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'... information for the ignorant and aid for the advancing ...'

Macmillan's "Art at Home Series", 1876 – 1883

Some of the best known volumes of domestic design advice published in the late-nineteenth century first appeared as magazine articles; perhaps most famously, Charles L. Eastlake's *Hints on Household Taste in Furniture, Upholstery and Other Details* (1868), was originally published in the *Cornhill Magazine* (1864) and the *Queen* (1864 – 66). This process occurred on both sides of the Atlantic, for instance, the series of articles on "Beds, Tables, Stools and Candlesticks", written by the American art critic Clarence M. Cook for *Scribner's Illustrated Monthly*, were collected, re-arranged and re-published as *The House Beautiful* in 1877.¹ However, this change in format was not always straightforward, as is demonstrated by the production of three volumes in Macmillan's "Art At Home Series".

Published between 1876 and 1883, the "Art at Home Series" was a collection of domestic advice manuals aimed explicitly at an expanding lower middle-class readership. Devised and edited by the Reverend W. J. Loftie, the series eventually encompassed subjects as diverse as *Amateur Theatricals* and *Sketching from Nature*. However, as sources for the design historian, arguably the most interesting of the final twelve volumes are the four books that dealt exclusively with aspects of the domestic interior. First issued between 1876 – 78, Rhoda and Agnes Garrett's *Suggestions for House Decoration* (1876); Mrs Orrinsmith's *The Drawing Room* (1877); Mrs Loftie's *The Dining Room* (1878); and, Lady Barker's *The Bedroom and Boudoir* (1878), offered a range of advice based on both professional and personal experiences.

These books and their illustrations are mentioned in almost every study that considers the late-nineteenth century domestic interior, where they have been interpreted as indicators of how people furnished their rooms during the late-1870s.² Nonetheless many writers have missed the value of the "Art at Home Series" as a set of cultural documents: Mark Girouard, for example, simply dismissed it as 'a very superficial series of little books, aimed at the popular market'.³ However, research into the production of "Art at Home Series" suggests that the significance of these texts is precisely all that Girouard has rejected. The advice

offered was elementary, but these “little books” were far from superficial. Instead, they should be interpreted as a complex collection of discourses, which revealed contemporary concerns with what Nicola Humble has identified as ‘new constructions of class, revised gender roles and relations, regional and national identities, history, economics and the momentous clash between science and religion.’⁴

Unravelling the complex relationship between the “Art at Home Series” and a range of contemporary magazines, in terms of its production and its reception, this essay will chart the publication of the books and highlight the difficulties of using them as conventional sources of information about the Victorian interior. In particular, this essay focuses on the images used to illustrate the “Art at Home Series”, which had been previously published in a magazine and appeared concurrently in an American book. It suggests that while this may have resulted in a transatlantic exchange of Aesthetic ideas, it also raised issues surrounding copyright.

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The production of the series can be traced through the correspondence collated in the General Letterbooks and other collections of letters held in the Macmillan Archive.⁵ This correspondence has been used to construct a narrative that recounts the publication of the “Art at Home Series”. These letters revealed the initial plan for the series, recorded the commissioning of authors, illustrators, engravers and bookbinders, and charted the progress of the volumes as they were written – or in some cases remained unwritten. They also provided an insight into the marketing techniques employed, mentioned the reviews that appeared in a wide range of journals, and gave a sense of the overall success of the venture.

In March 1876, following discussions with a representative from the American publishing house, Coates & Co., of Philadelphia, W. J. Loftie wrote to Alexander Macmillan, co-founder of Macmillan & Co., outlining his scheme for an entire series of small “Art at Home” books. Aimed at a readership composed of ‘people of moderate or small income’, initially, this joint venture was to comprise eight books; four to be written in England and four in America, all of which would be

published by Coates.⁶ The four British volumes (which it seems had already been commissioned and in some cases were nearing completion) were described briefly. They included Loftie's own contribution to the series initially entitled *Art at Home*; Rhoda and Agnes Garrett's *House Decoration*; and two other volumes (that were never published) called *Good Things We Have Lost: or Hints from Old English Households* and, *Hints from Foreign Households*.⁷ Loftie proposed that Macmillan should publish these four books but not the four unnamed American volumes which he felt 'would be of little or no use here: as the subjects proposed were such as would require local treatment.'⁸ Instead he wanted Macmillan to commission at least four more books, including *Art at Table* and *Dress*, while proposing J. J. Stevenson for a volume on *Domestic Architecture* and John Hullah to write on *Music at Home*.⁹ Loftie recommended that the books should be 8vo., approximately 150 pages long and illustrated with relatively cheap photozincographs. He suggested that the authors should receive £30 or £40 for their copyright, though naturally, the better-known authors would receive more money for their work, and he thought that the books should sell for a shilling, which corresponded to the price of 25 cents proposed by Coates. Having volunteered to oversee the whole project in return for 4 per cent on the retail price, Loftie naturally sought to expand the series even further. He wrote:

The list of eight subjects given above by no means exhausts those of which I have thought. Miss Plues could do a very pretty book on Gardening. Another of the series might be on Needlework & Embroidery, generally, another on Sketching from Nature, another on Carving & amateur Carpentry; even reading aloud & elocution would make one, as well as dancing & gymnastics. Art would however be kept strictly in view, & the general title of the series would be Art at Home.¹⁰

Alexander Macmillan expressed doubts 'about the serial form' of the scheme being more inclined to think one book would have been better, as he thought 'The subjects so topple over into each other.'¹¹ Eventually, however, Macmillan & Co., were to publish twelve volumes as the "Art at Home Series".

