DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

The Reception and Reinvention of Coventry's Medieval Architectural, Archaeological, Decorative and Visual Arts Heritage, c.1800-1920

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Award date:
2024

Awarding institution:
Coventry University

[Link to publication](#)

The Reception and Reinvention of Coventry's Medieval Architectural, Archaeological, Decorative and Visual Arts Heritage, c. 1800-1920

by

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For the award of PhD

April 2024

The Reception and Reinvention of Coventry's Medieval Architectural, Archaeological, Decorative and Visual Arts Heritage, c. 1800-1920

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the University's requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

April 2024

Certificate of Ethical Approval

Applicant: Joanna Meredith

Project Title: The Reception and Reinvention of Coventry's Medieval
                    Architectural, Archaeological, Decorative and Visual Arts
                    Heritage, c.1800-1920

This is to certify that the above named applicant has completed the Coventry University Ethical Approval process and their project has been confirmed and approved as Medium Risk

Date of approval: 22 Nov 2019

Project Reference Number: P96190

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<u>Thesis Abstract</u>

This thesis provides the first interconnected, developed and comprehensive view of the reception of Coventry's medieval art and architecture between 1800 and 1920. In order to develop this view, this thesis builds a detailed visual 'map' of where and how much of Coventry's medieval heritage could be seen in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This map is primarily constructed from a range of rarely-examined antiquarian prints, drawings and paintings. Through map-regression exercises, using previously unseen cartographic sources and architectural plans, the thesis similarly develops new knowledge on the transformation of Coventry's medieval heritage.

At the same time, this thesis implements art-historical approaches to provide a more developed view of the reception of Coventry's medieval heritage. It illuminates how and why Coventry's medieval buildings were portrayed as natural 'living' organisms in early nineteenth-century antiquarian prints. The antiquarian response to Coventry's medieval heritage is discussed and analysed throughout this thesis in order to redress the longstanding mistreatment of antiquarianism in historiography. The main ambition is to bring new visibility to the emerging network of antiquaries who built, heightened and stimulated the taste for Coventry's medieval heritage in the 1820s. It uncovers how John Britton (1771-1851) particularly fuelled the taste for Coventry's medieval architecture by linking it to expanding ideas of nationhood and nationalism.

This thesis seeks to develop new knowledge on how Coventry's medieval heritage, which may be understood as the tangible manifestation of the pre-Reformation Catholic faith, was treated by a network of Catholic Revivalists during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The central concern is to illuminate how Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin (1812-1852) reinvented Coventry's medieval timber-framed dwellings in order to build his own Catholic 'utopia' in the 1830s. Stylistic analysis of Pugin's rarely-examined pencil drawings of Scarisbrick Lodge provides deeper insight into how and why he was inspired by Coventry's medieval domestic architecture. Pugin's response to Coventry's Catholic heritage is likewise shown to have been influenced by the work of several local antiquaries including William Dugdale (1605-1686) and Edward James Willson (1787-1854).

Nonetheless, the five chapters that comprise this thesis serve to demonstrate how the treatment of Coventry's medieval heritage was shaped by wider developments on the Continent. In particular, it investigates how the response to Coventry's medieval heritage was shaped by a network of German Romantics, including Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) and Johann Friedrich Overbeck (1789-1869). The thesis goes on to shed new light on how Coventry's medieval craftsmanship transcended national boundaries, different imaginaries and cultural borders in the 1890s. An examination of previously unseen picture postcards of Coventry's medieval buildings likewise reveals how they were consumed and received in the German lands in the early 1900s. Ultimately, this thesis will conclude by arguing that Coventry was perceived to be a great Gothic city as its medieval buildings were likened to those seen in Cologne, Nuremberg and Strasbourg.

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5.11 Tuck and Sons, ca. 1900-1920, *Coventry, Ford's Hospital*, photo-postcard, 8.5 x 13.5 cm. From the author's own collection.

5.12 William Henry Bartlett, 1837, *Part of the Town Hall, Ghent* in *The History and Topography of Holland and Belgium*, engraving, 14.8 x 10.1 cm. From the author's own collection.

5.13 Boots the Cash Chemists, ca. 1900-1920, *Ford's Hospital, Coventry,* photo-postcard, 13.3 x 8.5 cm. From the author's own collection.

5.14 Boots the Cash Chemists, ca. 1900-1920, Reverse of the card featuring *Ford's Hospital, Coventry*, 13.3 x 8.5 cm. From the author's own collection.

5.15 Mary Dormer Harris, 1911, Map of Coventry in the *Story of Coventry*, line engraving, 27 x 31 cm. From the author's own collection.

5.16 Valentine and Sons, ca. 1900-1920, *St Mary's Hall, Coventry*, collotype print on card, 8.9 x 13.5 cm. From the author's own collection.

5.17 Valentine and Sons, ca. 1900-1920, Reverse of the card featuring the image of *St Mary's Hall, Coventry*. 8.9 x 13.5 cm. From the author's own collection.

5.18 Valentine and Sons, ca. 1900-1920, *St Mary's Hall*, *Coventry,* collotype print on card, 13.8 x 8.6 cm. From the author's own collection.

5.19 Valentine and Sons, ca. 1900-1920, *The Kitchen, St Mary's Hall, Coventry*, collotype print on card, 8.6 x 13.7 cm. From the author's own collection.

5.20 Raphael Tuck and Sons, ca. 1900-1920, *Priory Row, Coventry* [featuring the Lychgate Cottages], 'oilette' postcard, 8.6 x 13.8 cm. From the author's own collection.

5.21 Raphael Tuck and Sons, ca. 1900-1920, Reverse of the card featuring the Lychgate Cottages, *Priory Row, Coventry,* 'oilette' postcard, 8.6 x 13.8 cm. From the author's own collection.

5.22 Raphael Tuck and Sons, ca. 1900-1920, *St Mary's Hall, Coventry*, oilette postcard, 8.6 x 13.6 cm. From the author's own collection.

5.23 Albert Chanler, 1911, *Oriel Window and Stocks, St Mary's*, line engraving, whole page 17 x 10 cm. From the author's own collection.

5.24 Raphael Tuck and Sons, ca.1900-1920, *Bablake Hospital, Coventry,* collotype print on card, 8.3 x 13.8 cm. From the author's own collection.

5.25 Raphael Tuck and Sons, ca.1900-1920, Reverse of the card featuring *Bablake Hospital, Coventry*, collotype print on card, 8.3 x 13.8 cm. From the author's own collection.

5.26 Evelyn Wrench, ca.1900-1920, Reverse of a card featuring the image of The Three Spires [posted to Miss Ground], collotype print on card, 9 x 14 cm. From the author's own collection.

5.27 Evelyn Wrench, ca.1900-1920, Reverse of a card featuring the image of The Three, Coventry [posted to Miss Allison], collotype print on card, 8.7 x 13.8 cm. From the author's own collection.

5.28 Evelyn Wrench, ca. 1900-1920, *St Michael's Church, Coventry*, collotype print on card, 14 x 9 cm. From the author's own collection.

5.29 Anon. ca. 1880-1900, Postkartke to Mrs Dormer Harris, Dale House, Kenilworth, card and ink, dimensions unknown. Courtesy of the Warwickshire County Record Office, Mary Dormer Harris Collection: CR3874/1/2

5.30 Anon. ca. 1880-1890, Postkartke to Mrs Dormer Harris, Dale House, Kenilworth, card and ink, dimensions unknown. Courtesy of the Warwickshire County Record Office, Mary Dormer Harris Collection: CR3874/1/2

5.31 Raphael Tuck and Sons, ca. 1900-1920, *Priory Row, Coventry*, 'oilette' postcard, 8.6 x 13.8 cm. From the author's own collection.

5.32 Raphael Tuck and Sons, ca. 1900-1920, Reverse of a card featuring the image of St Mary's Hall, No.22 Bayley Lane, and St Michael's Church, 'oilette' postcard, 8.6 x 13.8 cm. From the author's own collection.

5.33 Shurey, ca.1900-1920, *A Bit of Old Coventry*, collotype print on card, 14 x 8.9 cm. From the author's own collection.

5.34 Anon, ca. 1900-1920, *Priory Row, A Bit of Old Coventry*, collotype print on card, dimensions unknown. From

5.35 Evelyn Wrench, ca.1900-1920, *Cathedral Ruins, Coventry*, collotype print on card, 8.9 x 14 cm. From the author's own collection.

5.36 Valentine and Sons, ca. 1900-1920, *St Mary's Hall, Coventry* [interior view of the Coventry Tapestry and North Window], collotype print on card, 8.9 x 13.5 cm. From the author's own collection

5.37 Valentine and Sons, ca. 1900-1920, *Pulpit and Choir, Holy Trinity Church, Coventry*, collotype print on card, 8.7 x 13.8 cm. From the author's own collection

5.38 Albert Chanler, 1911, *Holy Trinity Church, Coventry* in *The Story of Coventry*, line engraving, whole page, 17 x 10 cm. From the author's own collection.

BL: British Library

CA: Coventry Archives

HAGM: Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry

NAL: National Art Library, London

RIBA: Royal Institute of British Architects

SPAB: Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings

V&A: Victoria and Albert Museum, London

WCRO: Warwickshire County Record Office

Glossary of Terms

Catholic Revival: an awakening of interest in the Roman Catholic faith which began in the early nineteenth century.

Collotype Printing: a reproductive photo printing process which was used to produce varying tones and shades.

Chasing: a metal working technique in which a piece of metal is shaped by hammering to give a relief or texture.

Craft guilds: an association of workers in a particular craft, such as stained-glass painting, who worked together for mutual benefit and protection.

Doom Painting: a large vivid image of the Last Judgement. It depicted Christ in his glory, the gruesome resurrection of the dead, the saved being received into heaven and unrepentant sinners being dragged into the jaws of hell.

Feast of Corpus Christi: a feast of the passion which celebrates the sacramental presence of Christ in the Eucharist. It is commonly observed on the Thursday after Trinity Sunday by the Roman Catholic Church.

Gothic Revival: an architectural movement which sought to revive medieval art and architecture during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Lithography: a printmaking technique that involves drawing on a polished slab of limestone with greasy or waxed crayons.

Mystery play: a popular medieval play which looked at the mysteries of God, such as the creation of the world, the Flood, or the life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

The Oxford Movement: a nineteenth-century movement which sought to revive certain Catholic doctrines and rituals in the Church of England.

Notes on Translations

This thesis has provided modern translations of medieval texts and publications.

Introduction

0.1 Overview

Coventry was the fourth wealthiest city in England after London, York, and Bristol in the fourteenth century (Monckton 2017: xv). Its prosperity primarily derived from a flourishing cloth trade and was reflected in a major building boom which transformed the city (Monckton 2017: xv). Nonetheless, the reception of Coventry's medieval heritage during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries has traditionally been explored through one individual building or site, which belies its richness and creates a fragmented view. The core objective of this thesis, therefore, is to provide a more comprehensive and interconnected view of the reception of Coventry's medieval art and architecture from the period 1800-1920.

The second, although no less significant aim of this thesis, is to develop new knowledge on how Coventry's medieval buildings and art works were treated by a network of Catholic Revivalists. The term 'Catholic Revival' is used throughout this thesis to refer to the awakening of interest in the ancient faith during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This thesis presents a new understanding of the Catholic Revival movement in the English Midlands, by exploring how and why Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin reinvented Coventry's medieval timber-framed dwellings in order to build his own Catholic utopia. Pugin's response to Coventry's medieval visual arts heritage, which included wall paintings and stained-glass windows, is similarly brought into new visibility.

Another key ambition of this thesis is to uncover how a network of antiquaries built, heightened, and stimulated the taste for Coventry's medieval heritage. It brings new visibility to a range of antiquarian scholars who played a pivotal role in offering a deeper, and more immersive vision of Coventry's medieval heritage, in order to redress the longstanding neglect of antiquarianism in historiography. Antiquarianism has been poorly treated in historiography as it was regarded as an amateurish discipline and occupation. Caricatures of antiquaries as peculiar, quarrelsome figures, who compulsively travelled around the country in search of worm-eaten records and illegible tomb inscriptions became fashionable throughout the nineteenth century (Hill 2011: 9). Yet, this

study seeks to substantially revise and rehabilitate the antiquaries' reputation, by investigating the ways in which they developed the taste for Coventry's medieval past as a potent site of memory-construction and nation-making.

At the same time, this thesis illuminates how Coventry's medieval heritage was exported and imaged beyond the country's borders, in order to situate it within a wider nexus of Continental developments. Its main focus is to develop new knowledge on how Coventry's medieval churches, timber-framed dwellings and guildhall were received in the German lands. It sheds new light on how the reception of Coventry's medieval art and architecture was influenced and informed by German 'taste-makers', such as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Friedrich von Schlegel. The term taste-makers is used throughout this thesis to refer to someone, usually an artist or antiquary, who played a pivotal role in galvanising the interest and enthusiasm for the Gothic past during the nineteenth century.

An overarching aim of this thesis is to challenge the modernist vision of Coventry as a post-1945 city, which is discussed and explore in the next section, by revealing how and why it was perceived to be a fundamentally medieval city during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Coventry's image as a post-1945 city has continued to thrive and endure, yet it has also played a central role in obscuring the City's medieval art and architecture. Indeed, it is made clear in the next section that Coventry's medieval past has even been maligned and criticised due to the focus on its reconstruction in the twentieth century.

0.2 The Modernist Vision of Coventry

According to Monckton (2011: xv), Coventry is rarely perceived by the public as a great Gothic city as its medieval buildings and traditional street plans were demolished during the late 1930s. Coventry's former medieval market area, for example, was cleared away as its tightly-packed houses and narrow streets were widely seen to be incompatible with the City's booming motor and engineering industries (Monckton 2011: xv). In an editorial article, the *Midland Daily Telegraph* went as far to suggest that Coventry's medieval heritage was becoming a threatening and dangerous influence on the present:"[Coventry is] generations of bad planning - slums,

narrow streets, overcrowding, sewers - all the trouble saved up for the future from an unimaginative future" ([1936] 1997: 43). The destruction of Coventry's medieval heritage was by no means unusual, however, as many historic streets and buildings across the country were demolished as part of 'slum clearances'. The City of Southampton, which had been an important trading port with Italy and Spain in the fifteenth century, had largely been protected from the Industrial Revolution due to the development of reclaimed land outside the medieval walls (Webb 2018: 643). However, slum clearances in the north-west of the town in the early twentieth century destroyed large numbers of vernacular buildings and medieval streets, including Simnel Street and Blue Anchor Lane (Webb 2018: 643).

Even better known than the widespread clearances, however, is Coventry's destruction during a series of night-time bombing raids in November 1940 (Monckton 2011: xv). In all more than 1,000 people were killed, 23,500 houses were destroyed or badly damaged, and over 53 acres of the city centre devastated (Gould 2016: 12). Many of Coventry's medieval timber-framed dwellings were struck by incendiary bombs, including Ford's Hospital[1], which was left with only half a roof and shattered windows (Gould 2016: 12). The medieval parish church of St Michael's was the severest casualty of the bombing raid as only its external walls, tower, and spire were left standing (Gould 2016: 11). In Tom Allbeson's study, *Photography: Reconstruction and the Cultural History of the Post-war European City*, he explores how photographs of St Michael's ruins became a central image in British wartime visual culture (2021: 197). *The Daily Mirror* published perhaps some of the most iconic photographs of the ruins. In one photograph taken the morning after the raid, the viewer can distinguish the church's interior strewn with fallen masonry and roof-timbers, which had been set alight by an incendiary bomb (see Figure 0.1). In another photograph, the outline of St Michael's spire can be seen behind a cloud of smoke, rising high into the air and across the streets (see Figure 0.2). The images achieved their aims as Coventry quickly became known as the first victim of the air war and a martyred city (Allbeson 2021: 196).

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[1] An early sixteenth-century timber-framed almshouse.

Figure 0.1 Daily Mirror, *Coventry Raiders Return*, c. 1940

Figure 0.2 Daily Mirror, *Coventry After the Nazi Visit*, c. 1940

After the Second World War, the local Labour Council turned their attention to Coventry's reconstruction, which was carried out under the aegis of the Modernist town planner Donald Gibson (1908-1991). In Tiratsoo's study, *Reconstruction, Affluence, and the Labour Politics: Coventry 1945-60* (1990: 9)*,* he explains that Gibson was appointed to the post of City Architect as the Labour Council admired his interest in social reform through good architecture and planning. Gibson's earliest plans for the City show that he was concerned with wide open-roads, monumental vistas, and points of civic interest (Tiratsoo 1990: 10). The surviving medieval buildings around the Cathedral and Holy Trinity Church were to be cleared away to make way for a large open space (Tiratsoo 1990: 10). Gibson's ideas came from a number of different sources, including Le Corbusier's *The City of Tomorrow* (1929), which recommended surgically removing the medieval buildings and streets that had spread across Paris "like a dry crust" ([1929] 1971: 281). Gibson's approach was also influenced by the Beaux-Arts traditions and the

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more modernist doctrine of the CIAM (International Congresses of Modern Architecture) (Walter 2020: 45). The CIAM's doctrine was first promulgated in the 1930s and typically sought to sweep away existing urban infrastructure in order to rebuild cities on 'functional' principles (Walter 2020: 45).

