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If You Build It, They Will Come: A Study of Imperial Design in Victorian Britain

Scarlett A. Jones
University of Southern Mississippi

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The University of Southern Mississippi

If You Build It, They Will Come:
A Study of Imperial Design in Victorian Britain

by

Scarlett Jones

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Approved by

Allison Abra
Professor of History

Phyllis Jestice, Chair
Department of History

David R. Davies, Dean
Honors College

Abstract

The Crystal Palace (1851) and Paddington Station (1854) utilized imperial design in their construction as a tool to infuse the British public with pride in the empire. This study considered how the buildings were discussed in the press and other descriptive materials, such as guidebooks and architectural critiques to provide a general perception of how imperial propaganda utilized descriptions of imperial design to garner support for the empire. The study concluded that the impact of imperial design as propaganda for the empire was influenced by the function of the buildings. Attitudes towards imperial design varied, hinting at a division in Victorian society on the issue of empire.

Key Terms: Imperial design
Imperial propaganda

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Introduction

Approaching Hyde Park in London on May 1, 1851, the crowd of people who visited the Crystal Palace on its opening day numbered in the thousands. Exclamations of wonder and delight resonated across the park as people caught their first glimpse of the majestic glass and steel building housing the Great Exhibition of 1851. The building was heralded as the beginning of a new type of architecture and was soon emulated in designs for other structures, such as Paddington Station, a train station in central London. Both of these buildings embodied Britain's empire in the use of imperial design, which for the purpose of this study is defined as any architectural style or element that contained colonial influences on either the façade or in the interior of a building. The function of an imperial pavilion is significantly different than that of a train station, however. How did the function of a building transform its utility as a means of promoting enthusiasm for the empire?

In this study, the Crystal Palace (1851) and Paddington Station (1854) are examined for the use of imperial design in their construction as a tool to infuse the British public with pride in the empire. These two buildings were chosen for study because of their use of like materials, specifically glass and iron, in their construction and because they shared many of the same architects and designers. Though the two buildings are similar in these ways, their function will also be examined for its influence on people's perceptions of imperial design. Both of these buildings were located in London, making them even more potentially influential since London was the center of imperial power during this era. From London, the British government ran its vast empire and imperial issues affected this city greatly. The British Empire was at its greatest power and extended across the globe during the nineteenth century, which is why buildings from this

time period, specifically the Victorian Era from 1837 – 1901, were selected for this study. The goal of this thesis is to examine how the assimilation of design elements found in the empire's Middle Eastern and Asian colonies helped to communicate positive perceptions of the empire to the public.

The focus of this study is on public buildings rather than private ones because private buildings were usually constructed to please the owner. Public buildings were built to appeal to the masses, and provide further insight into the role of imperial design within Victorian Britain. Since public buildings were supposed to be pleasing to society in general, the utilization of imperial design in the Crystal Palace and Paddington Station emphasizes the role empire played in the aesthetics of the Victorian period. The buildings themselves were proof that Britain's empire had important cultural effects back in the metropole at the height of British imperialism, that were visible on the nation's very urban landscape.

Both the outer and inner façades of the Crystal Palace and Paddington Station were examined for imperial design. The buildings were evaluated on a set of criteria. The first criterion was function, defined as the purpose the buildings served at the time of their opening. The next measure of analysis was location, to help explain where each building stood and why it stood there. Scale was also analyzed for how the size and scale of a building determined its relationship to users. The next criterion was space, to gain a sense of how people moved through the building in order to perform a specific function. Style was considered for the message a building sent through its appearance. The history of each building was examined in order to understand who designed the buildings and why they created them to appear as they did. These findings will allow readers to gain a

sense of each building's overall appearance and its imperial design, as well as how the buildings fit into the wider imperial culture of Victorian Britain.

Furthermore, this study considered how the buildings were discussed in the media and other descriptive materials. I examined newspaper editorials from *The Times*, which was chosen for its role as a prominent newspaper of the day, as well as guidebooks for the Crystal Palace. These sources were chosen because they will provide a general perception of how imperial propaganda, defined as the promotion of empire through the use of various media and materials, utilized descriptions of imperial design to garner support for the empire.

Other important sources for this study included John Ruskin's *The Opening of the Crystal Palace* and *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, while other materials were drawn from the specific builders of each building. John Ruskin's critiques of imperial design are an important aspect of this study as they hint at controversy within society about the empire. Ruskin was a well-known critic of the Victorian era. As a member of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, a group of artists, writers, and critics who valued traditional forms of art,¹ he argued that imperial design in the Crystal Palace and Paddington Station was too modern. Ruskin's critique of these buildings suggests Victorian concerns about industrialization and imperialism.

In conducting this research, I was guided by three main questions. What type of language is used by imperial propaganda to describe buildings featuring imperial design? Does the language used to describe buildings featuring imperial design change due to the function of the building and how does this tie in with imperial culture? What does the

¹ Timothy Hilton, *John Ruskin: The Later Years*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 156.

language used to describe buildings featuring imperial design in general reveal about Victorian society and its relationship with the British Empire?

The ultimate goal of this research is to prove that the impact of imperial design as propaganda for the empire was influenced by the function of the buildings. The Crystal Palace, an overtly imperial building, played a great role in imperial propaganda as its imperial design was overwhelmingly discussed in the newspapers and guidebooks of the day. Paddington Station's imperial design received less coverage as it served an everyday function. Even though Paddington Station was less obviously connected to the empire, the use of imperial design alone was still a form of imperial propaganda that people experienced every day, just less consciously. Attitudes towards imperial design varied, suggesting a division in Victorian society on the issue of empire. While most people reacted positively to the use of imperial design, others resisted its employment as a mode for increasing positive attitudes towards the empire. The critiques of the Crystal Palace and Paddington Station's utilization of imperial design imply fears about the future of Britain and its relationship with the empire.

Review of Literature

Historians have considered the British Empire in many different ways. The following literature presents historians' understanding of the complexities of imperialism and provides context to the argument of this thesis. The role of imperial design is also addressed in order to provide a background on its history and place in imperial Great Britain.

Imperial Theory

In the 1800s, the British Empire and its spheres of influence, areas not formally colonized but under Britain's direction, expanded rapidly. Technology and communications were steadily improving and trade was more easily conducted. Scholarly interests in archaeology and antiques also escalated. The growth of the empire increased the military demand for soldiers to serve in the Asian colonies, such as India, Malaysia, and Hong Kong. As a result, more Britons traveled to the Asian continent and brought their experiences and perceptions back to England. They wrote travel narratives and published periodicals about their encounters with colonial culture.² A great number of commodities and food from the empire were advertised daily, and these advertisements carried powerful messages and images of life in the colonies. The exposure of the general population to the empire through media led to the creation of widely accepted notions of the orient and the oriental people.

