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**Sister Arts:  
The Life of Colour and the Colour of Life in the Work of  
Alice Meynell and Elizabeth Butler**

**Hilary Fraser**

In his 'Notes on the Royal Academy' for 1875 John Ruskin singled out for special praise Elizabeth Thompson's painting *The 28th Regiment at Quatre Bras* [Fig. 1], depicting the British foot regiment holding off the French cavalry two days before the Battle of Waterloo in 1815. Despite his declared prejudice against the picture ('partly because I have always said that no woman could paint; and secondly, because I thought what the public made such a fuss about must be good for nothing'), he was apparently won over when he saw it, comparing it with the work of the artists he most famously championed: Turner and the Pre-Raphaelites, whose canvases are distinguished above all by their colour and luminosity. The painting is 'the first fine pre-Raphaelite picture of battle we have had', he enthuses; it is 'wrought ... with gradations of colour and shade of which I have not seen the like since Turner's death'.<sup>1</sup>

The distinguished critic could hardly have heaped greater praise on Miss Thompson's achievement as a colourist.<sup>2</sup> The young artist had indeed paid special attention to colour in her meticulous preparation for the painting. She reports in her autobiography, published nearly half a century later but based on contemporary diaries, that a military friend 'had the whole Waterloo uniform made for me at the Government clothing factory at Pimlico... They have even had the coat dyed the old 'brick-dust' red and made of the baize cloth of those days!' She admits to initially 'finding the red coats very trying'. Her studies in Florence hadn't prepared her for painting 'a mass of men in one

colour, and that “brick-dust”. But a visit to observe soldiers in training at Aldershot helped her to see ‘how the British red coat becomes blackish-purple here, pale salmon colour there, and so forth, under the influence of the weather and wear and tear’.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, and beyond the technical difficulties of rendering it chromatically, she had thrilled to the colour of Waterloo ever since visiting the battlefield in 1865 on her nineteenth birthday, and she was to dedicate much of her career to capturing it on canvas. At the end of the chapter in her autobiography that recounts that first visit, she admits to having feared, in the wake of the Great War, that Waterloo ‘would be obliterated in the fumes of a later terror’: ‘But no, there it remains, that lurid glamour glows around it as before, and for the writer and for the painter its colour, its great form, its deep tones, remain. We see through its blood-red veil of smoke Napoleon fall’.<sup>4</sup>

Elizabeth (later, following her marriage to Lieutenant General Sir William Butler, Lady Butler), was accompanied on this family visit to Waterloo in 1865 by her parents and her younger sister Alice, who would later marry the publisher and writer Wilfrid Meynell and develop a significant reputation of her own as a poet, essayist and art critic. In this latter role, as Meaghan Clarke has argued, Alice Meynell ‘repeatedly championed her sister’s work through art reviews, columns and articles in various periodicals’, often invisibly, her identity ‘hidden beneath an array of anonymous and pseudonymous bylines’. If the artist would benefit from ‘having her own personal press agent’, she in turn gave Meynell personal and financial support, and the sisters would share valuable information from their respective professional networks throughout their careers.<sup>5</sup>

Alice Meynell's subjects are far removed from Elizabeth Butler's battle scenes, but she too developed a refined and knowledgeable interest in colour – blood red not least – that seems to have been based on a technical understanding of ancient and modern pigments and dyes. Like her sister's perception of the tonal variegation of the Waterloo soldiers' fading red coats, for example, she had an eye for how colours change over time, maintaining that 'spoiling is an important process'. She was disparaging about modern aniline dyes that don't age well, magenta in particular – named, as it happens, after the Italian-French victory over the Austrians in the Battle of Magenta in 1859 – which is, she declared, 'bad enough when it is itself; but the worst of magenta is that it spoils but poorly'. She regretted the widespread supplanting of traditional dying techniques by chemically manufactured colours, even in the silk mills of Bombay, 'with the deplorable result that their old clothes are dull and unintentionally falsified with infelicitous decay'; for 'the sun and water that do but dim, soften, and warm the native vegetable dyes to the last, do but burlesque the aniline'.<sup>6</sup>

Where Elizabeth applies her informed chromatic sensibility to her painting, Alice brings her own knowledgeable appreciation of the aesthetic effects and cultural and figurative significations of colour to her essays and to her critical work on modern art. Her own more personal, lyrical explorations of the poetics of colour in the natural, urban and cultural landscapes, and the ambition of her attempt to map the life of colour and (the title of one of her most potent essays) the colour of life, were informed, I suggest, by the education in the history and materiality as well as the symbolism and aesthetics of colour that she shared in her youth with her artist sister. Their

unusually intense and colourful female sibling education, within the small circle of a 'united family life [that] continued from year to year', and the lifelong reciprocities of their interrelated professional lives, provide an important context for understanding Meynell's and Butler's individual engagement in chromatic experimentation.<sup>7</sup> Attending to the meanings of colour, in word and image respectively, for this unusual sorority also offers a unique perspective on the uses and meanings of colour in the sister arts of literature and painting in the late nineteenth century.

## I

The Thompson sisters had been home-schooled, mostly in Italy, by their parents, who moved in literary and artistic circles, and numbered Ruskin among their friends. Alice's first book of poetry was published in the same year that Elizabeth's *Quatre Bras* was exhibited, and it too received high praise from the critic, who wrote to their mother that he found in it some of 'the finest things I've seen or felt in modern verse'.<sup>8</sup> Twenty-five years later, as an established critic herself, Alice Meynell was to write a book on Ruskin that was more equivocal. As a contemporary reviewer observed 'The warmest praise of the Master is there and yet courteous alarm-bells are rung on every page'.<sup>9</sup> But if the daughters were not entirely like minded with Ruskin, Elizabeth recalls '[h]e and our mother were often of the same way of thinking on many subjects, and I remember seeing him gently clapping his hands at many points she made'.<sup>10</sup>

Christiana Thompson was a talented water-colourist, and her vision of the various landscapes they inhabited shaped her daughters' early experience. Elizabeth was born in winter in Lausanne, on the borders of Lake

Geneva, and, according to her sister, her mother's 'natural pictures of the snowy mountains and the ice-bound lake, set as they often were in magnificent sunsets, were the first objects that caught the child's eyes'.<sup>11</sup> Elizabeth herself remembers how later, in Italy, 'Our mother did many lovely water colours', mentioning 'one especially exquisite one of Fiesole seen in a shimmering blue midsummer light ... She understood sunshine and how to paint it'.<sup>12</sup> Her daughters were evidently taught to view the world in colour, and Elizabeth's journals from this period are full of lusciously painted verbal landscapes. Journeying from Genoa to Spezzia on their way to Florence for the first time in 1866, she notes, for example, 'The colour all along was ravishing ... Why don't water-colour painters come here in shoals? What colouring the mountains had at sunset ...!'