Coventry effectively became known as the 'poster-child' for reconstruction as Gibson's plans were widely circulated and debated across the country (Diefendorf 1989: 135). In London, there were several concerns about the costs of the plans, but the central government had generally been supportive (Diefendorf 1989: 135). Gibson himself recognised that Coventry's reconstruction had wider, national repercussions, as he emphasised in a report to the local Labour Council that the "city is being made a test case" ([1941] 1989: 98). Its solutions, he goes on, will "form a guide to the other cities which have been similarly devastated" ([1941] 1989: 98). Coventry's reconstruction has continued to attract significant academic attention as the post-war decades are the subject of a growing popular literature. In the preface to Gould's report, *Coventry: The Making of a Modern City 1939-73* (2016), they declare that their main objective was to raise awareness of Coventry's post-War buildings as they are "material evidence" of when the "wider world looked to Coventry for hope and a vision of a better future". The historian Otto Saumarez Smith supported the "impressive report" by proposing that Coventry might aspire to become a World Heritage Site due to its internationally significant post-War architecture (Apollo Magazine 2020).

One of the most important post-War buildings is the new cathedral church of St Michael, designed by the architect Basil Spence (1907-1976) for the Coventry Cathedral Competition. In Campbell's essay, *Towards a New Cathedral: The Competition for Coventry Cathedral 1950-1* (1992: 222), she explains that Spence's winning design divided opinions as there were concerns about its modernity. Many traditionalists objected to the design as they perceived it to be hideously reminiscent of exhibition pavilions, which dominated Spence's career years following the Second World War, since building licenses for 'solid' projects were severely restricted (Campbell 1992: 222)[2]. Nonetheless, Spence's design also provided a reassuring link with the past as it was built in the same familiar red sandstone as the nearby Guildhall of St Mary

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[2] Basil Spence designed the Sea and Ship Pavilion for the 1950 Festival of Britain.

(Campbell 1992: 211). Spence's memoir, *Phoenix at Coventry*, recounts how he purposefully sought to provide a reassuring link with the past as "all great buildings show a rhythmic continuity" (1962: 13). This 'rhythmic continuity', as Spence opines, is an essential ingredient because the church stands for permanence and vitality in faith (1962: 10).

Coventry became closely commonly associated with the new cathedral as it became a successful tourist attraction in the late twentieth century (Campbell 2011: 26). "Great numbers of visitors came from the commonwealth and from countries all over the world", wrote Provost Howard[3], as they were drawn to the "beauty of the [....] rising new cathedral" ([1962]: 2019: 121) Howard's comments usefully reinforce how Coventry's identity has been bound up with the new cathedral by a range of audiences. However, as this study will show, Coventry's medieval past was also connected with ideas of identity and perceptions of modernity in the early twentieth century.

0.3 Literature Review

Having explored Coventry's Modernist image and identity, the literature review will now investigate how key primary sources have responded to Coventry's medieval art and architecture over time. The review then investigates how the secondary literature has explored the reception of Coventry's medieval heritage during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, before moving on to consider how recent scholarship has investigated A.W.N Pugin's response to Coventry's medieval buildings and visual art works.

0.3.1 Primary Sources and the Early Response to Coventry's Medieval Heritage

This section will explore the key primary sources that provide an evaluation, interpretation or response to Coventry's medieval art and architecture. Many of these sources have fallen into neglect or been underexplored for a plethora of reasons, yet it will be made clear that they provide crucial insights into the reception of the City across time. This section similarly uncovers how key primary sources imaginatively reinvented Coventry's medieval heritage in order to

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[3] Howard was Provost of Coventry from 1933-1958.

construct newer narratives and ideas. The term 'reinvention' is used throughout this study to refer to the re-imaging, re-creation and revival of Coventry's medieval heritage.

In the sixteenth century, antiquarian scholars travelled around Britain and Europe, laying the foundations of archaeological study by making drawings and collecting information (Rodwell 2012: 16). John Leland (1503-1552) could claim to be England's first rescue archaeologist, since he was travelling around the country acquiring records of antiquity, literally while the monasteries were being looted and destroyed around him (Rodwell 2012: 16). Leland was primarily interested in the monastic libraries as he had been authorised by Henry VIII, at some point between 1533 or 1534, to search the libraries of the monasteries and colleges for manuscripts of historical interest (Toulmin Smith 1907: xxxvii). Leland's papers, which were published posthumously as his *Itinerary*, reveal that he visited St Mary's Cathedral and Priory in 1540: "Leofric, Erle of the Mercia, turned it in King Edward the confessor's days to a house of monks, and adorned it with gold and silver incredibly. It is now suppressed" ([1540] 1908: 107)[4]. However, Leland offers little insight into the cathedral library or its holdings, which is a notable omission as significant parts of the cathedral survived well into the seventeenth century and beyond. The north-west tower, for example, was converted into a domestic dwelling in the seventeenth century and can clearly be identified on the far-right hand side of a nineteenth-century engraving (see Figure 0.3)[5].

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[4] St Mary's Cathedral was formally suppressed and surrendered on the 15th of January 1539 (Scarisbrick 1994: 158). It was the only cathedral church to be demolished at the Reformation (Scarisbrick 1994: 158).
[5] The North-West tower may have been constructed in the second quarter of the thirteenth century and survived for five hundred years until the mid-nineteenth century (Rylatt and Mason 2000: 27). The tower was partially demolished as it had become structurally unsound, but its medieval plinth was repaired and incorporated into the remains of the Blue Coat School in the mid-nineteenth century (Demidowicz 2000: 41-45).

Figure 0.3 J.C Smith *Coventry*, [the North West Tower labelled in red by the author], ca. 1800-1810

Furthermore, St Mary's Cathedral library may have also remained undisturbed for many years as the site stood bolted and barred during the early years of the Reformation (Rylatt 2000: 25). This may not have been unusual as the books at Rochester Cathedral Priory remained in situ for some time before they were removed to one of the royal libraries (Ramsay 2004: 129)[6]. Nonetheless, Leland may have purposefully overlooked St Mary's Cathedral library as it could have been of little value or interest. This is reasonable to propose as recent studies have argued that the house was of no more than middling wealth and had a rather modest collection of relics, including: the head of St Osburga (a seventh-century virgin saint whose cult had never matched that of a Hilda or Etheldreda), set in a shrine of copper and gilt only; St Cecilia's foot and part of the true cross

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[6] The books at St Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury, similarly remained in the library for several years as the site was initially retained by the Crown for its own uses (Ramsay 2004: 129).

(Scarisbrick 1994: 162)[7]. Libraries rarely mentioned in the Dissolution inventory of a house as monastic books were ill-valued and generally regarded as without financial value (Ramsay 2004: 127). Only one royal commissioner, Sir John Prise (1501/2-1555), took an acquisitive interest in the libraries of the houses whose surrender he was receiving (Ramsay 2004: 127). He formed a collection of historical and theological manuscripts from the houses in the west of England which he dissolved in late 1539 (Ramsay 2004: 127).

As Leland travelled between the monastic libraries, he deviated from his main commission by conducting a measured topographical survey of England and Wales. He made notes on the finest manor houses, ancient castles, monasteries adapted to secular use and newly built churches, with the aim of reducing the country down to the size of a 'silver platter' for the King's enjoyment and pleasure: "Your grace shall have ready knowledge at the first sight of many delectable, fruitful and necessary pleasures, but the contemplation thereof, as often as occasion shall move you to the sight of it" ([1549] 1907: xxxvii). Leland's survey was an enormous undertaking and provides crucial insight into the early response to Coventry's medieval architectural heritage. For example, Leland appears to have found Coventry's medieval walls to be worthy of a detailed antiquarian response, as he provides a lengthy paragraph on their history and colour:

> The Town was begun to be walled about the time of Edward the 2 [sic] There
> be gates in the wall thus named Bishop's Gate, Greyfriars Gate, Little Park
> Street Gate, Spon Street Gate, Cook Street Gate. There be many fair towers in
> the wall. The grit and colour of the stone that the walls be built of is of a
> darkish deep red, as if it were a ferruginous colour; and so is all the grit ([1540]
> 1908: 106-107).

In contrast, Leland offered little insight into the colour of York's medieval walls and gates, as he was more concerned with their construction and size: "Thus goith [sic] the wall from the ripe of Ouse of the east part of the city of York. First a great tower with a chain [...] to cast over the

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[7] The original Dissolution inventory also reveals that the house had many usual relics including: a part of the Holy Cross; relics of St Thomas à Becket, St Cecilia, St James, St George, St Justine, St Jermone; and a barrel of mixed relics (Scarisbrick 1994: 162).

Ouse: then another tower, and so to Boudom gate" ([1540] 1907: 54). Two years later, Leland recorded that the surviving walls and gates in Bath were engraved with various carved stone faces and ornaments, but there is no mention of their colour: "there be [...] notable antiquities engraved in stone that yet be seen on the walls of Bathe betwixt the south gate and the west gate [...] the first was an antique head of man" ([1542] 1907: 140-141). The omission of their colour is useful as it reinforces how Coventry's medieval fortifications were amongst the most distinct in the country.

For Leland, colour appears to have held an emotive charge, reminding him of the loss of Coventry's vibrant medieval past. This was far from unusual as there was a clear awareness, even amongst those men of staunch Protestant convictions, that the country had become 'dull' and 'lacklustre' after the Dissolution. One Protestant clergyman, Francis Trigge (1547-1606), wrote that "many do lament the pulling down of the abbeys. They say it was never a merry world since" ([1589] 1959: 38). Leland himself was a Protestant and a staunch defender of Henry VIII, but he most likely regretted the effects of the Dissolution as he was a Catholic sympathiser. Leland's Catholicism was reproached by the historian John Bale (1495-1563), who compiled and catalogued his notes, with the intention of having these published (Carley 1986: 110). In Bale's jottings on Leland's *De Viris Illustribus* [On Illustrious Men], for instance, he suggests that he would have to correct his mentor's 'popish' comments about the proto-reformer John Wycliffe and the Lollards: "weigh carefully the preposterous judgement of Leland here. He says that the most barbarous sophist is a famous theologian [...] And he says that the most frigid - actually the most iniquitous – glosses of the papists are the sword of the Gospel" ([1552] 1976: 117).

Nevertheless, Leland's *Itinerary* does not seek to rebuild Catholic England, but instead promises to reveal how the English landscape supported the political and cultural aims of the Henrician Reformation (Summit 2007: 161). The Henrician Reformation is defined by Wooding (2000: 51) as a "vigorous movement" which sought to limit clerical power, purify the church from corruption, and challenge the supremacy of papal authority during the reign of Henry VIII. The validity of the Henrician Reformation was supported by various writers, who were tasked with constructing a new history of England which was independent from the influence of Rome (Wooding 2000: 52). Leland himself was clearly tasked with building a new history of England

as he suggests that it had been an age since the building of Coventry's wall and gates ([1540] 1908: 106-107). This 'distance' was artificially invented as the books which the Chamberlains kept to record expenses laid out on repairs and building of the walls reveal that they were still being constructed at the time of Leland's visit (Gooder 1967: 22-23). Leland's re-imaging of Coventry's medieval wall as an ancient fortification is important, as it reinforces how the medieval past was manipulated in order to construct new religious narratives.

In contrast, Leland devotes less than two sentences to Whitefriars' Monastery[8], which he suggests was founded with the help of "Sr. John Poultney 4. Times [sic] mayor of London" ([1540] 1908: 108). On the one hand, this may have been due to the fact that he realised that the Whitefriars, who had originated from Mount Carmel in Israel, would possess few ancient manuscripts to support the nation-building aims of the Henrician Reformation. Yet on the other hand, Leland may also have recalled that the friars were supposed neither to keep nor bequeath books without license as they embraced a contemplative eremitic lifestyle (Andrews 2006: 42). The only known document to have survived from Whitefriars is a letter of fraternity in favour of Sir Henry Willoughby and his wife, granted by the prior provincial in 1512 (Woodfield 2005: xv).

Greyfriars' Monastery[9], which was a Franciscan religious house situated near the southern entrance to Coventry, was similarly treated to less than half a sentence ([1540] 1908: 108). However, Leland may have overlooked the building as the Franciscan friars were prohibited from making books in Francis's *Rule for the Order* (1209) and *My Testament* (1226) (Welch 2010: 26). The Franciscan General Council also prohibited their friars from making books for sale as it was dangerously profitable (De Hamel 1986: 117). As mendicants, they were required to maintain absolute poverty because it was conceived as the source of all perfection and

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[8] Whitefriars Monastery was founded in 1342 with the help of Sir John Poultney, a London merchant, for the Carmelite friars (McGrory 2003: 50). The Carmelite friars wore white habits, were sworn to poverty, and lived austere lives (McGrory 2003: 50).

[9] Greyfriars Monastery was founded in the thirteenth century for the Franciscan friars (McGrory 2003: 47). The Pipe Rolls of 1234, which reveal payments and debts owed to the Crown, record that Henry III allowed the friars timber out of the woods of Kenilworth (McGrory 2003: 47-48).

humility (Welch 2010: 26). Many ancient texts were later destroyed by the Crown's Commissioners because they were highly decorated with gold, silver, or semi-precious stones[10].

Leland's work can also be considered as a pivotal study, as it is one of the earliest examples to suggest that the collapse of Coventry's cloth industries in the early sixteenth century, negatively impacted the appearance of the City's medieval fabric: "the town rose by making of cloth and caps, that now decay the glory of the city" ([1540] 1908: 108). It is beyond the scope of this review to address the debate on late-medieval urban decline, but it is important to note that Leland's statement is supported by the historian Charles Phythian-Adams, who suggests that Coventry's textile trade rapidly deteriorated in the sixteenth century due to a contemporary change of fashion from knitted woollen hand-gear to felted hats (1979: 217). The change drove out many employers and workers, with all but the wealthiest wards losing fifteen per cent or more of their 1520 populations (Phythian-Adams 1979: 190).

Leland's account neglected to elaborate on how Coventry's medieval buildings had 'decayed'. However, it is likely that he was referring to Coventry's medieval timber-framed dwellings as he repeatedly applied the words ruined and decayed to England's late medieval houses. At Bridgwater in Somerset, for example, he found that there were over two hundred "ruinous" houses because the town's fishing industries had been hit by overseas competition (Lee 2010: 9). Leland offers little further insight into Coventry's medieval houses, as it was only in the early nineteenth century that the 'old' English domestic style became of importance to antiquaries, looking to assert the special role of England in the development of the Gothic style (Sweet 2019: 168).

While Coventry's declining economic fortunes played an important role in the early antiquarian response to its medieval buildings, anti-Marian bias also appears to have played a similarly significant role as Leland omits the fifteenth-century Guildhall of St Mary[11] from his discussion. St Mary's Guildhall would have brought great discomfort to the Protestant King as its exterior

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[10] Books which had metal covers and brass clasps were similarly at risk from being mutilated or destroyed.

[11] St Mary's Guildhall, a suite or complex of rooms, may have been constructed in two main phases (see Chapter One).

gatehouse depicted the Coronation of the Virgin Mary, who became a key source of cultural anxiety and provocation during the Reformation, as she represented the opposing faith[12]. Henry VIII insisted that the image of the Virgin Mary be destroyed as deep and mysterious powers had been attributed to the Virgin and to relics and places especially associated with her (Waller 2011: 7). For Catholics, such attributions were truthful and reflected God's purpose; for the Protestants such claims were false and demonic, slippages into paganism and evidence of the irredeemable corruption of the Roman Church (Waller 2011: 7).

Moreover, Leland may have steered clear of St Mary's Hall because he wanted to share his research with the rest of the King's "realm", who were becoming increasingly Protestant in their outlook and activities ([1549] 1907: xlii). Coventry's citizens appear to have been opposed to the Virgin Mary as they omitted her image from their renowned mystery plays, which focused on the representation of God's greatest miracles or mysteries, such as the creation of the world (King and Davidson 2000: 219). Great nobles and members of the royal family often travelled to watch the Coventry mystery plays, as they were lavish celebrations typically held in their honour. In 1526, Princess Mary visited Coventry for a play that had been prepared by the Mercers Guild: "Lady Mary came to Coventry and Lay at the Priory, the Mercers Pageant Gallantly trimmed stood in the Cross Cheaping" (Sharp 1825: 156). The Civic Annals do not reveal which exact play was performed to the eleven-year-old princess, but we can surmise that the 'Virgin Mary' took a lead role, as her mother was especially devoted to the Virgin and to the image of the Assumption (King and Davidson 2000: 42).