Who exactly is included in the term "oriental?" The British used the word to refer not only to the people of Eastern Asia but to Egyptians, Arabs, Turks, and Indians, as

² Barbara Bush, *Imperialism and Post-Colonialism* (New York: Pearson Education Limited, 2006), 84.

well.³ Britons viewed these various Asian peoples and their cultures through the same lens that they viewed all outsiders – foreign and other. Because Orientals lived pastoral lifestyles and possessed fine goods often associated with leisure, the people and culture of the East were exotic compared to the European way of life.⁴ Edward Said was the first to support this idea and develops it further in his book, *Orientalism*. He proposes that to Europeans, the Orient was a mysterious “other” because of the different climates, occupations, and religions there, and Europeans believed the Orient needed to be explored and examined.⁵ This notion is further developed by Said into an important theory concerning empire.

Published in 1978, Edward Said’s *Orientalism* examines the relationship between empires and perceptions of the East. He proposes the theory of orientalism and offers several definitions. For the purpose of this thesis, only the one that applies most to the study has been selected. According to Said, orientalism is “... a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.”⁶ In this theory, Europeans concluded Asians were their “oldest cultural contestants” and resorted to imperialism to reduce the threat to their power and exploit Eastern resources.⁷ Orientalism was a method preventing similarities between cultures. It created the notion of the inferiority of Asia’s people in comparison to Europeans. Stereotypes arose among the British and were perpetuated through imperial ambitions. Orientals even began to define themselves according to these stereotypes. Eventually, art and architecture in

³ John Sweetman, *The Oriental Obsession: Islamic Inspiration in British and American Art and Architecture 1500 – 1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 1.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁵ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 2.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.

Great Britain reflected these European representations of the Middle and Far East. Said's theory raises the question of why Eastern designs were used in British imperial design if they were considered inferior. Another historian's explanation for this occurrence is offered later in the literature review.

Orientalism allowed for British control over the conceptions of art and architecture within its Asian colonies, as well. Thomas R. Metcalf argues that the British assimilated Indian architectural elements into European concepts of design in Britain's Indian colony. He states, "The buildings the British built in India tell us much about how the British shaped India's conception of the past, and how they turned India's architectural heritage to the service of the Raj."⁸ This quote reinforces the idea that orientalism represented in the architecture of structures built by the British even effected how the people of the East saw themselves. For example, a clock tower at Mayo College in India is built in the Indo-Saracenic style, but reflects "British concern for time and punctuality."⁹ This structure is a display of imperial prominence which blends the interests of the empire and its colony.

John M. MacKenzie proposed another imperial theory which argued that the rise of nationalism as a political movement influenced Britons' view of the empire. Nationalism bled into social life and united citizens, even those separated by class, against foreigners. This patriotism contributed to the notion among the populace that the British race was superior to others and therefore was destined to rule a great empire. Entertainment began to reflect the need for nationalist leisure activities, such as music

⁸ Thomas R. Metcalf, "A Tradition Created: Indo-Saracenic Architecture under the Raj." *History Today* 32, no. 9 (September 1982): 40.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 41.

halls where patriotic anthems were performed.¹⁰ Yet many of the buildings designed to house these new forms of nationalist entertainment used imperial design, such as one of the buildings on which this study focuses, the Crystal Palace. The fact that imperial design was used in nationalist aims suggests that Britons were proud of their empire but also reinforced them by adopting these colonial elements as their own.

By the 1990s, new views on orientalism and the intentions of the British concerning the use of imperial design in England emerged for further study. John M. MacKenzie further examines imperialism and the theory of orientalism proposed by Said in *Orientalism: History, Theory, and the Arts*. According to MacKenzie, orientalism describes paintings, furniture, architecture, textiles, and ceramics that reflect Europeans perceptions of Eastern cultures. MacKenzie disagrees with Said's analysis of orientalism, however. If one only considers Western dominance as the force behind orientalism, the interpretation of European art and architecture is limited.¹¹ Instead, MacKenzie proposes that orientalism during the Victorian era represented admiration for what was imagined to be a more peaceful, idyllic culture. Britain in this period was highly industrial and suffered from several social problems, such as high crime rates, poverty, pollution, and crowded urban centers. The fascination with depicting and recreating Eastern culture in Britain stemmed from the dissatisfaction people experienced at home.¹² The inclusion of imperial design elements revealed a distaste for machine produced wares of the industrial age. Because oriental embellishments were exotic, handcrafted, and luxurious, they were

¹⁰ John M. MacKenzie, ed. *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986), 4.

¹¹ John M. MacKenzie, *Orientalism: History, Theory, and the Arts* (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1995), xiii.

¹² *Ibid.*, 14.

the opposite of the goods produced by Britain's factories.¹³ MacKenzie's theory supports this thesis as it explains the use of imperial design in industrial structures, like the Crystal Palace and Paddington Station, as a means of making the appearance of the buildings more pleasing through establishing connections to the East.

This view of Orientalism allows for a different explanation for the assimilation of Eastern designs within British architecture. While Said is correct in stating that the British believed the people of the Orient to be inferior, in need of Western modernization, and socially backwards, MacKenzie proposes that the British also associated the Orient with a more relaxed, peaceful lifestyle. Many of the buildings, therefore, utilizing the various forms of Asian architecture were associated with leisure and entertainment.¹⁴ The style of design was in fact directly tied to the building's function. For example, a bathhouse was built in the Turkish style as the two were associated in the public's idea of the East.¹⁵ Likewise the two buildings of this study, the Crystal Palace and Paddington Station, employed imperial design to make them more palatable to the masses as they were built as representations of the modern and technologically advanced industrial age.

The Crystal Palace, a museum for entertainment, utilized Asian design influences in juxtaposition with its modern glass and steel frame to make the atmosphere less austere and more pleasant. Paddington Station, however, was not a building associated with entertainment. It instead served the everyday function of transporting goods and people into the city. The station also used imperial design elements, though, as it sported Asian ornament to offset the large amounts of glass and steel in its structure in order to beautify a building with an everyday function. This study complicates MacKenzie's arguments as

¹³ Ibid., 72.

¹⁴ Ibid., 72.

¹⁵ Ibid., 83.

it proves that imperial design extended beyond entertainment venues into the sphere of buildings with practical functions.

MacKenzie further argues that private homes that displayed Eastern design do not “represent the inner and outer worlds of metropolis and empire.”¹⁶ Instead, he emphasizes that the relationship between the mother country and its colonies was not found in a private citizen’s home. While private homes might have displayed the desire for the essence of an Eastern lifestyle, individuals designed their homes based on their own likes and dislikes. Public buildings were designed to attract the people of the nation, and therefore better represent the general attitude towards Britain’s empire.¹⁷ MacKenzie notes that piers, railway stations, theaters, and cinemas all contained oriental design elements.¹⁸ These were the main hubs of leisure, but it could be argued that these were also prominent features of Britain’s imperial power because they allow for the connection of people and ideas.

More recent literature has focused on the self-representation of imperial powers in their own cultures. Scholars Barbara Bush and Andrew Thompson emphasize the importance of visual depictions of empire in reaching the masses. Entertainment often supplied the ideal venues to feature the glories of imperialism. Great Britain’s museum age began in 1840, and Bush notes that the idea of empire was often a source of fascination among museum visitors, who wanted to experience the colonies of their imagination.¹⁹ Thompson also illustrates the role of colonial exhibitions in garnering support for the empire. Visitors often left these physical displays of imperial glory with a

¹⁶ Ibid., 77.