Planned as a collectable set, from the outset the series was given a clear visual identity. The British books were bound in a suitably “artistic” blue-grey cloth, bearing the title, the authors’ names and the Macmillan initial engraved by J. D. Cooper.¹² The four American volumes eventually published by Porter & Coates were bound in brown cloth and decorated with the “Art at Home” motif designed by Harry Soane.¹³ This motif, which is signed and dated “1876” by Soane, appeared on the title page of both the British and American books.

This outward visual unity belies the diverse and often contradictory advice given by the contributing authors: each volume was written as a distinct text that highlighted its own concerns and scarcely related to others in the series. This discrepancy was noted by the *Saturday Review* when the first two books were issued:

Mr. Loftie has a leaning towards drawing-room papers with no patterns, and towards painted or panelled dining rooms. But if one turns from his manual to Miss Garrett’s – and it is to be remarked that these works belong to the same series, and are bound in cloth of the same tint, “the bluest of things grey and the greyest of things blue” – there is a fresh perplexity. The dining room paper in Miss Garrett’s design is not plain but laid out in large squares, interlaced with the leaves and flowers of some unknown specimens of the vegetable creation.¹⁴

The final twelve books that formed the British series fell into several groups. Historians have tended to focus on the moral aspect of William Loftie’s *A Plea for Art in the House*, which, after all was subtitled “*with special reference to the economy of collecting works of art, and the importance of taste in education and morals*”. The religious sentiment expressed in his final chapter certainly served to remind the reader that Loftie was an Anglican clergyman, moreover, given the links between the religious revival and design reform, this was the part of Loftie’s book that has received most attention from twentieth-century design historians. However, addressing male readers, much of Loftie’s treatise, like Andrew Lang’s *The Library*, is largely concerned with connoisseurship and the long-term financial benefits of

collecting as a form of investment. Margaret Oliphant's *Dress*, John Hullah's *Music in the House* and the Pollocks' *Amateur Theatricals* offered historical information on these subjects, which suggested suitable forms of appearance, behaviour and entertainment in the home for lower-middle class aspirants. Other volumes, including Charles G. Leland's *The Minor Arts*, Elizabeth Glaister's *Needlework*, and Tristram J. Ellis's *Sketching from Nature*, can best be classified as instruction manuals, which gave detailed descriptions of the techniques used in a variety of decorative arts and crafts.

The contributing authors form an interesting group of subject specialists and writers, and while some of them, notably Mrs Oliphant and Lady Barker, had professional associations with Macmillan, others seem to be personal acquaintances and colleagues of Loftie. William Loftie is an interesting figure, with a surprisingly substantial entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. Born in Tandraghee, County Armagh in July 1839, Loftie graduated from Trinity College, Dublin in 1862. In 1865 he took holy orders and in the same year he married the widowed Martha Jane Burnett (née Anderson). Loftie served three curacies before becoming assistant chaplain at the Chapel Royal, Savoy in 1871, where he remained until retiring in 1895. Managing to combine his clerical duties with journalism, Loftie 'wrote voluminously in periodicals.'¹⁵ He contributed to the SPCK's *People's Magazine* (1867 – 73) and was appointed its editor in 1872. It is here that he published illustrations by Kate Greenaway, having bought the first drawings that she sold publicly after their exhibition at the Dudley Gallery in 1868. Loftie is also credited with having advised Greenaway to 'devote her energies solely to the illustration of children's books'¹⁶: several of her illustrations appeared in volumes from the "Art at Home Series". Loftie worked for a range of journals, writing for the Church of England newspaper, the *Guardian* between 1870 – 76, and joining the staff of the *Saturday Review* in 1874 and of the *National Observer* in 1894. Loftie's numerous publications reflected his antiquarian interests, many of them covering aspects of archaeology, art and architecture; and while he wrote fourteen books on the history of London, he is also known for editing the *Orient Line Guide for Travellers* and his studies of Egyptian artefacts. Loftie's literary connections, wide-ranging artistic and

archaeological interests and membership of organisations and clubs, such as the Savile and the SPAB, meant he was ideally placed to recruit suitable authors.¹⁷

The first two books in the series, Loftie's *A Plea for Art in the House* and the Garretts' *Suggestions for House Decoration*, were both published in November 1876. The Garretts' book was based on a paper entitled "How to Improve the Interior of Modern Houses," which Rhoda Garrett had presented at the Social Science Congress in 1876: it was later published in *The Transactions of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science* and in *Macmillan's Magazine*.¹⁸ A letter from Alexander Macmillan to Rhoda Garrett indicated the marketing methods employed in promoting the series, which was based wholly on successful reviews of the books in a wide range of magazines and newspapers:

We have already sent a copy to Mr S C Hale of the *Art Journal* & I have instructed our clerk to offer him clichés of any of the illustrations for insertion in his paper along with any review he may have. The *Building News* has borrowed some. Copies were sent to two Manchester, two Birmingham, two Liverpool and one Leeds paper, also to the *Scotsman & Glasgow Herald*. Altogether we sent about 60 copies all over the country.¹⁹

