The Power of the Jewel: Discovering Historical Meaning Through the Study of Jewelry Made in Britain During the Reign of Queen Victoria, 1837-1901

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THE POWER OF THE JEWEL: DISCOVERING HISTORICAL MEANING THROUGH THE STUDY OF JEWELRY MADE IN BRITAIN DURING THE REIGN OF QUEEN VICTORIA 1837 – 1901

by

Mary Gilbert Palmer

A plan B thesis paper submitted in partial fulfillment for the degree of MASTER OF ARTS in History

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UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY
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2001
ABSTRACT

The Power of the Jewel: Discovering Historical Meaning

Through the Study of Jewelry Made in Britain
during the Reign of Queen Victoria

1837 - 1901

by

Mary Gilbert Palmer

Utah State University, 2001

Major Professor: Leonard Rosenband
Department: History

The thesis: British Victorian jewelry has the power to function as both subject matter and a point of departure for the lively, interdisciplinary study of nineteenth-century Britain.

The study begins with an object, a jewel in the hand, understood as an artifact. The beauty, wearability, intrigue, and history of antique jewelry gives it the power to launch historical inquiry and to provide concrete access to the past. Visual, oral, and print resources, along with other period objects from the arts and social sciences are then used to help reveal, enrich, and expand the historical meanings embedded in the jewels.

This paper demonstrates numerous ways to examine a jewel to discover what it reveals about its own history, and the historical information that it points to about Victorian Britain. From the style, construction techniques, materials, and the design intentions of the jeweler, the research expands to consider social, cultural, economic and political issues that shaped nineteenth-century Britain and the jewelry that Victorian
Britain produced. This method uses visual, photographic, and advertising images, the material culture resources found in museums, universities, special exhibitions, and retail collections, monographs on local, national, and international issues, literature of the era, along with biography, economic, industrial, class, social, artistic and cultural histories to develop and inform the discoveries made from handling the jewelry.

Using information from a variety of perspectives, the jewelry can then help the historian create social, economic, political, cultural, and ideological commentary on the era and the society that produced it. Like the jewelry it studies, this interdisciplinary analysis reveals a diversity and variety in nineteenth-century Britain that reflects the sweeping, economic, and technological change brought about by industrialization, investment, imperialist expansion and trade, and the new social and political forces that growth and development unleashed. The interconnected actions among these forces shaped the life, thought, and the jewelry created during the nineteenth-century in Britain. Now, that legacy of connections facilitates the hands-on, interdisciplinary study of British Victorian jewelry, a study that develops historical competence about this exceptional jewelry, while tangibly enriching the historical understanding and appreciation of nineteenth-century Britain.
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FORWARD—OR HOW IT ALL BEGAN

For nearly two decades I have been trading in antiques, though not always in antique jewelry. Yet at the start of my English buying trips I happened upon my first Victorian jewelry teacher. Whisked off from Heathrow to nearby Windsor for a wake-up coffee and a walk around the ancient castle village, I found her huddled beside a thin electric fire, gruff, grand, and graying on a damp February morning. Discovering little of interest in her dim cold clutter I posed the question, “What do you have that’s over one-hundred years old?” From the pile of papers scattered across her desk she pulled a large oval brooch with a thick sharp stem jutting out from the edge of the jewel.

I explained that I was new to the trade and asked how she knew the age of this piece. Immediately she handed it to me, saying, “Just turn it over and see the stem and closure. There’s no safety catch, only the traditional ‘C’ hook as a clasp. Also the length and thickness of the stem are classic mid-Victorian details, even before you consider its size.” In the end I left the plain awkward pin with its long pointed stem, but I still remember her words and her haunting image so strangely reminiscent of the aging Queen Victoria:

Take the jewel in your hand. Touch it, feel it, turn it over. Look at it carefully, front and back. Notice how it’s been constructed as you consider the design. Does it speak to you? Is your heart pounding just a bit? Do you feel as if you have to have it?

Victorian jewels held in the hand, admired, worn, and studied with care have since become my passion. I trade in antique jewelry, specializing in jewelry made in Britain during the reign of Queen Victoria, but first and foremost I love these engaging
pieces of the past, for me still alive and vital today. Beloved, handsome, wearable Victorian jewelry delights now in the twenty-first century much as it must have done when it was created in the nineteenth.

As a dealer, my excitement with this jewelry often spills over as a mini history lesson volunteered across the counter for unsuspecting clients admiring a jewel in the collection. Through the years I’ve found myself functioning as jewelry historian, eager for more research and understanding in order to better teach others what I am learning for myself. And always I begin with a piece of jewelry held in the hand, only to discover it drawing me into the life and times of Victorian Britain. With the engaging potential to raise social, economic, political or technical issues, as well as industrial, aesthetic, or cultural dimensions of the period, these jewels have become my muse and mentors enticing me into a journey of historical exploration and discovery.

Mary Gilbert Palmer
27 January 2001
Richmond, Utah
THE POWER OF THE JEWEL—A THESIS PROJECT

... objects can provide us with numerous and valuable insights into the past. To neglect such data in any modern historical inquiry is to overlook a significant body of research evidence.

--Thomas J. Schlereth, Material Culture Studies in America

Hands-on study of the jewelry left behind by the Victorians offers a concrete connection to those people and their times, as it tangibly enriches historical understanding and appreciation of nineteenth century Britain. Victorian jewelry held in the hand encourages creative, interdisciplinary, and direct access to the era. When period jewelry is understood and appropriated as material culture, artifacts rather than literary text become the starting place for a kind of study that promotes serious academic engagement.

The jewelry itself permits one to think about the past; to question the times and techniques that produced it; and to wonder about the artisans, their craft and culture, and the shape of the world that evoked such pieces. For those with little previous exposure to historical studies, infatuation with a single jewel can open an entire cache of historical meaning. A jewelry handling session offers direct, tactile encounter with materials of the past. It creates special excitement and enthusiasm born of hands-on discovery and raises questions that often require additional research to fully explore and answer. The jewelry functions as a window on the past, creating an immediate starting place for study and exploration.

Such inquiry may begin with a history of personal adornment or the role of jewelry in the decorative arts; however, other issues quickly arise from the experience of
handling examples of material culture still in use today. Wearable, enjoyable, still longed for in the present, the jewelry raises issues about the cultural, social, and political dimensions from the period of production as well as technical or historical questions about the jewels themselves. Thus a lively search begins. The visual, oral, or print resources of many disciplines expand and inform the direct observations discovered in a handling session. It takes focussed research, gathering evidences from many sources, to uncover the multiple historical meanings embedded in the jewels themselves.

Victorian jewelry straddles a unique period of transition in the history of jewelry. Until the mid-nineteenth century, jewelry manufacture served a luxury market for one-of-a-kind designs created entirely by hand. With the advent of factory-made jewelry created to meet the growing demands of middling and working consumers in industrial Britain, this elitist monopoly vanished, although the production of fine custom jewels continued to expand.

More rapid growth, however, occurred in industrializing jewelry production, where developments in that sector of the jewelry trade often paralleled the kinds of social, political, economic, and cultural transformation convulsing much of the rest of nineteenth-century Britain. Consequently, scholars today can use British Victorian jewelry to access issues of taste, class, social identity, and the political reform and social protest expressed through the clash of values, consciousness, and ideology found in industrial capitalism and cultural socialism. The jewelry also represents the growing economic and political power of consumers and producers reflected in the acquisition of raw materials, the inventive techniques for manufacture and distribution, and the development of mass-marketing to an expanding consumer base. This paper will address
these issues, illustrating how the jewelry can initiate and inform scholarly research across many sectors of British history.

During Victoria’s sixty-three year reign, the creation, production, and consumption of jewelry grew dramatically within her realm. Variety and quantity in both traditional, hand-made jewels and the newer, machine-produced jewelry marked the output of the British jewelry trade. Factor in a monarch and her consort who designed, adored, gave, and collected jewelry, plus many subjects high and low, ready to copy her royal example even as the Queen moved in and out of favor during a long reign. Then add the certain passion, commitment, and natural curiosity of most antique jewelry collectors and an instructor trained for historical research. A lively, in-depth, and participatory learning experience is practically assured.

However, the most compelling ingredient in this historical method remains the power of the jewel. Ultimately human fascination with gemstones and jewelry may elude quantification or defy written expression. Yet for many people a sense of mystery remains attached to jewelry. Created from materials forged in the earth long before any artisan reworked them, collectors find these wearable artifacts still irresistible today. In the search for historical meaning the jewelry itself will launch the quest, drawing students and teacher together in study. My thesis project demonstrates how the power of a jewel in the hand offers both compelling subject matter and the engaging point of departure for interdisciplinary historical inquiry.