I feel as though I had been steeped all day in some balmy liquid of gold, purple, and blue. I have a Titianesque feeling hovering about me produced by the style of landscape we have passed through and the faces of the people who are working in the patches of cultivation under the mulberries and vines, and that intense, deep blue sky with massive white clouds floating over it. We exclaimed as much at the beauty of the women as at the purple of the mountains and the green of the budding mulberries and poplars. And the men and boys; what perfect types; such fine figures and handsome faces, such healthy colour!<sup>13</sup>

Elizabeth's descriptions of the Italian landscapes that delighted them during this period are themselves ravishing, and, as here, filtered through the palettes of Old Masters, as well as through her mother's, her sister's and her own artist's eye. Her experience of Florence is even more strongly coloured

by the artists of the past: 'it is a delightful thing', she writes, 'to go about those streets and be reminded at every turn of the great Painters, Architects, Sculptors I have read so much of.'<sup>14</sup> This is particularly the case during the special festivals, such as the Florentine celebrations to celebrate the 400th anniversary of Michelangelo's birth, when the city was 'all *imbandierata* and hung with the usual coloured draperies'.<sup>15</sup> Elizabeth, the student of painting, did her best to record what she saw in both visual and verbal form, though sometimes her palette fails her. Of a later stay at the coast with her sister, she writes 'as to the sea, which three-parts enveloped our little Promontory, its blue utterly baffled my poor paints. But paint I did, on those little panels that we owe to Fortuny, so nicely fitting into the box he invented'.<sup>16</sup>

Although Elizabeth reports in her autobiography that her art teacher in Florence, Giuseppe Bellucci, 'had kept me a good deal to painting in monochrome, so as to have my attention absorbed by the drawing and modelling and *chiaroscuro* of an object without the distraction of colour', she notes that she took steps to improve what she perceived to be her 'weak point' by making particular study of the Venetian Masters, 'Veronese, Titian, Tintoretto, Palma Vecchio and others ... [who] filled me with all that an artist can desire in the way of colour'.<sup>17</sup> Her diaries are full of detailed accounts of the art that the young Thompson sisters were exposed to in Italy, and suggest the independence of their tastes and their alert sensitivity to colour. In Florence, for example, puzzling over the critical neglect of Andrea del Sarto ('what could be the matter with such work?' she wonders, when ticked off by Ruskin), she suggests a family visit to the convent of San Salvi, to see his *Cenacola*, distinguished for its expressive and highly innovative use of colour.

She is impressed by '[t]his beautifully coloured fresco ... the wonderful value of bright yellow as well as white in a composition to light it up'.<sup>18</sup> And of Pinturicchio's well-preserved frescoes in Siena she writes: 'Here one sees what frescoes were meant to be: deep in colour, exceedingly forcible, with positive illusion in linear and aërial perspective'.<sup>19</sup> Fresco seems emblematic of Italy's saturation by colour, of the polychromatic penetration of its very fabric in the eyes of the young painter.

The richness of Italy's palette is nowhere more pronounced than in the brilliance of its religious festivals, which are described in sumptuous detail throughout the Italian chapters. Elizabeth's diaries give a flavour of how, at the colourful holy processions and ceremonies the young women attended following the conversion of first Christiana then the rest of the Thompson family to Roman Catholicism, the extravagant visual experience transported them to an almost unendurable state of ecstasy. The Feast of the Annunciation was one such, '[a] brilliant day, full of colour', a 'spectacle of great pomp', that she took a day off work to witness. 'Everything was filled with light', she exclaims, 'the cardinals glowing like rubies inside their coaches, even their faces all aglow with the red reflections thrown up from their ardent robes'.

But there presently came a sight which I could hardly stand ... On a sleek white mule came a prelate, all in pure lilac, his grey head bare to the sunshine and carrying in his right hand the gold and jewelled Cross. The trappings of the mule were black and gold, a large black, square cloth thrown over its back in the mediæval fashion. The Cross, which was large and must have weighed considerably, was very conspicuous. The



beauty of the colour of mule and rider, the black and gold housings of that white beast, the lilac of the rider's robes, and the tender glory of the embossed Cross—how these things enchant me!<sup>20</sup>

Experiences of staged holy spectacles such as this (and there are several of them recorded in Elizabeth's journals), where an aesthetic response to the materiality of colour gives way to a spiritual vision that is almost unbearable in its intensity, provide a significance context for the young women's own creative engagement with colour in their work, respectively, as artists and writers.

## II

'A certain education', Meynell observed in 1903 in her introduction to *The Works of John S. Sargent R.A.*, 'makes us able to see well, and that is our art and needs our attention. It is our contribution, and we owe it. Life, light, form and colour in a picture, and indeed in nature, must have our intelligent eyes'.<sup>21</sup> Having herself enjoyed an unusually privileged education in the art of seeing, Meynell dedicated a good part of her life as a writer and critic to attending to the education of her readers, bringing her own intelligent eyes and informed sensibility to the visual world, both of nature and culture, that surrounded her. In the latter half of the nineteenth century this was a newly colourful world, one that was freshly conscious of the experience of colour, and Meynell herself was especially interested in colour as it related to 'life, light, form'. She wrote about these connections in her work on Frederic Leighton, for example, explaining in an early article of 1884 on his *Cymon and Iphigenia* [Fig. 2] how this 'painter of the ideal in human form and colour' achieves his effects through these combined means. The very drapery is

made eloquent, she argues, 'its exquisite studied lines being invested with the highest and most brilliant colour of the whole composition – sunset-lighted white'.<sup>22</sup> Meynell examines a number of the line drawings Leighton produced as studies for the picture, but then gives considerable attention to the artist's transformative use of colour in the final version of the painting. 'In the colour', she writes, 'the artist has intended to unite splendour with significance, and has chosen those deep and rich harmonies which suggest slumber and repose, the lighter tints being full, and full of golden effect – such roses and primroses as light the clouds of a declining day'. But, she adds, 'there are colours as well as colour, and a word may be added as to the several tints that combine in the chord':

The white draperies have ... the value, in colour, of pale and rosy gold, and they are spread over the middle of the composition; beneath Iphigenia's blonde head the pillows are of rose and red. The red is repeated in Cymon's robe and in the ruddier leaves, while the rose reappears in the lights of the female attendant's garment and in the light draperies of the child. Warm too, but without any touch of hot tone, is the fine brass of a great jar, with the yellow of the stuff that falls upon it. The sleeping man, whose place is in the more shadowy plane of the picture, is clad in cooler and bluer tints. In the distance, the white buildings of a sea-city burn in the lovely light between sunset and moonrise, and the eye passes over this to the dark sea and to the edge of the Oriental moon. Among the darkest accents of the picture is the colour of the alert black dog, who runs before Cymon in his labouring

pilgrimage, and whose admirably rendered animal vivacity redeems the group from languor without marring its rest.<sup>23</sup>

Her analysis, at once impressionistic and forensic, of the compositional harmonies of Leighton's colours in this painting is characteristic of both her art writing and her essays in aestheticism.