Reviews for the first two volumes have been located in national and provincial newspapers, trade journals and the architectural press. On the whole they were favourable, and the comments of the London *Examiner* were reproduced in later editions:

In these decorative days the volumes bring calm counsel and kindly suggestions, with information for the ignorant and aid for the advancing, that ought to help many a feeble, if well-meaning pilgrim along the weary road, at the end whereof, far off, lies the House Beautiful – many a pilgrim to whom otherwise the Slough of Despond and the Hill of Difficulty had been unsurmountable obstacles. If the whole series but continues as it has begun – if the volumes yet to be rival the two initial ones, it will be beyond praise as a library of household art.²⁰

It is perhaps not surprising that the review of the “Art at Home Series” appeared on the same page as a review for an edition of Bunyan’s *Pilgrims Progress*, the text that was the origin of the phrase “House Beautiful”.

Being ‘on the regular staff’²¹, Loftie managed to secure a lengthy commentary in the *Saturday Review*. However, the anonymous reviewer, having highlighted examples of contradictory advice given by Loftie and the Garretts, devoted most of the review to criticising the contemporary ‘decorative craze’:

Every few months we see a change in the highest decorative society; one hobby is as good as another hobby and no better. People who do not care about Queen Anne and Chippendale have their own tastes of some other sort, and do not mind being looked on as little better than the wicked. Perhaps the one great moral effect of the fashion of decoration is that it provides matter for talk as exciting as scandal, and less dangerous. When you pick a lady’s curtains to pieces her character escapes criticism. To provide a harmless substitute for scandal, and to make even London houses not uninteresting to their occupants, is the office of domestic art.²²

The reviews published by the trade and professional journals were mixed. A highly favourable review was published in the *Building News*, which amounted to five columns and included two illustrations from Rhoda and Agnes Garrett’s *Suggestions for House Decoration*. However, the sarcastic and misogynistic review in the *Furniture Gazette* drew attention to inaccuracies and faults detected within the Garretts’ treatise, commenting that these were errors

such as would be made by the fair sex, who are rightly or wrongly, in the habit of looking for advice and instruction to the sterner half of creation, and of taking for granted many clever men’s sayings, which they would doubt or at least question, if they came from their own sex.²³

The Macmillan Archive reveals that the finished plates of the first two volumes were shipped across the Atlantic in November 1876 to the American publishers, who were at liberty to publish the books in ‘another form if desired.’²⁴ Subsequently, reviews also appeared in American journals: the four American books carried excerpts of reviews published in various journals, including *The North American*, *The American Builder* and the *Church’s Musical Visitor*. A lengthy review traced in *The American Architect and Building News* in May 1877 commented on the inappropriate nature of English advice for American readers.

The principles of taste as laid down in these books, though elementary, are in the main sound and of useful application anywhere, but in some respects they seem better suited to the atmosphere of London than our own. ... We Americans may continue to rejoice in our contrasts of positive and neutral colours, and, under our clear skies, to profit by the purity and freshness of bright walls.²⁵

The reviewer also criticised the illustrations to Loftie’s volume:

We must protest too against the woodcuts in Mr Loftie’s book, which certainly do more harm than good; that on p. 38 especially we might select as an example to be avoided in every respect of subject and execution.²⁶

The illustrations commissioned or chosen for the “Art at Home Series” can also be identified through correspondence in the Macmillan Archive. Prominent Suffragists, Rhoda and Agnes Garrett were trained interior designers who ran a successful house decorating business from their Gower Street home, creating fashionable “Queen Anne” style interiors.²⁷ The Macmillan Archive shows that they had produced their own illustrations for *House Decoration*, which included several of their own furniture designs and decorative schemes.²⁸ However, the other three volumes that also dealt with the domestic interior were illustrated in a far more complex manner, as Mrs Haweis revealed in her stinging criticism of the series:

I vainly overhauled the many manuals of good advice now daily pouring from the press – among them *'House Decoration'* in the Art at Home series – a series, by the way, which, considering how good was the primal notion, has been ill-carried out by the writers, and is meagre in suggestions to a miracle. Not a hint for the real beautifying of stoves, nor of the house inside or out, was to be found, save the time worn command to destroy mirrors and have 'Queen Anne' fenders; and the illustrations, which are peculiarly American in character, better suited the articles in *'Scribner's Illustrated Monthly'*, where they first appeared, than the English series, which they probably fettered.²⁹

The illustrations, many by Inglis, Sandier and Lathrop, were indeed taken from "Beds and Tables, Stools and Candlesticks", the series of eleven illustrated articles on house furnishing written by Clarence M. Cook. Originally appearing in *Scribner's Monthly* between June 1875 and May 1877, the first article opened thus:

... There never was a time when so many books written for the purpose of bringing the subject of architecture – its history, its theories, its practice – down to the level of the popular understanding, were produced as in this time of ours. And, from the house itself, we are now set to thinking and theorizing about the dress and decoration of our rooms: how best to make them comfortable and handsome; and books are written, and magazine and newspaper articles, to the end that on a matter which concerns everybody, everybody may know what s the latest word.³⁰

In *Sweetness and Light*, his study of late-nineteenth century "Queen Anne Style", Mark Girouard discussed these articles and the influence of the decorator Daniel Cottier, whose furniture designs appear in many of the illustrations and who later designed the front cover of *The House Beautiful*. Within this discussion Girouard claimed that Macmillan & Co., had plagiarised Cook's illustrations for use in the "Art at Home Series".