¹⁷ Ibid., 77.

¹⁸ Ibid., 93.

¹⁹ Barbara Bush, *Imperialism and Post-Colonialism*, 169.

renewed sense of purpose and pride in the British Empire.²⁰ While neither scholar specifically mentions architecture when they describe the visual impact of imperialism, this thesis will show that it too played a part in the self-representation of empire.

Architecture Styles and Terms

In order to better understand imperial theories and explore the Crystal Palace and Paddington Station's elements of imperial design, the various styles of architecture in the East and in Britain were examined. A mix of Eastern and British design characterized the architecture of the Crystal Palace and Paddington Station. Familiarity with the different architectural elements, therefore, enables recognition of imperial design and provides context for its use in the two buildings of this study.

The Victorian era saw the rebirth of Gothic architecture in England. Gothic buildings possessed asymmetrical designs and façades that appeared archaic.²¹ These elements evoked memories of England's great history and many people identified with this aspect of Gothic architecture. Gothic revival in turn became very popular during the 1800s. Roger Dixon and Stefan Muthesius discuss the importance of neo-Gothic in the Victorian era. They describe Gothic as the "national style" amongst the British people who believed it had originated in England even though it developed in France.²² The Houses of Parliament, completed in 1835, were even rebuilt in the Gothic style.²³ The Gothic style perfectly incorporated Eastern design as it, too, contained ornate and complex ornamentation. For instance, the arched windows of the Middle East suited the design of Gothic buildings.

²⁰ Andrew Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back: The Impact of Imperialism on Britain from the Mid-nineteenth Century* (New York: Pearson Education Limited, 2005), 84.

²¹ Roger Dixon and Stefan Muthesius, *Victorian Architecture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 21.

²² *Ibid.*, 22.

²³ *Ibid.*, 58.

Chinoiserie was also an important style implemented by the British in the design of their buildings, usually in decorative elements of the interiors. According to Sweetman, chinoiserie did not refer to Eastern art transported to Europe. Chinoiserie, instead, described replications of Eastern ornamental style, mainly that of China but not exclusively. These replications were actually representative of how Europeans perceived the various Asian cultures.²⁴ Chinoiserie became popular with Victorians because architects of the time admired the asymmetrical style that easily fit into the popular Gothic architecture.

Middle Eastern or Islamic features in architecture were usually geometric. Sharp angles form crisscrossing lines that draw the eye to the center as well as the outer edges of a shape.²⁵ However, one popular form of decorative design in architecture contained fluid curvatures. Most commonly the design illustrated swirling vines with the occasional leaf or flower. This style is known as arabesque and usually resembles an intricate pattern of lattice.²⁶ It is Middle Eastern in origin and was first adopted into European design during the sixteenth century. It reappeared in the nineteenth century in Victorian architecture.²⁷ Arabesque appealed to Victorians because patrons of traditional design favored its “disciplined intricacy” while unconventional artisans and architects admired its “effortless freedom of movement.”²⁸ This style appeared during the Victorian Era as architects tried to imitate designs from the colonies that were more dynamic and colorful. The Islamic architectural elements were colorful and brought patterns of shapes into the forefront of design. Compared with the classical tradition, Middle Eastern architecture

²⁴ Sweetman, *The Oriental Obsession*, 2.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 21.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 16.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 6.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 22.

presented exciting methods of utilizing space through design.²⁹ This style of design and the following were the most prominent in the two buildings examined in this study.

Indian architecture was known as Mughal. For the purpose of this study, this style will be referred to as Indo-Saracenic, which was a creation of the British. Indo-Saracenic combined Mughal and Gothic, and formed an extremely ornate form of architecture. Domes, spires, arches, and intricate stonework are characteristics of this style.³⁰

History of Colonial Architectural Design in Europe

The history of imperial design and how it arrived in Europe is important to understanding its cultural role. Eastern design was not brought to England for exclusive use in architecture. Instead, the design was brought to the British Isles by oriental carpets. The first record of these carpets appears in 1518 when England became interested in increasing its empire in order to trade more with Asia. Henry VIII eventually owned over four hundred carpets of “Turkey making.”³¹ These carpets are even documented in portraits of the Tudor era as prominent figures stand on them while posing. These portraits were symbols of imperial power as they illustrate the English standing on the products of empire. Owners of oriental carpets hung them on walls and draped them across furniture, as well. These actions indicate the interest of using these patterns as design elements in architecture.³²

Middle Eastern design in particular journeyed to England during this period as more trade routes were established with North Africa and Asia. Islamic cultures often created designs for book bindings, and as the world became more interconnected, this

²⁹ Ibid., 21.

³⁰ Metcalf, “A Tradition Created,” 41.

³¹ Sweetman, *The Oriental Obsession*, 11.

³² Metcalf, “A Tradition Created,” 13.

craft was taken by visitors to the Arab world back to Europe. The covers of books printed in Venice displayed arabesque patterns and these designs slowly traveled across Europe. Their popularity in England arose during the Tudor era, as well. For instance, records state Thomas Wotton purchased a Koran with an intricate arabesque binding in around 1551 or 1552.³³ The first instance of oriental architectural elements being used in European architecture also occurred around this time with the construction of buildings and settings for plays about Eastern people.³⁴

By the 1800s, imperial design elements were found in both public buildings and private homes. These architectural styles were appealing because of their different use of materials and textures compared to the classical style. Sweetman echoes the notion of Orientalism proposed by Said when describing the Royal Pavilion located in Brighton, England. The structure's exterior is modeled after the Indo-Saracenic style, while the interior is a collection of rooms dedicated to chinoiserie. The pavilion, completed in 1808, was built as a private winter residence for King George IV, but the building also held a place in the public sphere as it was a symbol of the British Empire. The extravagantly large building represented King George IV's imperial power and the prominence of Great Britain in the colonial world.³⁵ The East was the ultimate antithesis to England during the Victorian Era; America was too similar to England's own culture and the people and culture of Africa were considered too inferior. The Orient developed a more equal relationship with England as its culture remained mysterious but refined in comparison. As the figurehead of the empire, King George IV created a building that represented not only his power in the East but his connection to the exotic culture, as

³³ Sweetman, *The Oriental Obsession*, 22.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 24.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 106.

well.³⁶ The pavilion was a display of imperial prominence which attributed Eastern design elements to the glory of Britain's empire for any who saw or visited the building.

Private residences across Britain in the Victorian era instituted elements of imperial design that eventually spread into public buildings. England's empire contributed to its increase in wealth and prosperity. As the English people became wealthier, they began to use their new leisure time to pursue pleasure activities. Popular interest in horticulture allowed for gardening to grow as a hobby. Exotic plants were collected, but greenhouses were needed to maintain them. A great deal of these plants came from the East as it was popular for Victorians to bring them back from visits to the colonies. As most of the plants were of Asian origin, it seemed fitting that Asian styles be used in these structures. Also, Eastern architecture allowed for an abundance of light with a basic frame for each building. Many private greenhouses, therefore, reflected Asian imperial designs as they were considered best for the purpose of growing plants.³⁷ This fact is important in the following study as the two buildings' designs were influenced by the structure of greenhouses, mostly being constructed out of glass and metal.