Meynell's essays, everywhere inflected by her minute observations of the hues of the natural and built environment, are, like her art criticism, undoubtedly coloured by her formative years. She wrote an entire essay on 'the differences of the green of leaves' in July, in which she takes in the chromatic variations between seasons, between trees and the colour of skies, as well as between kinds of trees. Her favourite is the poplar, whose 'green is not rich; the coolest have a colour much mingled with a cloud-gray'.<sup>24</sup> She observes in another essay that colour is effaced by the 'sweetest light' of the horizon: 'The bluest sky disappears on that shining edge; there is not substance enough for colour. The rim of the hill, of the woodland, of the meadow-land, of the sea—let it only be far enough—has the same absorption of colour'.<sup>25</sup> It is the 'impression of colour' that she wishes to articulate when distinguishing between, for example, the individual pleasures of different towns and villages. Like her sister, she writes with pleasure of 'an impression produced by warm yellows and pinks in old Genoa, by the rich sunny brown of Florence, and by the pervasive rose of Venice.' Heidelberg is similarly experienced by her as 'roseate,' because of the lovely red sandstone of its buildings, 'enhanced by a sunset so harmoniously that it is difficult to tell how much of the subtle tint is "local colour" and how much is due to the pencil of the light'. The colour, like the topography of the town, is organic, and

accordingly has 'a life and a character' that she finds wanting in planned cities with imported international styles.<sup>26</sup>

Given her appreciation of living colour aligned with form in landscape and townscape, it is not surprising that this is Meynell's focus in her art writing of the 1880s. This is particularly pronounced in her work on landscape painting associated with a particular region. She was notable for her critical espousal of the *plein-air* practice of the Barbizon School in France, for example, and the French-influenced Newlyn School in Cornwall, 'the most significant body of painters now in England'. 'In the one point of open-air painting, we have assuredly a novelty in the schools of Art', she declares in 1889.<sup>27</sup> In the case of both the Barbizon School and the Newlyn School, the colour and light of art relate closely to the specific qualities of the location in which it was formed. St Ives for example, she remarks, framed by the sea, is geographically 'almost bound with colour'.<sup>28</sup> Its inhabitants are themselves coloured by the place in which they live and work, like organic elements of the landscape, in ways that recall her sister's description of the landscape and people they saw on the road to Spezzia. Meynell notes the sun- and wind-tanned colouring of the fishermen: 'The hair, lightened in passages, plays into the darker tones of the skin with harmony and variety, and in the eyes the white is touched with blue, the iris is clear, and the pupil wholesomely contracted with the fullness of daylight'.<sup>29</sup> Reflecting on the painting that emerges from this landscape, she observes that the Newlyn painters 'have devoted themselves to the subtle study of light rather than to the obvious study of colour'. Or rather, she qualifies, they depict the true colours of nature, unlike more conventional English painters:

For in looking at the brilliant flesh of the one painter, we perceive the corrupt execution and the coarse yellows and whites by which he achieves his brightness; and the other has, after all, a dull picture to show us, in which no living lights and airs move between the clouds, and the distance reveals no design in the firmament. Less interesting painters have a habit of feigning violent colour in nature where a simple pictorial sight perceives grey – grey that is various indeed, but with varieties depending upon their limitations. In each case of manner, or fiction, the result is an absence of vitality. Vitality – *voilà le mot lance*. It expresses precisely the Newlyn quality.<sup>30</sup>

Vitality and fidelity to nature are the qualities she finds, uniquely in contemporary English art, in the Newlyn painters. These are the terms in which she praises Stanhope Forbes, for example, writing of his *Fish Sale on a Cornish Beach* (1885) [Fig. 3]:

It is nature and art together, for he who has it in perfection divests himself of artifice, and learns to look with an appreciative simpleness. Then comes that power of comparison which is the open secret of out-of-door painting; and then the quality of colour. This is the lesson to be learnt by the eyes.

Meynell elaborates in particular on his subtle handling of colour:

As a colourist Mr. Forbes has extreme refinement, and a moderation which does not prevent a singular completeness. That is, his is comprehensive colour, fuller, richer, more multitudinous than appears at the first glance, but marked by the modesty of nature. And this charming restraint and control is evident in that study of light which is

the motive of his work; here, too, he has no surprises of luminosity for us, no translucent passages where nature has her simple opaque daylight, no abrupt contrasts where she shows delicate comparisons.<sup>31</sup>

Meynell is especially interested in the relation of colour to light, and the challenges for the artist in capturing a due balance. In the second of her articles on the Newlyn School, she writes that 'It is the general absence, or extreme gentleness of colour, that enables the Newlynners to achieve such light.' She expands on this question of the relationship between colour and light in landscape painting:

A grey or white sky can be valued in a picture as – what a sky always is – the brightest passage of it; but a blue sky must always be darkened by precisely the degree of the intensity of the blue. It is not at all uncommon to see a picture of southern sunshine – landscape and sky – in which the blue sky is the darkest tone of the composition. This is of course wrong – grotesquely wrong it looks to eyes accustomed to value a sky as the very light-giver of a landscape. But the painter is readily forgiven. He had two truths to present, colour and light; and they were truths irreconcilable except by the omnipresence of nature. And thus he has elected the one which was to him most essential – colour; and light has had to go. Nature alone can intensify an Italian sky until the colour comes to such a pitch of strength that it is called "dark" in our vocabulary, whereas it is, in fact, shining with the fire of celestial sapphires, and cannot be faced by the open eye.<sup>32</sup>

Meynell cites the complaint of the French painter Henri Regnault – 'a great colourist' she notes – 'when I am luminous I am no longer sufficient in colour;

when I am coloured I lose my luminosity.’ English painters have the same dilemma, she remarks, but ‘in a less difficult degree’. Furthermore, and this is where the Newlyn painters are a model, ‘the difficulty is greatly minimised by the choice of passages of nature in which the local colour is very gentle, and the illumination comparatively low. For then not only is the brightness not impaired by fulness of colour, but the brightness itself is better within reach of achievement’.<sup>33</sup>

### III

One of the painters who lived in St Ives and was a member of the Newlyn School in the 1880s, and whom Alice Meynell particularly admired, was the Austrian artist Marianne Preindlsberger Stokes. Meynell wrote an extended article in 1901 on ‘Mrs Adrian Stokes’, for the *Magazine of Art*, which exemplifies the entanglement of colour and ‘life’ in her writing about art. Unlike her sister, whose studies in Bellucci’s studio in Via Santa Reparata in Florence furnished her with the opportunity to copy frescoes by Andrea del Sarto and Franciabigio in the cloisters of the nearby Santissima Annunziata, Stokes had received her early artistic training in Germany and France, where, we are told, she had little exposure to colour.<sup>34</sup> ‘Her first conviction of the greatness of colour was gained’ only later, Meynell writes, like Elizabeth’s, ‘in the galleries of Italy, and in the study of the primitive painters, who seem to look not against the light, so as to see the shadows of a luminous world, but with it, so as to see the colours of an illuminated world’.<sup>35</sup> Meynell’s comments here strongly recall her sister’s response to the complex relations between colour and light in the frescoes of Andrea Del Sarto and Pinturicchio. They also reflect the Thompson sisters’ views on the relative merits of Italian and