This accusation of plagiarism has been repeated recently³¹, but research has revealed that in March 1877, Cook had written to Frederick Macmillan offering him

the British publication rights to his articles. Macmillan, however, after asking Loftie for his advice on the matter, was to refuse this proposal.³² He wrote to Cook:

I know your articles in "Scribners" well & since your letter came have talked them over with my partners & some artistic friends. The general impression is that your papers, as they stand, would not be suitable for English sale. You can no doubt well understand that the conditions in the two countries are somewhat different, that the difficulties encountered in house finding & furnishing on the one are not those in the other, while of course there are in your articles many purely local allusions that would be meaningless to English readers. In view of these things the only plan that seems to us practical would be for us to buy the very beautiful illustrations & to re-cast or re-write the text so as to suit it to English requirements.³³

After brief negotiations, Macmillan & Co., bought electrotypes of the original wood engravings from Scribner for one hundred pounds, and immediately set about finding authors willing to write new books around the identical illustrations many of which represented furnishings displayed in Daniel Cottier's New York showroom.³⁴

Before the electroplates had even crossed the Atlantic, Mrs Loftie had proposed a book titled *The Dining Room*.³⁵ Letters to her husband from George Lillie Craik indicated that both Lady Barker and Mrs Orrinsmith, having been shown copies of Cook's original articles, were equally confident that they could produce suitable texts, which later became *The Bedroom and Boudoir* and *The Drawing Room* respectively.³⁶

These three volumes were all written and published, complete with their American illustrations between 1877 and 1878, and a comparison of *The House Beautiful* with the "Art at Home" books reveals the different approaches Mrs Orrinsmith, Lady Barker and Mrs Loftie took when writing around these images.

Mrs Lucy Orrinsmith (née Faulkner) was a craftswoman who, with her brother Charles and younger sister Kate, had worked with William Morris, producing panels of hand-painted tiles and embroideries after designs by Burne-Jones. She was also a talented wood-engraver, having trained in the art at the office of “Smith & Linton” under Harvey Orrin Smith, whom she married in 1870. Mrs Orrinsmith’s involvement with the “Art at Home Series” seems to be the result of a friendship with her Beckenham neighbours, George Lillie Craik, a partner in Macmillan & Co., and his wife, the novelist Dinah Mulock Craik.³⁷

The *Scribner’s* illustrations appeared in only six of the final eight chapters of her book on *The Drawing-Room*. Mrs Orrinsmith largely resolved the difficulties of writing text round these illustrations by reorganising them, inventing new descriptions, and re-naming many of the cuts. For instance, an illustration ‘drawn by Mr. Lathrop, from “the life”’³⁸ appeared in *The House Beautiful* titled “A French Settee”, but reappeared as “A ‘Sheraton’ Sofa” in *The Drawing Room*. Similarly, an “Italian Fire-screen” described by Cook becomes ‘lovely pieces of Japanese embroidery... worked in glowing silks, representing peacocks’ feathers’³⁹ in *The Drawing Room*. It is arguable whether this says more about the knowledge of the author, the quality of the image or the fluidity of its meaning.⁴⁰

Mrs Orrinsmith’s manipulation of image and text is best demonstrated in her chapter on “Furniture”, where in a damning critique of contemporary workmanship and popular taste, she advised her readers to ‘Buy old furniture for the drawing-room’⁴¹ and carefully arranged the woodcuts to construct an illustrated history of furniture styles. However, the re-use of the illustrations, particularly the designs by E. W. Godwin, caused criticism in the professional press. Indeed, the review in the *Building News* prompted an angry response from Macmillan, who wrote to the editor:

Our attention has been called to a review of Mrs Orrinsmith’s “The Drawing Room” which appears in your paper of the 16th inst. In which you point to an illustration as “taken bodily from the Building News”.

We would point out to you that while the book was in the press someone said that he thought that this cut had appeared in your paper, and Mr Loftie

called at your office for the purpose of asking permission to reproduce it. He was assured there however that he was under a mistake and that the design must have been published elsewhere.⁴²

A biting review written by Godwin himself also appeared in *The British Architect and Northern Engineer*. His designs, first published in the *British Architect*⁴³, had also appeared in Cook's original articles and *The House Beautiful*, where, modified by Lathrop, they are at least, acknowledged as his work. What Godwin condemned was their unacknowledged reproduction in the "Art at Home Series":

In the *Art at Home series*, Mrs Orrinsmith lectures us on *the Drawing Room*. In her last chapter she says (p. 142), "The encouragement of original ideas has been throughout the motive of this book". She also trusts that certain of her readers are "convinced that personal perseverance in the search after decorative beauty will be rewarded by results apparently unattainable except by those who have some gift of the nature of inspiration". This is all very fine, but if Mrs Orrinsmith and her friends would have the grace to acknowledge the sources of their "original ideas", it would enlighten readers as to the method to adopt in searching "after pure decorative beauty" ...⁴⁴

A design for a fireplace by E. W. Godwin was also among the illustrations allocated to Lady Barker. Probably unaware of its origins in *The Architect*, Lady Barker did not acknowledge the designer. Moreover, ignoring the merits of the design, she remarked that the fireplace 'shows a pretty arrangement of picture, mirror and shelves for china'⁴⁵: one can almost hear Godwin gnashing his teeth.