This paper develops the rationale and methods for the project, including some of the background and content used in a hands-on jewelry workshop entitled *THE POWER OF THE JEWEL: Jewelry Made in Britain during the Reign of Queen Victoria: 1837-
1901\(^2\). For that workshop I have also created a series of lectures, visual, and computer-generated teaching aids, and a comprehensive collection of books, journals and popular guides in the field. In addition I have designed a web site\(^3\) that presents themes in Victorian life and jewelry, illustrated with pieces from my teaching collection of British Victorian jewelry. Exercises that hone the skills needed to identify and appreciate Victorian jewelry use my time line and chart of the jewelers’ motifs and materials.\(^4\) To complete the thesis project, I will present a talk that introduces some of the workshop methods and content in an invited session of instruction and hands-on jewelry study for faculty and the public.\(^5\)
As this review of literature will show, the history of jewelry remains a relatively new discipline, developed in Western Europe since the middle of the twentieth century. Until recent decades, it has been little more than an aside to art history or the study of the decorative and applied arts in the United States. For scholars working in British Victorian jewelry, the written point of departure and invaluable reference work remains Margaret Flower's defining work, *Victorian Jewellery* published in London in 1951 and revised in 1967. Based on scrupulously detailed original research of almost every sort of Victorian female jewelry, this illustrated compendium has three sections, early, mid- and late Victorian, setting out categories in each for a scheme of organization that remains the standard in the field. Out-of-print, yet occasionally available in antiquarian bookshops, this essential source for scholars or serious collectors uses photography, sketches, charts and descriptive prose to catalogue nineteenth-century jewelry styles and relate them to the ever-changing fashion of Victorian women's clothing. A witty and insightful essay by Doris Langely Moore, "On Collecting Jewellery," offers sage advise for the beginning or advanced collector and comes as a bonus in Flower's comprehensive monograph.

Clare Phillips's beautifully illustrated paperback published by the Victoria and Albert Museum in 2000, traces the history of Western jewelry from the Middle Ages until the end of the twentieth century. *Jewels And Jewellery* makes a valuable contribution to jewelry history by describing the wide range of materials used by the jeweler as well as the systems of hallmarking, manufacture, and distribution practiced over the last five hundred years in Europe. The major mid-section, a "Chronology of Style," devotes
nearly half its entries to Victorian jewelry. Here, Phillips’s instructional power rests in her original organization of basic nineteenth-century jewelry history.Beside text that describes and analyzes period designs, she juxtaposes graphics of manufacturing techniques, period design sketches, and stinging social commentary found in nineteenth-century cartoons that often lampoon the owners through their use of the jewels. This informative combination of these historical materials along with the exquisitely photographed period jewelry creates a stunning record of English jewelry, enhanced by an extensive bibliography and a valuable illustrations’ appendix.

In 1995, Shena Mason published *Jewellery Making in Birmingham 1750-1995*, a socio-cultural business history of the Birmingham jewelry trade. Using vivid first-hand reports and images of the workshops, the workers, and the prolific assortment of jewelry that Birmingham produced during these years, Mason documents the continuity of basic production techniques alongside the changes that industrialization brought to jewelry manufacture. With archival images as illustration, Mason describes the strong sense of community maintained through times of prosperity and recession by the artisans and their families, living and working in the Birmingham Jewellery Quarter. Interviews with people whose families had lived in the quarter for over a century describe a common reliance upon and appreciation for the “village-like” social fabric that created support for both the trade and the families who lived near their work in the quarter.10

Writing for popular as well as scholarly interest in local history, Mason draws upon her own years of documenting Birmingham jewelry making, first as editor of a local trade publication and then as researcher for the Birmingham Museum’s Jewellery Quarter Discovery Centre. Her use of primary source materials makes this volume a valuable
handbook for antique jewelry studies. Archival resources from the Birmingham Jewellery Quarter, as well as other local primary sources demonstrate the use of oral history, letters, photography, period advertising copy, business records, and wills for doing basic historical research.

Period photography captures much of the social make-up and flavor of the quarter--both workplace and home to artisans whose children studied and played close by until they were ready to be trained and hired into the trade. Fathers often started the training of promising children at home until, according to an August 1885 article that Mason quotes from the Watchmaker, Jeweller & Silversmith, the introduction of machinery created "too many people in the trade for anyone to make very satisfactory profits...." More over, from the informative, period advertising-copy that Mason reproduces, the historian finds concrete evidence for dating jewelry styles and the ideological commentary that these jewelry designs represent.

Mason's more recent interest has focused on an interdisciplinary research project at the University of Warwick, the "Luxury Project," which is exploring eighteenth-century consumer culture in Europe. In 1999, an introductory volume edited by Maxine Berg and Helen Clifford, Consumers and Luxury, presented the project's initial debate on the impact of early modern luxury consumption. This emerging consumerism shaped social and aesthetic values, reflected class structures, both elite and middling, and laid the foundations for the mass-marketing and industrialized manufacture of the nineteenth-century. Scholars working in material culture, economics, the history of art, science, or economics, and cultural history take these debates "far beyond their customary concerns with the corruption of wealthy elites" to consider the boundaries
between necessity and luxury, the role of national museums and their impact on non-material consumption, and issues of value, taste, imitation and novelty arising in the middle classes and fueling Victorian consumerism.

At the outset, Berg and Clifford acknowledge their debt to the basic research collected in the early volume on consumption edited by John Brewer and Roy Porter, *Consumption and The World of Goods*.\(^1\) This basic compendium, which addresses issues of supply, demand, markets, value, and distribution of resources, provided the starting place for my work on Victorian consumerism and the mass production of jewelry. As Berg and Clifford note, Brewer and Porter created the framework for the study of early modern and eighteenth-century consumption\(^1\) by establishing a foundation of methodology and initial issues in consumer studies that has continued into the present.

In their introduction, the “Luxury Project” editors address an issue basic to my scholarship: Were the middle class consumers of Victorian jewelry trying to

emulat[e]...a pre-existing culture among the elite? We suspect, or in some cases even know this was not the case. But we know very little about the inducements to consumer culture among these variegated and intensely status-conscious groups. Once our fixed categories of a resistant, customary plebian culture have broken down, assumptions of an emulative bourgeois culture leading the way to modern mass consumerism are no longer satisfactory.\(^1\)

The interdisciplinary scholarship generated by the “Luxury Project” provides valuable background for my nineteenth-century research, as well as suggesting important issues to which a hands-on study of Victorian jewelry can contribute in the on-going dialogue. This paper will demonstrate how the semiotics of the jewel allows Victorian jewelry to function as “economic, political and (to a limited degree) scientific
commentator..." on Victorian Britain—this role of commentator identified by Berg and Clifford as an important emerging direction in consumer studies.18

An essay in the collection by Marcia Pointon, “Jewellery in Eighteenth-century England,” 19 addresses one of my chief interests—the ways in which jewelry represents important cultural meaning within a given class or society. Interested in the kinds of concrete connections that I observe between period jewelry and trends in the culture at large, Pointon examines the gap between the names of tiny lingerie jewels and their usage in eighteenth-century England. Her essay demonstrates “how particular material characteristics of jewellery products highlight,” 20 cultural shifts, in this case in the language of aristocratic Georgian Britain.

In an endnote, Pointon mentions another of my concerns, the “split between the work of jewellery historians, who are concerned with objects, and that of economic and social historians who focus upon production and circulation, [noting that t]his chapter is an attempt to bridge these approaches...”.21 My jewelry studies often encounter a range of issues raised by the jewels, each concern arising directly from the pieces under consideration. I find that using the jewelry as a common starting point however, helps to minimize splits or differences and to encourage cohesive interdisciplinary study.

Several volumes of general jewelry history also deserve mention in this survey. *A History of JEWELLERY 1100-1870*,22 Joan Evans’s survey of European jewelry appeared in 1953 with a revision in 1970 that greatly increased the attention given to Victorian jewels through 1870. Beginning with medieval jewelry, Evans introduces a brilliant and now common technique for jewelry studies: the use of portrait art to “illustrate what jewels are worn and the manner of wearing them at different periods....
[For a picture] states a transformation of social values more eloquently than any words.  

Evans's exhaustive history provides solid background to the evolution of nineteenth-century jewelry design, by offering visual source materials from medieval, renaissance, and gothic Europe. These images are invaluable for historical jewelry studies, particularly research on the Revivalist styles popular in Victorian Britain when Revivalist jewelers relied upon historical pieces for inspiration in design, materials, and motifs.

In 1986, the trustees of the British Museum published *Seven Thousand Years of Jewellery*, another richly illustrated paperback history book. Edited by Hugh Tate, formerly Deputy Keeper of Medieval and Later Antiquities at the British Museum, it traces the "oldest form of decorative art" from the earliest known centers of civilization in Egypt and Mesopotamia until the 1950's. Using examples from the museum's collections, Tate explores the history of personal jewelry, excluding jewels of office or religious demarcation. He notes that from pre-historic times individuals chose jewelry for beauty, "social cachet, or their amuletic purpose" as well as one other "special quality: it could be used as a form of currency, almost as an investment." This work offers an invaluable cross-cultural reference that gives excellent, though limited, attention to the Victorian era and provides much-needed international background and context for the massive jewelry production of imperialist nineteenth-century Britain.