German art. 'What a downward slope in art it is from Italy into Germany!' wrote Elizabeth, when the family returned to England via the Tyrol and Bavaria in 1870. 'We girls felt a great irritation at the change, and were too recalcitrant to attend to the German sights properly'.<sup>36</sup>

Stokes' experience of the Tuscan galleries and frescoes inaugurated a change in her method, and a decision to abandon painting in oil. As Meynell explains it,

Something, she thought, had been lost in the practice of art by the association of colour with oil. Too thick, too deliberate, too tolerant of handling and re-handling, too indulgent to the *à peu près* in execution, whilst it works for realism, oil-painting has separated the art of Europe from simplicity. Material controls the painter so far that the very existence of the spirit of realism has come to pass as a consequence of this imitative yet hindering medium which encourages and hampers at once.<sup>37</sup>

Searching for a ground and material such as the Early Italian painters used, Stokes found these in gesso and tempera.<sup>38</sup> The powdered pigment mixed with a binder (usually egg yolk) is applied over white gesso ground on wood panel, and the result is fast drying and permanent. Meynell describes how, for Stokes, 'the technique of this painting – the mere material – led to the spirit and the idea'.<sup>39</sup> Stokes was a Roman Catholic, like Meynell herself, who had by this time edited two Catholic periodicals with her husband, and also wrote for the Catholic journal, the *Tablet*. Stokes' use, in works such as *Candlemas Day* (tempera on wood, c.1901) [Fig. 4], of techniques derived from Early Italian Christian art (predominantly commissioned altarpieces and devotional



subjects) rather than oil, which was associated with the Northern Renaissance, appealed to Meynell's religious as well as her aesthetic sensibilities.

Stokes' views on oil painting were, according to Meynell, influenced not only by her close study of Early Italian art but also by fellow artist Christiana Herringham, who dedicated herself to the revival of tempera painting, founding the Society of Painters in Tempera in 1901. Herringham had, in 1899, translated Cennino Cennini's fifteenth-century treatise *Il libro dell' arte o trattato della pittura*, a work which, she argued, 'established victoriously' that '[i]f the Middle ages preferred tempera and fresco ... it was not done through ignorance'.<sup>40</sup> Stokes herself clearly associated the use of tempera with the purity and simplicity of an earlier art. Her choice of medium was ethically inflected.<sup>41</sup> As Meynell explains, '[f]or her the recovery of tempera was no less than the restoration of spirituality and decoration – two things long overpowered by the realism, drama, and complexity of oils':

Mrs. Stokes found in gesso and tempera the whole convention, and by concomitance the spirit, that suited her genius. She is by nature and grace a primitive painter in tempera, exquisitely sincere in feeling, mistress of a pure method ... She is direct in heart and hand, and possesses the composure and the foresight that this simple and severe art of tempera demands.<sup>42</sup>

Interestingly, Meynell connects Stokes' sincerity of feeling with her espousal of the purity and simplicity of Early Italian colour technique, which in turn enables the expression of emotion in art: 'It needs her noble simplicity to begin the reaction against modern contempt for feeling and thought in art',

she urges, a contempt that was itself a reaction against the excessive sentimentality of mid-nineteenth-century art. Stokes' sympathy was Early Italian, not early Victorian, and it was expressed through her mastery of the materials and techniques of the so-called primitives. She was, as Meynell put it, 'directly a Primitive in art and heart'.<sup>43</sup>

Meynell emphasises Stokes' education in medieval faith, feeling and methods of painting, through her reading of Herringham's translation of Cennini, for example, and through her own close study of early Italian art, both in Italy and the National Gallery, in order to differentiate the devout articulation of religious feeling in her work from the kind of sentimentality in art that was typically associated with female painters.<sup>44</sup> Meynell's own personal experience of growing up in Italy within a close, observant family circle that included a mother and a sister who were both artists, enabled her sympathetic understanding of the religious and aesthetic influences on Stokes, and the prejudices she faced as a female artist in a professional world that was predominantly male and highly gendered. In the early 1870s, when her sister was still finding her way as a painter, it was perhaps inevitable that, immersed in the early Italian art that Stokes did not encounter until later in her own artistic education, Elizabeth's early subjects were religious. Her first subject picture in oils represented *The Visitation*. She describes in her autobiography how she undertook it 'at [her] dear mother's earnest desire', and how on 'off days' she and her father "did" all the pictures contained in various palaces, the Vatican, and the Villa Borghese'.<sup>45</sup> *The Visitation*, also known as *The Magnificat*, received honourable mention when it was first exhibited in Rome, but was rejected by the Royal Academy the following year, whence it was

returned ignominiously with a hole in the canvas. Only later, in 1882, after her astounding success as a military painter, was *The Visitation* recognised by being reproduced as a full-page engraving in the *Art Journal*.

Elizabeth Butler's decisive turn from painting devotional to battle scenes meant that she was no longer in danger of being labelled as a painter of typically feminine subjects; indeed, astonishment that a young woman should address such masculine scenes so masterfully was a constant theme among critics. Her new subject, which was to become her settled professional choice following the runaway success in 1874 of her painting of an imagined scene from the Crimean War, *The Roll Call* [Fig. 5], required a negotiation of gender expectations that was somewhat different from Meynell's defence of Stokes' painterly understanding of sentiment. Butler's feeling representation of the horrors of war, and the emotional response it aroused in the viewers of her battle scenes, signified for reviewers the womanly sensibility she brought to bear upon on this most masculine of genres. Butler's intention as a military painter was, she maintained, not to glorify conflict but to record the pain and suffering of war by trying to capture the emotions of the ordinary individual soldier: 'I never painted for the glory of war, but to portray its pathos and heroism'.<sup>46</sup> For Butler, 'the fact that counts is the power of touching the people's heart, an "organ" which remains the same through all the changing fashions in art'.<sup>47</sup> And touch people's hearts she did, as the stories of the emotional power of her work to reduce spectators to tears attest. Butler records in her autobiography that 'Col. Lloyd Lindsay, of Alma fame, and his wife were wild to have *The Roll Call*. She shyly told me she had cried before the picture'.<sup>48</sup> Famously, a policeman had to hold back the crowds at the

Royal Academy, such was the public interest in the painting when it was first exhibited in 1874. And at the private view of *Balaclava* [Fig. 6], exhibited at the Fine Art Society in 1876, Butler recalls, ‘there was what may be called a sensation’, when ‘Virginia Gabriel, the composer, was led out of the room by her husband in tears’.<sup>49</sup>