The Macmillan Archive reveals that, as an established and popular writer, the Jamaican-born Lady Barker was offered £50 for suitable text to complement the electrotypes. Famous for publications that recounted her experiences of life in the colonies, including *Station Life in New Zealand* (1870), *Station Amusements in New Zealand* (1873) and *A Year's Housekeeping in South Africa* (1877), she also wrote stories for *Good Words for the Young* and reviewed books for the *Times*. In 1874,

Lady Barker had become editor of the Church of England family magazine *Evening Hours*. This periodical serialised several of her books, including her “Notes on Cooking” later collected and re-issued as *First Lessons in the Principles of Cooking* (1874), which prompted her appointment as the first Lady Superintendent of Henry Cole’s newly founded National School of Cookery.

The Bedroom and Boudoir was written very quickly, proposed shortly after Lady Barker’s return from Natal and while she was preparing to leave England once more; this time for Mauritius, where her husband, Frederick Broome, had been appointed Colonial Secretary. Some sections of the text are clearly based on her earlier series of articles for *Evening Hours* titled “Houses and Housekeeping”, particularly those on “Bedrooms” and “The Nursery”. However, in the passages that described the illustrations, Lady Barker also drew heavily on Cook’s articles. The most glaring example concerns the description of a Japanese chest. Compare first, Cook’s original text:

No one but a man knows what a blessing this shirt-drawer is. It will hold the week’s wash of shirts without tumbling or crowding, and nothing else need be allowed to usurp a place in it. In these four drawers is room for all one man’s linen; and in the little closet, which contains three drawers and a hiding-place for money (which the owner did not discover until after a year’s possession), there is room for all his trinkets and valuables. When the two boxes are placed together, the whole measures three feet one inch in length by three feet four high, and one foot five deep.⁴⁶

with Lady Barker’s version:

But the male heart will be sure to delight specially in that one deep drawer for shirts, and the shallow one at the top for collars, pocket-handkerchiefs, neckties, and so forth. The lower drawers would hold a moderate supply of clothes, and the little closet contains three drawers, besides a secret place for money and valuables. When the two boxes, for they are really little else, are

placed side by side they measure only three feet one inch long; three feet four high, and one foot five deep.⁴⁷

Given her colonial experiences, when the plates from Cook's articles were allocated to the authors of the "Art at Home Series", Lady Barker was apportioned any that illustrated non-European furniture, regardless of its original placing in Cook's text. Thus, in *The Bedroom and Boudoir*, Lady Barker described a Chinese Cabinet, an Indian Screen, a Chinese sofa, and a bamboo chair 'of a familiar pattern to all travellers on the P. and O. boats, and whose acquaintance I first made in Ceylon.'⁴⁸ All these illustrations originally appeared in Cook's chapter on *The Living Room*.

Whereas Mrs Orrinsmith made endless references to furnishings by Morris & Co., the necessity of fitting the text around the illustrations made it impossible for Lady Barker to advocate a particular style, especially when she began to write about bedroom furniture. Indeed the review published in *The Spectator* commented on these illustrations:

We cannot conclude without a word or two about the numerous illustrations; may of them are very inferior – and this one does not expect in a work on art – while some of them, those especially in which a figure is introduced, are quite ludicrously bad. Lady Barker herself cannot be satisfied with them, and they are most detrimental to the book, as ones eye is naturally first caught by them, in turning over the leaves. A few carefully chosen and carefully drawn subjects would have been far better in every way.⁴⁹

The difficulty posed by the images was most apparent in her chapter fittingly titled "Odds and Ends of Decoration", where she managed to describe a picture stand, a bamboo sofa, a piano and 'a great deal of "rubbish" dear, perhaps, only to the owner for the sake of association.'⁵⁰ Here, before paraphrasing Cook's description of a South American pitcher, in an ironic reference to the unhappy mix of text and images, Lady Barker commented:

The worst of such a delightful den as I am imagining, or rather describing, is the tendency of the most incongruous possessions to accumulate themselves in it as time goes on.⁵¹

While the illustrations Lady Barker described had been bought from *Scribner's Illustrated Monthly*, research also shows that a chapter of *The Bedroom and Boudoir* had been written by another author and had already appeared in another journal.