However, the Virgin Mary's role appears to have been dropped by the Mercers Guild around 1548 (King and Davidson 2000: 43). In the case of the Cappers' play, the change came even earlier, as the Virgin Mary's role is last mentioned in the 1547 records (King and Davidson 1997: 163). The Coventry Cappers were almost certainly eager to remove the role of the Virgin Mary, even though they were one of only two guilds that could afford to put on a lavish display, because they had long been sympathetic to religious dissent. Coventry's craftsmen counted heavily among the ranks of Lollard sympathisers as their regular mobility and increased leisure

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[12] The roof boss on the exterior of the gatehouse depicted the Coronation of the Virgin. Visitors could also find a guild chair featuring a relief carving of the Virgin holding her son.

time encouraged independent thinking (Jurkowski 2006: 161). This was far from unusual as there were strong links between the textile industry and the Lollard community in the South-East of England (Davis 1966: 191).

Sir William Dugdale's *Antiquities of Warwickshire* (1656) has a similar focus to Leland's *Itinerary*, as it aims to preserve the memory of Warwickshire's landed gentry through the recording of ancient tombstones and coats of arms: "my principal aim having been, by setting before you the noble and eminent Actions of your worthy Ancestors, to incite the present and future Ages to a virtuous Imitation of them; the continued Welfare, and lasting Honour of yourselves". The tracing and documentation of family histories became of major importance to the landed gentry in the seventeenth century, as they stood to gain property and prestige from the discovery of an illustrious ancestor (Roberts 2002: 13). Dugdale himself was keenly interested in the preservation of heraldic evidence, as he had served as a heraldic officer on behalf of the King during the Civil War. This position opened his eyes to the vulnerability of the antiquary's 'working stock', as Parry (1995: 221) called it, to Puritan attacks. Luxurious church shrines and tombs, as well as richly covered books and charters, were major targets for Puritan iconoclasts because they "irredeemably polluted" the mind of the worshipper (Spraggon 2013: 55)[13]. Coventry was a prime target for 'enthusiastic' Puritan iconoclasts since Puritanism had become the creed of the ruling oligarchy and clergy (Stephens 1969b: 218). Coventry's leading citizens had periodically suppressed the City's traditional religious festivities, encouraged the burning of popish relics, and whitewashed much of the City's medieval visual arts heritage[14].

William Hinton, a High Churchman, and vicar of St Michael's Church, was one of the few to challenge the authority of the Puritans. In 1609, he invited Francis Holyoake to preach a sermon at the archidiaconal visitation in Coventry, which was later published as *A Sermon of Obedience, especially unto Authority Ecclesiastical* (1610). The sermon vehemently attacked those that criticised non-preaching ministers as "dumb dogs" and claimed that the sacraments, not sermons, were the essence of worship (Holyoake 1610: 9). This did not sit well with the Puritans, who not

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[13] Arguments against images were based on the biblical injunctions against idols and graven images in the decalogue (Spraggon 2013: xi).
[14] The Doom painting in Holy Trinity Church may have been whitewashed in the 1560s.

only attacked the sermon for being 'heretical', but also defaced the picture of a dove which hung over the baptismal font (Holyoake 1610: 2). Dugdale himself may have known of the attacks as he was a native of Warwickshire and received an education at Coventry's Grammar School until the age of fifteen. He shows a degree of concern for St Michael's heraldic evidence by embellishing his study with 'all' the coats of arms seen in the church windows (see Figure 0.4). Each coat of arm was drawn and etched by Wenceslaus Hollar (1607-1677), a Bohemian engraver, who had travelled to England in 1636 to reproduce paintings in the collections of the Earl Arundel. Dugdale employed Hollar to illustrate most of his works as he had a sharp eye for antiquarian detail and a reliable understanding of medieval styles (Parry 1995: 234). He was also the natural choice for the job because he was widely known as the finest delineator of his time (Rodwell 2012: 19).

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Figure 0.4 Wenceslaus Hollar, *In the Windows of St Michael's Church [Coventry]* [digitally sharpened by the author as the original illustration is very faint]*, 1656

Dugdale's *Warwickshire* also contains a street map of Coventry by the cartographer John Speed (1551-1629) and two panoramic views of Coventry by Hollar (1656: 86). In Speed's 1610 map of Coventry, churches, dwellings, streets, hills, and trees are rendered from a birds-eye perspective. There are no individual views of the existing buildings as the reproduction of copperplate engravings and etchings was expensive. Publication costs could be reduced by inviting subscribers to pay for the cutting and printing of plates, but the practice of attracting subscribers was still a relatively new development in the seventeenth century (Smiles 2018: 24). A great deal of time had to be put into recruiting subscribers who wished to openly protest the destruction of ancient heraldic evidence, and there was no guarantee that the sponsors would pay on time (Smiles 2018: 24). Dugdale himself was cheated of his payments, as he notes in his preface to *Warwickshire* (1656) all the names of families who refused to pay for the preservation of their memories.

Dugdale also had little interest in architectural details and rarely devoted more than a phrase to a place or a monument (Roberts 2002: 44). Coventry's medieval walls and gates, for instance, are only mentioned in passing: "being thus grown to such a height of splendour by those strong and high walls, with so many beautiful Gates and stately Turrets" (1656: 92). The indifference of Dugdale to Coventry's medieval architecture was nonetheless common amongst antiquaries, who were generally so preoccupied with inscriptions that they forgot their architectural context (Parry 1995: 240). Indeed, it is only in the closing decades of the eighteenth century that we see the careful and systematic delineation of medieval edifices by leading antiquaries (Smiles 2018: 53).

In the panoramic views, the viewer can also distinguish Coventry's medieval church spires, which stand out as they are presented as major landmarks (see Figure 0.5 and Appendix 2). Dugdale may have asked Hollar to portray Coventry's ancient churches as key landmarks, as he bitterly resented the English Reformation and the senseless destruction of medieval parish churches (Parry 1995: 217). In one striking section, he indulges in a bitter attack on those who pulled St Mary's Cathedral and Priory apart for building materials, as he opines: "at which time the very Church itself, though a most beautiful cathedral, and the mother-church of this City, escaped not the rude hand of destroyers; but was pulled in pieces and reduced to rubbish" (1656:

105). The loss "sustained by the ruin of that great and famous monastery [pushed] many inhabitants to forsake the City [and] to recompense which decay of trade" (Dugdale 1656: 96).

Hollar produced several other panoramic views for Dugdale's *Warwickshire*. Warwick and Tamworth came to be represented in two panoramic views each. Birmingham was also represented in one and Kenilworth Castle in three. Dugdale also included a prospect of Guy's Cliff, the site of a hermitage that was a medieval pilgrimage destination and a popular tourist site in his time (Roberts 2002: 29). Inspiration for the inclusion of prospects appears to have come from Antonius Sanderus's *Flandria Illustrata* (1640), which was portrayed by Dugdale in his preface to *Warwickshire* as having the most "exquisitely represented [...] Monasteries and Gentleman's Houses of Note" (1656). However, Hollar's prospect of Coventry stands out amongst his other drawings out as it features the greatest number of churches. Coventry's medieval skyline will be returned to later in this thesis, as I explore how it was exported and received during the nineteenth century (see Chapters Two and Three).

Figure 0.5 Wenceslaus Hollar, *The Prospect of Coventry* [digitally sharpened by the author as the original illustration is very faint], 1656

Celia Fiennes's late seventeenth-century travel journal, published posthumously as *The Illustrated Journeys of Celia Fiennes*, is another pivotal text as it demonstrates how educated men were not the only group to critically engage and respond to Coventry's medieval heritage[15]. Fiennes begins her account of Coventry by suggesting that St Michael's Church adds to the glory and esteem of England: "the spire and the steeple of one of the Churches is very high and is thought the third highest in England" ([1697] 1947: 112). Fiennes may have felt impelled to celebrate St Michael's Church as she was anxious about elevating and "over-valuing foreign parts" above those of home ([1697] 1947: 1-2). She called on both men and women to journey across their "native land" to "cure the evil itch" of travelling to the Continent ([1697] 1947: 1-2). Coventry's medieval cross may have helped 'cure' the 'evil itch' to travel abroad as Fiennes presents it as an important source for English nation-building: "Just on each side before each statue is their arms of England and the arms of the town adorned with colours and gilding in their proper places" ([1697] 1947: 113). Fiennes's comments are nonetheless unusual as English nationalism became synonymous with Protestantism in the seventeenth century, as reformers like John Foxe (1517-1587) had given the English a powerful sense of their collective identity as a Protestant nation (Bowers 1993: 153). Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* (1563)*,* a graphic and polemic account of those who suffered for the cause of Protestantism, was one of the most popular books of the seventeenth century (King 2006: 160). It provides further evidence of Coventry's importance as a centre for dissent, as Foxe draws upon oral testimonies and historical documents, to present a vivid account of the Coventry Lollard persecutions ([1563] 2003: 297).

Coventry's Lollard community was primarily active in the 1480s and is among the most well documented of the English heretical communities of the late Middle Ages (McSheffery and Tanner 2003: 1). We know that they had connections with two other centres of heresy, Bristol and London, and divided themselves by sex and marital status (McSheffery 1995: 25). However, the Coventry Lollards came under close episcopal scrutiny in the early sixteenth century, as Geoffrey Blyth (the Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry) began a concerted effort to eradicate their community (McSheffery and Tanner 2003: 2). Some of the most notorious Lollards, including Thomas Bowen and Joan Smyth, were persecuted, but this did not deter them from continuing

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[15] Fiennes's travel journal is also one of only two accounts of domestic travel by a late seventeenth-century English woman to survive (Kinsley 2003: 1).

their Lollard practices (McSheffery 1995: 24). Anti-Catholic sentiment clearly lingered as the Coventry Mercers paid £3 for two copies of Foxe's *The Book of Martyrs* in the 1630s (Berger 2010: 203). Fiennes herself appears to have been influenced by the Mercers' anti-Catholic bias, as she excludes the majority of Coventry's medieval buildings from her discussion and makes Coventry's Nonconformist communities a central focus of her study:

> There is indeed the largest Chapel and the greatest number of people I have
> seen of the Presbyterian way. There is another Meeting House in ye Town of ye
> Independents which is not so big, but though they may differ in some small
> things in the main they agree and seem to love one another which was no small
> satisfaction to me, Charity and Love to the brethren being the characteristic
> mark of Christs true Disciples ([1697] 1947: 113).

Fiennes's focus on Coventry's Presbyterian chapels is perhaps not surprising, however, as the City was a major centre for nonconformity in the late seventeenth century. Hurwich (1977: 17) estimates that Dissenters, a term used to describe those who refused to comply with the Act of Uniformity of 1662 and the established Church of England, made up at least a quarter of the population of Coventry in the period 1660-1720. Coventry became a key locus for nonconformity as the City's merchant oligarchy were Protestant Dissenters, including the Presbyterian draper Major Robert Beake, who served twice as mayor and hosted a 'Great Meeting' attended by around seven hundred Presbyterian Dissenters (Hurwich 1977: 31)[16]. Fiennes herself may have been impressed by the 'Great Coventry Meeting' as she was the daughter of Nathaniel Fiennes (1608-1669), a well-known Presbyterian and fierce critic of the Catholic faith (Morris 1982: xvii). Fiennes's journal was clearly intended for her Nonconformist relatives as she maintained in her foreword that it was so "little likely to fall into the hands of any but my near relations" ([1697] 1954: 32).

Fiennes's journal may have also overlooked Coventry's medieval buildings as she was chiefly interested in new manufacturing techniques and trading effects (Speake 2003: 434). Coventry was presented as a "thriving" manufacturing town as there were "several" silk-throwing mills

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[16] Roughly 40% of Coventry's mayors who served between 1660 and 1687 were Dissenters (Hurwich 1977: 31).

which were powered by a "water house at the end of town" (Fiennes [1697] 1947: 113). The mills played an important role in the revival of Coventry's fortunes as they employed thousands of people and attracted national attention (Walters 2013: 146). Many silk weavers were Huguenot refugees, who had newly settled in Coventry after Louis XIV's 1685 revocation of the Edict of Nantes[17], which is a useful reminder of Coventry's importance as a centre for dissent and Protestantism (Walters 2013: 145-146).

Daniel Defoe's *Tour Though the Whole of Island Britain* (1724-1726) is similar to the previous travel journals discussed as he likewise commented on Coventry's 'decayed' medieval heritage: "The Buildings are very old, and in some places much decayed [...] the Timber built houses projecting forwards and towards one another, till in the narrow streets they were ready to touch one another" (1725: 126). Defoe may have presented Coventry's medieval buildings as ruinous as he was principally concerned with bringing greater attention to England's new and "improving" industries (1725: v). In his foreword, Defoe draws attention to his nation-building interests by noting that "new foundations are always laying, new Buildings always raising, Highways always repairing, Churches and public buildings always erecting" (1725: V). Defoe himself had first-hand experience with town planning and building as he helped to rebuild Whitehall after the fires of the 1690s (Rogers 1998: 116). He appears to have thought back to his time at Whitehall during his visit to Coventry as he claimed that it had looked like the "very picture of London, on the south side of Cheapside, before the great fire" (Defoe 1725: 126). However, there are no surviving architectural drawings or plans to confirm that he had drafted any plans for Coventry's modernization, which had reportedly become "very great" through the "the manufacture of tammies[18]" and the "weaving of ribbons" (Defoe 1725: 126).

Furthermore, Defoe may have been keen to present Coventry's medieval timber-framed dwellings as ruinous, as he often sought to portray the pre-Reformation world as outdated and unappealing (Bower 1993: 153). Lincoln had been one of the leading religious centres in the country in the thirteenth century, for example, yet is presented in the *Tour* as a "ragged [...] and still decaying city" (Defoe 1725: 137). Defoe appears eager to present Lincoln's medieval

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[17] The Edict of Nantes ended the French Wars of Religion (1562-1598) by permitting Protestant practices.
[18] A woollen fabric, usually used for linings or undergarments.

heritage as being part of an obsolete past as he goes on to claim that it is "full of the Ruins of Monasteries and religious houses" (1725: 137). This is perhaps not surprising as Defoe was a Presbyterian Dissenter who had limited tolerance for the Roman Catholic Church. In Defoe's *System of Magic*, for instance, he denounced the Catholic faith as: "one entire-system of anti-Christian magic; its constitutions are all sorcery and witchcraft; they prevail upon sense by nonsense, upon the head by the tail, upon zeal by enthusiasm, and upon the Christian doctrine by the doctrine of the Devil" (1729: 352).

Nonetheless, Defoe's use of the term 'decayed' to describe Coventry's timber-framed dwellings may have been appropriate, as it would have been highly unusual for the City's Nonconformist communities to willingly raise funds for the repair of Catholic edifices. They were clearly more concerned with the financing and construction of their own places of worship, as a number of meeting houses and chapels were erected around this time. A large Quaker meeting house was opened in 1698, a new Presbyterian chapel in 1701 and one for the Particular Baptists in 1724 (Stephens 1969a). The term 'decayed' may have also been appropriate as Coventry's Catholic population were most likely too weak to financially support the repair of the City's medieval heritage. The Compton Census of 1676 – the first national census of religious affiliation – supports this assessment as it records that there were then only three Catholics in Coventry and two in Foleshill (Stephens 1969b). The census has been interpreted as a reasonably reliable for the overall distribution of Roman Catholics, although there several issues relating to particular nonconformity and dissent (Crockett and Snell 1997: 58).

Furthermore, the high number of ancient timber-framed houses that were demolished in Coventry during the eighteenth century is perhaps indicative of their state of disrepair. For example, a large block of late medieval timber houses at the south-west corner of St Michael's churchyard were demolished in 1783-4 (Stephen 1969). In the same year, an old timber-framed hall was demolished along Trinity Lane, while the Black Bull Inn (a three-storied timber-framed structure of eight bays) was demolished in 1793 (Stephens 1969b).

By the late eighteenth century, there appears to have been a shift in attitudes towards Coventry's medieval past, as contemporary travel writers decried its vanishing monuments. The travel writer

and diarist John Byng (1743-1813), for example, begins his account of Coventry by recording his shock and 'great' surprise upon finding that "Spon Gate and Grey Friars Gate" were the "last two remaining" medieval gates ([1792] 1954: 209)[19]. The rest had been pulled down by "block heads", as Byng claims, who had little appreciation for "monuments of antiquity" ([1792] 1954: 209). Coventry's vanishing medieval past most likely shocked Byng as it was a tangible sign that the old social order which he supported as a landed gentleman was in decline. Byng clearly feared the rapid social changes undergoing the country, as he proclaimed to detest the "upstart" newcomers, who had 'ignorantly' spent their newly acquired wealth and riches ([1792] 1954: 435).

Byng was of course justified in showing a degree of concern for the decline of the old hierarchical order as there were books in circulation that called for an egalitarian society. John Trusler's *The Way to be Rich and Respectable* (1775), for example, advised its readers on how to assume the persona of a wealthy landed gentleman. One month prior to Byng's trip to Coventry, both church and nobility had also been overthrown in France, which clearly played on his mind as he attempted to dissuade the "fools in London who think of [similarly] inflaming their country" ([1792] 1954: 369). Coventry's medieval heritage appears to have been seen as the antidote to society's upheavals as he suggests that it urgently needed to be 'restored' to its former "glory" (Byng [1792]: 1954: 209). Ford's Hospital may have been especially important to 'curing' society's ailments as Byng referred to it as "venerable" ([1792]: 1954: 209). This was an important terminology in the eighteenth century as it was used to recall the generosity of the abbeys and monasteries that were once the pride of England (Townshend 2019: 223).