Private homes also incorporated imperial design elements with the development of social roles. Both Sweetman and MacKenzie agree that gender roles influenced the designs of certain rooms. For instance, smoking was a manly pursuit so the smoking room was often designed in an Islamic style, which was perceived to be masculine.³⁸ Eastern culture was often associated in England with smoking dens. Drawing rooms were the domain of women and were constructed with the more feminine Chinese designs.³⁹

³⁶ Ibid., 107.

³⁷ Ibid, 108.

³⁸ Ibid, 189.

³⁹ MacKenzie, *Orientalism*, 84.

The Chinese styles were viewed as effeminate because of the use of light color and delicate structures.

Public buildings in the Victorian Era often displayed Asian design elements, as well. The Imperial Institute, a popular museum of international exhibitions, exemplified how the Victorians united design elements with imperial conceptions. The Imperial Institute represented its colonial history through architectural elements drawn from British colonies. Design elements included "...Hopton wood, Portland stone, Indian teak, Irish and other colonial marbles, arabesque work, mosaic floors, bronze balusters, wrought-iron grilles, and Derbyshire fossils."⁴⁰ The institute was a collage of Colonial holdings merged with British elements to celebrate Great Britain's imperial power. Like the Imperial Institute, the Crystal Palace was created to honor Britain's imperial holdings, which is reflected in its design. It was an era of museums and exhibitions that began to focus on the world at large and Britain's role in the world particularly.

Summary

There is a limited amount of literature available that examines imperial culture, which prohibits the understanding of the importance of imperial design during the Victorian era. This study helps fill the gap in literature on the British Empire by explaining that the impact of imperial design in buildings directly correlated to the function of the building. If a building was explicitly connected to the empire, imperial design received more attention. For instance, the Crystal Palace, a building designed to house an exhibition of the empire, contained a great amount of imperial design for different displays and was heralded as an imperial building. A building not directly

⁴⁰ Mark Crinson, "Imperial story-lands: Architecture and display at the Imperial and Commonwealth Institutes." *Art History* 22, no. 1 (March 1999): 107.

connected with the empire such as Paddington Station received less attention for its use of imperial design.

Chapter Two

The Crystal Palace

The Crystal Palace's façade provided little evidence for imperial design as there were no hints of arabesque or Indo-Saracenic designs in the sheets of glass that covered the structure of the building. The palace, however, epitomized the essence of imperial design not only in the construction of the interior displays but in its purpose. The Crystal Palace was built to house The Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations of 1851. The use of imperial design contributed to the Exhibition's purpose as imperial propaganda. The history of its creation is unique and helps to explain the importance of imperial design utilized in the building.

The Great Exhibition of 1851 was the brainchild of Prince Albert, the husband of Queen Victoria, and was meant to showcase Britain's place in the world and garner support for the empire. British technological advances were on display alongside those of other nations, and displays specifically on Britain's colonies and countries within its influence were featured as well. These colonial displays, meant to be instructive, utilized imperial design, and the whole Exhibition was based on educating the masses about the world in which they lived. One guidebook even stated the purpose of the exhibitions as "to blend for them [the visitors] instruction with pleasure, to educate them by the eye, to quicken and purify their taste by the habit of recognising the beautiful."⁴¹ The employment of imperial design in the palace helped to achieve these aims and rallied people around the ideals of imperialism.

The building originally planned to house the Great Exhibition was designed by The Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851; more specifically the plan was

⁴¹ Samuel Phillips, *Guide To the Crystal Palace and Park* (London: Bradbury and Evans, 1854), 13.

created by Isambard Kingdom Brunel, the future architect of Paddington Station, the second building of this study. It featured a large brick building with a huge iron and glass dome in the center. The plan was never officially adopted as the commission was hesitant to build an expensive brick structure that would have to be destroyed after the temporary Exhibition was over. Joseph Paxton submitted the design for the Exhibition building that was eventually selected. Paxton was renowned for his creation of glass greenhouses for private estates, and his special technique known as the ridge and furrow system allowed for the creation of large glass structures.⁴² Paxton's career exemplified the early Victorian interest in horticulture and the fascination with exotic Asian plants, such as orchids.

The design he submitted to the commission for the Great Exhibition was based on his previous work with greenhouses; it featured a large building constructed out of glass panes, iron girders, and wood braces. The simplistic design allowed for the use of iron and steel as building materials, which had become cheaper and more available since the Industrial Revolution.⁴³ All the parts used in construction could be pre-fabricated and mass assembled, which in itself was a testament to the advances in British technology. This building was dubbed the Crystal Palace by *Punch*, a popular satiric magazine of the day, because of its glass façade.⁴⁴ The completed palace can be seen in Figure 1.

⁴² Kenneth Powell, ed., *The Great Builders* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2011), 66.

⁴³ Dixon and Muthesius, *Victorian Architecture*, 94.

⁴⁴ Powell, *The Great Builders*, 90.

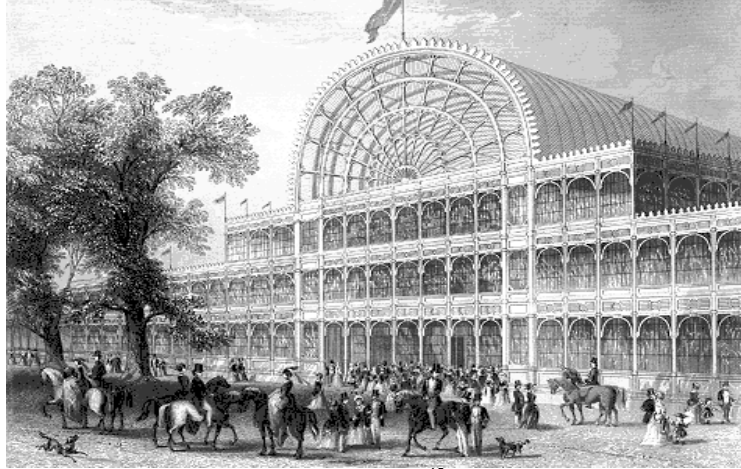


Figure 1: Entrance to the Crystal Palace⁴⁵

Because the Great Exhibition was so extensive, the Crystal Palace needed to be incredibly large. The Royal Commission selected Hyde Park for the construction of the Exhibition as it was a large area of open space that was ideal for location. Space was needed as the building was located across fifteen acres of land. The scale of the building was quite grand, as well. It was one thousand eight hundred and forty-eight feet in length and four hundred and eight feet wide. The palace had three stories and measured at sixty-six feet high. The large scale of the building was able to house over one hundred thousand exhibitions for its visitors to see.⁴⁶ The interior of the building was broken into smaller spaces by each exhibit's own architecture or movable hangings. To help design the interior of the building, architects Owen Jones and Matthew Digby Wyatt were brought in by Paxton. Owen Jones, who studied Eastern architecture, used primary colors to paint the interior of the palace, and these colors lent the building a sense of the foreign, as most buildings in Britain featured the natural colors of the type of stone used to build

⁴⁵ "Entrance to the Crystal Palace," Drawing, ca. 1852, *Wikipedia.com*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Crystal_Palace.PNG.