Under the editorship of Philip Harwood, W. J. Loftie had joined the staff of the *Saturday Review* in 1874, and from that time his wife, Martha Jane Loftie, also began to contribute articles. A survey of the *Saturday Review* between 1874 and 1879 has identified a number of articles written by Mrs Loftie, which were later collected and published in book form by Macmillan as *Forty-six Social Twitters* (1879). Mrs Loftie's preface stated rather apologetically:

In republishing articles written at different times on kindred subjects it is almost impossible that there should not be a certain amount of repetition. It is almost equally impossible to cut out paragraphs without re-writing articles. These essays therefore remain for the most part as they appeared in the *Saturday Review*, from which they have been reprinted with the kind permission of the Editor.⁵²

Written between 1875 and 1876, five of the essays in *Social Twitters*, "New Houses", "Doing-Up One's House", "The Spare Room", "Living on Flats", and "Furnishing", discussed housing, interior decoration and furnishings. A close reading has suggested that the article on "The Spare Room", published by the *Saturday Review* in April 1876, was re-worked to form the final chapter of Lady Barker's *The Bedroom and Boudoir*. Witness the following paragraph written by Mrs Loftie:

To busy people of moderate wealth the acknowledged possession of a spare room represents an income-tax of several shillings in the pound. It means to be forced to take in lodgers all year round who do not pay, but who expect as much attention as if they were in an American Hotel – to be obliged, not only

to supply them with free quarters, but to amuse, advise, chaperon, perhaps even nurse and bury them.⁵³

Two years later, in a chapter also titled “The Spare Room”, Lady Barker issued a very similar warning to her readers:

To a professional man, with a small income, the institution of a spare room may be regarded as an income tax of several shillings in the pound. It is even worse than that; it means being forced to take in a succession of lodgers who don't pay, who are generally amazingly inconsiderate and *exigeante*, and who expect to be amused and advised, chaperoned and married, and even nursed and buried.⁵⁴

Clearly Mrs Loftie's earlier article had been re-cycled, without attribution, for use in Lady Barker's volume in the “Art at Home Series”. Significantly, a review of *The Bedroom and Boudoir* published *The Spectator* in April 1878, had noted a change in style (if not author) and commented:

The chapter on the “Spare Room” does not say much for Lady Barker's hospitality, though it strikes one that she has taken up her views on the subject more as an excuse for a little smart writing, than because they express her real opinion.⁵⁵

An examination of Mrs Loftie's “smart writing” published by the *Saturday Review* suggests that she was rarely reticent in expressing her opinions, and this is also apparent in her descriptions of the *Scribner's* illustrations that appeared in *The Dining Room*. Throughout this volume, particularly in the third chapter on “Sideboards, Tables and Chairs”, Mrs Loftie made constant references to the *Scribners* images, and like Mrs Orrin Smith, renamed and adapted them as she saw fit. On several occasions, against the advice of Frederick Macmillan, Mrs Loftie even used the American illustrations as examples of bad taste.⁵⁶ Thus, having quoted at length from a recent article in ‘one of the weekly papers’⁵⁷ (which was probably one

of her own) on the design faults of fashionable knickknacks, she described an image of an ornately carved table as ‘An example of the sort of furniture designed on the same false principles as these horrible inventions’.⁵⁸ The illustration list re-named this cut as “AN EXAMPLE TO BE AVOIDED”. In contrast, when this woodcut of a “Table and Chair from Tyrol, Bavaria” appeared in the tenth of the original articles in *Scribner’s Monthly*, it had been described in detail and judged by Cook to be ‘very pretty’.⁵⁹

Opportune though it may have been for Macmillan & Co., the use of these American illustrations was hugely problematic, prompting not just critical reviews in the professional press, but transatlantic anxieties over copyright. Indeed, there was a delay in the production of the electrotypes because of concerns that Macmillan & Co., would use the images in books offered for sale in America – as they had fully intended: in a letter to Lady Barker dated July 1877, Craik mentioned the possibility of American sales.⁶⁰ Scribner’s sought assurances that Macmillan would not sell the plates to their American associates, Porter & Coates of Philadelphia, and in reply, Macmillan wrote:

We of course understand that Mr Clarence Cook’s pictures are copyright and that no books containing them can be sold in the US. We are sorry that you have delayed making the electrotypes on this ground and beg that you will get them finished and sent off with as little delay as possible.⁶¹

Consequently, Macmillan informed Porter & Coates that they would be unable to publish these three volumes in America.

It is unfortunate that the last three volumes of the Art at Home series have contained so much copyright matter as to render them useless for American publication. We hope however, you will find it possible to take plates of several volumes which are now in preparation.⁶²

The “Art at Home Series” was an Anglo-American publishing venture that sought to exploit the tide of enthusiasm for house decoration on both sides of the Atlantic. However, using these books as evidence of the design and decoration of the late-Victorian lower middle-class domestic interior is fraught with difficulties. Conceived as an intervention and advocating “inconspicuous consumption”, the series promoted an upper-middle class view of how lower-middle class aspirants should decorate, furnish and behave in their homes. The discourses discernible in the texts combined with biographical research suggest that the authors, though perhaps loosely linked along class lines, were writing from completely different religious, economic, political, marital and occupational positions, which had significant ramifications for the advice they gave. Moreover, the history of its production reveals that certain volumes in the series were based on essays, articles and papers previously published in a range of magazines: add the complication of the American illustrations and it becomes impossible to use Macmillan’s “Art at Home Series” as conventional historical evidence. Consequently, while it remains an important source for considering nineteenth century concepts of taste, class and gender, it may be that the “Art at Home Series” offers more information about the expedient world of nineteenth-century publishing practices than it does about the Victorian interior.