Different as their subjects were, Butler and Stokes drew on a shared Catholic iconography that in Butler’s case produced what the *Daily Mail* described as a ‘profound moral and depth of pathos not utterable in words’.<sup>50</sup> Her own work, though, both early and late, from *Balaclava* (1876) to *Dawn of Waterloo. The “Réveille” in the Bivouac of the Scots Greys on the Morning of the Battle* (1893-95), typically invokes not the Nativity but the Pietà, as soldiers cradle their sleeping or dying comrades. Her overwhelming theme is the Christ-like martyrdom and sacrifice acted out in the routine heroism of the common soldier. One of the painterly means by which Butler achieved her powerful emotional effects is through her poetics of colour. In *The Roll Call*, for example, a cold palette of white, grey and brown conjures the frigid chill of a Crimean winter. Here, and in *Balaclava*, the grim drama of the scene is heightened by the contrast between the sombre colours of the soldiers and the pale sky that throws them into silhouette. Butler’s striking use of colour did not go unnoticed by the press. The *Morning Post* commended *Balaclava* as ‘a poem in colours [. . .] not undeserving of equal rank with the Laureate’s famous ode’.<sup>51</sup>

Butler may have been schooled in the techniques of the Italian Old Masters, but her turn to military painting was influenced by the work of contemporary French painters such as Eduard Détaillé and Ernest

Meissonier, whose modern representations of the battlefield were a revelation when she visited Paris in 1870, shortly before the Franco-Prussian War was declared. The first of her paintings to be accepted by the Royal Academy, *Missing* (1873) depicted a scene from that war, which was naturally a subject to which the French painters who had inspired her were also drawn.

Meissonier first conceived the idea of a picture that would combine realism and allegory to represent the Siege of Paris as soon as the war was over, in 1871. His painting *The Siege of Paris (1870-1871)* [Fig. 7] was not completed until 1884, but his original ambition for the work is encapsulated in the focal group of the finished canvas, which depicts a dying soldier collapsed at the feet of an allegorical personification of Paris rising above the ruins of a barricade. That soldier is the painter Henri Regnault, who had volunteered and was killed at the age of 27 during the second Battle of Buzenal, and who is made to symbolise the heroism and sacrifice of a whole generation.

Elizabeth Butler could not have seen that painting when she visited Paris again in 1874, of course, though the ideas that informed it might conceivably have been discussed when she went to the studio of Détaillé, who had studied under Meissonier. Certainly her sister Alice knew about Meissonier's plans for the painting long before it was exhibited to the public in 1884.

Indeed, in a generally celebratory article on him, published in the *Magazine of Art* in 1881, Meynell expressed her apprehensions about the projected painting, questioning the wisdom of the master of 'microscopic *genre* in our own time' taking on 'a work not only colossal in size but allegorical in subject, in which France is to be lying prostrate and bleeding under the shadow of a

hovering and unclean Prussian eagle, while the body of the young Regnault is cast across her breast'.<sup>52</sup>

#### IV

Despite her doubts about Meissonnier's proposed foray into the allegorical sublime, Meynell was interested in the figure of the slain artist at the centre of his canvas, Henri Regnault, so much so that she made him the subject of her next article in the *Magazine of Art*. If, as a colourist, Meissonnier, despite his many talents, 'undoubtedly, in the eyes of those who love beautiful colour, leaves something to be desired', Regnault had caught her attention as a modern master of colour.<sup>53</sup> Her article positions him as, at first, part of a metropolitan art scene quite distinct from the *plein-air* painting of the Barbizon School. While rural France 'was producing art so sincere, direct, and grave as the work of the peasant Millet, the Paris studios, on the contrary, were brilliant with the expansion of colour, the complacent triumph of manner, and the gay contempt of the ideal in subject'.<sup>54</sup> Regnault was, for Meynell, the very exemplar of this colourful but insubstantial and decadent style, until he made a transformative visit to Tangiers and found his style, before the Franco-Prussian war brought an end to his own short but colourful life.

Meynell traces the history of Regnault's development as a colourist in the years leading up to his untimely death. She writes of his happy times in Tangiers, where 'he fed his peculiar love of colour upon the shining hues of Tangerine climate and costume', and Rome, where he did his principal work and established his reputation with paintings such as *Judith and Holofernes* and *Salome* [Fig. 8].<sup>55</sup> *Salome* in particular had caused a sensation when it was first exhibited in 1870 because of its daring use of colour and eschewal of

chiaroscuro. Both figure and ground are painted in brilliant yellow tones, the flamboyant colouring and the bold gaze of the femme fatale anticipating fin-de-siècle tropes. Regnault was the son of a famous chemist, and critics inevitably drew attention to his experimentation with modern pigments. Here is Paul Leroi, for example: ‘ce sont surtout les recherches de colorations nouvelles qui dominant; le fils du chimiste illustre se retrouvait dans le peintre, que préoccupent les tonalités à base d’aniline et qui rêve de chatoiements inconnus, de gammes opalines, d’éblouissements prismatiques’.<sup>56</sup> This is the theme of a cartoon in the *Journal Amusant*, which shows the painting as a ‘Prodige de la Chimie’ surrounded by an assortment of dazzled viewers’ [Fig.9].<sup>57</sup>

Writing ten years later, after Regnault’s death, Meynell’s own judgement of *Salome* emphasises its originality as an experiment in colour:

It is not too much to say that in all the history of colour, paint had never produced anything so wonderful; nor is rivalry with the great masters of colour implied, because Henri Regnault struck out a way of colour which was altogether new. Gold and rose-colour, to which the gold and rose-colour of other painters was as prose to poetry, lucid, vague, and brilliant, were accentuated by the bold jet-black of the girl’s hair with extraordinary effect.<sup>58</sup>

As well as his luminous yellow, Meynell is struck by Regnault’s original use of black in paintings such as *Salome* and *General Juan Prim (1814-1870)*: ‘He was indeed a master of black, that colour which has been so much neglected in the English school, and which is yet of such value to the emphasis and directness of a picture.’ His renditions of Salome’s hair and General Prim’s

horse are particularly praised for being ‘masterly studies of black – of real black, that is, and not of the sophistications of brown reflections and blue lights which are too often used amongst ourselves for the simple colour’.<sup>59</sup>

Meynell also remarks upon Regnault’s use of red, particularly noting his rendition of blood in his spectacularly gory *Summary Execution under the Moorish Kings of Granada* (1870) [Fig. 10]. The painting portrays a freshly decapitated man, following his summary beheading on the steps of the Alhambra, during the Moorish kingdom prior to the Christian Reconquista of 1492: ‘the head has rolled away, and a deluge of blood is spreading, thickly and lucidly, upon the marble stair’. Regnault makes effective use of contrasting colours in this scene, with the green robes of the victim intensifying the red of his blood. The artist, writes Meynell, ‘delighted in the beauty of blood’. It is a luridly coloured scene, the very atmosphere blood-stained. The background, she observes,

glows with the rosy and golden tints of some court of the Moors of Granada. The colour of the picture blushes like wine – all the air seems coloured. Blood has often been painted before, but always as an accessory, and with a certain reluctance; Regnault was surely the first who made a delighted study of blood the leading motive of his picture.<sup>60</sup>