Nonetheless, Byng also appears to have little interest in St Mary's Hall, as it is briefly mentioned as a place often "filled by burgesses swearing to their freedoms [...] on the approach of a new election" ([1789] 1954: 209). Byng may have deliberately offered little insight into the appearance of St Mary's Hall as he was aware of Coventry's lingering hostility towards the relics and remnants of the Catholic faith. He immediately notes upon entering Coventry that its "Romish chapels" were "disdainfully spoken of" (Byng [1789] 1954: 209). One 'Romish chapel'

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[19] Coventry's medieval walls were pierced by twelve gates and thirty-two towers (see Chapter One).

may have been St George's Chapel, which is first mentioned in the early fifteenth century as a meeting place for the tailors' craft, and originally attached to Gosford's Gate[20].

William Gilpin's *Observations Relating to Picturesque Beauty* (1792) is another key publication as it marked the emergence of the Picturesque movement and reveals how Coventry's medieval heritage was received at a time when it could be fully appreciated. Gilpin's theory of the Picturesque was inspired by Edmund Burke's essay, *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful,* which argued that two essential criterions of beauty were smoothness and neatness: "to produce [...] a perfect grandeur in such things [...] there should be an absolute uniformity in disposition, shape and colouring" (1757: 230). Gilpin was troubled by the qualities of regularity and monotony as he found pictorial beauty in irregular and rich medieval ruins. St Mary's Cathedral ruins appear to have become the focus of picturesque interest around this period as he described them using the terms 'rich' and 'mutilated':

> The tower of Coventry church, is a beautiful object: but constructed of the same kind of mouldering stone, which we took notice of in the ruins of Kenilworth; and which is indeed better adapted to a decayed, than to a complete pile. The ornamental parts of this tower are just in that state, which one would in a ruin: they possess a rich mutilation: every part is in some degree defaced; and yet the whole so perfect (Gilpin 1792: 55).

Gilpin's use of the term 'decayed' to describe the ruined cathedral gains further usefulness to this thesis, as it provides further evidence that there was an emerging visual lexicon used to evaluate and classify Coventry's medieval heritage. Nonetheless, Gilpin had no desire to revive Coventry's Catholic past because he was a High Church Anglican. Whilst visiting the ruins of Glastonbury Abbey in 1798, Gilpin suggested that they could only serve as a "Picturesque object" once their Catholic past had been repressed (1798: 135). Gilpin may, therefore, have only considered St Mary's Cathedral ruins to be a legitimate object of picturesque beauty because they had been 'purged' of the Catholic history they once contained.

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[20] See: The Coventry Leet Book ([1425] 1907).

In contrast to Gilpin, Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin's *True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture* (1841), usefully reveals how a devout Roman Catholic responded to Coventry's medieval architectural heritage in the early nineteenth century. Pugin draws particular attention to Coventry's medieval timber-framed houses by suggesting that they were structurally 'honest' and comparable to those seen in York and Gloucester: "In the ancient timbered houses of which such interesting examples yet remain in many of our old cities, especially at Coventry, York, and Gloucester, we do not find a single feature introduced beyond the decoration of what was necessary for their substantial construction" (1841: 37). However, Pugin does not consider elaborating on the meaning behind the term 'interesting' or specify which particular houses caught his eye, as his study summarises his previous lectures on medieval architecture and presents two great principles of design (1841). Pugin explains that every feature of a building should have a 'functional' purpose and maintains that all decoration should 'enrich' the essential construction of the building: "1st, that there should be no features about a building which are not necessary for convenience, construction, or propriety; 2nd, that all ornament should consist of enrichment of the essential construction of the building" (1841:1).

Pugin's study on *The Present State of Ecclesiastical Architecture in England and Some Remarks Relative to Ecclesiastical Architecture and Decoration* (1843) has a different focus to the previous publication. Its main objectives were to consider the features appropriate to a Gothic Church and investigate the destruction of medieval churches at the Reformation. Pugin addresses the second aim by implying that the choir stalls used at St John's Hospital, which he implies were removed from St Mary's Cathedral, are suitable for stylistic imitation: "many of the large parish churches had regular choirs with stalls, as at St Peter's, Norwich: St Mary's, Coventry; Long Melford church, Suffolk. In these churches there were no arched divisions between the nave and choir" (1843: 26).

Pugin's study gains further importance to the history of medieval art, as he provides one of the earliest published accounts on the Doom painting in Coventry's Holy Trinity Church, as he observes: "Most of these edifying paintings were defaced, under Edward the sixth, as superstitious, but one has been newly discovered at Coventry, which, although very late and very coarse in execution, is exceedingly curious" (1843: 25). However, Pugin's description may be

somewhat inaccurate and misleading as the Coventry Doom painting may not have been 'defaced' during the reign of Edward VI. Instead, it seems more likely that the painting was whitewashed several years later, as the Coventry annals record that 'all' popish images were defaced or pulled down by Puritan reformers in the late sixteenth century: "This year the mass was put down, all images and Popish relics beaten down, and burnt in the streets" ([1560] 1871: 120). It is difficult to precisely pinpoint when the painting was whitewashed, as the parish records of Holy Trinity Church do not report the date when its medieval wall paintings were obscured.

In Pugin's *Apology for the Revival of Christian Architecture in England* (1844)*,* he proposes that the reader base their residential designs on Coventry's medieval almshouses, since he perceived them to be truly 'Christian' edifices:

> To be constructed in a style once simple and religious: the aged should be
> provided with cloisters for sheltered exercise, - a common hall and kitchen, -
> separate lodging chambers, and a chapel for daily devotion; religious emblems
> and memorials of their benefactors should constitute the only decorations,
> interspersed with pious scriptures and moral legends. Beautiful examples of
> these truly Christian institutions are to be found in the ancient hospitals of
> Stamford, Leicester, Northampton and Coventry (1843: 33).

Pugin omits the names of Coventry's medieval almshouses as he was principally focused on setting out the rules for the construction of domestic and residential edifices. This was an essential aim for Pugin as he was horrified by the "unsightly mass of bastard Italian" residences that had been erected in old English parks (1844: 39). However, as this study will show, Pugin was clearly familiar with Coventry's medieval almshouses as he re-imagined their form and layout in his designs for Charles Scarisbrick's timber-framed lodge (see Chapter Three). Pugin's rediscovery of Coventry's medieval past as a place of harmony and beauty is similarly explored later in this study (see Chapter Three).

Pugin's *Glossary of Ecclesiastical Ornament and Costume* (1844: 110) builds upon his previous study of the Coventry Doom by drawing upon two 'new' visual descriptors to describe the painting: "There is a *rude*, but *interesting* Doom remaining at Caythorpe Church, near Grantham; also in the Church of Holy Trinity, Coventry [author's emphasis]". Nonetheless, Pugin offers little further insight into the meanings behind the terms 'rude' and 'interesting' as his publication was only intended to provide an alphabetical glossary on church furnishing and devotional equipment. It also provides the reader with coloured plates showing various holy monograms, liturgical ornaments, and vestments. This thesis seeks to redress these gaps by offering greater insight into the meanings and significance behind the terminologies (see Chapter Three).

By the late nineteenth century, Charles Eastlake (1836-1906) usefully defined the Gothic Revival in his *History of the Gothic Revival* (1872: 1) as the "renewal in this country of a taste" for medieval art and architecture. Eastlake's study emerges as another critical text as it is one of the earliest publications to overlook the connections between A.W.N Pugin and the City of Coventry, despite the fact that he explores his activities in the English Midlands. For example, Eastlake reveals that Pugin designed St Chad's Cathedral in Birmingham, which was his first cathedral and the first Roman Catholic cathedral to be built in England since the Reformation (1872: 156). Eastlake critically assesses the Cathedral's form, condition, exterior features, internal layout and decorative details (1872: 156-157). He suggests that Pugin based St Chad's upon the medieval churches of northern Germany, but he appears to have been unable to explain when and why Pugin visited the German lands as he was primarily interested in his activities in England (1872: 156). Eastlake follows his study of St Chad's Cathedral with an accurate, but incomplete, list all of the other 'major' Puginian churches in the English Midlands: "The list of Pugin's works is a long one, including churches [...] at Derby, Kenilworth [and] Nottingham" (1872: 157). In the publication's appendix, he also offers a developed discussion on Pugin's designs for St Bernard's Monastery, Leicestershire.

In contrast, Eastlake may have ignored the connections between A.W.N Pugin and Coventry's medieval heritage, as he argued that Pugin's "bias" for the ancient faith had "no legitimate place in the polemics of art" and only served to "weaken" his literary work (1872: 151-152). Eastlake's anti-Catholic bias is made most apparent to his readers when he praises John Ruskin (1819-

1900), a fierce critic of Pugin and an Evangelical Protestant, for prising away the Gothic from the papist associations that the Protestant party "saw lurking in every pointed arch and [...] peeping from behind every Gothic pillar" (1872: 266).

Just a year later, in 1873, Ruskin gave a lecture at the University of Oxford which referred to the great height and scale of Coventry's medieval sandstone churches: "The sand of Coventry binds itself into stone which can be built halfway to the sky" (1891: 310). Ruskin was doubtless impressed by Coventry's medieval churches as his lecture sought to provide greater knowledge on the "intelligent laying of stones" in "our buildings" (1891: 119). Nonetheless, his lecture reinforces how Coventry's medieval buildings were prised away from their Catholic associations, as he neglects to explore how and why they were built to support the ancient faith. Ruskin may have deliberately overlooked the Catholic origins of Coventry's medieval churches as he often sought to Protestantize the Gothic style. In Ruskin's *Stones of Venice*, for example, he seeks to make the Basilica di San Marco welcome to a "Protestant beholder" as he argued that he saw the 'reformed' faith in its ancient features (1853: 24). The Basilica's golden walls were like the great "illuminations" of a great Bible, as he explains, and the "common people of the time were taught their scripture history" through its illuminations (Ruskin 1853: 111). Ruskin (1853: 103) likewise claims to see the "Protestant spirit of self-dependence and inquiry" in the Gothic of the English Middle Ages.

Ruskin may have also been reluctant to explore the Catholic origins of Coventry's medieval buildings as the City's identity was still bound up with ideas of Protestantism in the late nineteenth century. This is made clear by Thomas Flyer (1788-1833), MP for Coventry and a committed Protestant, who voted against the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829. *The Coventry Herald* also reported that Flyer presented a petition to the House of Commons, which had been signed by 3,915 persons of Coventry, against making concessions to the Roman Catholics (1829). Britain also remained in many ways a Protestant state and a Protestant society long after the Catholic Emancipation Act (Machin 1999: 31). Resentment to the Catholic faith was so great that the Public Worship Act, which was intended to suppress the growth of Catholic ritualism, was passed by the British Parliament as late as 1874. Ruskin almost certainly knew of this law

due to his own reservations about the Catholic Church and likely had the nation's 'interests' in mind when he obscured Coventry's Roman Catholic past.

By the early twentieth century, Arthur Mee's topographical series on *The Kings of England: Warwickshire* (1936), openly portrayed St Michael's Cathedral as a tangible representation of English nationhood and glory: "above everything soars the spire of the cathedral, one of the architectural glories of England [...] Only two other English cathedral spires exceed it in height" (1936: 101). Mee may have been eager to associate St Michael's Church with ideas of nationhood as more recent studies have revealed that 'Englishness' became of increasing importance in the fight against Nazi-propaganda and continental nationalism (Kumar 2003: 232-233). Kumar's *Making of English Identity* (2003: 232-233) is particularly useful here, as it also suggests that the nationalist hysteria of Nazi rallies encouraged the English to seek refuge in their quiet cathedral cities and rural countryside. Mee himself appears to have taken refuge in Coventry's medieval buildings as he describes how they took him to a more "noble and dignified" past (1936: 110). In the peaceful surroundings of St John's churchyard, Mee had a quiet moment of reflection for the "guildsmen of old" who had built such a "perfect little picture" (1936: 107).

Mee clearly viewed Coventry's medieval heritage through rose-tinted glasses as he suggests that the stained-glass windows of its churches were "not obscured by smoke" (1936: 97). This assessment is inaccurate as contemporary investigations into Coventry's atmospheric pollution recorded "suspended impurities" which were caused by its booming motor-car and engineering industries (1937: 484). Mee continued to view Coventry's medieval heritage through a rose-coloured lens as he celebrates the decay and destruction of St Mary's Hall: "We see how nature has sculptured the soft red sandstone, rounding every edge, leaving many groove and furrow" (1936: 98). This statement echoes Gilpin's description of Coventry's 'mouldering' stonework and reinforces how the medieval past had long mistreated.

Mee's account further builds on earlier travel guides as he includes several black and white photographs of Coventry's medieval guildhall and churches. The photographs of St Michael's Church stand out as they show the building from an aerial viewpoint. Nonetheless, Mee offers

little insight into the circulation or production of the photographs since he was primarily focused on guiding his readers around the county's principal landmarks. This thesis therefore expands on Mee's study by exploring how Coventry's medieval heritage was circulated, consumed and imaged in the early twentieth century (see Chapter Five).

0.3.2 Secondary Literatures on the Reception of Coventry's Medieval Heritage

Having analysed the 'core' primary texts, discussion now moves on to consider how the secondary literature has explored the reception of Coventry's medieval heritage during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This literature has primarily been the product of three main academic disciplines, including art history, archaeology, and conservation. It highlights the key methods used to explore the reception of Coventry's medieval heritage, but also sheds new light on key gaps in their treatment. This section also investigates how extant scholarship has investigated the survival and visibility of Coventry's medieval heritage during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Gooder's *The Walls of Coventry* (1966) is an appropriate text to begin the second half of this review as the boundaries of a medieval city were defined by their walls and gates. Gooder begins the study with a brief history of the town wall, from the early fourteenth to the late twentieth century. She suggests that the wall was of antiquarian interest in the nineteenth century by including a short passage from William Reader's *History and Antiquities of Coventry* (1810), which usefully reveals when four of the City gates were demolished in the eighteenth century (Gooder 1966: 99). Nonetheless, she does not consider to elaborate on the reasons why Coventry's medieval past became the focus of antiquarian attention, as the primary purpose of the study is to present the results of Woodfield's excavations in King and Well street in the early 1960s (Gooder et al 1966: 88).

Gooder's pamphlet, *Coventry's Town Wall* (1967), builds upon her previous work by including several early nineteenth-century sketches of Coventry's medieval gates. Many of the illustrations appear to have been produced by local antiquaries, including William Reader (1782-1852), but the reader does not discover why they were interested in Coventry's medieval architecture. This

is arguably a major omission as she seeks to shed greater light on the history wall from its "first recorded stirrings" to the "lingering remnants still to be found in the city today" (Gooder 1967: 3). It is also noteworthy that Gooder does not consider to use the illustrations to explore the visibility of Coventry's medieval wall in the nineteenth century, since she was interested in its height and length.

Moving inwards, Brian Hobley's study on the *Excavations at the Cathedral and Benedictine Priory of St Mary, Coventry* (1971), offered a detailed picture of the former layout of St Mary's Cathedral. He reveals that much of the former Cathedral was surviving in the early nineteenth century by analysing a range of cartographic sources and architectural plans. One upstanding section of the wall around the top of the priory was surviving in the nineteenth century, as it was drawn "many times" for the Aylesford Collection, which was a collection of early nineteenth-century watercolour paintings featuring the medieval churches and houses of Warwickshire (Hobley 1971: 88). Nonetheless, Hobley neglects to include any drawings from the Aylesford Collection, as his study was written to provide greater insight into his excavations at the Cathedral and Benedictine Priory in the late twentieth-century.

Margaret Rylatt's *City of Coventry: Archaeology and Development* (1977) has a wider focus than the previous publication discussed, as it investigates the archaeological interest in Coventry's medieval remains from the seventeenth to the late twentieth centuries. The publication's broad focus meant that Rylatt could only devote the following lines, out of fifteen pages, to the reception of Coventry's medieval archaeological heritage during the nineteenth century: "discoveries of ancient silver coins and human bones were made in the 19th century. This, however, was all accidental discovery, reported to 'Antiquaries'" (1977: 23). The inverted commas around the word 'antiquary' are worth focusing on briefly as they suggest that Rylatt had a relatively poor opinion of Coventry's antiquarian scholars. The reasons why Rylatt may have had a negative view of Coventry's antiquaries are unclear as she swiftly moves on to explore the creation of local archaeological societies. However, it reinforces how there has been little developed treatment into the antiquarian reception of Coventry's medieval heritage.

Another key point to consider about Rylatt's publication is that it remarks in passing on the survival and visibility of Coventry's medieval houses in the nineteenth century, as she was more concerned by the number of timber-framed dwellings that had been destroyed a few years prior to her study: "160 timber-framed houses survived the war, but more recent developments had, by 1966, reduced, this number to a mere 38" (1977: 41). Rylatt may have returned to the 'recent' destruction Coventry's medieval timber-framed dwellings as around this time there were several new development sites planned for the City (1977: 49). The new development sites were planned along Much Park Street, which had been laid out in the fourteenth century, as well as High Street (Rylatt 1977: 49).