Major attention to Victorian jewelry appeared in 1989 with the Antique Collector's Club publication of *Understanding JEWELLERY*, by David Bennett and Daniela Mascetti. Another beautifully illustrated volume, it offers a brilliant introduction to "Gemstones" and the tools of the trade. These scholars, historians at
Sotheby’s, London, consider fine Western jewels from the late 1700’s and, with their revision of 1994, cover jewelry through the 1980’s. Focusing on technique and materials as well as stylistic developments, the authors create “a ‘primer’ for [those]…embarking upon a career in the jewellery trade or collectors who are looking for a practical base on which to build their knowledge.”27 With detailed descriptions, careful dating, and comparative stylistic details found in both text and captions, this accomplished work by professional historians offers a handbook of fine jewels for beginners and experienced students alike. Since 1994 Mascetti has published specialty jewelry volumes with another Sotheby’s historian, Amanada Triossi. [See bibliography.]

Other print references include Harold Newman’s invaluable guide, An Illustrated Dictionary of Jewelry, the numerous booklets from the Shire Publications Ltd. on specialty subjects such as “Jet Jewellery and Ornaments,” and self-published papers and handbooks like my timeline and methods and motifs handbook,28 which those of us in the field share with one another. These titles appear in the bibliography appended to this paper, along with other important jewelry and period histories, museum exhibition catalogues and guides, and the regular journals published by the Society of Jewellery Historians, London, and the American Society of Jewelry Historians.

Museums, university collections, art galleries, special exhibitions, and the inventory of retail antique dealers provide visual and material resources essential to the basic experiences required in antique jewelry studies: the direct encounter with cultural artifacts. As a jewelry historian, I consider it my responsibility to stay abreast of such sources so I can encourage my students and clients to use and enjoy these opportunities as often as possible. I send them off with a notebook or journal, a habit that I have
cultivated from my own experiences at such exhibits. Not only does this provide a satisfying personal record of first impressions, observations, reflections, and source references, it also insures accurate sight notes that I find essential to my research.

On April 5, 2001, the Victoria and Albert Museum will open a major retrospective, "Inventing New Britain: The Victorian Vision." Announced and anticipated for more than a year, this review of nineteenth-century thought, experience, and objects will mark the centenary of Victoria’s death and already has museum goers queuing for tickets. The March, 2001 issue of House Beautiful magazine highlights the coming London attraction by featuring jewelry from this Victorian extravaganza in a colorfully illustrated “Antiques Special.” Writing for an American audience, journalist Martin Filler noted that “English jewelry from 1840 to 1900 was more about design than it was about geology.” In two-and-a-half lively pages, he highlights a brief but inclusive survey of design and materials used by Victorian jewelers, noting with keen insight the social status and class differences that the jewelry reflects. To interest his readers in the entire exhibition, Filler appeals to the variety, grandeur, and social power of the jewel in Victorian Britain.

Another American journal, Victoria, selected "Inventing New Britain: The Victorian Vision" for its lead article in April 2001. Highlighting the jewelry in the article’s illustrations, this more general preview of the exhibition focuses upon the roots of modern life found in the Victorian era. Paul Atterbury, exhibition curator, even credits the Victorians with inventing the middle class, a “newly created class with money and a taste for the fine things in life: as basic as education, as frivolous as a velvet-covered chair.” Such popular attention and enthusiasm for this yet-to-be unveiled
exhibition underlines the power possessed by museums and their historical collections to attract a wide audience to historical study.\textsuperscript{34}
In a hands-on approach to jewelry studies, the jewelry itself provides access to the past. As the review of literature has suggested, source materials cut across academic disciplines in this kind of historical research. This section of the paper will consider specific issues and ideas raised by my own purposeful look at the past, using the Victorian jewelry that I know and love. I include both method and content developed for students in workshops or with clients standing at my jewelry counter--whenever the jeweler's loupe along with visual and print references are needed to further understanding.

The jewelry historian shares a perspective with students of material culture. This view holds the jewel as artifact, an object with cultural significance and social meaning that can be extracted from it.\(^{35}\) We begin with the piece itself, moving out from there to interpret the past.\(^ {36}\) With jewelry the first question often concerns intrinsic value, which must consider integrity of design, carat weight of stones, and the purity of metals. Already a number of issues arise. First of all, how do we measure value?

A definition that remains valid, understandable and particularly appropriate for antique jewelry appeared in 1907 in Georg Simmel's opening chapter of *The Philosophy of Money*. For Simmel, "value is never an inherent property of objects, but is a judgment made about them by subjects."\(^ {37}\) Therefore, what a buyer anticipates or desires in a piece of antique jewelry will often determine the value assigned to that piece. The very jewels that some owners devalue ("What, this old thing?") often create the supply for the
collector; meanwhile, my ability to offer in-depth historical information about a particular jewel adds real value to it in the showroom. In fact, my transition from a knowledgeable dealer to serious jewelry historian grew out of a commitment to offer clients accurate in-depth histories of their investments.

To address questions of jewelry materials and metal purities, one needs historical knowledge of British hallmarks\(^{38}\) and the legislative changes in the gold standard\(^{39}\) through the years. Hallmarks code the date of production to the year. Even without a hallmark however, the jewelry historian can still assert that a 15-carat gold jewel could not have been legally struck before 1854; while jewels in 18 and 22-carat gold were more likely handmade earlier than 1854, particularly if they have the smaller size of early Victorian styles. Pieces hallmarked in lower carat gold were probably produced for a middling, mass-market dependant on machine manufacture. The aesthetics of the design combined with techniques of construction, particularly the type of clasp and hinge employed on the jewel, will provide additional dating clues.\(^{40}\) These kinds of interdisciplinary connections that I observe in Victorian jewelry-making are also noted by Marcia Pointon for gold and diamonds in eighteenth-century England. She claims that they exist, “culturally at the nexus of competing discourses of the economic, the aesthetic and the legal.”\(^{41}\)

The materials and construction used in Victorian jewelry help reflect some of these aesthetic, economic and legal dimensions of nineteenth-century Britain. Precious stone identification requires years of specialized instruction and very expensive equipment. Therefore, most jewelry historians rely upon a certified gemologist for identification and verification of stones. Yet the historian will know that synthetic stones
weren’t commercially available until the mid-1880’s, and aluminum held brief sway as a precious metal shortly after 1855, when the initial refinement procedure made it so expensive that goldsmiths eagerly sought this rare metal for their jewels. Knowledge about metals, stones, and jewelry design not only helps to establish dating and era, but it also suggests how Victorian legislation stimulated market-demand, which in turn propelled production, all fuelled by geological exploration, discovery, and scientific invention. These kinds of interdisciplinary connections provided by nineteenth-century jewelry studies offer valuable enrichment to historical research on Victorian Britain.

If a jewel is held and closely examined, one can trace how materials and design combine to convey a sense of the cultural milieu or ethos of an era. With sufficient physical handling, a single piece of jewelry can create an enriched sense of time and place, made fully and immediately available in the jewel. This quality of understanding doesn’t happen by reading a description of the piece or even from looking at a visual image. It must be encountered directly in the jewel. Antique jewelry has the unique ability to function as a living artifact, by encouraging us to ask questions about place and period of origin, or the materials, techniques, and design used by the artist.

When the response to a piece of period jewelry can interact with other references to culture, society, economics, or the intellectual thought of an era, our historical understanding becomes tangibly enriched. The voluptuous sensuality of line and design found in the work of the Art Nouveau jewelers was intentionally used to represent ennui, depression, and despair over personal stagnation and the dehumanization experienced by many of the workers bound to factory piecework production. Art Nouveau jewelers wanted to convey that sense of entrapment in the lives of the working poor, along with
the uncertainty, end-of-century doubt, and restlessness that the more financially stable also faced, because of the century's constant transformation and change--expression of social anxiety encountered in the recent end-of-millenium frenzy, as well.

Using the shock of design to proclaim that many things were not as they appeared, Art Nouveau intentionally broke with the past to became one of the first modern art movements, using "art and design as motors for social and political change." Art Nouveau jewelers often juxtaposed rigid material construction against flowing, fluid design to infuse solid metals with a soft undulating line. A solid gold brooch formed into long waving tresses languidly draped round the face of a remote and melancholy young woman typifies Art Nouveau jewelry design. These jewelers relied upon the form of the female body and motifs from nature as "a socially accepted way of evoking eroticism," but they also designed a concrete message of social unrest and individual despair into their jewelry. Consequently, their work offers access to earlier commentary on much of late-century European life and culture. For the historically uninitiated, the disparity encountered in the jewels should not only surprise, but also awaken interest in class distinctions and the economic and political systems that provoked jewelers to imbed social commentary within their jewelry.

In the mid 1880's other social visionaries sought change through the reformist Arts and Crafts Movement, hoping to create an artistic correction to the growing consumerism and the immiseration of factory workers brought on by industrialization. Their goal became the production of one-of-a-kind pieces of furniture, household furnishings, and jewelry, hand crafted by a single artisan using humble materials and
designs so simple that they required no specialization. They hoped that this return to individual production would create a kind of national therapy for workers through handicraft. Much of the basic ideology for this movement came from the original mind of William Morris as he hammered out his own humane cultural socialism. In protest against industrialized manufacture and the division of labor that robbed workers of the “pleasure of work by which they make their bread,” Morris created a firm of prolific workshops that hand-produced carpets, tapestry, wall papers, metal-work, mural decorations, furniture, embroidery, stained glass, and jewelry. From John Ruskin, another leader in the Arts and Crafts Movement, Morris found inspiration for “the establishment of a company of artists and craftsmen who intended to revive the minor arts of England on a sound financial basis and in the face of an age of shoddy.”