⁴⁶ Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back*, 84.

them.⁴⁷ These two men were primarily in charge of designing the Fine Arts Courts, as well, where the recreation of foreign lands allowed the liberal use of imperial design. In regards to space, the building had a central transept with displays on each side. People were able to move through the different rooms of the exhibits and then reconnected with the main transept to enter a new exhibit.⁴⁸

In the course of the Exhibition, over six million people visited the Crystal Palace at its location in Hyde Park. The Great Exhibition was so popular that after the initial Exhibition was over, the Crystal Palace was moved from its temporary position and permanently rebuilt at Sydenham, London in 1854. It continued to offer its original displays with occasional new exhibitions until the building burned down in 1936. The Crystal Palace, meant to be a temporary edifice, had a long legacy illustrated by its being used continuously for eighty-five years.

As stated previously, the Crystal Palace was built to house the Great Exhibition of 1851, including displays on various nations and cultures. Historians today regard the Exhibition as a way to associate empire and modernity for the public.⁴⁹ Scholar Andrew Thompson states that “imperial propaganda” was used in exhibitions “to instill a sense of imperial purpose” in British society.⁵⁰ This message was especially meant for the middle and working classes, who could now afford this type of leisure activity by the 1850s. Even if people could not attend the Exhibition, the guidebooks created for the displays could be bought and used to experience the exhibits at home. Historian Barbara Bush suggests that the purpose behind imperial leisure activities was that the working class

⁴⁷ Sweetman, *The Oriental Obsession*, 126.

⁴⁸ Samuel Phillips, *Guide To the Crystal Palace*, 13.

⁴⁹ Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back*, 84.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 38.

would be seduced by the “spectacle” and realize the value of the empire.⁵¹ This “imperial propaganda” was meant to “neutralize class struggle” and create “national and racial solidarity.”⁵² The Crystal Palace’s purpose overall emphasized the grand advancement of Britain’s society by accommodating the Great Exhibition. Because the building was created for an exhibition and held displays permanently until its destruction, the type of building is classified as museum for the purpose of this study.

The language used by the press and guidebooks to describe the Crystal Palace and its interior displays illustrates the roles of imperial design in reinforcing positive perceptions of the empire. A London based newspaper, *The Times*, covered the opening of the Crystal Palace extensively. In an effort to describe the imperial design of the building, the newspaper writes that “written words are powerless and weak in that great muster of worldly magnificence.”⁵³ The language here suggests that the reporter was astounded by the palace. The paper continues, “...the eye rested with delight upon that charming variety of colors and those harmonious proportions which give to this palace of industry so remarkable and fairylike a character.”⁵⁴ Owen Jones’ use of primary color for the colonial exhibits and the imperial design most likened the palace to a mythical structure that people would want to see and experience for themselves. *The Times* circulated widely and had the ability to influence people’s perceptions of the palace positively with its descriptions. From the newspaper’s stance, the imperial design of the palace was a sign of the magnificence of the empire, and it distributed this notion to a broad circulation of people as imperial propaganda.

⁵¹ Bush, *Imperialism and Postcolonialism*, 154.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 154.

⁵³ “The Great Exhibition,” *Times* (London, England), May 1, 1851.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

Another mode for examining the role of imperial design is through the guidebooks that circulated at the time. Specifically, the language used by these guidebooks to describe the edifices of foreign lands lends insight into how imperial design was used to raise excitement for the empire among the British population. Samuel Phillips's *Guide to the Crystal Palace and Park* used very positive imagery and phrases to express admiration for imperial design; in fact, Phillip's guide is a great example of imperial propaganda. For instance, he notes that Queen Victoria's apartment in the Crystal Palace, where she received important guests, was decorated with arabesque patterns and ornaments.⁵⁵ Phillips related the use of imperial design proudly in relation to his monarch, which acknowledged her as the leader of the empire. He reinforced this assertion when he wrote, "...her Majesty gives the best proof of the interest she takes in an institution which...has for its chief object the advancement of civilization and the welfare of her subjects."⁵⁶ The institution to which he refers is the Crystal Palace, and he assumed the civilizing mission of the Exhibition coincided not only with the "welfare" of the Queen's English citizens but her colonial ones as well.

The variety of language used by Phillips to describe the Crystal Palace reinforces the use of imperial design to draw positive attention to the British Empire. One interesting aspect, for instance, is that Phillips invented the term "English Modern" to describe the Crystal Palace's overall architectural design.⁵⁷ This is an imperial claim, as the building was influenced by conservatories, and greenhouses were based on Asian designs that existed long before Britons brought these designs home and thought to use glass and iron in the construction. With this assertion, he appropriated Eastern

⁵⁵ Phillips, *Guide to the Crystal Palace*, 21.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 24.

architectural elements as British. His statement combined with the declaration that the Crystal Palace was home to “one of the greatest national displays that England ever attempted,”⁵⁸ illustrates that Britain assumed the identities of its colonies under its own by ignoring the role each colony played in the Exhibition. He further asserts that “All the component parts of the Exhibition blend, yet all are distinct...” which makes this “effect,” as he describes it, “harmonious” and “admirable.”⁵⁹ The fusion of the colonies with Britain helped to create a coherent system of empire for visitors to observe.⁶⁰ With this guidebook and newspaper articles on the Crystal Palace circulating among the populace of Britain, the people were inundated with imagery focusing on imperial design.

The descriptions of the various foreign displays offered by Phillips best illustrate the use of imperial design within the palace and its positive depictions emphasized the glory of the empire. The Egyptian Court was designed by Owen Jones and Matthew Digby Wyatt to look like one was entering an ancient temple. Phillips remarks on the arabesque ornament in the exhibit and describes the columns featuring lotus patterns as “beautiful.”⁶¹ His admiration also extended to a peculiar feature of the temple. He notes with pride that Queen Victoria and Prince Albert’s names are “engraved in hieroglyphic characters” on the Egyptian temple.⁶² That the British monarchs’ names were placed on an Egyptian temple illustrates the sense of imperial importance that imperial design was supposed to convey to the masses.

Descriptions of the Alhambra Court in the guidebook also demonstrate how imperial design was applied in the Crystal Palace to appeal to the crowds looking for

⁵⁸ Ibid., 24.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 25.

⁶⁰ Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back*, 84.

⁶¹ Phillips, *Guide to the Crystal Palace*, 44.