Endnotes:

¹ *The House Beautiful* was re-issued by Charles Scribner's Sons, New York in 1881. Like the Garland Press reprint of "Art at Home Series", *The House Beautiful* and Eastlake's *Hints on Household Taste* have since been reprinted by Dover Editions and have both received renewed interest.

² N. Pevsner, 'Art Furniture of the 1870s' in *The Architectural Review*, CXI, 1952 [reprinted in *Studies in Art, Architecture and Design*, Volume 2, Thames & Hudson, 1969]; E. Aslin, *The Aesthetic Movement: Prelude to Art Nouveau*, Elek Books, 1969; M. Girouard, *Sweetness and Light: The 'Queen Anne Movement' 1860 - 1900*, Yale University Press, 1977; P. Thornton, *Authentic Décor, The Domestic Interior, 1620 - 1920*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1984; A. Forty, *Objects of Desire: Design and Society 1750 - 1980*, Thames & Hudson, 1986; A. Briggs, *Victorian Things*, Penguin, 1988; J. Banham, et al, *Victorian Interior Style*, Studio Editions, 1995; T. Logan, *The Victorian Parlour: A Cultural Study*, Cambridge University Press, 2001; H. Long, *Victorian Houses and their details: The role of publications in their building and decoration*, Architectural Press, 2002; and, C. Gere & L. Hoskins, *The House Beautiful - Oscar Wilde and the Aesthetic Interior*, Lund Humphries/Geffrye Museum, 2002.

³ M. Girouard, 1977; 1984, p. 211

⁴ N. Humble "introduction", *Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management*, Ward Lock & Co., 1861; Oxford World Classics, 2000, p. xvi

⁵ British Library Manuscripts Collection: Macmillan & Co Ltd., publishers 1833 - 1969: Add MSS 54786 - 56035, 61894 - 96; Reading University Library: Macmillan & Co Ltd, publishers 1875 - 1964: MS 1089

⁶ BL: Add MS 55075/122/124/126/128. W. J. Loftie to Macmillan, 11th March 1876

⁷ BL: Add MS 55075/118. W. J. Loftie to Macmillan, 29th February 1876.

⁸ BL: Add. MS 55075/122/124/126/128. W. J. Loftie to Macmillan, 11th March 1876.

⁹ Loftie suggested Stevenson, on the strength of an article on "Our Dwelling Houses" published in *Good Words* in October 1873. Eventually, Macmillan published the two volumes of J. J. Stevenson's *House Architecture* separately in 1880, and although it was not issued as part of the "Art at Home Series", Loftie was still involved with the production of this publication.

¹⁰ Ibid. Margaret Plues, was a writer and expert on wild flowers and grasses.

¹¹ BL: Add. MS 55399/64. A. Macmillan to Rev. W. J. Loftie, 14th March 1876

¹² BL: Add MS 55075/136. W. J. Loftie to Macmillan, 12th August 1876. James Davis Cooper (1823 - 1901) seems to have engraved most of the illustrations for the first four volumes. R. K. Engen, *Dictionary of Victorian Wood Engravers*, Chadwyck-Healey, 1985, p. 54, described Cooper as a 'Prominent London wood engraver and draughtsman on wood, who engraved after the major artists of his day'.

¹³ Harry Soane fl. 1840 - 95: According to R. K. Engen, 1985, p. 244, Soane was a London wood engraver, heraldic draughtsman and stationer, who worked at Green Street, Leicester Square WC.

¹⁴ *The Saturday Review*, November 25th, 1876, pp. 656 - 657 The wallpaper referred to appears to be Morris's "Trellis".

¹⁵ *Dictionary of National Biography*: Supplement January 1901 - December 1911, OUP, 1958 reprint, pp. 474 - 475 "Loftie, William John (1839 - 1911)", p. 474

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 474 - 475

¹⁷ M. M. Bevington, *The Saturday Review 1855 - 1868: Representative Educated Opinion in Victorian England*, Columbia University Press, 1941 has demonstrated that John Hullah and Andrew Lang both contributed articles to the journal, while W. H. Pollock later became its editor (1883 - 94).

¹⁸ "Art at Home", *The Manchester Examiner*, November 1876; *The Transactions of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science* 1876, pp. 863 - 865, noted that Rhoda Garrett's paper was also published in *Macmillan's Magazine*.

¹⁹ BL: Add. MS 55401/71. A. Macmillan to Miss R. Garrett, 6th December 1876. Cliché in this sense means a metal casting of a stereotype or electrotype.

²⁰ Reprinted in Rev. W. J. Loftie, 1876. See the 1879 edition for advertisements, p. 2

²¹ BL: Add MS 55075/118. W. J. Loftie to Macmillan, 29th February 1876.

²² *The Saturday Review*, November 25th, 1876, p. 657

²³ *The Furniture Gazette*, Saturday 9th December 1876, p. 349

²⁴ BL: Add. MS 55400/882. Macmillan & Co., to Messrs J. H Coates & Co., 27th November 1876

²⁵ *The American Architect and Building News*, May 12, 1877, p. 149

²⁶ Ibid.