Regnault was likely the first and certainly the bloodiest of painters to depict bloodshed so prolifically on canvas, but since his death in 1871 Meynell’s own sister had portrayed what some judged to be an unseemly excess. In 1876, for example, Butler was criticised by the *Globe*, in its review of her *Balaclava*, for displaying ‘an unnecessary amount of blood in the



picture'.<sup>61</sup> The canvas is indeed liberally spattered. A dragoon in the middle distance with a bloodied bandage covering his eyes and a blood-stained jacket staggers forward blindly. Another bleeds over his white shirt from a chest wound, which a fellow soldier attempts to stanch. Another, in the foreground, stares vacantly at his bloody hands. A mounted sergeant, his own boot covered in blood and his horse's hoof dripping blood, surveys the scene. The painter who had thrilled to the 'dazzling spectacle' of the Queen's Review at Aldershot, where her 'eyes positively ached with all that scarlet and gold', finds in the bloodied survivors of the notorious Battle of Balaclava a poignant visual counterpoint to the brave scarlet of the soldiers' uniforms.<sup>62</sup>

Meynell questioned whether Regnault's "Execution without Judgment," in which all wholesome and reverential reserve is denied, can be accepted as decent', and it is interesting to speculate whether she had similar concerns about her sister's lavish depiction of blood in her paintings.<sup>63</sup> Meynell was undoubtedly interested in the symbolic language of colour as well as its material and pictorial properties, and the colour red, because of its association with blood as both a bodily fluid and a potent figurative image, particularly intrigued her. Her confronting essay on 'The Colour of Life' begins and ends with graphic images of the hidden blood-red life contained within the body and the visibility of blood spilled. It suggests that, like Butler, she was fascinated by the multiple connotations of a colour resonant at once, as Michel Pastoureau has argued, of military, religious and political symbolism, and of violence, injury, revolution, hell.<sup>64</sup> 'Red,' Meynell writes, 'has been praised as the colour of life'.

But the true colour of life is not red: Red is the colour of violence, or of life broken open ... Or if red is indeed the colour of life, it is so only on condition that it is not seen. Once fully visible, red is the colour of life violated, and in the act of betrayal and waste. Red is the secret of life, and not the manifestation thereof. It is one of the things the value of which is secrecy, one of the talents that are to be hidden in a napkin. The true colour of life is the colour of the body, the colour of the covered red, the implicit and not explicit red of the unpublished blood.<sup>65</sup>

Vita Sackville-West, who wrote a biographical and critical introduction to a selection of Meynell's essays in 1947, comments: 'Those words must stand amongst the most revealing she wrote. The true colour of life, for her, was not red. There was something shocking, almost vulgar, to her in the idea of life broken open. The value lay in secrecy. The decencies must be preserved'.<sup>66</sup> Sackville-West's ironic phrasing here echoes Meynell's distinctly unironic invocation of the decencies in her critique of Regnault's display of life broken open.

The main thrust of Meynell's essay is indeed devoted not to the colour red, from which she averts her gaze, but to what she perceives as the real colour of life that enters the urban landscape when, in the summer months, many a London boy flocks to the banks of the Serpentine and strips off his grubby clothes:

He is allowed to come out of all his ignominies, and to take the late colour of the midsummer north-west evening, on the borders of the Serpentine. At the stroke of eight he sheds the slough of nameless colours—all allied to the hues of dust, soot, and fog, which are the

colours the world has chosen for its boys—and he makes, in his hundreds, a bright and delicate flush between the grey-blue water and the grey-blue sky.<sup>67</sup>

As we have seen, Alice Meynell was drawn by colour; she was interested in it technically; she was sensitive to its effects; she was moved by it. It was also, though, something abstract and painterly, like line and form, discussion of which did not require indecent self-exposure. In her critical writing, she sometimes, as here, deployed colour as a strategic device for writing obliquely about 'indecent' topics such as nudity, for example, so that she could avoid referring directly to the naked body or to her own response as a woman. In 'The Colour of Life', as Talia Schaffer has argued, Meynell displaces a vision of naked boys swimming in the Serpentine into a disquisition on colour and shape.<sup>68</sup> It is through colour that the watching woman and the naked object of her gaze become subtly connected.

Meynell typically identified with the 'woman in grey' who is the eponymous subject of an essay she wrote about the grey figure of a woman threading her way down Oxford Street on a bicycle, whose 'unstable equilibrium' is a figure for her own passage through the world.<sup>69</sup> We have seen that she aligned herself with the grey sea and skies of Newlyn, and with the spiritual colouring of Stokes' and Herringham's tempera madonnas. Grey might seem the very opposite of the colour of life. Regnault wrote to his friend Stéphane Mallarmé in 1865: '*Haine au gris!* c'est là mon cri de Guerre'.<sup>70</sup> But Meynell is acutely aware of the red of the life within. She writes of Regnault's untimely death in the Battle of Buzenval, when '[h]e who so gaily spent his flowers of colour upon the blood of a decapitated slave was called to shed his

own in defence of the corrupted city'.<sup>71</sup> 'Red,' as she says, is the colour of violence, or of life broken open'. Although Meynell was etherealised as a living, disembodied angel in the house, she bore eight children, and knew viscerally the experience of 'life broken open'.

Meynell's fastidiously decorporealised vision of the nakedness of those gathered London gamins in her essay on 'The Colour of Life' is framed by images of violation and, specifically at the end, violence against women, that complicate the colour palette of her femininity. 'The Colour of Life' concludes with two final paragraphs on the colour red as it pertains to women. Meynell invokes as her example Olympe de Gouges, author of *The Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen* (1791), who was executed by guillotine in November 1793 during the Reign of Terror. She muses on the ironies of her case, pointing to what her experience discloses about the blood-red colour of women's inner and public lives:

In the case of women, it is of the living and unpublished blood that the violent world has professed to be delicate and ashamed. See the curious history of the political rights of woman under the Revolution. On the scaffold she enjoyed an ungrudged share in the fortunes of party. Political life might be denied her, but that seems a trifle when you consider how generously she was permitted political death. She was to spin and cook for her citizen in the obscurity of her living hours; but to the hour of her death was granted a part in the largest interests, social, national, international.<sup>72</sup>

In a fascinating counter-narrative, what began as a meditation on colour modulates into a powerful statement about female political agency.

Now the colour red, with which the essay opens, ‘the colour of violence, or of life broken open, edited, and published’, is made figurative in the broken body of a woman. Red is made to signify both the ‘flush’ of a properly modest woman and the violent death by guillotine of Olympe de Gouges: ‘The blood wherewith she should, according to Robespierre, have blushed to be seen or heard in the tribune, was exposed to the public sight unsheltered by her veins’.

Against this there was no modesty. Of all privacies, the last and the innermost—the privacy of death—was never allowed to put obstacles in the way of public action for a public cause. Women might be, and were, duly suppressed when, by the mouth of Olympe de Gouges, they claimed a ‘right to concur in the choice of representatives for the formation of the laws’; but in her person, too, they were liberally allowed to bear political responsibility to the Republic. Olympe de Gouges was guillotined. Robespierre thus made her public and complete amends.<sup>73</sup>

Meynell seizes the opportunity of an essay on colour to refer to the spectrum of colours that comprise a woman’s life: from the flush of colour between the greys, and the permissible blush, to the red of a life exposed – or, interestingly for this most prolific of authors, ‘published’.