⁶² Ibid., 40.

exotic foreign lands. Now, one might wonder why the Alhambra Court would be included in this study of imperial design as it was a palace built by the Moors in Spain, and Britain never colonized the Spanish. It is integral to this research however, as the architecture of the Alhambra is the arabesque of the Middle East and Northern Africa and this study is focusing on Eastern imperial design. The Alhambra Court and its foreign design especially received the highest praise from Phillips. For instance, the guidebook begins with the display introduced as “the gorgeous magnificence of the Alhambra Court.”⁶³ Phillips continues to exalt the imperial design with various descriptions of this “brilliant court.”⁶⁴ He admiringly states that the “highly ornamental surfaces attract and ravish the vision.”⁶⁵ Phillips even appreciates the Middle Eastern influences such as “the exquisitely wrought tracery” and acknowledges that it is “sufficient exclusively to arrest and enchain the attention.”⁶⁶ Phillips’ pleasant portrayal and enthusiasm for the Alhambra Court helps demonstrate the deliberate utilization and descriptions of imperial design in distributing imperial imagery to the populace in order to fill them with pride that their empire contained such beautiful architecture.

The next exhibit that featured imperial design was the Assyrian or Nineveh Court, which was the largest display of imperial design with a length of one hundred and twenty feet and a width of fifty feet.⁶⁷ For this court, the designers of the Crystal Palace utilized ancient architectural features from the Middle East as well. Walls constructed out of brick and “ornamented with paintings” ensconced visitors in the recreation of foreign design.⁶⁸

⁶³ Ibid., 57.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 60.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 58.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 60.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 62.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 63.

Phillips describes this court in his guidebook with flattering language and admiration. He notes that “the bold ornaments, the gigantic bulls, and colossal features, present as novel and striking an architectural and decorative display as the mind can imagine.”⁶⁹ His awe-inspired writings on imperial design were intended to inspire enthusiasm for imperial imagery in the people reading his guidebook, whether at home or while touring the Crystal Palace.

Another guidebook that circulated admiring descriptions of imperial design in order to call positive attention to the empire was *The Crystal Palace Penny Guide*. It was the official guidebook of The Great Exhibition in 1863. The guide describes the imperial design of the Egyptian Court as “wonderful architecture.”⁷⁰ The writer admired the columns of the court for their detailed designs and praises their beauty. In the section for the Alhambra Court, the phrase “a most charming specimen of the architecture and the ornament of the followers of Mahomet” was used to describe the exhibit. In fact, this court once again was described with the most glowing flattery when compared to the other exhibits. For example, the guide states, “The design of this hall is one of the most beautiful things in art.”⁷¹ With this assertion, the guidebook influences readers and visitors to the palace to appreciate the imperial design of the court. Both of the guidebooks to the Crystal Palace serve as examples of imperial propaganda for their overwhelming admiration and praise of imperial design.

While there was significant appreciation – as expressed by the media and guidebooks – of the imperial design prominent throughout the Crystal Palace, it is important to note, however, that there were voices of discontent among people who felt

⁶⁹ Ibid., 65.

⁷⁰ *The Crystal Palace Penny Guide* (London: Crystal Palace Co., 1863), 5.

⁷¹ Ibid., 9.

this type of design was out of place. John Ruskin, a well-known architect and member of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, wrote a critique of the Crystal Palace in 1854 titled *The Opening of the Crystal Palace: Considered in Some of its Relations to the Prospects of Art* that illustrates a dislike of imperial design and resistance to imperial propaganda. Throughout this treatise, Ruskin argues against the ingenuity of the architecture, which he acknowledges as the “popular view” of the palace.⁷² Instead, he asserts that a building of iron and glass is a “magnified conservatory” and not a true form of art.⁷³ Ruskin disapproved of the modernization of design, and referred to the Palace as a “crystal humbug.”⁷⁴ He frequently expresses shock that the Palace is much admired by his fellow countrymen as to him it does not represent the true nature of British nationalism.

That the interior of the Palace utilized imperial design failed to impress Ruskin, as well. He objected to the recreation of foreign design because imitation has no artistic value in his view. The Crystal Palace, meant to be a national museum, should have represented traditional British forms of architecture instead of using imperial design as a ploy of imperial propaganda. Ruskin disliked the modern style of building enabled by mass production of materials, but he also did not appreciate the inner splendor of the building achieved through the utilization of imperial design. Ruskin later wrote against the use of curtains in buildings, which the Crystal Palace used to denote different displays. In fact, the India exhibit featured a great deal of exotic fabrics, such as rugs, tapestries, and silk, in the place of walls for the exhibit.⁷⁵ According to Ruskin, “Drapery

⁷² John Ruskin, *The Opening of the Crystal Palace: Considered in Some of its Relations to the Prospects of Art* (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1854), 5.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁷⁴ Powell, *The Great Builders*, 12.

⁷⁵ Sweetman, *The Oriental Obsession*, 173.

is always ignoble; it becomes a subject of interest only by the colors it bears...⁷⁶ The use of these materials in the Palace exemplified to him the disreputable style of imperial design. He equated patriotism with imperialism when he asserted that the patriotic population of the nation rejoicing in the Crystal Palace harbored a “patriotism which consists in insulting their fathers with forgetfulness.”⁷⁷ Ruskin disapproved of the Palace and its imperial design despite the media heralding the Palace as a notable display of imperial greatness.

Scholar John M. MacKenzie asserts that the inclusion of oriental architectural elements in imperial design helped the British distance themselves from the mechanical age they lived in and the modernization inherent with the future; yet, Ruskin objects to imperial design in the Palace that represented British industry not only in its exhibits but in its design of glass and steel, as well. The inclusion of Eastern design did not make the modern architecture less objectionable to Ruskin, and he instead criticized the use of imperial design in the national display. Instead of celebrating Britain’s industry and imperial power with the Crystal Palace, Ruskin preferred a traditional British-only oriented style of architecture.

In sum, the language used to describe the Crystal Palace’s imperial design suggests conflicts within Victorian society, especially concerning the empire. A large majority of reviews on the Palace praise imperial design as a show of Britain’s own supremacy and power in the world. The guidebooks and the press attributed the beauty of the Palace to progress in British manufacturing of iron and glass and the ability to draw on its colonial spheres for inspiration. However, the Crystal Palace in turn raised

⁷⁶John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, 2nd ed. (London: George Allen, 1855), Kindle edition, 20%.

⁷⁷Ruskin, *The Opening of the Crystal Palace*, 14.

objections for its use of contemporary materials and the national claiming of Eastern imperial design for its own. These different views on modernity and progress in imperial design suggest concerns that the empire might lead to the loss of the true, untainted British identity.

The Crystal Palace was created with the empire in mind as it was the focus of the Great Exhibition of 1851. Because the emphasis on empire was so embedded in the Palace, the language used to describe imperial design was meant to establish positive perceptions of the empire with the British people. What language was used by imperial propaganda to describe other buildings that utilized imperial design, but whose functions were radically different than a national museum and were less obviously connected to the empire? To answer this question, the second building of the study features Paddington Station, a railway terminal that served an everyday function but possessed several connections to the Crystal Palace.