Unfortunately, the social vision of Morris (who served as President of the Birmingham Society of Arts and the School of Design in 1879,) and other like him in the movement, could not match the power of the marketplace in "a world of Cash and Fact," that was driven by the lowering prices resulting from cheap raw materials and increasing mass production. The simply designed Arts and Crafts items found support primarily from those of wealth and aesthetic cultivation, but this limited custom did not generate sufficient income for the movement to survive beyond 1920. (Interestingly, in the 1990's young professionals rediscovered Arts and Crafts design for its functional, simple, aesthetically pleasing, and easy-to-live-with household furnishings, though late twentieth-century production did not rely upon the handwork of a single artisan.)

These two artistically distinctive, late-century movements helped to shape and express the political protest and rising social consciousness that infused the cultural ethos
of late Victorian Europe. To even discuss their impact today, we must appropriate terms from the marketplace, industry, and design along with the vocabulary and concepts of class, competition, social protest, human psychology, and the clashing political ideologies of capitalism and cultural socialism. What results is a lively and interdisciplinary historical dialogue fueled by the ability of the jewelry to capture the imagination in ways that encourage the interplay of ideas and disciplines.

So it should come as no surprise when historians use period jewelry to create interest in their depictions of the past. The stunning Art Nouveau exhibition mounted by the Victoria and Albert Museum in the spring of 2000 opened into a darkened entranceway. As recorded narration introduced the era, visitors remained riveted to a single lighted showcase. It featured one exquisite brooch whose sheer beauty and technical prowess caused the heart to catch and the mind to struggle as it grappled with the power of this solitary item--able to represent and anticipate an entire retrospective. The jewel actually set the stage for the exhibition, enticing visitors eagerly into galleries that used print and paintings, ceramics and commercial art, everyday objects and luxury items to convey an entire movement and period. Through their encounter with a single piece of jewelry, museum goers fell captive to the spirit of the times as it was conveyed by the jewel.

A formalized conception of spirit of the times originated in the thought of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. In 1807 Hegel wrote *Phenomenology of Spirit*, a speculative philosophy of history based upon his understanding of developmental patterns of history. Hegel adopted the term *Zeitgeist*, or "spirit of the times," to suggest the embodiment of both physical and social realities which appear as actual manifestations of spirit or mind,
experiencing their fullest social expressions in public institutions. His culturally based historical method draws on themes from religion, economics, art, social structures, and politics in order to paint a portrait of an entire age. Serious artists would argue that their art, and for jewelers their jewels, physically embody exactly these kinds of social realities, presented in concrete forms of expression immediately accessible by wearing and noticing the jewelry and art present in the society. From a rich legacy of the creative work done by nineteenth-century artists and jewelers, the modern historian can appropriate art and jewelry as part of the material culture left behind by our predecessors to enrich our reflections and inform the study of culture, politics, and the economic and social forces acting upon individuals and the nation in Victorian Britain.
The relationship between power, consumption, and technological growth helped shape the jewelry trade in Victorian Britain. Until the nineteenth century, British jewelers looked to the Continent for quality of production and sophistication in design. Secure in their guilds and supported by the French system of royal patronage, Parisian goldsmiths led the world in creativity and quality craftsmanship. When the guilds were banned during the French Revolution, major disruptions occurred in apprentice training, quality control, and the cultivation of creativity so central to these professional societies. Much of the French home market disappeared as well with the scattering of the court. French leadership of the international jewelry market began to falter just as the industrializing British jewelry trade emerged poised and eager to assume that powerful role.

Stimulated by invention, industrial growth, and technological progress, the growing industrial wealth within Britain combined with profits in trade and exploration to produce an expanding English middle class. These newly rich longed for jewels and other worldly goods to endow them with prestige and esteem appropriate to their recently acquired economic prominence and power. This emerging home market increased the demand for jewelry at the same time that advancements in the techniques, tools, and manufacture of the trade catapulted the rate of production and therefore the output of British jewelry manufacture.
This explosion of economic well being spurred continuous growth in the middling orders. As the *nouveau riche* exercised economic power over the market and the means of production, they developed their own sense of taste. A single, but telling, example of this power affected the production of hand-carved cameos. The sheer beauty and value of those lovely engraved gemstones fostered the growing demand for cameo jewelry, until the pressures of the marketplace finally forced the Victorian cameo carvers to change their manufacturing procedures.

Since the days of the Roman Empire, artisans had worked in banded agates and other hard stones to create individually carved cameos. Their production workshops maintained exacting control over this finely detailed artistry. As expanding demand required a significant increase in production the majority of cameo workshops began to shift away from the challenging hard stone carving, to create quality cameos of lovely Neapolitan shell. This softer, more easily, and so more rapidly carved medium allowed artisans to meet the increased demand without sacrificing quality. Limited production of hard stone cameos continued for consumers in the top echelon of the elite market, willing to wait and pay for quality jewels created in the more traditional method. However, a basic shift in popular taste encouraged most consumers to favor the fine shell cameos rather than the more traditional hard stone images.

In her essay “New Commodities, Luxuries and their Consumers in Eighteenth-Century England,” Maxine Berg argues that the growing value of novelty, imitation, and invention helped to make semi-luxury goods desirable in their own right. These newly created commodities were not inferior substitutions for the luxury items of the elite, but rather new items chosen by new consumers and reflective of their growing self-
definition and assurance. The fine shell cameos produced a century later in Victorian Britain reflect a similar sort of social confidence emerging in the newly empowered industrial classes eager to define their own taste. They embraced the beautiful hand-carved shell jewelry as expressions of their “aspiration [for] quality and individuality.... These [were] new commodities that inspired...shifts in behavior among ordinary people and the rise of a new material culture among the middling groups....”

In nineteenth-century England, taste and technology often went hand in hand to initiate change in production. The invention of a die-stamping machine in 1832 dealt a major blow to the piece-by-piece hand manufacture of jewelry. With the advent of a pressing machine, component parts for a jewel could be quickly and identically manufactured for rapid assembly and finishing. By 1850, even with the continuation of fine hand finishing, this new pin-making machine consigned hand-made jewels to the “old-fashioned.” Elitist, artisan-made jewels took second place to machine-produced jewelry that was created simply to be worn, rather than weighed for its worth in the family treasury. The mass production of jewelry had begun. According to Shena Mason, a further

[impetus to machine-dominated mass production came from the new and much larger jewellery market which had been effectively born with the passing in 1854 of the so-called Lower-Standards Act.... As mass production for the new lower-priced market sector swept in, competition became fierce and there was a constant search for novelty.]

An 1840’s invention dramatically increased the availability of low-cost jewelry to the public. When a British firm patented an electroplating process for coating base metal with silver and gold, this innovation suddenly brought low-cost jewelry within the reach
of consumers who might never afford carat-gold jewels. Victorian factory workers received cash rather than the in-kind payments more traditional to agricultural employment, so increasingly they had enough income to buy low-cost, mass-produced trinkets. Moreover, urban social life provided regular occasions, along with the increased desire, to wear simple jewelry. An evening at the pub, political or religious gatherings, a trip to the shops or a popular lecture, all reinforced the pleasure of owning and wearing a piece of jewelry.

Charles Darwin, a compelling and controversial speaker, helped popularize scientific lectures for non-academic audiences. In 1859 he published the *Origin of the Species* which focused widespread attention on many aspects of natural history. This scientific fascination surfaced in the 1880s and 1890s as an insect craze that had a pronounced and amusing impact on the jewelry trade. According to Corinna Pike in the “Gem and Jewellery News” of the Society of Jewellery Historians, London, suddenly beetles, butterflies, dragonflies and spiders adorned high society ladies and crept over hats and bodices. The fly motif was particularly popular and detailed references can be found in jewelers’ catalogues of the period, such as that of the Goldsmiths & Silversmiths Company Ltd. Plique-a-jour enamelled winged insect creations were Art Nouveau favourite themes....

Scientific, social, political, and economic factors conspired in such a way that the demand for variety in jewelry would continue to increase throughout Victoria’s reign. Economic prosperity propelled demand, which in turn prodded production at a time when an emerging popular urban culture spurred the desire for innovation and novelty. Victorian jewelry production and design soon reflected all of these developments, spurred on by the legal, technical, and aesthetic changes at home, and the new markets and
sources of raw material in the Empire, which helped to insure that British manufacture for a mass market would continue to expand and diversify.

This paper does not allow for a wider discussion of the interdependence of economic development and social change. However in his brilliant and readable survey, *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations*, David Landes explores in detail how a “critical mass” of technology, invention, investment, and entrepreneurial spirit finally coalesced in eighteenth-century England to ignite widespread industrialization, economic growth, and social change. The gathering of these forces in a nation steeped in entrepreneurial skills enabled rapid industrial development to build upon inventions from the continent, while growing profits financed and encouraged innovation at home to mechanize life and work. This convergence of forces led to a sweeping transformation of society, economics, politics, and culture that was to envelop much of nineteenth-century Europe and America.