The powerful political conclusion of the version of ‘The Colour of Life’ that was subsequently collected and republished in later volumes of Meynell’s writings represents a significant revision of the original unsigned article that appeared in ‘The Wares of Autolykus’ column in the *Pall Mall Gazette* in June 1895. In its earlier form, there is no mention at the end of violent death and

martyrdom to a cause. Rather, the worst examples of lifeless, 'deadly' colour Meynell can muster to contrast with the 'bright and delicate flush' of the bathing lads 'between the grey-blue water and the grey-blue sky' are the garish, aniline-dyed hues of fashionable women's bonnets. 'Are there many eyes left so undazzled by the bonnets of the afternoon as to be able to perceive all the value of the colour of life in the evening, in the self-same park?' she asks.

Nothing is less like the colour of life than anything aniline. The colours of the fashion are the most edited and published colours of all. They give to the light the intensities that life makes a secret of. They show and spill the blood of colour, and in doing so they expose something far stronger, sharper, more stinging, and more exaggerated than the private red of human blood. The colours of the mode at their worst are really deadly.

The replacement of this passage deploring the evils of aniline dyes, with their 'exceedingly definite, and generally vulgar, names', by a passionate exposure of the political martyrdom of women who shed their blood in the French Revolution constitutes a startling shift in register.<sup>74</sup> Talia Schaffer speculates that the radical revision may be explained by the delayed impact on Meynell of the trial of Oscar Wilde, which was in process when she wrote the original article. Schaffer's proposal that it suggests 'a deeper identification with Wilde, than Meynell could admit at the time of his trial', and that 'by the time she revised the piece for publication in 1896, she was thinking deeply about the way the government might torture and destroy an intellectual', is compelling.<sup>75</sup>

There may also have been other factors in play. In the same year that Meynell worked on 'The Colour of Life', her sister was working, in her own medium, on *Dawn of Waterloo. The "Réveille" in the Bivouac of the Scots Greys on the Morning of the Battle* (1893-95) [Fig. 11].<sup>76</sup> Butler's dramatic use of colour in the painting highlights the tension of the hours before battle as the troopers of the 2nd Royal North British Dragoons prepared to charge on the morning of 18th June 1815. Dawn breaks over the dark grey and brown landscape, casting a pale light onto the white horses ridden by the trumpeters at the centre and corralled en masse on the left of the canvas, and picking out the white cross bands worn by the soldiers, the white feathers in their headgear, and the expressive faces of the central figures. But the colour that reverberates most lyrically across the canvas is the red of the soldiers' uniforms and the flames of the campfire in the foreground. Butler's use of red is pictorially effective; like her deployment of white, it provides compositional balance and accent. Additionally, as in the earlier *Quatre Bras*, her rendition of the soldiers' red uniforms serves to reinforce the authenticity of her realist representation of a historical scene, something she was throughout her career concerned to achieve. However, her reds also resonate with symbolic meaning: forebodings of sacrifice, martyrdom; the violence and bloodshed of life broken open, violated.

Reflecting on Piero della Francesca's use of red, Michael Baxandall observes that the painter may have had 'good, non-symbolic reasons' for using the colour. Nevertheless, red, as the colour of the blood Christ shed for us, is, he points out, 'one of the four liturgical colours, in mid-fifteenth-century Europe a live and appropriate code, where red would stand for Sacrifice and

the Passion'. Therefore the painter was 'certainly exposed to the colour symbolism', and even if he 'had not reflectively designed the colour as symbolic, the code had a latent presence in his sensibility and indeed intention'.<sup>77</sup> Elizabeth Butler and Alice Meynell had been raised in mid-nineteenth-century Europe, but arguably those mid-fifteenth-century codes were still live and appropriate for the young women whose early lives were, as we have seen, coloured on a daily basis by the Italian Old Masters and the living Catholic Church. Indeed, it is evident from Meynell's essays and the light they shed on Butler's parallel interests as a painter, that for the sisters likewise colour symbolism had a latent presence in their sensibility and indeed their intention. The ability to move between the materiality and the symbolism of colour, I suggest, informs the work of both the painter and the writer throughout their careers as they negotiate the reds and greys of life as a female artist, and is a significant shared feature of their creative practice that helps us to think more tangibly about the sibling interfiliation of word and image in the late nineteenth century.

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<sup>1</sup> Ruskin's generous praise is quoted in both Alice Meynell's pseudonymous essay on her sister's work, 'John Oldcastle', 'Our Living Artists: Elizabeth Butler (Née Thompson)', *Magazine of Art* (Jan 1879): 257-62, at 260-61, and her husband Wilfrid Meynell's *The Life and Work of Lady Butler (Miss Elizabeth Thompson)* (London: Art Journal, 1898), 8. It is also referred to by Butler herself in Elizabeth Butler, *An Autobiography* (London: Constable & Co. 1922), 146.

<sup>2</sup> Others were more critical of her use of colour. See reviewer's comments on the crude colour treatment of *Floreat Etona*: 'Exhibition of the Royal Academy', *Art Journal* (1882): 237-39.

<sup>3</sup> Butler, *Autobiography*, 125, 130.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>5</sup> Meaghan Clarke, *Critical Voices: Women and Art Criticism in Britain 1880-1905* (Aldershot, Hants.: Ashgate, 2005), 53-58. Clarke's research on the sisters' correspondence in the Meynell Family Archive reveals the extent of their mutually supportive relationship.

<sup>6</sup> Alice Meynell, 'The Plaid', *Essays by Alice Meynell* (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne Ltd., 1922), 152-55, at 152.

<sup>7</sup> 'Oldcastle', 'Elizabeth Butler', 259.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in June Badeni, *The Slender Tree: A Life of Alice Meynell* (Padstow, Cornwall: Tabb House, 1981), p.52.