In contrast to Rylatt, the historian Joan Lancaster (1918-1992) claimed to have made "fuller use of the illuminating work" of Coventry's antiquaries in her guide to *St Mary's Hall* (1981). Lancaster achieves this aim to some extent as her bibliography includes the work of several local antiquaries, including Thomas Sharp and William Reader, who appear to have extensively written on St Mary's Hall in the nineteenth century. Yet, she does not cite or discuss their work in the main body of her text, as she was primarily focused on describing the contents of the hall for potential tourists. In the second section of the study, Lancaster aimed to provide a detailed description of St Mary's Hall and its contents, but she devotes less than one page to the appearance of the Coventry Tapestry (1981: 42). This is a notable omission as she described the tapestry[21] as being of "unique" importance as it "remains virtually complete and in the position for which it was designed" (Lancaster 1981: 42). St Mary's Guild Chair, which has been dated to the mid-fifteenth century due to the style and quality of its craftsmanship, is similarly described and discussed in one short paragraph (Lancaster 1981: 41). This is another striking gap as Lancaster argues that the chair is of "outstanding importance" due to its "intricate and beautiful features" (1981: 61). In the final part of her study, Lancaster provides several birds-eye plans of St Mary's Guildhall. The plans show the ground, first and second floor rooms at the time of her visit in the 1980s. There is little doubt that they are of particular importance to the architectural historian as they give greater insight into the form and layout of St Mary's Hall in the late twentieth century. However, she does not consider to provide an equally detailed visual 'map' or

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[21] The Coventry Tapestry may have been made in the early sixteenth century (see Chapter One).

view of the hall in the nineteenth or early twentieth centuries, since this was beyond the scope of her study.

George Demidowicz's edited volume, *Coventry's First Cathedral* (1994), is a volume of essays which were presented at a symposium on St Mary's Cathedral and Priory in 1993. Many of the papers are useful for this study as they draw attention to the interest in St Mary's Cathedral in the nineteenth century. Richard K. Morris's paper, for example, suggests that local nineteenth-century historians sought to shed greater light on the architectural form and style of the Cathedral. He usefully adds that they published detailed histories on the building, which were used by successive architectural historians to build a more complete understanding of the Cathedral. Nonetheless, one shortcoming of the symposium is that no paper was devoted to exploring how the Cathedral was treated during the nineteenth or early twentieth centuries. This is a major omission as the conference was intended to shed greater light on the history of the "often neglected" and "oft-forgotten" Cathedral (1993: 1).

By the turn of the twenty-first century, there was a renewed interest in the Lychgate Cottages[22], as the local City Council sought to redevelop the area as part of their 'Millennium Scheme'. George Demidowicz's *History of The Blue Coat School and the Lych Gate Cottages* (2000), for example, aimed to offer great insight into the history of the cottages in order to help the Council plan a transformation that was historically accurate and relevant. His study stands out as he includes several nineteenth-century watercolour prints of the cottage. Nonetheless, Demidowicz does not consider to explore why the cottages became the subject of artistic importance, as he uses the drawings to shed greater light on the condition of the cottages in the nineteenth century (2000: 33-34).

Charmian Woodfield's edited volume, *The Church of our Lady of Mount Carmel and Some Conventual Buildings at the Whitefriars, Coventry* (2005), emerges as another critical study as it is the only recent scholarly study to discuss the survival of Whitefriars' Monastery in the nineteenth century. In section 'C' of the study, for example, Cattell suggests that the North wall

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[22] The Lychgate Cottages stood on a plot of land at the southern end of St Mary's forecourt. They have been dated to the early sixteenth century (Demidowicz 2000: 1).

of the East cloister could be seen on an early nineteenth-century plan of the monastery and the city wall (2005: 47). However, he does not consider to use the drawing to shed greater light on the survival or visibility of the city wall, as the study's principal aim was to discuss the key archaeological findings of their excavations around the East cloister range in the late twentieth century. Woodfield's article on *The Whitefriars of Coventry* (2007: 210) later revealed that she was eager to publish the findings of their excavations, as they had been "indefinitely" delayed by Coventry City Council and English Heritage, who had left "virtually no money for any kind of archaeology" following the City's reconstruction. Woodfield's comments should be treated with a degree of caution as local newspapers highlight how she was a fierce critic of both the council and its widespread demolition plans. The *Coventry Evening Telegraph*, for example, reported that she fought against the local council's "pull it down attitude" in order to save an almost roofless fourteenth-century cottage on the outskirts of the City (1964: 6). Nonetheless, her comments usefully reinforce how Coventry's post-1945 reconstruction has dominated scholarly discussions for the last few decades.

Linda Monckton's edited volume, *Coventry: Medieval Art, Architecture and Archaeology in the City and Its Vicinity* (2011), is a volume of essays which were presented at the British Archaeological Association's 2007 conference in Coventry. The main aims of this conference were to remedy the relative neglect in modern scholarship of Coventry's medieval art, architecture, and archaeology. Ian Soden's opening essay, *An Introduction to the Archaeology of Coventry*, appears to revise Rylatt's dismissal of the 'antiquaries' by arguing that Coventry's medieval archaeology "benefited from the attentions" of a series of local antiquarian scholars during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (2011: 1). He further builds upon her work by listing the names of several antiquaries, including Thomas Sharp and Benjamin Poole, who "revelled in the old fabric" (2011: 1-2). However, he was unable to trace their activities and pursuits in further detail, as his essay concentrates on the most recent archaeological enquiry in Coventry. This is a key issue which needs to be addressed as he points out that the names of the antiquaries are "unheard by some" and "half-forgotten by others" (2011: 2). His list may also be developed as it appears to exclude women antiquaries, who have traditionally been marginalised and overlooked, on account of their gender[23].

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[23] See: Rosemary Hill's *Times Witness* (2021) for a brief study on the marginalization of women antiquaries.

In Monckton's essay, *St Michael's, Coventry: The Architectural History of a Medieval Urban Parish Church* (2011)*,* she relies on Sharp's nineteenth-century transcriptions of the *Leet Book*[24] and Trinity Guild books to explore the construction of St Michael's Church. Sharp's transcriptions, as she notes, reveal that building works were still underway in the mid-fifteenth century and continued into the sixteenth century (Monckton 2011: 151). Monckton's reliance on Sharp's transcriptions particularly stands out here, as it implies that local antiquaries made valuable contributions to the study of Coventry's medieval antiquities, which demand recognition and respect. Monckton (2011: 144) herself appears to support this assessment by adding that many primary source documents have been lost or accidentally destroyed since the nineteenth century. Although, Monckton neglects to explicitly state why St Michael's Church became the focus of antiquarian attention, as she was principally interested in the building's architectural construction in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Monckton (2011: 135) reassess St Michael's architectural fabric as she adds that it has generally been less appreciated, and less valued, on account of the destruction of its interior in the 1940s.

Monckton's volume continues to focus on Coventry's medieval churches. In Gill's essay, *The Doom in Holy Trinity Church and Wall Painting in Medieval Coventry* (2011), she develops new knowledge on the artistic standing of medieval Coventry by dissecting and comparing the iconography in the Doom painting in Holy Trinity Church. Gill's essay is further useful to this study as she devotes almost two pages to the treatment and condition of the Doom painting in the nineteenth century (2011: 207-209). The Doom appears to have been in a poor condition as it was depicted by a range of artists, including James Cherry and George Scharf, as an indiscriminate brown wall painting (Gill 2011: 209). However, Gill was unable to include or treat their drawings to greater attention as she goes on to declare that painting should be understood through "technical examination" (2011: 214). She therefore analyses its paint pigments, principal coatings, and techniques through a scientific lens. This thesis seeks to present a new reading of the Doom painting by focusing on its artistic reception and treatment in the nineteenth century.

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[24] The *Leet Book* contains extracts from Coventry's social, economic and political laws (see Chapter One for further detail).

In another essay, entitled *Coventry: A Regional Centre of Glass-Painting in the 14th Century?* (2011)*,* Richard Marks seeks to establish if Coventry was a regional centre for glass painting in the fourteenth century. He draws on an extensive range of civic sources, surviving monuments and artefacts to argue that Coventry may be seen as a centre of glazing activity. Yet, he offers one tantalisingly brief sentence on how N.J.H Westlake (1833-1921) included Coventry amongst several urban-based painting 'schools' in the late nineteenth century, which provokes a series of questions from the reader (2011: 198). For example, why was Westlake interested in Coventry's medieval stained-glass painters? How did Westlake respond to Coventry's medieval stained-glass? Did Westlake revive and reconstruct Coventry's medieval glass 'schools'? Such questions are addressed and answered in subsequent chapters of this thesis (see Chapter Four).

On the front cover of *Coventry: Medieval Art, Architecture and Archaeology in the City and Its Vicinity* (2011), it should be mentioned that the authors include an early twentieth-century picture postcard of St Mary's Hall from Bayley Lane. The postcard is attributed to Valentine and Sons, a leading postcard publisher, yet the authors neglect to explore why the Guildhall was perceived to be of pictorial interest in the early twentieth century. This thesis seeks to redress this gap in knowledge by uncovering why picture postcard publishers depicted Coventry's medieval art and architecture in the early twentieth century (see Chapter Five).

In more recent years, there has been a greater amount of interest in Coventry's medieval visual arts heritage, which doubtless stems from Coventry having been chosen as UK City of Culture 2021. On 27th September 2019, a conference was held on *The Mystery of the St Mary's Hall Tapestry - Pulling the Threads Together* in St Mary's Hall. Jointly organised by the charities Medieval Coventry and Tudor Coventry, the central aims of the conference were to: figure out the overall purpose of the tapestry, work out who the figures are within the tapestry's lower compartments and uncover who commissioned the tapestry. Several key new ideas came out of the conference, as we will now explore.

Maria Hayward, a textile conservator from Hampton Court Palace, proposed for the first time that the banderoles in each corner of the tapestry have the initials H and M on them. These initials were previously overlooked due to poor lighting, but they may have originally been

incorporated because the tapestry had been commissioned for Henry VI and Margaret of Anjou. In other contributions, Fred Hepburn, a Coventry based historian, proposed that the dogs in the bottom left-hand compartment of the tapestry could be talbots (the emblem of the Earls of Shrewsbury). The publication of the conference findings has been delayed due to funding issues, but it appears that no paper was dedicated to investigating how the medieval tapestry was received in the nineteenth or early twentieth centuries. This is a major gap in scholarly knowledge since the Coventry Tapestry has been classified as being of national and transnational significance (Lancaster 1981: 42).

Two years later, Alice Lister, a textile conservator, presented a seminar on the Coventry Tapestry as part of the Warburg Institute's series on medieval art and objects (Warburg Institute 2021). Lister's seminar expanded on the *Mystery of the St Mary's Hall Tapestry* conference by including Henry Shaw's early nineteenth-century illustration of the Coventry Tapestry. Lister included Shaw's print as she argued that we should compare details of the tapestry with earlier historical depictions in order to help us understand the design of the tapestry. Nonetheless, Lister was unable to explore why the tapestry became the focus of artistic treatment in the nineteenth century, as the central focus of her seminar was to describe and discuss the initial results of its conservation.

0.3.3 Pugin Scholarship and Coventry's Medieval Heritage

In this section, I interrogate recent Pugin scholarship which explores A.W.N Pugin's response to Coventry's medieval buildings and visual art works. Pugin's drawings form a central focus of this study as they reveal how Coventry's Catholic art and architecture, which may similarly be understood as medieval art produced for the Catholic Church, was reinvented and re-presented to build newer national narratives. The section also draws attention to the key methods and approaches used by a range of scholars as they have had a direct impact on the methodologies employed within this thesis.

Alexandra Wedgwood's *Catalogue of the Drawings Collection of the Royal Institute of British Architects: The Pugin Family* (1977) is a key foundational text as she ostensibly presents a comprehensive catalogue of the drawings by A.C Pugin, A.W.N Pugin and E.W Pugin in the

Royal Institute of British Architects archives. Wedgwood shows familiarity with A.W.N Pugin's twenty-three preliminary illustrations for Daniel Rock's *The Church of our Fathers*, a book projected to be on the ceremonies and customs of the medieval Catholic church, by noting the dimensions and key features of each illustration. One illustration is described as follows: "the procession of the Blessed Sacrament through the streets of a medieval town on the feast of Corpus Christi; a crowd of people is shown in the foreground surrounding the ecclesiastical procession" (1977: 169). She adds that the "town in which the procession is taking place might possibly be based on Coventry. Half-timber gabled houses are shown on either side of the drawing and in the background there is a church with a tall tower" (1977: 53). However, Wedgwood appears not to draw upon any primary or secondary sources to validate the idea that the architecture in the illustrations was based on Coventry's medieval architecture, because she did not expect to devote any in-depth attention to the designs.

Wedgwood's second catalogue is A. *W. N. Pugin and the Pugin Family: Catalogue of Architectural Drawings in the Victoria and Albert Museum* (1985). It has a similar focus to the first as she attempts to provide a catalogue of all the drawings by A.C Pugin, A.W.N Pugin and E.W.N Pugin in the Victoria and Albert Museum. Wedgwood's second catalogue builds upon her earlier work, as she sheds greater light on the aims of *The Church of our Fathers* and the reasons behind Pugin's involvement with Daniel Rock. She supplies the reader with three illustrations that were intended for *The Church of our Fathers*, yet the illustration which might have been based upon medieval Coventry is not featured.

Margaret Belcher's article, *Church of our Fathers: A.W.N Pugin and Daniel Rock* (1982), is worth focusing on briefly here as she similarly provides a useful summary of the central religious processions in each illustration. However, she appears not to conceive the buildings in the illustrations as important as she maintains that they were not meant to be prominent features (1982: 382). She also does not consider investigating if the medieval buildings in the illustrations were based on real, living examples as she argues that they may have been based around imaginary subjects (1982: 382). This thesis similarly suggests that A.W.N Pugin had a vivid imagination as he re-imagined the medieval past as a better place of harmony and cohesion (see Chapter Three). Nevertheless, this study challenges Belcher's study by arguing that Pugin based

the buildings in his drawing of the Blessed Sacrament on Coventry's surviving medieval timber-framed dwellings and churches.

Three years later, Belcher's A.*W.N Pugin: A Critical Bibliography* (1985) expands on Wedgwood's work, as she offers a revised catalogue of all the works by and about A.W.N Pugin. There is a vast amount of material on Pugin, 863 publications in total, but Belcher suggests that only two publications have touched upon his connections to the City of Coventry. The 'first' is *The Autobiography of Archbishop Ullathorne with Selections from his Letters* (1892)*,* which revealed that Pugin found St Osburg's Church in Coventry to be a pure revival of the Early English Gothic style (Belcher 1987: 366). The 'second' publication is an article entitled *New Church to be Opened* (1844), which mistakenly suggested that St Osburg's Church was designed by Pugin (it was in fact designed by Charles Hansom) (Belcher 1987: 366). Although Belcher erroneously suggests that only two other publications have looked at the connections between Pugin and the City of Coventry, this catalogue is important as it indicates how the connections between Coventry and the early Catholic Revival movement have been consistently understudied.

In 1995, the Pugin Society was founded in order to celebrate A.W.N Pugin's life and writings[25]. The Society appears to have generated new interest in A.W.N Pugin as several studies have since been published on his activities and architectural interests. Roderick O'Donnell's *The Pugins and the Catholic Midlands* (2002), for example, is a relatively recent gazetteer of the works of A.W.N Pugin and his sons throughout the Midlands. O'Donnell's study is major piece of scholarship because it is the only publication, that the author is aware of, dedicated to investigating Pugin's widespread building activities in the English Midlands. O'Donnell devotes numerous pages to St Mary's Church in Derby, St Chad's Cathedral in Birmingham, and St Barnabas in Nottingham. He strengthens the idea that Pugin based his churches on 'foreign' examples by arguing that St Chad's Cathedral was based on the German 'hall churches' due to its immense proportions (O'Donnell 2002: 58). In contrast, the connections between the City of

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[25] The Pugin Society also publishes a newsletter which often presents new knowledge on Pugin's writings and artistic productions. It has not, as far as the author is aware, published an article dedicated to exploring Pugin's interest in Coventry's medieval past.

Coventry and Pugin are only referenced tangentially through a discussion on Bishop Ullathorne's preferred church architect: "W.B. Ullathorne [...] who had known of Pugin's leading role in 1838, treated C.F. Hansom who had designed for him [...] St Osburg, Coventry, as 'his' architect" (O'Donnell 2002: 25). This thesis not only seeks to expand upon O'Donnell's research by illustrating why Coventry became a central destination for Catholic Revivalists, but also seeks to develop new knowledge on how Pugin applied the ideas of leading German scholars to Coventry's medieval heritage.

