very diverse forms and content of stained glass, and how it was embedded in the burgeoning consumer world of the nineteenth century, this section points towards numerous fruitful lines of further enquiry.

Readings and Iconographies focuses on the meanings of stained glass. It asks how those meanings were negotiated, in processes that involved not just designers and patrons but broader ideas about theology, symbolism, aesthetics, history, and place. It also enquires into the broader associations and metaphors that stained glass evoked in viewers. [Gareth Atkins](#)'s article considers the association of stained glass with 'lineage' and asks how the ecclesiastical and historical connotations of this idea informed its use and interpretation in more secular contexts. [Michael Ledger-Lomas](#) shows how the stained glass scheme at Southwark Cathedral was used to meld together multiple simultaneous messages: celebrating the monarchy, High Church Anglicanism, and the relationship between Church and State, while also asserting the place of the cathedral in the literary history of Southwark. [Martin Crampin](#) traces different varieties of medievalism across the nineteenth century, aiming in the process to recover the sheer variety that the blanket term 'Gothic Revival' has sometimes obscured. Collectively, therefore, the case studies that form the backbone of this section seek to demonstrate the potential of the particular to throw light on a wide variety of questions that are of interest to nineteenth-century scholars more broadly.

This issue of 19 concludes with an afterword by [Isobel Armstrong](#), author of *Victorian Glassworlds*.