A number of factors contributed to the critical mass that formed within English jewelry-making and eventually pushed British influence to the forefront of the international jewelry trade. Examples of mechanization and innovative jewelry production have been cited above, along with the new sources of raw materials available from geological discoveries and from imperialist expansion that was also creating new foreign markets for British manufacture. As the middle classes gained economic power they cultivated a taste for the innovative products of industrial production, while factory workers responded to the harsh life of mechanized-labor and crowded urban living with active political protest and eager consumption of the low-end jewelry produced by the industrialized jewelry trade. Additionally two important political movements on the
continent made direct contributions to British leadership in the world of international jewelry.

The social, economic, and political chaos that followed the French Revolution with its impact on the guilds and the scattering of the luxury market, undermined French leadership in the jewelry trade leaving an open door for British influence. Then the political unification of the Italian peninsula created social and economic unrest there. By the 1850's Italian artisans in the cameo trade began seeking work in politically stable London, where their greatly admired carving skills were in demand. Along with many cameo-carvers two important fine jewelers from the archaeological revivalist tradition also left Italy to establish private workshops in London. Wealthy English patrons welcomed Fortunato Pio Castellani from Rome and Carlo Giuliano from Naples, pleased to have these fine custom jewelers close-by. Drawn by the excitement and power of the jewelry trade in London, all their sons eventually moved to London, ready to assume leadership of these influential family jewelry houses, now flourishing in the capital city of the premier nation in international jewelry production.

As this discussion illustrates, numerous trends and developments in nineteenth-century Britain can be discovered and traced through interdisciplinary Victorian jewelry studies. However, Berg and Clifford identify another important direction for material culture research arising out of the "Luxury Project," the "literary treatment of the subject and the evidence of literary texts...." Nevertheless, I have also noted that certain students learn history from reading novels and biography, while some clients will relish a well-written historical monograph. Therefore, this paper turns now to a brief consideration of resources for readers in Victorian jewelry studies.
MORE JEWELRY STUDIES AND RESOURCES FOR READERS

Historical studies based upon interdisciplinary research and the direct encounter with the objects generated by Victorian jewelry production, can also benefit from research using period fiction, biography, and historical monographs to explore subjects related to Victorian Britain. The nineteenth-century novels of Charles Dickens, Jane Austen, William M. Thackeray, and Anthony Trollope not only capture the feeling and attitudes of that era, but their descriptions bring to light the rich detail of everyday life and thought in nineteenth-century Britain.

_A Tale of Two Cities_, quickly draws the contrast between the prosperous, stable, urban, middle-class life of London and the chaotic, threatening, political, and social furor in revolutionary Paris. Even with little mention of jewelry, Charles Dickens creates a vivid sense of two very different social and economic climates for the production and consumption of jewelry, bringing to life the places and times that contributed to the shift from French to British leadership in the jewelry trade.

For those readers of other British fiction who may be baffled by the many details and items of Victorian daily life, Daniel Pool's guide to British social history organizes basic information about Victorian Britain into two parts. Written by a lawyer also trained as a political scientist, _What Jane Austen Ate and Charles Dickens Knew_ explains subjects ranging from London, the currency or the railroads, to city balls, country fairs, markets, and death, in fascinating chapters full of engravings, illustrations, and quotations taken directly from Victorian sources. The second part, arranged as a glossary, again uses contemporary prints to illustrate alphabetized entries which briefly
summarize the meaning of terms taken from life in Victorian England: terms such as, "banns," "butterfly kiss," or "ombre," along with the correct forms of address for the nobility and certain clergy.

A detailed introduction to the times, the people, the politics, and culture can also be found in biography, particularly biographies of Queen Victoria. My own library contains a 1928-copy of Lytton Strachey's *Queen Victoria*. Written originally in 1922 and now out of print, this tiny volume views the life of the monarch with balance, unlike Strachey's more usual satiric treatment of the Victorians and their times. Using well-footnoted primary sources, Strachey conveys an immediate sense of key people and political issues, as he maintains a considered appreciation for the girl of eighteen who suddenly found herself queen of a great nation. Leading so sheltered a life that she had never been allowed a moment alone by herself nor a room of her own, on the first morning of her reign Victoria ordered her bed moved out of her mother's room. This insulation kept Victoria separated from the excesses and debauchery of her Hanoverian uncle-kings, and almost certainly contributed to her inclination as Queen to represent what her subjects then, and many historians today, see as the middle class values that developed in nineteenth-century Britain out of the political, economic and social transformation, which helped to create and define the expanding middle classes.

To accompany Strachey, the Pitkin Souvenir Guide, *Queen Victoria*, provides black and white photos and colorful paintings of the queen, her family, and many of the significant people and events in Victoria's reign. The guide also lists Prime Ministers and key dates in the Queen's life. Using minimal text but showy illustrations, it provides
a pictorial impression of Alexandrina Victoria from childhood until death, in twenty-one pages that can visually enrich any reading of Victorian history.

For a comparative, thorough, and recent, biography, Stanley Weintraub published *Victoria, An Intimate Biography* in 1987. After Strachey, Weintraub’s extensive research, wit, and insight offer a readable yet in-depth reassessment of Victoria and her times; though Weintraub considers his "Victoria" not so much a debate with earlier historians as his unique scholarship built upon research of, “predecessors whose labors have been so vital to one’s own work.” These two biographies detail a broad historical context for the study of Victorian jewelry.

A contemporaneous “life of the Queen, and not a history of her reign,” was published by Charles Morris in 1897, to honor Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee. Writing from the perspective of social and economic privilege, Morris reads like a society columnist. When Art Nouveau and Arts and Crafts jewelers were protesting the abuses of capitalist economics and industrials working conditions, the primary textual evidence of this non-critical, celebratory coverage of major figures and public events illustrates the limited point of view, the superficiality, and social indifference in much of Victorian British society.

The Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations held in London in 1851 under the patronage and active leadership of Prince Albert, offers the opportunity for a comparative assessment of this defining mid-century event—the first important industrial exhibition and the first such international occasion in Britain. Asa Briggs titles his penetrating political and social history *Victorian People*, then opens with a chapter on the Exhibition of 1851. This brilliant retrospective of the mid-Victorian years warned that “[t]here was no single Victorian England, and there can be no easy return to the
Exhibition of 1851...” Writing in 1955, Briggs sought an “explanation of the difference in mood between 1850 and 1895 [that] lies in social structure and social adaptation in the middle years of the century.” For the student of Victorian jewelry, that “different mood” can be approached by contrasting the jewelry designs of 1850 and 1895.

The large, decorative, and often revivalist pieces from the middle of the century reflect the prosperous and expanding middle classes and the entrenched upper class, trying to cope with rapid transformation in the world around them, by idealizing the social organization of medieval feudal society while appropriating motifs from gothic design. By contrast, at the end of the century the jewelers from the Arts and Crafts Movement and Art Nouveau employed their jewelry design for social protest against the brutality of factory labor and the inequalities of capitalist economics.

Further understanding of the power of Victorian design comes from Charlotte Gere, a talented historian of the nineteenth-century decorative arts. In another self-proclaimed retrospective, *Victorian Jewelry Design* draws distinctions similar to Briggs's, contrasting old and new, revival and anticipation in the chapters on “Victorian Gothic” and “The Exhibition Years.” Gere traces the impact of medieval influences on British life and jewelry during Victoria’s reign by comparing the revivalist jewelry designed for the Exhibition of 1851 to jewels exhibited in Paris, Dublin, Philadelphia, and Florence, then back again to London for the Exhibition of 1862.

In her tribute to Prince Albert’s commitment to art in industry, Gere notes that Albert's "obsession with raising the standard of industrial design was of immense value at the time that saw such a great expansion of industrial methods in all branches of artistic production and the mass-production by mechanical methods of objects that had
previously been the exclusive province of the artist-craftsman.”  She also observes the power of period jewelry design to interpret nineteenth-century social issues:

Practically any new development, either artistic or mechanical, is reflected in the design of jewellery; the expansion of the middle class created a vast new public eager to acquire the jewellery and trinkets which they could now afford who were delighted by the ‘novelty’ of these pieces.

Like the hands-on, interdisciplinary jewelry studies have shown, so also this cursory literary foray reveals the artistic, technical, social, political, and economic issues that shaped the nineteenth century and determined the jewelry it produced. Good writing captures the imagination as it conveys historical meaning to enrich the cross-disciplinary learning available through antique jewelry studies. Regardless of the source: from the jewels themselves to literature about the era, from visual images to the material culture preserved in museums, in monographs on local, national and international issues, or from primary sources of oral, photographic, or advertising history, along with clothing fashions, industrial invention, the development of taste, and the use of design for social protest, there is no escaping the sheer quantity, variety, and diversity of Victorian jewelry, nor the ways in which it reflects its own complex times.