Chapter Three

Paddington Station

Just north of Hyde Park in London today stands Paddington Station, currently one of the busiest train terminals in the city. Though the building has expanded, the original structure completed in 1854 is still the main arrival and departure site. The imperial design of the interior reflects Britain's past empire and the Victorians' fascination with Eastern design elements. Paddington Station shared a unique connection with the Crystal Palace, as they were built within a few years of each other and many of the same architects and designers worked on both buildings. The history of Paddington Station's creation illustrates an era of modernization and technological advancements, as well as a blending of Britain's empire with national pride.

The conception of Paddington Station followed the complex process of establishing a railroad from Bristol to London, two important port cities. In 1832, a group of merchants from Bristol decided to launch the rail line, and when they convinced a committee of men from London to join their venture, the Great Western Railway Company was born.⁷⁸ The board of directors hired the emerging engineer and architect Isambard Kingdom Brunel to plan the route and design the railway with its accompanying stations. Brunel proposed the route of the line and the location of the stations to parliament, and the plans were approved in 1835 when the Great Western Railway Act was passed.⁷⁹

The location of Paddington Station was shrewdly picked by Brunel. Because the railroad would connect two trade cities and the people of the countryside to London,

⁷⁸ Steven Brindle, *Paddington Station: Its History and Architecture* (Swindon, England: English Heritage, 2004), 1.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

Brunel picked a site that was conveniently centered to the city but was also connected to a canal for the transport of goods. The station is located next to the Paddington Basin at the Grand Junction Canal, which would easily allow for the shipping of goods from the station that the trains had carried into the city. The name of the station is the result of its location in the basin.⁸⁰ The cost of building the railroad and the first stations along the line was too expensive, so a temporary, open-air station was constructed at Paddington in 1838 until the company could afford to build a permanent one.⁸¹

In 1850, the Great Western Railway Company approved the construction of a permanent station as the temporary one could not handle the large amount of activity that passed through the station anymore. Brunel began designing the overall structure and was heavily influenced by Joseph Paxton's work on the Crystal Palace. After the opening of the Palace, Brunel admiringly stated that Paxton's building was "best adapted in every respect for the purpose for which it was intended."⁸² He determined to do the same with Paddington, designing a building which utilized the recent industrial materials of iron and glass because he thought they best suited a building meant to house trains. Brunel employed the same contractors – Fox, Henderson and Company – who built the Crystal Palace because he knew they could construct a beautiful building out of iron and glass.⁸³

After finishing his design, Brunel contacted architect Matthew Digby Wyatt whom he had met when working on the Crystal Palace and had admired for the splendor of the colonial exhibits for which Wyatt was responsible. Brunel proposed they work together to create a decorative interior of the building. In a letter written in January of

⁸⁰ Ibid., 16.

⁸¹ Ibid., 19.

⁸² R. Angus Buchanan, *Brunel: The Life and Times of Isambard Kingdom Brunel* (New York: Hambleton and London, 2002), 189.

⁸³ Brindle, *Paddington Station*, 37.

1851, Brunel specifies that the construction of the interior would be mostly metal and that he would need assistance with the “detail of ornamentation.”⁸⁴ Wyatt accepted Brunel’s offer and consulted Owen Jones, another designer of the imperial courts of the Crystal Palace, in the creation of decorative design elements.⁸⁵ Digby and Brunel were responsible for the imperial design that can be found in Paddington Station today. The arched trusses of the train shed are decorated with an arabesque pattern of leaves that can be seen in Figure 2 below. Another example of the imperial design Wyatt implemented is the filigree arabesque designs on the windows at the ends of the station seen in Figure 3.



Figure 2: Arched Trusses at Paddington⁸⁶



Figure 3: Wrought Iron Pattern Windows⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Ibid., 37.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 37.

⁸⁶ Sally O. Brien, “Arched Trusses At Paddington,” Photograph, 2009, *Flickr.com*, <http://www.flickr.com/photos/sally-o/3446224233/in/photostream>.

⁸⁷ Dennis Ogden, “Wrought Iron Pattern Windows,” Photograph, 2008, *Travellerspoint.com*, <http://www.travellerspoint.com/photos/stream/photoID/1487929/features/countries/United%20Kingdom/>.

The completed building had a brick façade with an iron and glass roof that spanned seven hundred feet in length and two hundred and forty feet in width.⁸⁸ Brunel had never constructed a glass and iron roof before, but he utilized the “Paxton Glazing” technique that had been used for the Crystal Palace.⁸⁹ The platforms of Paddington measured forty feet by twenty-five feet, and the height of the building was fifty-four feet.⁹⁰ It was the largest train shed yet to be built in the Victorian era. Like most train stations, it featured platforms for the arrival and departure of trains, reception and waiting areas for passengers, ticket and information offices, staff accommodations, and public restrooms. People were able to move easily through these spaces in order to board trains and to do their jobs.

The official opening of the Paddington Station was May 29, 1854 when the first train arrived at the new building. Despite the strong imperial design elements in the station’s architecture, this received little attention in the press. Only one mention of the station’s architecture was found in *The Times*. On May 31, 1854 the Great Western Railway’s information section notes that Paddington is an “extensive and handsome” station.⁹¹ There is no acknowledgement of the Middle Eastern influenced iron work or any specific details of the building at all. In fact, only one other mention of Paddington was found for this study, and it used the same phrases to describe the building. *The Illustrated London News* reported, “The new shed for outgoing trains, being entirely roofed with glass, presents a light and handsome appearance, with separate entrance and reception rooms for the Queen and the Royal Family...” The language used to describe

⁸⁸ Ibid., 102.

⁸⁹ Steven Brindle, *Brunel: The Man Who Build the World* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2005), 252.

⁹⁰ Brindle, *Paddington Station*, 102.

⁹¹ “Great Western Railway,” *Times* (London, England), May 31, 1854.

the building is general at best with no specific mention of imperial design, unlike the Crystal Palace.

The lack of descriptive language and more primary sources is rather revealing to this study, however. This gap of information answers the question of whether or not the language used to describe buildings featuring imperial design changes in relation to the function of the building. Paddington Station, an average train terminal, had less connection with the empire and less media attention than the Crystal Palace, a museum built for a national exhibition featuring imperial conquests. An example of the different relationships between the purposes of the buildings and their use of imperial design in imperial propaganda is the fact that Samuel Phillips described the Queen's suite in the Crystal Palace in admiring detail and made note of the imperial design, but *The Illustrated London News* does not mention details about Queen Victoria's waiting room. Function played a role in whether or not imperial design drew attention from the press when a building lacked an overt connection to the empire.

There is more to learn about the possible effect of imperial design in Paddington Station when one examines the role of railways in general for Victorian society and the reactions people had after visiting stations. Trains, stations, and railroads were a recent phenomenon of the period. Railroads were a product of the Industrial Revolution which led to the invention of the steam engine in Britain and the first locomotives. Trains began transporting goods and people and were viewed as a sign of progress and the ingenuity of the British people by the early nineteenth century. Trains stations of the Victorian era are

referred to now as “cathedral stations” because they employed grand architecture of a large scale and artistic designs like many gothic churches.⁹²

While many people thought train stations were a distinct form of architecture belonging only to the century that invented it, a few individuals viewed train stations as a negative sign of modernity. John Ruskin, who criticized the imperial design of the Crystal Palace, also objected to train stations being considered a beautiful, unique type of architecture. He states that “the iron roofs and pillars of our railway stations...are not architecture at all.”⁹³ Ruskin discounted Paddington Station with this assertion because of its iron and glass roof.