Timothy Brittain-Catlin's doctoral thesis, *A.W.N. Pugin's English Residential Architecture* (2004), is a rare piece of scholarship because it is one of the few works to openly consider the significance of Coventry's medieval architectural heritage for Pugin. Brittain-Catlin implies that Coventry's ancient timber-framed houses may have even shaped Pugin's domestic designs because he showed great favour towards them in *True Principles of Christian Architecture* (1841). Nevertheless, Brittain-Catlin appears not to explore which particular ancient houses were deemed to be so pleasing, because he only intended to provide a brief survey of all Pugin's published and unpublished writings which make specific reference to domestic and residential architecture.

0.4 Gaps in the Literature

To summarise the discussions above, several key gaps in the literature have emerged:

First, many studies have touched on the reception of one individual building or site, but there has hitherto been no attempt to provide interconnected view of the reception of Coventry's medieval heritage during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This a major gap in scholarly knowledge as it creates a fragmented and incomplete view of the reception of Coventry's medieval heritage. The fragmented nature of existing scholarship is also evidenced by the fact that little has been written on the form, layout, and visibility of Coventry's medieval heritage during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The survival of Coventry's medieval timber-framed dwellings has been particularly overlooked and dismissed as the earliest primary sources deliberately portrayed them as ruinous. This thesis therefore seeks to bring new insight into the

survival and hidden centrality of Coventry's medieval timber-framed houses for nineteenth-century picturesque tourists and visual artists. It also considers how drawings and artistic productions played a key role in bringing Coventry's medieval houses back into limelight.

Second, Coventry's Roman Catholic past has been consistently suppressed because the majority of sources follow a Protestant narrative. This suppression began early in the sixteenth century, when Protestant writers artificially distanced themselves from Coventry's medieval heritage, in order to advance the cultural and political aims of the English Reformation. For the City of Coventry, the Reformation meant the disbandment of the guild of Holy Trinity in 1547. It also meant the suppression of St Mary's Cathedral and Priory, the locking up of Whitefriars' Monastery, and the decay of Coventry's timber-framed houses. Coventry's Catholic heritage continued to be ignored in the seventeenth century as the City was known as a major centre for religious dissent. In the instances when prominent Nonconformist writers did comment on Coventry's medieval buildings, they often took the opportunity to present them as outdated or decayed, in order to undermine their importance and significance to a broad range of audiences. This thesis seeks to bring new visibility to Coventry's Catholic heritage by tracing the awakening of interest in its Marian iconography from the nineteenth to early twentieth centuries.

Third, Coventry's medieval heritage has been overlooked and understudied as English nationalism was closely connected to the development of new industries. England's emerging identity as a powerful manufacturing nation in the seventeenth century, for example, encouraged domestic tourists to overlook and openly criticise Coventry's medieval buildings. Celia Fiennes's guidebook notably offered little insight into the appearance of Coventry's medieval architecture, as she was principally interested in the nation's new manufacturing processes. Coventry's medieval heritage continued to be marginalised as the City reinvented itself as a leading centre for silk and ribbon weaving in the eighteenth century. Nonetheless, as this study will show through close visual and textual analysis, Coventry's medieval heritage became increasingly bound up with ideas of nation-making in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Fourth, there has been little developed discussion on the significance of Coventry's medieval buildings and art works for early Catholic Revivalists. When scholars have investigated the links

between A.W.N Pugin and the English Catholic Midlands, for instance, they have tended to focus on his church building activities in the City of Birmingham. O'Donnell's *Pugin and the Catholic Midlands* is an important example as he argues that Birmingham was a key destination for Pugin and other leading Catholic Revivalists. This study similarly recognises that Birmingham was home to a powerful and wealthy Catholic community, yet it seeks to open new routes of Pugin scholarship by uncovering new insights into his emotional and sensory responses to Coventry's medieval heritage.

Finally, many studies have downplayed or dismissed the antiquarian treatment of Coventry's medieval heritage during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Rylatt's research stands out as she appears to dismiss the antiquarian treatment of Coventry's medieval heritage by using inverted commas to refer to their publications. This thesis offers greater insight into why antiquarianism has long been viewed as an amateurish discipline and occupation (see Chapter Two). Yet, it seeks to redress the antiquaries' treatment by uncovering how their unique fusion of the imagination and information brought Coventry's medieval past into the spotlight like never before. The interconnected relationships between the antiquaries similarly forms a central focus of this study in order to further redress the fragmented view of the reception of Coventry's medieval heritage.

0.5 Methodology and Archival Sources

This thesis has employed a range of tools, methods, and approaches in order to build a more complete view of the survival of Coventry's medieval heritage between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Mapping regression techniques, which involve comparing cartographic sources and architectural plans in order to understand changes in the historic landscape, have proven to be an invaluable tool as they illustrate how the survival and visibility of Coventry's medieval heritage transformed over time. The technique is also particularly important to this thesis as reveals what the antiquarian scholar, picturesque tourist, and Catholic Revivalist could respond to during their visits to Coventry. Many of the maps which I have analysed have been previously excluded from map regression exercises, including the Sheldon Tapestry map of Warwickshire (c.1580) and the General Plan of Whitefriars (c.1800). However, the reliability

and accuracy of the cartographic sources has been assessed through comparisons with recent photographs, which were taken on a smart phone camera during site visits carried out in the first and second phases of this research project. Site visits were undertaken to St Mary's Hall, Swanswell Gate, and the 'Old Stone House' along Much Park Street. St Chad's Cathedral in Birmingham and St Mary's Church in Derby were also photographed on separate site visits in order to help the reader visualise their appearance in the third chapter.

While this thesis employs key archaeological tools and approaches, it has also been informed by the theory and practice of material culture. The Coventry Tapestry, for example, is presented as a key source of material culture as it conveys both political and religious messages (see Chapter One). These messages may have spoken specifically to a Coventry audience and had particular resonance during the early sixteenth century (Chapter One). Other key examples of material culture mentioned in this study include the fifteenth-century Guild Chair, the carved statues on St Michael's Church tower, and the central decorative roof bosses in St Mary's Hall.

Art-historical methods have similarly been employed as my literature review revealed that many secondary sources have approached Coventry's medieval buildings through a 'scientific' lens. Hobley's approach to the drawings of St Mary's Priory and Cathedral in the Aylesford Collection, for instance, may be defined as scientific since he uses them to build a precise and accurate view of the priory remains in the nineteenth century. This thesis builds on Hobley's distinctly scientific approach by investigating how and why the drawings in the Aylesford Collection were imaginatively reinvented by visual artists during the early nineteenth century (see Chapter Two). The Aylesford Collection is likewise discussed and examined through an art-historical lens in order to greater light on the picturesque treatment of Coventry's medieval heritage.

Another key secondary source which has had a direct impact on the methodologies used in this project is Alexandra Wedgwood's catalogue on *A.W. N. Pugin and the Pugin Family* (1985). Wedgwood's catalogue briefly suggests that the medieval city seen in A.W.N Pugin's drawing of the Blessed Sacrament (produced for Daniel Rock's *Church of our Fathers*) may be Coventry, but she does not consider drawing upon any primary or secondary source evidence to

substantiate her claim. This thesis builds and expands on Wedgwood's work by analysing rarely-examined archival evidence to suggest that A.W.N Pugin's based his *Church of our Fathers* drawing on Coventry's medieval domestic and ecclesiastical architecture. In turn, this research develops a new understanding of the importance of the English Midlands during the early Catholic Revival movement.

Rosemary Hill's *Time's Witness* (2021) should also be seen as providing key frameworks for this thesis as it underlines the value of bringing the antiquaries and antiquarianism back into visibility. However, Hill's approach is quite selective as she primarily explores how antiquarian scholars responded to Lincoln Cathedral or Salisbury Cathedral. Salisbury Cathedral is treated to detailed discussion as Hill claims that it came to symbolise the antiquaries' battle to save Gothic architecture (2021: 42)[26]. Yet, this study builds on Hill's approach by exploring how a network of antiquaries played a pivotal role in stimulating the taste for Coventry's medieval art and architecture. Hill's *Time's Witness* also develops new knowledge on how key antiquarian scholars responded to the medieval past during the Picturesque movement (2021). Her research frames and supports this study as it similarly seeks to uncover how Coventry's medieval churches and timber-framed houses were treated in the age of romanticism.

This thesis also departs from traditional, revivalist studies, which previously obscured the connections between Coventry and the early Catholic Revival movement. Charles Eastlake's approach to the study of the Catholic Revival movement in the English Midlands is expanded upon, for example, as this thesis argues that Coventry became an important centre for a network of Catholic Revivalists in the early nineteenth century. This network is shown to have included Bishop William Ullathorne (1806-1889), Mother Margaret Hallahan (1803-1868), and A.W.N Pugin. This thesis further develops Eastlake's revivalist approaches by analysing A.W.N Pugin's surviving diaries in the National Art Library, London, to propose that Coventry was a key destination on his 'taste-making' trips to all the most important Gothic cities on the Continent.

Several key archives and libraries have provided much of the primary source material. The Coventry Archives and Record Office has been an important resource, as it preserves a variety of

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[26] This study similarly explores the antiquaries' relationship with Salisbury Cathedral (see Chapter Two).

medieval documents which have been used to build a more complete understanding of the appearance and condition of Coventry's medieval buildings in the nineteenth century. The British Library has also been invaluable as it retains a surviving copy of William Dugdale's *Antiquities of Warwickshire* (1656), which I have returned to throughout this thesis in order to explore how Coventry's medieval skyline was consumed and exported in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Furthermore, this thesis brings new visibility to a range of archival sources which have long been overlooked by the art and architectural historian. The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings archives have been highly useful as they contain several rarely-examined sources on the late nineteenth-century reception of Coventry's medieval stone work and carvings (see Chapter Four). The Royal Institute of British Architects print's room has similarly proved to be an invaluable resource, as they contain previously unseen drawings of Coventry's medieval decorative heritage by Augustus Charles Pugin (1762-1832) and his pupils. Pugin's drawings are analysed in the second chapter of this thesis to show how Coventry's medieval past was linked to expanding ideas of nationhood and nationalism in the early nineteenth century.

Additionally, a thorough investigation of all the primary source material related to the antiquarian treatment of Coventry's medieval heritage in the early nineteenth century, resulted in the discovery of several 'new' sources. One such 'new' source included Edward James Willson's introduction to *A Series of Ornamental Timber Gables* (1831), which has almost been entirely overlooked and omitted from discussions on Coventry's medieval heritage, as he has typically been over-shadowed by his more famous contemporaries (see Chapter Two). This thesis has also discovered several 'new' connections between key primary sources, such as Britton's *Picturesque Antiquities of the English Cities* (1830) and Mary Dormer Harris's S*tory of Coventry* (1911), which reveal how there was a 'common' or shared response to Coventry's medieval past.

Another novel approach has been the building of an inventory of all the key descriptors used to heighten, stimulate, and intensify the taste for Coventry's medieval heritage (see Appendix One). The inventory is important as it serves to shed new light on the frequency of interest in Coventry's medieval art and architecture by recording when, where, and how often the

terminologies were used. It will be made apparent that the terminologies were frequently used in the early nineteenth century, yet many also appear to have enduring influence in galvanising the taste for Coventry's medieval heritage in the early twentieth century.

In early 2020, the global COVID-19 pandemic unexpectedly halted my primary source research. This proved to be a challenging time as I was unable to access key archival centres, such as the Birmingham Reference Library and the Royal Institute of British Architects drawing room, for many months. However, it also inadvertently benefitted this thesis as I built my own 'archive' of nineteenth-century prints and drawings of Coventry's medieval heritage, which have enriched this research project. For example, during the first lockdown period, I purchased George Robson's 1827 *South-East View of the City Coventry* from Welland Antiques Maps and Prints. The painting is analysed in the second chapter in order to illustrate how Coventry's medieval churches were appropriated by antiquarian scholars to project a more appealing vision of English nationhood.

Moreover, I purchased several unseen and undocumented picture postcards of medieval Coventry from eBay, due to the closure of key archival centres during the pandemic. The postcards are an important primary source as they show how Coventry's medieval heritage was still a present and enduring feature in the early twentieth century. Their postmarks and messages give unique insight into when, where, and why Coventry's medieval heritage was circulated and consumed beyond the borders of Warwickshire. Nonetheless, the limitation of buying the cards individually is that I have been unable to ascertain the volume of postcards produced for a particular building or site.

In addition, I also purchased James Cherry's lithographic print of the Doom painting in Holy Trinity Church (c.1837) from eBay. This print is analysed in the third chapter of this thesis to provide deeper insight into the reception of Coventry's medieval visual arts heritage during the early nineteenth century. It is an invaluable primary source as it has, until now, remained largely unseen and overlooked by art historians (see Literature Review). However, it should be acknowledged here that the print has several 'fox' markings as it was previously stored in an outdoor warehouse. I have also created an inventory of all the key drawings and postcards which

have been examined throughout the thesis (see Appendix 2). The appendix is a particularly useful source as I have enlarged the key images in order to provide a closer examination of their details and features.

Overall, this thesis has drawn on a substantial range of archival sources and methodological approaches, in order to redress the fragmented view of the reception of Coventry's medieval art and architecture in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the next section, I shall outline the trajectory of the thesis, and draw greater visibility to the new thread of connections between each chapter.

0.6 Chapter Abstracts

Chapter One: The Survival and Visibility of Coventry's Medieval Heritage

In Chapter One, I develop new knowledge on the survival and visibility of Coventry's medieval heritage by drawing on previously unpublished maps and documents in the Coventry Record Office. Particular attention is paid to the survival of Coventry's medieval heritage in the early nineteenth century as it was the focus of extensive visual treatments during the 'Picturesque' movement. However, this chapter also sheds new light on the form and layout of Coventry's medieval heritage in the late nineteenth century, in order to illustrate how the journey of visibility changed over time. It is argued that Coventry's medieval gates, including Swanswell Gate, retained their original colour in the early nineteenth century. Yet, it goes on to reveal how they had been extensively altered and transformed by the mid-nineteenth century.

Moving inwards, this chapter investigates the character and condition of Coventry's medieval timber-framed dwellings, as they had been substantially overlooked in the primary literature. It is argued that many houses retained much of their original character by the nineteenth century, as they were depicted with highly decorative features, which were built in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries to reflect the City's wealth. These features are returned to in subsequent chapters as we consider how and in what ways they were connected to Coventry's medieval craftsmen in the nineteenth century (see Chapters Two, Three and Four).

Travelling deeper into the heart of the City, the final section of this chapter investigates the survival of St Mary's Hall and its contents. A key argument is that the hall's entrance-gateway and tapestry, which both featured Marian iconography, were deliberately neglected as the hall was used by notorious anti-Catholic preachers in the early nineteenth century. This section sheds new light on the condition and colour of the Coventry Tapestry through an analysis of surviving antiquarian accounts and drawings.

Chapter Two: Coventry's Medieval Heritage in the Age of the Romantic Antiquarian

In Chapter Two, I draw further attention to the antiquarian scholar by investigating how Coventry's medieval heritage was treated by leading 'Romantic antiquaries' in the late 1820s and early 1830s. The first aim of this chapter is to provide a more definitive definition of the term 'Romantic antiquary', by exploring how the English antiquaries' vision of the medieval Gothic past underwent went a distinct shift in the early nineteenth century, from forensic and archaeological to emotional and sensory. This shift is first shown to have been influenced by the picturesque writings of Uvedale Price and William Gilpin.

One key claim is that there was a network of Romantic antiquaries who used a variety of picturesque terms to portray Coventry's medieval architectural, decorative, and visual arts heritage as the 'organic' reflection of the City's environment and people. Nonetheless, this chapter also argues that the Romantic antiquaries' treatment of medieval Coventry was shaped and influenced by the German Romantic movement. It particularly investigates how Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's perception of Strasbourg Cathedral as the almost living embodiment of its creator's creativity and genius spirit shaped the treatment of Coventry's medieval churches. In doing so, this chapter offers new insight into the development of Coventry's image as a city of 'three spires'.

Moreover, the study illuminates how the Romantic antiquaries' vision of Coventry's medieval past was inspired by their underlying sympathy for the Roman Catholic faith. It is argued that they were especially drawn to St Mary's Hall and its surviving Marian iconography, which they depicted and recorded through an archaeological lens, in order to develop a more accurate

understanding of the Catholic past. However, the study goes on to point out how their Catholicism was often suppressed and hidden in order to avoid doctrinal disputes. The suppression of their Catholicism is shown to have created an underlying tension to their writings and artistic productions.

Chapter Three: A.W.N Pugin and Coventry's Medieval Heritage

Chapter Three continues to trace and explore the awakening of sympathy for Coventry's Catholic art and architecture during the early nineteenth century. It is argued that A.W.N Pugin visited Coventry because he had been inspired by the revival of interest in its medieval pilgrimage sites, including the Shrine of Our Lady of the Tower, in literary and artistic circles. Coventry's pilgrimage sites are likewise shown to have attracted considerable attention amongst local archaeologists, who were uncovering the City's medieval remains and archaeology, in order to attract and impress new audiences from across the country. However, the central objective is to illuminate how and in what ways A.W.N Pugin reinvented Coventry's medieval timber-framed dwellings in order to build his own Catholic utopia. Pugin's unpublished and rarely-examined drawings of Scarisbrick Lodge are brought into new visibility as the chapter uncovers how they were shaped by Coventry's medieval dwellings. His interest in Coventry's medieval domestic architecture is traced back to his father, A.C. Pugin, and the Romantic antiquaries who he formed a close relationship with during his youth.