During this self-conscious “age of transition,” the interconnectedness between economic and technological development and the new social and political forces that this development unleashed gave shape to the life, thought, and jewelry of Victorian Britain. That legacy of connections allows historians today, to use a hands-on, interdisciplinary study of British Victorian jewelry, to explore the diverse nature of the nineteenth-century through the artifacts that those confident, ambitious, earnest, and inventive Victorians created and then left behind, for the curious among us now, to uncover.
Although complexity and change influenced much in Victorian Britain, simple narrative shapes my pedagogical style with students and clients who are interested in Victorian jewelry. I always learn from the jewelry; consequently I view my collection as an opportunity for teaching.\textsuperscript{75} Stories about the jewelry provide a perfect starting place for instruction. The charts in my handbook, “Identifying Jewelry Made in Britain during the Reign of Queen Victoria,”\textsuperscript{76} create a structure and a formalized guide to the history. Compact yet thorough, it lays out basic information in careful chronological arrangement. From work begun in 1993, the materials in that booklet draw distinctions and make connections that help clients, students, and scholars understand and appropriate the vast body of knowledge accessible through the study of Victorian jewelry.

Yet it is the stories that bring all this information to life, and a good story provides an easy hook for remembering the facts. Who doesn’t love a well-told tale, especially one about a queen, or the upper classes, a clever young inventor, or struggling workers, all tied to the wealth, adventure, and ambition of a mighty empire? Doing history well requires good story-telling, and in Victorian jewelry history even the stories have an interdisciplinary flavor, dictated by the nature of the jewelry that reflects the transition and growth of those past times.

Along with the ability to weave a good tale, the jewelry historian must have a broad base of knowledge and the skill to be able to respond to the jewel in the hand. In the end, even the content and organization of this paper appropriate the power of the
story-teller, combined with in-depth research, and the enduring power of the jewel to capture the imagination, shape the questions, and launch the quest for historical meaning and understanding.

1 “One-off” is a British term commonly used by the jewelry trade for custom jewels that are made only once. Listed as both an adjective and a noun by The American Heritage Dictionary, the noun is defined as “something that is not repeated or reproduced.” The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language. 3d ed., s.v. “one-off.”

2 The letter of confirmation and images taken at an April 2000 workshop given in Germany for the British Decorative and Fine Arts Society of Hamburg are in appendix A.

3 Mary Gilbert Palmer, Popular Themes in British Victorian Jewelry: 1837-1901, is available from http://cc.usu.edu/~tdw/. Click once on British Victorian Jewelry. Still under development are two more projects: a 7-8 minute Power Point presentation, “The New, The Different, The Unusual: Jewelry as Social Commentary on Victorian Britain from 1885-1901.” This talk will use examples of Victorian jewelry to introduce the novelty, inventiveness, and variety of English jewelry design that represents and conveys the economic, political and social change, restlessness, and discontent arising from the dramatic transformations occurring during the nineteenth-century in Britain. Secondly, The Evidence is on the Back, a 5-minute instructional I-movie [Internet movie] will demonstrate the dating of Victorian brooches based upon the construction of the clasp.

4 Mary Gilbert Palmer, Identifying Jewelry Made in Britain During the Reign of Queen Victoria (Logan: Utah State University student desktop publishing, 2001) is in appendix B.

5 Invitation for March 20, 2001 thesis talk and instructional session is in appendix C.

6 In 1997, a course flyer for a weekend workshop at New York University acknowledges that, “The conference also seeks to bridge the divide between the traditional approach to jewelry on the one hand and to decorative arts on the other, with both being seen as expressing the same stylistic impulses.” Expression of the Modern: Jewelry in the Context of the Decorative Arts (New York: New York University, 1997), course flyer.


10 Ibid., 73-75

11 Ibid., 76.


14 Ibid., footnote 13, p.15.


16 Berg and Clifford, 1-2

17 Ibid., 2.

18 Ibid., 3

19 Marcia Pointon, “Jewellery in Eighteenth-century England,” Berg and Clifford, eds., 120-146. N.B. Her endnotes provide additional information and valuable references.

20 Ibid., 122.

21 Ibid., endnote 12, p.146.


23 Ibid., 12.

25 Ibid., 11-20.
27 Ibid., 9.
28 Palmer. See appendix B.
30 Ibid., 69.
32 Walter Houghton makes a similar claim in his monograph on Victorian thought and culture. “The kind of inquiry here undertaken is the more important because to look into the Victorian mind is to see some primary sources of the modern mind.” Walter E. Houghton, The Victorian Frame of Mind 1830-1870 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), xiv. When I visit “The Victorian Vision” exhibition in London this summer, I plan to compare Houghton’s mid-1950’s conclusions about the defining Victorian issues with the exhibition’s analysis of Victorian vision from the perspective of fifty years later.
33 Victoria, 19.
34 Anthony Burton presents the lively and on-going debate over the purpose of a museum’s collections and the educational duty and vision of its staff, in his cultural history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries at the Victoria and Albert Museum. An in-depth look at the critical role of the museum for historical studies remains beyond the scope of this paper. However Burton’s approach to his subject offers a detailed, scholarly, and entertaining introduction to the wide range of scholarship done in museums, where much of the material culture that is available for historical research remains. Anthony Burton, Vision and Accident, The Story of the Victoria and Albert Museum (London: V & A Publications, 1999). Charlotte Klonk looks at “The National Gallery in London and its Public,” for indications of non-material consumption, the redefinition of the nation, and the social importance of galleries in Victorian Britain. Ibid., Berg and Clifford, 228-250.
35 Folklorists consider period objects a form of text to be read for social, cultural, and historical meaning.
38 Any quality pocket guide to British hallmarks will contain a brief history dating from the thirteenth century origins of fine metal testing and marking, along with charts of well-known maker’s marks and directions for the use of the guide to decode the marks. I use Judith Banister, ed., Dealer Guide to English Silver Hallmarks (London: W. Foulsham & Co. Ltd., 1995).
39 In 1854, Parliament legalized the use of 9, 12, and 15-carat gold for jewelry making. From 1575 until 1798, 22-carat gold had been required for jewelry; then in 1798, the jewelry standard was lowered to include 18-carat gold.
40 My instructional handbook provides useful information on dating, design, and materials. See appendix B.
41 Pointon, 120.
43 Ibid.
46 Ibid., 99.
47 Ibid., 10.
48 For very low cost, imperialist Britain gathered fine gemstones and precious metals form her empire to use “at home.” The available supply of gold increased substantially when gold was discovered in California in 1849 and again in Australia in 1850, thereby lowering gold costs. Then in 1854 the legal
standard for carat-gold in jewelry making was extended to 9, 12, and 15-carat gold, providing another
impetus to lower-priced gold for producers and consumers.

50 Leora Auslander, Taste and Power, “Furnishing Modern France” (Berkeley: University of California
Press, 1996), 1-423
and Clifford, eds.
52 Ibid. 65.
53 Mason, Jewellery Making in Birmingham. 61.
54 Corinna Pike, “In Defence of the Bug!,” Gem & Jewellery News. 8, no. 2, Society of Jewellery
Historians, 1999, 22.
55 New banking legislation favorable to the need for industrial capital, and laws to facilitate a "limited
partnership" offered protection to individuals and their families from business loss, thereby encouraging
capital investment in industrial ventures. British innovation in these two critical areas was much more
aggressive than on the continent. British legislation along with other factors that promoted industrial
prominence for Britain are discussed in chapter 2 and 3 of David Landes, The Unbound
Prometheus, Technological Change and Industrial Development in Western Europe from 1750 to the Present
57 Landes noted that Europeans in the eighteenth-century recognized "the contributions of high
consumption to technological progress" in Britain, as he observed the paradox between European "folk
wisdom that counseled thrift and abstemiousness," and the English experience of growing rich by the
consumption of the "great English middle class." Ibid., 221-2, 233.
58 Berg and Clifford, eds. 2.
Collier, Publisher, 1870).
61 Lytton Strachey, Queen Victoria (London: Chatto and Windus, 1928).
62 "When, after her first Council she crossed the ante-room and found her mother waiting for her, she said,
‘And now, Mamma, am I really and truly queen?’ ‘You see, my dear, that it is so.’ ‘Then Mamma, I hope
you will grant me the first request I make to you as queen. Let me be by myself for an hour.’ For an hour
she remained in solitude. Then she reappeared, and gave a significant order: her bed was to be moved out
of her mother’s room.” Ibid., 46-47.
65 Ibid., 9.
66 Chas. Morris, Queen Victoria, Her Reign and Diamond Jubilee (London: Edgewood Publishing Co.,
1898).
67 Asa Briggs, Victorian People, a Reassessment of Persons and Themes 1851-67 (Chicago: The University
68 Ibid., 9.
70 See also E. P. Thompson, William Morris, Romantic to Revolutionary, Part One. The escape into
historicism marked mid-century jewelry, in an appeal to the inclinations of the aspiring bourgeoisie and the
reactionary upper-classes—yearnings rooted in early-century Romanticism, which looked back to an
idealized past, seeking the perceived stability and order of feudal medieval society and gothic design. E. P.
Thompson characterized the young William Morris as the passionate "Romantic" yearning for the ideal and
the heroic in a society of cash values and self-interest, part of an intellectual movement that had abandoned
the depravity of industrial culture for the world of imagination and artistic creation. Ibid., 18-20.
71 Ibid., 59.
72 Ibid., 67.