As many stations of the period featured imperial design, he addressed the use of these designs as well. According to Ruskin, to decorate a railroad station was a “strange and evil tendency” of the day.⁹⁴ Because a railroad station was a “temple of discomfort,” people would not linger to appreciate the use of ornamentation, and the architects of these buildings should not attempt to please people with their designs.⁹⁵ The railroad stations should be outfitted simply as a result. The decoration of these buildings often involved imperial design which is the ornament to which Ruskin objected. According to him, beauty involved things found most commonly in nature, such as leaves instead of roses.⁹⁶ Despite the fact that the arabesque design used in imperial design was often compared to leaves, it was still not beautiful to Ruskin as it was made of iron, a material constructed by man and not nature. The ornamentation of leaves was often placed in areas where it

⁹² Jeffrey Richards and John M. MacKenzie, *The Railway Station: A Social History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 3.

⁹³ Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps*, 20%.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 54%.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 54%.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 48%.

was not found in nature, like the windows of the train shed at Paddington. Ruskin's complaints once again targeted modernization. He looked at the development of trains and train sheds as having a negative impact on society and hoped they would fall out of fashion. Ruskin disliked the use of imperial design because it was not a natural form of architectural structure, especially in train stations.

As he did when critiquing the Crystal Palace, Ruskin linked together modernity and the empire in his critiques against imperial design. This situation is revealing as scholar John M. MacKenzie asserts that many Victorians admired Eastern design elements because they were symbols of a less industrious and more idyllic lifestyle; yet, Ruskin thought the use of Eastern architecture in the imperial design of train stations was absurd because ornamentation did not belong on obvious symbols of an industrialized society. These ideas were not as contradictory as they might seem originally. MacKenzie is correct in his argument under certain qualifications, as Ruskin did not reject imperial design as a whole, only what he considered inappropriate usage. He obviously valued these elements as long as they were applied to buildings that reflected the characteristics of Eastern design in their purpose. For example, imperial design featuring arabesque patterns was better suited to a bath house than a train station. One building embraced the cultural context from which it came, natural design of the arabesque, and a peaceful function, while the other actively represented the mechanization of the world. From Ruskin, we can see that some Victorians did not just admire Eastern architectural elements for their connection to a less modern society, but that they also appreciated imperial design more when applied to structures that symbolized a less urban culture.

The lack of descriptive language used by periodicals of the era and Ruskin's admonition of ornamentation in train stations reveal that function played a key role in the Victorian perceptions of imperial design and its use in garnering imperial support. Unlike the Crystal Palace which served as a bastion of empire, Paddington Station's imperial design received little attention or recognition at its opening. Its use as a train station did not serve a great imperial purpose, and in turn its imperial design was less admired. The general response to the imperial design in train stations supports that a number of Victorians felt it served little use, and its rejection indicates fears of the future of modernization and entanglement with the empire.

Chapter Four

Conclusion

The Crystal Palace and Paddington Station shared a number of similarities. Both buildings were constructed largely of iron and glass, shared the same designers, and were constructed mid-century with only a few years separating them. Despite these common factors, each building uniquely represented imperial design in Britain and its use to increase excitement about the empire at home. Media of the period focused greatly on the Crystal Palace and its imperial design as it was directly connected to the empire by housing the Great Exhibition of 1851. Paddington Station, on the other hand, served an everyday function and its imperial design received little attention as a way to gain support for the empire. Through the analysis of these buildings and their impact on imperial culture in Britain, this study was able to answer a number of questions about Victorian perceptions of empire and modernization.

In response to the question what type of language is used by imperial propaganda to describe buildings featuring imperial design, the analysis of the Crystal Palace and Paddington station revealed that the language featured mostly elaborate, positive descriptions. A number of reports from *The Times* to guidebooks used flattering terms to describe the imperial design of the Crystal Palace, and while there are fewer sources for Paddington Station, it too received generically admiring descriptions. Both buildings, though, were criticized by John Ruskin who championed a school of thought on classicism. While a majority of people reacted positively to the use of imperial design in these buildings and heralded them as emblems of the future, he considered them to be negative symbols of the industrialized era. These contrasting opinions suggest a divide in

Victorian society between those who embraced Britain's modernization and expansion of imperial power and those who cherished Britain's traditional past and feared the entanglement of the empire with the national culture. As Britain's empire began to strengthen its power over its colonies, increasing qualms about the empire arose for a number of reasons. People feared that a more integrated empire would lead to miscegenation, foreigners in the metropole, and the deterioration of the British race and identity.⁹⁷ The use of imperial design confirmed these fears for them as traditional forms of British architecture were being replaced.

The different functions of the structures also affected the descriptions of their imperial design in imperial propaganda. There were a plethora of descriptions for the Crystal Palace, a publicly promoted museum of the nation and its empire. While Paddington Station received admiring descriptions as well, the language was less effusive in praise and more general. The train station did not receive even half as many details on imperial design as the Palace. The functions of the buildings tie into the imperial cultural of the mid-nineteenth century. As an obvious representation of empire, the Crystal Palace received more attention to its imperial design, while Paddington was an everyday train station that did not garner as much recognition as a national event. Imperial propaganda was so great a part of the "everydayness" of Victorian Britain that without a direct link to the empire, Paddington Station's imperial design was much less enthusiastically acknowledged.⁹⁸

The analysis of the Crystal Palace and Paddington Station answered the most integral research question of all: what does the language used to describe imperial design

⁹⁷ MacKenzie, *Imperialism and Popular Culture*, 125.

⁹⁸ Catherine Hall and Sonya O. Rose, eds., *At Home With the Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 23.

and the responses of critics like Ruskin reveal about Victorian society and its relationship with the British Empire? Reactions to the imperial design of both buildings suggest that the British population was divided in their regard for the empire. Some viewed it with national pride, while others outlined fears for the transformation of society sparked by modernization and imperial influences at home. The resistance to imperial propaganda combined worries over both imperialism and industrialism. Britain's industrialization process occurred rapidly and greatly affected society, from the rise of the middle class to the creation of urban slums. These changes caused concerns over the effects of industrialization. Imperial design used new forms of mass manufacturing, like glass and steel, that were made possible through industrialization. Ruskin in particular resisted imperial design because he cherished traditional methods of building in Britain. He disliked the new materials developed by industrialization, and he especially disliked them in the use of imperial design because it combined two items he considered to be unnatural. Ruskin's defense of traditional British architecture hints at worries about Britain's modernization and greater commitment to the empire.

The use of imperial design in Britain was a way to instill excitement for the empire within the populace, and analysis of the Crystal Palace and Paddington station reveals that function played a huge role in whether or not imperial design factored into imperial propaganda. More importantly, the responses to imperial design suggest a divided society in Victorian Britain between those who favored the empire enthusiastically and those who thought that empire could lead to the weakening of the nation.

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