- <sup>9</sup> Quoted in Viola Meynell, *Alice Meynell: A Memoir* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1929), 161.
- <sup>10</sup> Butler, *Autobiography*, 153.
- <sup>11</sup> 'Oldcastle', 'Elizabeth Thompson', 258.
- <sup>12</sup> Butler, *Autobiography*, 58-59.
- <sup>13</sup> Butler, *Autobiography*, 56.
- <sup>14</sup> Butler, *Autobiography*, 59.
- <sup>15</sup> Butler, *Autobiography*, 149.
- <sup>16</sup> Butler, *Autobiography*, 159-60.
- <sup>17</sup> Butler, *Autobiography*, 66, 95.
- <sup>18</sup> Butler, *Autobiography*, 153, 62.
- <sup>19</sup> Butler, *Autobiography*, 163.
- <sup>20</sup> Butler, *Autobiography*, 87, 89.
- <sup>21</sup> *The Works of John S. Sargent, R.A. With an Introductory Note by Mrs Meynell* (London: William Heinemann; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1903), 10.
- <sup>22</sup> Alice Meynell, 'Cymon and Iphigenia', *Art Journal* (May 1884): 129-33, at 130, 132.
- <sup>23</sup> Meynell, 'Cymon and Iphigenia', 130-31.
- <sup>24</sup> Alice Meynell, 'In July', *Essays by Alice Meynell*, 181-83, at 181, 182.
- <sup>25</sup> Alice Meynell, 'The Horizon', *Essays by Alice Meynell*, 176-80, at 178.
- <sup>26</sup> Alice Meynell, 'Heidelberg', *Art Journal* (August 1887): 257-64, at 258.
- <sup>27</sup> Alice Meynell, 'Newlyn', *Art Journal* (May 1889): 137-42, at 137.
- <sup>28</sup> Alice Meynell, 'Newlyn', *Art Journal* (April 1889): 97-102, at 97.
- <sup>29</sup> Meynell, 'Newlyn', *Art Journal* (April 1889), 98.
- <sup>30</sup> Meynell, 'Newlyn', *Art Journal* (April 1889), 99.
- <sup>31</sup> Meynell, 'Newlyn', *Art Journal* (April 1889), 101.
- <sup>32</sup> Meynell, 'Newlyn', *Art Journal* (May 1889), 138.
- <sup>33</sup> Meynell, 'Newlyn', *Art Journal* (May 1889), 138.
- <sup>34</sup> Alice Meynell, 'Mrs. Adrian Stokes', *Magazine of Art* (March 1901): 241-47, at 242.
- <sup>35</sup> Meynell, 'Mrs. Adrian Stokes', 243
- <sup>36</sup> Butler, *Autobiography*, 95.
- <sup>37</sup> Meynell, 'Mrs. Adrian Stokes', 243.
- <sup>38</sup> See Meaghan Clarke's fine article on Stokes, Herringham and tempera, 'On Tempera and Temperament: Women, Art, and Feeling at the *Fin de Siècle*', *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 23 (2016). DOI: <http://doi.org/10.16995/ntn.767>.
- <sup>39</sup> Meynell, 'Mrs. Adrian Stokes', 243-44.
- <sup>40</sup> Meynell, 'Mrs. Adrian Stokes', 244.
- <sup>41</sup> Wilfrid Meynell observes that 'Mrs Adrian Stokes regards the choice of medium as practically a matter of ethics', and quotes her as saying 'It seems to me a medium which lends itself most to spirituality, sincerity and purity of colour'. Wilfrid Meynell, 'Mr. and Mrs. Adrian Stokes', *Art Journal* (July 1900): 193-8.
- <sup>42</sup> Meynell, 'Mrs. Adrian Stokes', 244.
- <sup>43</sup> Meynell, 'Mrs. Adrian Stokes', 244, 242.
- <sup>44</sup> See Clarke, 'On Tempera and Temperament'.
- <sup>45</sup> Butler, *Autobiography*, 78, 79.

- <sup>46</sup> Quoted in a letter to the *Times* (4 October, 1933), which was published the day after her obituary. See Dorothy Nott's excellent PhD thesis, University of York, *Reframing War: British Military Painting 1854 to 1918* (2 vols, 2015), etheses.whiterose.ac.uk, vol 1, 32.
- <sup>47</sup> Butler, *Autobiography*, 113.
- <sup>48</sup> Butler, *Autobiography*, 108.
- <sup>49</sup> Butler, *Autobiography*, 112, 152.
- <sup>50</sup> Quoted in Nott, *Reframing War*, vol. 1, 70.
- <sup>51</sup> Quoted in Nott, *Reframing War*, vol. 1, 70.
- <sup>52</sup> 'Nothing could well be imagined more opposed to the moderate, keen, and wholesome common-sense of M. Meissonier's long course of artistic invention ... in the practice of allegorical or ideal art of the "grand style" M. Meissonier would deprive the world of the enjoyment of that exquisitely intelligent tact by which he unites his *types* and *times*.' Alice Meynell, 'Our Living Artists: Jean Louis Ernest Meissonier', *Magazine of Art* 4, (Jan 1881): 133-137, at 134-35.
- <sup>53</sup> Meynell, 'Meissonier', 134.
- <sup>54</sup> Alice Meynell, 'Henri Regnault', *Magazine of Art* (Jan. 1881): 69-78, at 69.
- <sup>55</sup> Meynell, 'Henri Regnault', 71.
- <sup>56</sup> Paul Leroi, *l'Art*, 4 (1876), 116.
- <sup>57</sup> Charles Albert d'Arnoux Bertall, 'Promenade au Salon de 1870', *Le Journal amusant* (14 May 1870), 4.
- <sup>58</sup> Meynell, 'Henri Regnault', 71.
- <sup>59</sup> Meynell, 'Henri Regnault', 71.
- <sup>60</sup> Meynell, 'Henri Regnault', 73.
- <sup>61</sup> Quoted in Nott, *Reframing War*, vol.1, 72.
- <sup>62</sup> Butler, *Autobiography*, 235-36. See Nott, *Reframing War*, 71-73.
- <sup>63</sup> Meynell, 'Henri Regnault', 73.
- <sup>64</sup> Michel Pastoureau, *Red: The History of a Color*, trans. Jody Gladding. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2017.
- <sup>65</sup> Alice Meynell, 'The Colour of Life', *Alice Meynell: Poetry and Prose*, with an Introduction by V. Sackville-West (London: Jonathan Cape, 1847): 219-222, at 219.
- <sup>66</sup> V. Sackville-West, 'Introduction', *Alice Meynell: Poetry and Prose*: 7-26, at 19.
- <sup>67</sup> Meynell, 'The Colour of Life', 220.
- <sup>68</sup> Talia Schaffer, *The Forgotten Female Aesthetes: Literary Culture in Late Victorian England* (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 2000), 176-79.
- <sup>69</sup> Alice Meynell, 'A Woman in Grey', *Alice Meynell: Poetry and Prose*: 208-12, at 211.
- <sup>70</sup> Arthur Duparc, *Correspondance d'Henri Regnault* (Paris: Charpentier, 1872), 18.
- <sup>71</sup> Meynell, 'Henri Regnault', 69.
- <sup>72</sup> Meynell, 'The Colour of Life', 221-22.
- <sup>73</sup> Meynell, 'The Colour of Life', 222.
- <sup>74</sup> [Alice Meynell], 'The Wares of Autolykus: The Colour of Life', *Pall Mall Gazette* (June 28, 1895), Issue 9441: 5.

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<sup>75</sup> Talia Schaffer, 'Writing a Public Self: Alice Meynell's "Unstable Equilibrium"', *Women's Experience of Modernity, 1875-1945*, ed. Leslie W. Lewis and Ann L. Ardis (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003): 13-30, at 17-18.

<sup>76</sup> Dorothy Nott speculates that the sisters may have discussed the issues raised by Meynell's essay. See Nott, *Reframing War*, vol. 1, 70.

<sup>77</sup> Michael Baxandall, *Words for Pictures: Seven Papers on Renaissance Art and Criticism* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 139-40.