74 To my list Houghton adds: optimistic and enthusiastic, along with anxious, rigid, dogmatic and hypocritical. Ibid., Houghton, xiv-xv.

75 The journalist notes this tendency as “my love of a good story...[t]hat makes the title of jewelry historian a perfect fit....” Sally H.N. Wright. “The History of Pretty Things,” *Herald Journal, Cache Magazine*, 2/9/01, 6-7. See appendix D.

76 See appendix B.
BOOKS CITED


ARTICLES CITED


UNPUBLISHED SOURCES CITED


OTHER SOURCES CITED


SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY


APPENDICES
APPENDIX A. Letter of Confirmation and Images

April 2000 Workshop for
British Decorative and Fine Arts Society of Hamburg
BRIDFAS OF HAMBURG

British Decorative & Fine Arts Society of Hamburg e.V.
Patron: Her Britannic Majesty's Consul General

Philosophenweg 31
22763 Hamburg
18th January 2000

Mary Gilbert Palmer, Graduate Student
Utah State University,
c/o Palmer Ranch, Box 37,
Richmond, Utah 84333, USA

Dear Ms Palmer,

BRIDFAS of Hamburg is pleased to confirm our invitation to you to conduct a workshop for our society here in Germany this spring. We will offer our members a Saturday hands-on workshop to be held in early April, following a three sessions format:

Your introductory lecture: JEWELLERY MADE IN BRITAIN DURING THE REIGN OF QUEEN VICTORIA.

Coffee Break

Small Group Handling Session: using jewellery from your own collection and the Period Identification Chart that you have developed.

Lunch

Identification of Members' Jewellery: a form of "Antiques Road Show", that encourages participants to apply what they have learned during the morning sessions, while you demonstrate ways of looking at a jewel for maker, country of origin*, techniques of manufacture, style, and other dating clues.

* we understand your primary interest is in British jewellery 1837 - 1901

We will limit enrollment to 20-24 because we naturally want to ensure security of your pieces, and to encourage the maximum hands-on participation by each member of the workshop.

We are very much looking forward to your event in our BRIDFAS spring programme and appreciate your willingness to offer this workshop to our society. With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

Judith Holst
IDENTIFYING JEWELRY
MADE IN BRITAIN DURING THE REIGN OF
QUEEN VICTORIA
1837 - 1901

Compiled by
MARY GILBERT PALMER
Acknowledgements

The organization used here for the Materials and Motifs outline draws upon categories first established by Margaret Flower (1951) in her standard work, Victorian Jewellery. Inspired by Flower’s organization, I began to develop my first Materials and Motifs flyer in 1993. Then Christie Romero asked to use and expand my work for her second edition of Warman’s Jewelry, 1998. My own editing and updating continues; so this brochure now reflects the research of Flower, Romero, and myself.


Special thanks are due my wonderful husband Tom Wilkerson for his ready encouragement, editorial assistance, and steady support during the creation of this brochure. My appreciation extends as well to the talented jewelers and dedicated staff at S.E. Needham Jewelers, Logan--now home to the Palmer Collection. Help in the creation of this brochure came from my teacher Brian Astorga and his Utah State University lab assistants, too numerous to mention. Tom Wilkerson photographed the jewelry from the Palmer Collection.

My teachers in the field of jewelry history are numerous, as I learn from anyone willing to discuss antique jewelry. However grateful acknowledgement and appreciation go to two leaders in the field with whom I’ve been fortunate to study: Judy Rudoe, my first mentor at the British Museum, and Amanda Triossi, inspiring teacher and special friend at Sotheby’s Institute, Oxford Street, London.

Mary Gilbert Palmer
Winter 2001
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JEWELRY IN BRITAIN DURING THE REIGN OF
QUEEN VICTORIA
1837-1901

Queen Victoria adored jewelry, wearing her many jewels often and with pride throughout her life. During her reign Britain emerged as the major producer of European jewelry expanding the previously elitist trade of one-off, hand-made jewels to include mass-produced, machine-made and hand-finished jewelry designed for the new middle and working classes. In a century of sweeping change, quantity and variety marked British jewelry production. Driven by expanding markets, new wealth, and precious metals and stones imported from the empire, the jewelry trade, like most of British life, felt the direct impact of industrialization, imperialism, and dramatic population growth:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1800</td>
<td>10 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850</td>
<td>20 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>37 million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Jewelry Styles in Victorian Britain**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Style</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Romantic Period</td>
<td>1837-1860</td>
<td>Early Victorian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Period</td>
<td>1860-1885</td>
<td>Mid-Victorian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aesthetic Period</td>
<td>1885-1901</td>
<td>Late Victorian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts and Crafts Movement</td>
<td>1890-1920</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beaux Arts Style</td>
<td>1890-1910</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art Nouveau</td>
<td>1895-1910</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
WORLD EVENTS AND BRITISH JEWELRY-MAKING

1760 - 1850 INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION flowering in Britain
1820 Ancient gold work discovered in Etruscan excavations^^
1832 invention of a pin-making machine to die-stamp jewelry pieces**
1837 Victoria ascends to the throne
1840 British patent to Elkingtons for electroplating gold and silver on base metals
1848 gold discovered in California; and in Australia two years later - 1850
1850's Japan opened to trade [1854-Perry's fleet; 1862-Japan in London Exhibition]
1850 Tube shaped ['trombone'] safety catch patented: C. Rowley, Birmingham
1851 Great Exhibition of Industry of All Nations, Crystal Palace, [Prince Albert]
1852 British patent granted for machine to heat press bog oak
1854 9, 12, 15 carat gold legalized for jewelry-making in England
1861 Death of Queen's beloved Prince Albert: mourning jewelry at Court til' 1880
1862 Castellani of Rome: Archeological Revival jewelry^^ shown at London Exhibition
1867 Egyptian Revival jewelry exhibited at Paris Exposition [1859 - Suez Canal begun & Queen Ah-Hotpe's jewels found in Egypt]
1876 Victoria becomes Empress of India
1890 Screwback earring findings commercially marketed for unpierced ears

** by 1850 pin-making machines began to render hand-made jewels old fashioned!
Mass produced jewelry was to be worn, not weighed for its worth.
Erect Victorian 1837 - 1860  Romantic Period
Classic, sentimental and naturalistic influences on a young queen, newly married (1840,) and starting a family. Charming imaginative jewelry, delicate, colorful and small, light in weight and design.

Bracelets, often in pairs, one each wrist
Brooches—small, and buckles
Chatelaines: medieval inspiration
Combs
Earrings, after 1850 small & pierced
Ferronieres: Renaissance-inspired hair ornaments
Finger rings: gold with diamonds set in silver,
   pinchbeck, cut steel, Wedgwood jasper-ware
Gold cannetille & silver filigree: brooches, earrings,
Gold chains, fine intricate work: 18 & 22 carat ’til 1854
Hand-painted miniatures
Hardstone cameos, small; some in shell
Lace pins, tiny often with hair; seed pearls for mourning
Lockets, crosses, slides: small & often worn on ribbon
Necklaces, collet-set single stones (also bracelets,) &
   simple strings of tiny natural stones
Trembling hair ornaments & brooches: en tremblant
Watch fobs, seals & lorgnettes on long chains

Anchors, hearts, & crosses; Arrows & daggers worn in chignons; Assyrian lotus flowers,
Algerian knots, Celtic, Gothic, Medieval, Renaissance; Botanical motifs: Language of Flowers
Foliage, feathers, festoons, baskets, sprays, scrollwork, shells, stars, crescents, serpents
Heraldry, Order of the Garter: strap & buckle; Ribbon bows; Hands: clasped, ringed, bracelet
POPULAR AND EMERGING THEMES 1837 - 1860

[Expanded on the Web - http://cc.usu.edu/~tdw/ Follow Link to: British Victorian Jewelry]

NATURALISM - designs taken from the natural world: flowers, birds, serpents, botanics, shells, feathers, foliage, sprays; messages with flowers: “The Language of Flowers”

SENTIMENTALISM - keeping loved ones near & dear: hearts, locket/brooches w/ hair & miniatures, charm bracelets: Queen had her children’s baby teeth; message jewels

HISTORICISM - idealization of the past in the face of rapid industrialization and change: Revivalist styles from archaeological finds: Classic, Celtic, Etruscan, Egyptian

MOURNING - special jewelry worn after a death: onyx, Whitby Jet [petrified coal], French Jet [glass,] vulcanite[early plastic,] bog oak, pressed horn, with seed pearls for tears

SCOTTISH ETHNIC PEBBLEWORK - silver-set agate, granite, malachite, citrine from Scottish mountains

MID - VICTORIAN 1860 - 1885 Grand Period

More and bigger was better. 1860 French Crinoline began grand “upholstered” women’s wear, requiring large, bold, often machine-made, still sentimental jewels. 1880’s diamonds, silver, pearls: decline of color