- ²⁷ E. Ferry, “Decorators may be compared to doctors: An analysis of Rhoda and Agnes Garretts’ *Suggestions for House Decoration in Painting, Woodwork and Furniture* (1876)”, *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 16, No. 1, 2003, pp. 15 – 34
- ²⁸ BL: Add MS 55075. W. J. Loftie to Macmillan, 2nd August 1876.
- ²⁹ Mrs. M. E. Haweis, *The Art of Decoration*, Chatto and Windus, 1881, pp. 336-7
- ³⁰ C. M. Cook, “Beds and Tables, Stools and Candlesticks – Some Chapters on House Furnishing”, in *Scribner’s Monthly*, Vol. X, No. 12, June 185, p. 169
- ³¹ C. Gere & L. Hoskins, 2002, p. 81
- ³² BL: Add. Add. MS 55402/351. F. Macmillan to W. J. Loftie, 16th April 1877. One wonders what the Anglo-Irish Loftie made of Cook’s abhorrent anti-Irish comments, where he blamed ‘the Biddy tribe from the bogs of Ireland’ for a long list of social ills. C. M. Cook, *The House Beautiful* Scribner, Armstrong & Co., 1877; 1995, p. 271
- ³³ BL: Add. MS 55402/372. F. Macmillan to C. M. Cook, 18th April 1877
- ³⁴ BL: Add. MS 55402/372. Macmillan & Co., to Messrs Scribner, Armstrong & Co., New York, 18th April 1877 and BL: Add. MS 55402/372. Macmillan & Co., to Messrs Scribner, Armstrong & Co., New York, 4th June 1877. See S. Eliot, in E. James (ed.), *Macmillan: A Publishing Tradition*, Palgrave 2002, p. 51 n. 28. ‘One of the striking features of Macmillan production is its strong inclination to electrotype, as oppose to stereotype, when producing plates. The former is more expensive and technically trickier, but frequently gives finer results as well as producing more copies.’
- ³⁵ BL: Add. MS 55402/392. A. Macmillan to Rev. W. J. Loftie, 20th April 1877
- ³⁶ BL: Add. MS 55402/954. G. L. Craik to Rev. W. J. Loftie, 27th June 1877; BL: Add. MS 55403/306. G. L. Craik to Rev. W. J. Loftie, 31st July 1877
- ³⁷ The book is dedicated to George Lillie Craik. See Mrs Orrinsmith, *The Drawing Room*, Macmillan, 1877, “Dedication”.
- ³⁸ C. M. Cook, 1877; 1995, pp. 65 - 66
- ³⁹ Mrs Orrinsmith, 1877, p. 78
- ⁴⁰ Nonetheless, Thad Logan has recently used this extract from *The Drawing Room* to indicate the popularity of Japanese style screens made fashionable by the aesthetic movement. See T. Logan, 2001, p. 120
- ⁴¹ Mrs Orrinsmith, 1877, p. 93
- ⁴² BL: Add. MS. 55404/236. Macmillan & Co., to the editor of *Building News*, 19th November 1877
- ⁴³ *British Architect and Northern Engineer*, 3rd July 1874
- ⁴⁴ E. W. Godwin “In the Art at Home Series” in *The British Architect and Northern Engineer*, 8th February 1878, p.64. Godwin also publicly chastised the Garretts for stealing his design for a side table that they illustrated in the frontispiece of *Suggestions for House Decoration*. See Letter to William Watt, 1st January 1877 and printed in *Art Furniture designed by Edward W. Godwin FSA and manufactured by William Watts, 21 Grafton Street London, with hints and suggestions on domestic furniture and decoration*, 1877, p. iii
- ⁴⁵ Lady M. A. Barker, *The Bedroom and Boudoir*, Macmillan, 1878, p. 64
- ⁴⁶ C. M. Cook, 1877; 1995, p. 290 - 291
- ⁴⁷ Lady M. A. Barker, 1878, pp. 50 - 51
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 81
- ⁴⁹ “Art at Home”, *The Spectator*, 13th April, 1878, p. 476
- ⁵⁰ Lady M. A. Barker, 1878, p. 89
- ⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 90
- ⁵² Mrs M. J. Loftie, *Forty-six Social Twitters*, Macmillan & Co., 1879, “Preface”
- ⁵³ Mrs M. J. Loftie, “The Spare Room”, *The Saturday Review*, Vol. XLI, April 29, 1876, pp. 545 – 546
- ⁵⁴ Lady M. A. Barker, 1878, pp. 115 - 116
- ⁵⁵ *The Spectator*, April 13, 1878, p. 476
- ⁵⁶ BL: Add. MS. 55404/387. F. Macmillan to W. J. Loftie, 3rd December 1877
- ⁵⁷ Mrs M. J. Loftie, *The Dining Room*, Macmillan, 1878, p. 19
- ⁵⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁹ C. M. Cook, “Talk Here and There: Beds and Tables, Stools and Candlesticks, X” in *Scribner’s Monthly*, p. 820; reprinted in *The House Beautiful*, 1877, p. 255. This illustration was copied from an engraving in M. Rodolphe Pfnor’s *Ornamentation Usuelle*, 1866-7.
- ⁶⁰ BL: Add. MS 55403/301. G. L. Craik to Lady Barker, 30th July 1877
- ⁶¹ BL: Add. MS 55403/22. Macmillan & Co., to Messrs Scribner, Armstrong & Co., 2nd July 1877
- ⁶² BL: Add. MS 55405/429. Macmillan & Co., to Messrs Porter & Coates, 9th March 1878.