This chapter similarly illuminates how his visits to Coventry's medieval buildings inspired his drawing of the Blessed Sacrament for Dr Daniel Rock. Stylistic comparison between Pugin's drawing and contemporary depictions of Coventry's medieval churches serve to strengthen the idea that he based his drawing around a real city. It is also argued that Pugin's drawing of medieval Coventry owed much to the seventeenth-century artist, Wenceslaus Hollar, whose sensitive and sympathetic depictions of the medieval past appealed to his drawing tastes. The chapter goes on to develop new knowledge on why and in what ways the ideas of the Nazarene brotherhood directly informed Pugin's treatment of the fifteenth-century Doom painting in Coventry's Holy Trinity Church. Pugin's connections to Johann Friedrich Overbeck, the German artist and illustrator, are particularly treated to in-depth analysis as they reinforce how the

treatment of Coventry's medieval past was inspired by wider developments on the Continent. It is also argued that Pugin's interest in the Doom painting was shared by leading antiquaries, such as George Scharf, who used a similar lexicon to describe the painting and its so-called 'primitive' medieval painters.

Chapter Four: The Reception of Coventry's Medieval Guilds and Craftsmanship

Chapter Four analyses fresh archival evidence to shed new light on the revival of interest in Coventry's medieval craftsmanship and guilds during the late nineteenth century. A key concern is to develop new knowledge on how and why women antiquaries responded to Coventry's medieval wood carvings since they were previously barred from presenting their research due to gender discrimination. It particularly explores how Isabel Stuart Robson created a more immersive, and more comprehensive, view of Coventry's medieval timber-framed houses for female audiences by making a detailed and analytical study of their carvings.

Another key focus of this chapter is to illuminate how Coventry's medieval stone carvings were treated and received in the late nineteenth century. George Webster's drawings of St Michael's stone carvings are treated to a detailed analysis in order to demonstrate how there was a deep sense of loss for the colour, vibrancy, and richness of the medieval past. The carving of St George is treated to particular discussion as we explore how it was used to project St Michael's Church as a symbol of English nationhood and power. However, this study also recognises that the carvings may have been seen as negative symbols, which were used to enforce colonial narratives and ideas of empire on the Continent.

The loss of Coventry's medieval craftmanship is a central theme throughout this study as we consider how leading newspapers responded to the destruction of the stained-glass in St Mary's Hall. The language used to describe the destruction of the stained-glass windows, as well as the stone carvings, is used to demonstrate how the wider public came to openly lament the destructive impulses of the Reformation in the late nineteenth century. It is argued that there was an emotional response to the destruction of the North window in St Mary's Hall as it was perceived to be a tangible reflection of John Thornton's talent and skill.

Chapter Five: Coventry's Medieval Heritage in the Age of the Picture Postcard

The final chapter analyses previously undocumented and uncollected picture postcards to demonstrate how Coventry's medieval heritage was consumed beyond specific antiquarian networks between 1900 and 1920. It is argued that picture postcards of Coventry's medieval architecture were consumed by female audiences since they were one of the few ways which they could express their taste and individuality. The chapter explores why female audiences collected picture postcards of St Mary's Hall, St Michael's Church, Bablake's Hospital and the Lychgate Cottages. It brings previously unheard female voices into the limelight by analysing the messages on the reverse of the picture postcards of Coventry's medieval architecture.

Mary Dormer Harris's 1911 guidebook, The *Story of Coventry*, is referenced throughout the chapter in order to reinforce how women antiquaries sought to build a more developed view of Coventry's medieval heritage. Harris inspires her readers to have expanded encounters with Coventry's medieval art and architecture by encouraging them to use opera glasses and other portable accessories to linger over a charming boss, stained-glass window, or inscription. At the same time, Harris's guidebook is used to demonstrate how antiquarian scholars continued to build the taste for Coventry's Catholic past. The key claim is that she deployed the same terminologies as A.W.N Pugin to describe and classify Coventry's medieval art.

Moreover, the fifth chapter explores why picture postcards of Coventry's medieval buildings transcended national boundaries and different imaginaries. It offers a close reading of their postage markings, messages, and stamps to argue that they were consumed and reproduced in the German lands. A comparison of Evelyn Wrench's picture postcard of St Michael's Church with Eduard Hölzermann's picture postcard of Cologne Cathedral also serves to show Coventry's medieval heritage was carefully staged to challenge German nationalism in the early twentieth century.

The final section links with previous chapters as it explores how postcard publishers portrayed the loss of Coventry's medieval architecture and visual arts heritage. The changing colour of the

north window in St Mary's Hall is treated to detailed discussion, for example, as we consider how leading postcard publishers portrayed it using pale and muted colours. Postcards of 'Old Coventry' are likewise compared with postcards of 'Bygone Florence', in order to illustrate how early twentieth-century audiences were encouraged to view the medieval past, before it was lost to industrial development.

Chapter One: The Survival and Visibility of Coventry's Medieval Heritage

1.1 Introduction

This chapter seeks to develop new knowledge on the form, layout, and condition of Coventry's medieval heritage from the early nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries. This timeframe has been chosen as it not only provides a more comprehensive view of the survival of Coventry's medieval heritage, but also demonstrates how its visibility and appearance changed over time. Particular attention is paid to the visibility of Coventry's medieval heritage in the early nineteenth century as it was the focus of extensive visual treatments. However, this chapter also investigates the appearance of Coventry's medieval buildings and visual art works in the late nineteenth century.

Before we explore the survival and visibility of Coventry's medieval heritage in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it is necessary to mention that the City was divided into ten wards, each of which served a variety of different purposes[27]. Mark Webb (2020) has recently sought to reconstruct the character and boundaries of Coventry's medieval wards using a plethora of previously understudied deeds and taxation records. His map of Bayley Lane and Cross Cheaping wards, for example, is useful as it shows how the wards contained a range of civic structures and ecclesiastical edifices (see Figure 1.1). The most notable buildings included St Mary's Hall, Holy Trinity Church, and St John the Baptist Church. In Spon Street and Bishop Street wards, there were numerous timber-framed properties and several medieval gates, including Hill Street Gate and Well Street Gate (see Figure 1.2).

Given the vastness of medieval Coventry, this chapter has prioritised key buildings and structures, including the city fortifications. It is appropriate to begin with a study of the city walls and gates as they played a crucial role in defining the physical boundaries of medieval urban space (Creighton and Hingham 2005: 32). Coventry's medieval wall has often been described by leading archaeologists as "irregular" because it was constructed over many lifetimes (Creighton and Hingham 2005: 34). This 'irregularity' nonetheless reflects Coventry's changing economic

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[27] Bishop Street ward was used for stocking cattle. Spon Street ward was used for 'industrial' processes.

circumstances and allows us to build a more complete picture of the complexity of the medieval past. However, a full reconstruction of Coventry's walls would be beyond the scope of this one chapter, as they measured just under three km in circumference and were furnished with thirty-two towers and twelve gates (McGrory 2003: 56).

Coventry Central
c 1500

1. Holy Trinity
2. St Michaels
3. St Mary's Hall
4. St Mary's Priory Cathedral
5. St John's Hospital
6. Gaol
7. The Drapery
8. Pilgrim's Rest
9. Bishop's Palace
10. Mint (probable site)
11. Fishmongers
12. Butchers
13. Shoemakers
14. River Sherbourne
15. Cross
16. Town wall
17. Palace Yard
18. Priory Mill
19. Cooks and 'fast food' area - 14th cent.
20. Mercers and Warehousing
21. Catesby Place
22. 14 Cross Cheaping
23. Stone building, Spicerstoke (27-9 Trinity Churchyard)
24. Poultry Market
25. Goldsmiths
26. Cappers

Figure 1.1 Mark Webb, *Map of Cross Cheaping and Bayley Lane wards c.1500*, 2020

Spon Street
Coventry Suburb
c 1500

1. Spon Gate
2. Town ditch
3. Town wall
4. St John the Baptist
5. Bablake Hospital
6. Hill Street Gate
7. Well Street Gate
8. Radford Brook
9. River Sherbourne
10. Ram Bridge
11. Plough Inn
12. 14 Spon Street
13. 169 Spon Street
14. 159-162 Spon Street
15. Black Swan Terrace
16. Belgrade Plaza excavations 2005-6
17. Ikea excavations 2006
18. Salvation Army site excavations 2004
19. Archery butts
20. Poddycroft-dumping ground

Figure 1.2 Mark Webb, *Map of Spon Street Ward c.1500,* 2020

Moving inwards, this chapter investigates the condition and character of Coventry's medieval timber-framed houses in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This chapter prioritises Coventry's medieval vernacular heritage as the domestic Gothic style had previously been overlooked and criticised in a range of literatures (see Introduction). Daniel Defoe's *Tour*, for example, presented the domestic Gothic style as outdated and unappealing as he was a prominent Nonconformist (see Introduction). The chapter sheds greater light on the medieval houses along three principal streets, including Bayley Lane and Much Park Street, in order to provide a more comprehensive view of their condition and character.

In the final section, this chapter explores the survival and visibility of the medieval fabric in St Mary's Guildhall in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. St Mary's Guildhall is a central building in this chapter as Protestant writers consistently overlooked or manipulated the fabric to suit their religious agendas (see Introduction). John Leland's *Itinerary*, as previously discussed, entirely omitted St Mary's Hall due to anti-Marian prejudice (see Introduction). This chapter similarly considers how anti-Catholic prejudice continued to play a central role in shaping the condition and appearance of St Mary's Hall. However, it also investigates how the colour and condition of the building altered over time due to a range of environmental factors.

1.1.2 Documentary Evidence and Images

To ascertain how the buildings looked like between the fourteenth and early sixteenth centuries[28], this chapter draws upon a variety of medieval deeds and account books. One of the most important records is the Coventry Annals, which record 'all' the 'memorable' and 'historical' events in the City between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries (Ingram 1981: xxxvii)[29]. Any study of medieval Coventry must of course consider the surviving Corpus Christi Guild Account Book of 1488-1553, the Coventry Priory Register of 1410-11 and the Coventry Mayor's Register of 1420-1555[30]. However, it is difficult to fully reconstruct the original appearance of Coventry's medieval buildings as the vast majority of the City's records, including the ancient books and documents relating to the Corporation of Coventry, were destroyed during

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[28] 'Gothic' was prevalent from the thirteenth to early sixteenth century.
[29] The annalists are far from agreement as to what constitute 'memorable events' (Ingram 1981: xxxvii)
[30] Later known as the *Leet Book*.

the Birmingham Reference Library fire of 1879 (Ingram 1981: xxv). Many guild records were also lost in the air raid on the City in 1940, which severely damaged St Mary's Hall roof and destroyed Caesar's Tower (King and Davidson 2000: 2). In the absence of documentary evidence, we can develop a more complete understanding of medieval Coventry by focusing upon recent archaeological interpretations. These interpretations provide a framework for an examination of nineteenth-and early-twentieth century plans and drawings to uncover how the form, layout and condition of the City's medieval heritage changed over time.

Particular attention is paid to the work of Nathaniel Troughton (1794-1864), an English antiquarian and archaeologist, who produced over a thousand pencil drawings of Coventry in the 1850s and 1860s (CA: PA1-9). Troughton's album lends itself to offering a more comprehensive view of the survival and visibility of Coventry's medieval heritage as it contains detailed drawings of the local medieval dwellings, ecclesiastical edifices, fortifications, and streetscapes. He also drew key architectural details such as carved wooden bosses and elaborate staircase, which offer greater insight into the character and wealth of late medieval Coventry (CA PA1-9). Webb (2020: 50) recently claimed to have examined around 200 of these drawings, but only two appear within his study as he was not interested in establishing how much of Coventry's medieval heritage survived in the nineteenth century. This chapter therefore builds and adds to previous studies by analysing 'new' Troughton drawings which have hitherto been kept out of the limelight due to the longstanding marginalization of Coventry's medieval heritage. The accuracy and reliability of these drawings will be checked by considering their purpose and intended audience. Comparative examples are also used to provide wider context and support.

1.1.3 Cartographic Sources and Tools

Furthermore, map regression is undertaken to illuminate how the physical structure and spatial arrangement of Coventry's medieval architectural heritage altered over time[31]. The Sheldon

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[31] This technique has recently been used by Mason et al. (2017) to trace how the medieval buildings in Upper Well Street, Hill Street and Far Gosford Street developed between the seventeenth and twentieth centuries. In the Burges Conservation Management Plan, map regression was used to chart how the medieval properties along Palmer Lane, Hales Street and Ironmonger Row changed over the centuries (2017).

Tapestry Map of Warwickshire[32], which has been the focus of several in depth studies on the weaving industry in late medieval England[33], is of particular importance as it has long been excluded from map regression exercises because it is has only recently been digitised (see Figure 1.3). It is also much harder to examine, at four metres high and five metres wide, than 'conventional' paper maps.

This item has been removed due to 3rd Party Copyright. The unabridged version of the thesis can be found in the Lanchester Library, Coventry University.

Figure 1.3 *The Sheldon Tapestry Map of Warwickshire* [The City of Coventry may be difficult to locate as the map is several metres wide. The author has digitally brightened the map as it has faded over time], ca.1590-1600

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[32] The Sheldon Tapestry maps of Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire, Warwickshire, and Worcestershire were commissioned sometime in the late sixteenth century by the wealthy Catholic landowner, Ralph Sheldon (1537-1613), for his new estate at Weston. The tapestries were woven in wool, with silk used to highlight key areas, by Flemish weavers living in London (Sheen 2019: 41).

[33] See: Hilary Turner's *No Mean Prospect: Ralph Sheldon's Tapestry Maps* (2010) and Mary Bryan's *Flemish and Dutch Artists in Early Modern England*: *Collaboration and Competition, 1460-1680* (2017) for further information on the Sheldon tapestry weavers.

Figure 1.4 John Speed, *Coventre* [city gates and walls labelled in red by the author. However, the map may remain difficult to interpret as the buildings and streets are very small], 1610

John Speed's map of Coventry (c.1610) (see Figure 1.4) is similarly used throughout this chapter as recent archaeological excavations have confirmed the accuracy of the positioning of the walls on the map (Mason 2017: 183). Speed's map also remains one of the earliest sources for reconstructing the built-up frontages of the late medieval City (Phythian-Adams 1979: 323), but it should be treated with some caution as it is broadly schematic and produced using isometric projection. Samuel Bradford's 1749-50 plan of Coventry is another valuable cartographic source as it conforms to a more modern plan-view and shows how the built-up areas had declined since the sixteenth century (see Figure 1.5 and Appendix 2).

Moreover, I have examined a range of maps from 1800 to 1880. Thomas Sharp's 1807 map of Coventry is often treated with caution as it was produced for *The Beauties of England and Wales* (1801-1815), which examines the topography and local history of England and Wales through a picturesque lens (see Figure 1.6 and Appendix 2). However, Sharp's map is broadly similar to earlier cartographic sources, including Bradford's 1749-50 map of Coventry, which increases its reliability and usefulness. In 1848 the First Public Health Act, written in response to a major cholera epidemic sweeping across the country, established a General Board of Health which empowered local authorities to produce large-scale OS town plans to assist in improving public hygiene (Joyce 2002: 102). Coventry's 1851 Board of Health plan is used throughout this chapter as it has been described by Mason et al. (2017: 15) as the "first fully reliable" map of the City (see Figure 1.7).

Figure 1.5 Samuel Bradford, *A Plan of the City of Coventry* [the street names may remain difficult to read as the map is very large], 1749-50

Figure 1.6 Thomas Sharp, *Coventry* [digitally sharpened by author as the original map is quite faint], 1807

Figure 1.7 Board of Health, *Map of Coventry* [digitally sharpened by the author as the street names are very small and difficult to read], 1851

1.2 Coventry's Medieval Wall, Gates, and Towers

1.2.1 New Gate

The earliest reference to New Gate can be found in a remise claim of 1341, which reveals that Jordan de Shepeye and three others had acquired some "arable land next to New Gate, Much Park Street" (CA: BA/A/77/3)[34]. There is no surviving evidence for the original appearance of the gate, but it tempting to suspect that it was a one-or-two storey timber-framed structure, as there were abundant timber supplies to the west of the City during the fourteenth century (Berger 1993: 61). After the remise claim of 1341, there follows more than seventy years of documentary silence, until the *Leet Book* records that the City Chamberlains "shall begin to work at the New Gate" ([1421] 1907: 33). The wording here is ambiguous, but it appears to suggest that New Gate was rebuilt or extensively repaired because of Coventry's post-plague building boom and economic expansion.