In Addition to most of the above:

Archaeological gold work: Etruscan wire & granulation Commemoratives; Corsage ornaments & posy holders Large Brooches, Bangles, & Lockets on wide chains Mosaics: Florentine hardstone; Roman glass: tesserae Mourning jewels: Onyx, jet, vulcanite, Gutta Percha Necklaces for evening; Lockets w/ compartments for day Painted porcelain & ivory miniatures in necklaces, brooches, bracelets, earrings, rings Pendant Earrings, pierced; Pendants & drops on Swivel Brooches brooches & bracelets

Tartanware papier-mâché brooches & bracelets

Architectural styling, Cabochon cuts, Engraving & chasing on silver & gold, Fringes & Festoons, Gilding on base metal, Revivalist motifs: Etruscan, Egyptian, Greek, Assyrian; Small stones set in larger stones, Cameos habillés, Brazilian Tortoise Leaf beetles, Sports Jewels & Novelties 1880’s

Amber: 1878-83 necklaces Plastics
Bloodstone, Moss Agate Pearls, larger Bone, ivory, bog oak Shell cameos Diamonds return 1880’s Silver for day French Jet (black glass) Silver filigree & colored stones Gold: 9, 12, 15 ct., bloom Horn, carved & pressed Tiger claw Lava, shell, composition Vulcanite Marcasite replace cut-steel Whitby Jet:(pet-Niello: metallic enamels rifed coal)
LATE VICTORIAN  1885 - 1901
End of the century multiple influences & trends: naturalism, sports, Japanoise, novelty, gentlemen’s jewels; Women’s smaller, spare, asymmetrical; soft natural curves, originality. Few day pieces, but many at night

In Addition to many of the above:

Bachelor buttons, cufflinks, cravat pins
Bangles (narrow) & link bracelets
Beauty, lace/handy pins, bar pins — pins replace brooches
Chatelaines revived
Commemoratives: Victoria’s Jubilees 1887 & 1897
Earrings: small drops or buttons, humor trinkets
Hatpins, stick pins, scarf pins & slides
Inter-carved crystals, reversed-painted intaglios
Japanoise: bamboo, fans, storks, cattails (bulrushes,)
cherry blossoms, single birds: asymmetry
Lavaliers, Lorgnettes, Nanny’s pins
Longchains with watches, fobs, pendants
Miniatures exchanged for engagement in fobs & lockets
Padlock bracelets, often with charms
Sentiment pins with names & mottoes: baby, Mipah,
Mother, best wishes, Christina

Naturalistic motifs: Serpents, birds, flowers, insects, lizards, stars & crescents; Novelties: Beetles, humming birds, teeth, tusks, pets, miniature plates, jeweled skull/ bird moved by Voltaic battery

Austro-Hungarian and Garland Influences
A Revivalist style adapted from architectural motifs appearing in Vienna about 1875. Open pierced work with scrolls, foliate designs, and finely detailed cherubs, griffins, or grotesques stamped in silver gilt or silver, sometimes with semi-precious stones: Chatelaines, brooches, chain & link bracelets and necklaces.
ARTS & CRAFTS 1890 - 1920  Art as Social Commentary
Artisans' correction to mass production: mourning loss of hand-work, individual craftsmanship, and high quality. Craftsmen and women made pieces by hand from start to finish, to counter growing consumerism and the immiseration of workers trapped in factories doing piecework. Simple, often geometric design.

- Bracelets, brooches, buckles
- Cloak clasps, festoon necklaces,
- Hatpins, "paper clip" chains, pendants
- Rings, watch fobs, sash ornaments
- Scarf pins & slides, stickpins
- Uncut & cabochon stones, blister & freshwater pearls, wood, mixture of materials

- All hand work: hammered, patinated, acid-etched metal surfaces
- Bright enameling, ceramics, glass
- Silver and non-precious metals: brass, bronze, copper, very little gold

ART NOUVEAU 1895 - 1910  First Modern Art Movement
End of century originality, creativity; New Art by "eccentric jewelers" who broke with tradition in favor of original design, color, texture and overall effect. Design intended for shock value, often juxtaposing materials, to convey tragedy, ennui, or depression. Graceful, fluid, voluptuous lines, whiplash curves, scrollwork and intense colors; Motifs from nature; Dragon flies, fireflies, insects & scrolls, stylized flowers: irises, orchids, lily of the valley; Female faces, flowing women's figures (draped & nude).

- Bracelets, bangles, brooches, buckles
- Dog collars, festooned & flowing necklaces
- Hair combs & ornaments, hatpins
- Lavaliers, lockets, pendants, sash ornaments
- Rings, watch pins, scarf slides/pins, stick pins

- Amber, horn, tortoiseshell, ivory
- Colored cabochon stones of all values
- Enamel, especially plique à jour
- Gold, gilt, silver, base metals: often mixed
- Hornwork & glass
ON COLLECTING....

More than one of anything is a collection.

Anon

If you intend to collect, "it is a mistake to think that bargains are not to be had from dealers who specialize in a carefully selected stock....But the greatest mistake of all is to imagine that a good collection can be made up of bargains.

...the best collections have always born a strong imprint of the taste of the collector and the worst are those on which money has been spent in the hope of a rising market.

...there is much to be said for being a regular customer even in a small way."

DORIS LANGLEY MOORE, "On Collecting Jewellery," in Margaret Flower's VICTORIAN JEWELLERY. 1951
1897

VICTORIA’S DIAMOND JUBILEE PORTRAIT
TRY OUT YOUR IDENTIFICATION SKILLS

MATCH THESE DESCRIPTIONS WITH THE IMAGE NUMBERS

A_______ C.1875 WHITBY JET EARRINGS
B_______ MID-VICT. SCOTTISH STRAP & BUCKLE SILVER PEBBLE BROOCH
C_______ C.1845 LACE PIN HAND-WORKED IN GOLD WITH HAIR
D_______ C.1840 GOLD, ONYX, AND SEED PEARL MOURNING PIN
E_______ BEAUX ARTS PASTE AND GILT BROOCH, C.1885; FRENCH?
F_______ C.1865 CLASSICAL HARDSTONE CAMEO SET IN GOLD
G_______ C.1865 BRAZILIAN BEETLE SET IN GOLD ETRUSCAN WORK
H_______ C.1895 SIGNED CLARIFIED HORN, HAND-PAINTED BIRD; FRENCH
I_______ MID-VICT., 15 KT GOLD & CABOCHON GARNET KNOT BROOCH
J_______ AESTHETIC BROOCH: SWALLOWS IN SILVER WITH PASTE; C.1885
K_______ 1830’S GOLD CANNETILLE WORK AND AMETHYST EARRINGS
L_______ NIELLO WORK IN SILVER LORGNETTE, 1880’S
M_______ 1830’S GOLD LEAF WITH ROSECUT DIAMONDS SET IN SILVER
N_______ C.1885 CELLULOID BROOCH OF LONDON BRIDGE SET IN GILT
O_______ C.1900 SIGNED RUSKIN CERAMIC AND SILVER BROOCH
P_______ C.1840 GOLD, ENAMEL, AND SEED PEARL LOCKET WITH BIRDNEST
Q_______ C.1895 GLASS AND PEWTER BROOCH; ARTS AND CRAFTS
R_______ SILVER PLATED OPEN-PIERCED WORK BROOCH; BEAUX ARTS
S_______ C.1900 MASS-PRODUCED BASE METAL MOURNING BROOCH: AFTER VICTORIA’S GOLD & ENAMEL: IN MEMORY OF MY DEAR BROTHER
T_______ C. 1900 CLARIFIED HORN SCARF SLIDE; ARTS AND CRAFTS
U_______ 1890’S 9KT. GOLD AND SEED PEARL CRESCENT BROOCH
V_______ C.1900 GILT ON MACHINE-PRESSED BASE METAL FIREFLY; ART

[See answers at the bottom of the Table of Contents]  NOUVEAU

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JEWELRY from THE PALMER COLLECTION
FRONT COVER - Privately held oil portrait, electronically altered

1897, DIAMOND JUBILEE Photo Portrait - The Royal Collection © Her Majesty The Queen
APPENDIX C. Invitation March 20, 2001

Thesis Lecture and Instructional Session
The Power Of The Jewel

Mary Gilbert Palmer, jewelry historian
S.E. NEEDHAM JEWELERS
is pleased to announce
an evening of
Victorian Jewelry Studies
to mark the Centenary of
the death of
Queen Victoria

Tuesday, 20 March 2001
7:30 p.m.

141 North Main Street
Logan, Utah

Please join us for

THE POWER OF THE JEWEL

Thesis Lecture & Hands-on
Jewelry Instruction
with
Mary Gilbert Palmer, jewelry historian
Specialist in British Victorian Jewelry

R.S.V.P.

Kindly Call to hold your place
as seating is limited
435•258•5119
APPENDIX D. Newspaper Article

“The History of Pretty Things”
Sally H. N. Wright

Herald Journal, “Cache Magazine”
9 February 2001

[Appendix D is located in pocket of binder.]