The plague arrived in Coventry in 1349, 1360, and again in 1386 (Soden 2011: 13). This had a distributive impact as around fifty per cent of the population died (Soden 2011: 13). However, Coventry's medieval craftsmen appear to have recovered quickly as there were a number of major building projects carried out during the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. For example, the east end of St Michael's Church has been dated to the end of the 1390s, with work continuing into the 1420s (Goodard 2011: 40). Holy Trinity's nave arcades, chancel aisle, and clerestory also appear to have been built and extended in the late fourteenth century (Goodard 2011: 40). Coventry's building projects were largely financed by the local mercantile community, whose incomes had increased due to the growing demands for their blue dyed cloth and services (Goodard 2011: 41).

By the early sixteenth century, New Gate must have been in a poor and unappealing state, as it is only mentioned to provide more information about neighbouring buildings. For instance, a lease of 1535 records that Hugh Lawton (master of the Trinity Guild) rented a tenement outside New

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[34] The gate may have been quickly constructed to enclose and protect Queen Isabella's 'half' of the City from the Prior, who had claimed before the King's Council in 1336 that the queen mother had "wrongly" sought to "dispossess" him of his privileges and lands (CA: BA/F/1/23/1).

Gate to John Richard (yeoman) (CA: BA/B/16/448/1). New Gate may have fallen into decline because the City had endured around fifty years of economic decay and stagnation, following the collapse of the cloth trade in the fifteenth century (Goodard 2011: 45). However, Richard Banke's 1639 drawing of Little Park indicates that New Gate was still standing by the seventeenth century and had a square layout (see Figure 1.8). The 1639 drawing is schematic as it was produced from a 'birds-eye' perspective, but it is a crucial source of evidence as it remains one of the earliest cartographic sources for the study of the city gates. Three years later, a local builder appears to have been paid 6d for fitting "boards and nails" at New Gate (CA: BA/A/3/7/2). This was a small sum of money, but it reinforces the continuity of New Gate and reveals that Coventry's Parliamentarian forces were intending to strengthen the City's defences during the first few months of the English Civil War.

Nonetheless, New Gate appears to have become impossible to distinguish and interpret by the early nineteenth century, as J.D Walker's 1800 plan of Coventry only records the 'site' of medieval gate (see Figure 1.9). The 'site' of New Gate is similarly recorded on an 1841 plan of Coventry, but there are no discernible physical remains because the gate may have completely fallen into ruin (see Figure 1.10). This is reasonable to suggest as we know from previous discussions that the gate had been predominately subject to much hardship. There is no documentary or pictorial evidence to suggest that the original fourteenth-century gate was uncovered or visible during the nineteenth century.

Figure 1.8 Extract from Richard Banky's 1639 *The Plot of Little Park, Coventry,* showing New Gate [labelled in red and digitally enhanced by the author as the Birmingham Library have no digitisation services]

Figure 1.9 Extract from J.D walker's 1800 plan of Coventry, showing the former site of New Gate [labelled in red and digitally enhanced by the author as the Birmingham Library have no digitisation services]

Figure 1.10 Extract from the 1841 plan of Coventry, showing the former site of New Gate [labelled in red and digitally enhanced by the author]

1.2.2 The Round Tower near Whitefriars Monastery

According to the Coventry *Leet Book*, the Whitefriars showed much interest in the construction and upkeep of the City's defences throughout the early fifteenth century. In an entry dated 1430, for example, an agreement was made between the Carmelites and the Corporation of Coventry for the building of "dimidietatas vnius turre rotunde" [one half of the Round Tower] in front of the Whitefriars' Mill ([1430] 1908: 136). Rounded towers were extensively used in medieval defences from the fourteenth century onwards, as they were generally less vulnerable to battering rams than square towers (Johnston 2011: 95). The tower is first depicted on Speed's 1610 map with a substantial round base, and it appears to have been around the same height as the City's main gates, including Gosford Gate and New Gate (see Figure 1.11). Nonetheless, nineteenth-century cartographic sources, such as a surviving 1806 plan of Coventry and Thomas Sharp's 1807 map, appear to omit the tower because it may have been little more than rubble (see Figure 1.12 and 1.13).

The accuracy and usefulness of Sharp's map has previously been discussed, but it is important to note that the 1806 plan can be interpreted as a reliable source, as it appears to have been created to provide a detailed and colour coded snapshot of Coventry's principal features. W.G Fretton also maintained that the round tower was in a poor and much 'reduced' state during the early nineteenth century, by revealing that it was "taken down" and replaced with a row of cottages in 1814 (1872: 73). The cottages may have been occupied by the City's poor working classes and can clearly be discerned on the 1837 plan of Coventry (see Figure 1.14), as well as the 1880 OS map of Coventry (see Figure 1.15).

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Figure 1.11 Extract from Speed's 1610 map of Coventry, showing the location of Whitefriars Monastery, Gosford Gate, and the Round Tower [labelled in red by the author]

Figure 1.12 Extract from the 1806 plan of Coventry, showing Whitefriars Monastery, the City Wall and the Corn Mill [labelled in red by the author]

Figure 1.13 Extract from Sharp's 1807 map of Coventry, showing Whitefriars Monastery [labelled in red by the author]

Figure 1.14 Extract from the 1837 plan of Coventry, showing Whitefriars Monastery and the row of properties which replaced the Round Tower [labelled in red by the author]

Figure 1.15 Extract from the 1880 OS Map of Coventry, showing the row of properties which replaced the Round Tower [labelled in red by the author]

1.2.3 The Lady's Tower

As well as the Round Tower, there are records of a separate tower near the Carmelite friary dating from the fifteenth century, known as the Lady of our Tower. On the exterior of the tower, according to Dugdale, was a picture of the "Blessed Virgin Mary richly painted, and within it an image and her altar" ([1656] 1871: 72). To this image many pilgrims made offerings out "of confidence that their journey would be the better blest", but there was opposition from Coventry's Lollard community, who argued that the worship of such images was 'foolish' as they were only made from 'dead' sticks and stones (Dugdale [1656] 1871: 72). John Blumston for example, was put to penance in 1486 for refusing to make an offering to the shrine "because people can equally well venerate the Blessed Virgin [...] through seeing their mother or sister" (McSheffrey and Tanner 2003: 65).

The image of the Virgin Mary was most likely destroyed during the sixteenth century as she was perceived to be a powerful and provocative symbol (see Introduction)[35]. Nonetheless, the Lady's Tower appears to have survived well into the sixteenth century for civic purposes, as the City Accounts for 1539 record an "item for covering the bell at our Lady Tower" (Fretton 1872: 72). Speed's 1610 map does not record the precise location of the bell as it was produced from a birds-eye perspective, but it does show the tower as a large square building, directly parallel to Whitefriars (see Figure 1.16). The accuracy of his depiction is strengthened by a seventeenth-century survey of the City wall, which records that the Lady Tower was standing as late as 1640, although the top of the tower "looked to all" like it would "fall" (CA: BA/3/4/1/2).

The fact that the tower was in such poor condition in the seventeenth century suggests that it might not have been visible by the nineteenth century. However, W.G Fretton suggested that "its foundation was plainly discovered [...] when the House of Industry was enclosed by a new wall" (1872: 72). Fretton does not consider to record a precise date because the primary purpose of his study was to explore the history of the Carmelite friars in Coventry. Yet, it is tempting to suspect that they were uncovered after 1852 because they appear to be omitted from the 1851 Board of

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[35] Fretton (1871: 96) suggests that the image of the Virgin Mary was also pulled down from the rood loft in Holy Trinity Church, Coventry, in the late sixteenth century.

Health map (see Figure 1.17), which would have recorded the foundations because it also

depicted the remains of the City wall and gates.

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Figure 1.16 Extract from Speed's 1610 map of Coventry, showing the location of the Lady's Tower [labelled in red by the author]

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Figure 1.17 Extract from the 1851 Board of Health map of Coventry, showing the House of Industry [labelled in red by the author]

1.2.4 The City Wall near Whitefriars

In 1430 the Corporation of Coventry were paid for building "xiiij perches and dimidium muri lapidei" [14.5 perches of the stone wall] by Whitefriars' Monastery ([1430] 1907: 136). A 'perche' was the standard unit of measurement in medieval England and measured between 16.5 and 22 square feet (Landsberg 2003: 89). If we use the lowest measurement, we can calculate that the wall built near Whitefriars measured 22.3 metres. A "portion" of the wall was rebuilt after it had "fallen down" in 1636, according to W.G Fretton, who seems to have examined several original documents before they were destroyed in the Birmingham Reference Library of 1879 (1871: 72). Yet this also reveals that the wall was still taken seriously as late as the seventeenth century and the remaining section near Whitefriars appears to have been depicted on Bradford's 1750 map (see Figure 1.18).

Figure 1.18 Extract from Bradford's 1750 map of Coventry, showing the remains of the city wall around Whitefriars Monastery [labelled in red by the author]

Figure 1.19 Extract from the 1800 General Plan of Whitefriars, showing the remains of the city wall [labelled in red and digitally enhanced by the author as the Birmingham Library have no digitisation services.]

However, by 1800 it appears that only fragments of the early fifteenth-century wall remained. This situation is strongly suggested by an extant 1800 plan of Whitefriars' Monastery (see Figure 1.19) which has previously only been used to shed light on the inner cloister, medieval stair, and outer gate in the nineteenth century (Woodfield 2005). The 1800 plan is a useful source as it was created to help the antiquarian scholar visualise the medieval remains in and around the former Carmelite Monastery. In 1819, Brook appears to depict the 'remains' of the City wall from Brick Kiln Lane (formerly known as Mill Lane) (see Figure 1.20). His painting causes some confusion as it implies that the wall was rather more substantial than the fragments depicted by the 1800 plan, but he may have simply used artistic license to make the wall seem more impressive.

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Figure 1.20 William Henry Brook, *Remains of Coventry Walls near Whitefriars Monastery*, 1819

1.2.5 The City Wall around St Osburg's Pool

In 1462 Prior Shoteswell appealed to the Mayor of Coventry to "enclose" St Osburg's Pool (later referred to as the Pool Meadow) and a series of fish stews within the city walls, as compensation

for the Corporation building across his lands in "diverse places" ([1480] 1907: 463)[36]. His request was subsequently granted by the Mayor, who considered that the prior owed him much "favour" since it was expected to cost five marks more than the 'original' wall ([1480] 1907: 463). Speed's 1610 map provides the earliest visual depiction of the wall's 'dog-leg' bend around St Osburg's Pool (see Figure 1.21), but it appears not to be identified on the 1851 Board of Health map (see Figure 1.22) or E.J Purnell's 1879 map of Coventry (see Figure 1.23), because it may have been dismantled when the Earl of Northumberland ordered "all the stone walls" around the City to be "pulled down" in 1662 (CA: BA/H/Q/A79/250). According to a letter from Charles II to the Earl of Northumberland in the same year, the destruction of the walls was provoked by the City's harbouring of 'rebels' after the Restoration ([1661-2] 1861: 423-4)[37].

Figure 1.21 Extract from Speed's 1610 map, showing the location of Swanswell Gate and the site of St Osburg's Pool [labelled in red by the author]

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[36] Prior Shoteswell may have also wished to protect his fishponds from thieves and trespasses, as fish were a symbol of social prestige as well as dietary resources (Creighton and Higham 2005: 173). The value placed on fish in the later medieval period is made clear by Prior Deram, who made multiple complaints to the Corporation of Coventry about the "people in this city" spoiling his fishponds by washing in them ([1480] 1908: 446).

[37] One leading rebel may have been the Baptist Thomas Hobson, who was considered to be a notorious actor against the King during the Civil War and one of the most radical Dissenters in Coventry (Hurwich 1977: 19).

Figure 1.22 Extract from the 1851 Board of Health map, showing the remains of the city wall and Swanswell Gate [labelled in red by the author. The image may remain difficult to interpret as the remains and city wall are a small feature on the map]

Figure 1.23 Extract from E. J Purnell's 1879 plan of Coventry, showing the location of Swanswell Gate [labelled in red by the author]

Despite the loss of the fifteenth-century wall around St Osburg's Pool, Troughton depicts the wall on the south-east corner of Swanswell gate at a slight angle (see Figure 1.24 and Appendix 2). This suggests that the nineteenth-century antiquary could distinguish how the wall had been diverted to enclose the prior's lands and his drawing can be supported by more recent photographs of the city wall (see Figure 1.25). Another key point to consider is that Troughton describes his drawing as the "Town Wall, eight feet thick", which may be a slight exaggeration as the top of the wall had completely crumbled away and reduced in height. There is little doubt that the wall had been much curtailed as the blocked-in doorway at the top of the gate would have originally led directly out onto the wall top.

Figure 1.24 Nathaniel Troughton, *Town wall eight feet thick* [digitally sharpened by the author. However, the drawing remains difficult to interpret as it was produced using a light pencil], ca.1850-1860

Figure 1.25 *North-East Corner of Swanswell Gate*, photograph by author, 2024

Returning briefly to the *Leet Book*, it appears that the City Corporation had to alter the original course of the wall to encompass St Osburg's Pool ([1480] 1908: 463). The original wall followed the River Sherbourne by the Priory Mill and is first shown on the 1749 Bradford plan of Coventry as a finely dotted line (see Figure 1.26). The use of dotted lines implies that the wall was used as a footpath or walkway, like the remains of the city wall near Hill Street, from the Priory gate down to the Pool Meadow. Charles Hansom's 1842 map of Coventry nonetheless indicates that the original wall was no longer standing or visible by the early nineteenth century (see Figure 1.27). Hansom's map can be considered as a reliable source as he worked as the Town Surveyor of Coventry and trained as an architect (Champ 2007: 115). There is also no visual or documentary evidence to suggest the wall was uncovered during the early twentieth century.

Figure 1.26 Extract from Bradford's 1750 Plan of Coventry, showing the original wall through the Priory [labelled in red by the author]

Figure 1.27 Extract from Charles Hansom's 1842 Boundary map of the City of Coventry, showing the location of Swanswell Gate [labelled in red by the author]

1.2.6 Swanswell Gate

While the *Leet Book* records that the Prior gained permission to re-align the wall on the north-east corner of Swanswell Gate in the late fifteenth century, more recent archaeological excavations have dated the gate to the fourteenth century (PCPT Architects 2018). However, there is no documentary evidence for the building of Swanswell Gate, and the earliest visual depiction of the gate, which clearly shows a two-storey structure with a square layout, dates from the second half of the sixteenth century (see Figure 1.28). In 1610, Speed depicted Swanswell Gate as a relatively isolated structure, which may be explained by the fact that it was predominately used by the Prior to gain access to his lands and fish pools to the south (see Figure 1.29). The Prior appears to have entered Swanswell Gate as it was known as the 'Priory Gate' when Richard Marler was instructed to clean the city ditches in 1518 ([1518]1908: 662). Moreover, in a seventeenth-century survey of Coventry's medieval walls and gates, Swanswell Gate is clearly referred to as the "Priory gate" (CA: BA/H/Q/A79/215).

By 1807, Swanswell Gate was clearly visible and retained its original square footprint (see Figure 1.30). The area around Swanswell Gate also appears to have remained somewhat 'empty', and 'unused', with only the creation of a new orchard since Speed's 1610 depiction. These factors may have encouraged the people of Coventry to by-pass the medieval gate and leave it relatively 'undisturbed' for several hundred years. When Hales Street was laid out in 1848 through the undeveloped Pool Meadow area, the gate was again by-passed, although its longstanding isolation may have impacted its appearance and condition (Poole 1852: 24). Three years later, the 1851 Board of Health map shows the sudden development and expansion of the plots to the rear of Swanswell Gate. However, the gate appears to have been quite resilient to these changes as it was still situated in the 'northern' half of the city with a square layout (see Figure 1.31).

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Figure 1.28 Extract from the Sheldon Tapestry, showing Coventry and Swanswell Gate [labelled in red by the author]

Figure 1.29 Extract from Speed's 1610 map of Coventry, showing the location of Swanswell Gate [labelled in red by the author]

Figure 1.30 Extract from Sharp's 1807 map of Coventry, showing the location of Swanswell Gate [labelled in red by the author]

Swanswell Gate also appears to have had an open archway which was used as a walkway in the early nineteenth century (see Figure 1.31). This walkway may originally have been used by the Prior of Coventry to gain access to his lands and fish ponds in the south of the city. However, in the mid-nineteenth century, William F. Taunton[38] and J.H Fretton[39] depicted Swanswell Gate with a blocked gateway (see Figure 1.32 and 1.33). Local newspaper articles in the *Coventry Standard* (1852) and the *Coventry Herald* (1852) suggest that the medieval archway was filled as the upper storey was in a poor condition and dangerous to passers below. Nonetheless, the transformation of the gate may have been the best possible outcome, as many medieval gateways were demolished during the nineteenth century because they hindered the free movement of traffic or were too costly to maintain (Sweet 2004: 294). Chester's medieval North Gate, for example, was destroyed and replaced with a wide neo-classical entrance way in the nineteenth century (LeQuesne and Wait 1999: 99).

Figure 1.31 Anon, *Swanswell Gate* [digitally enhanced by the author as the Birmingham Library have no digitisation services], ca.1800

Figure 1.32 William Frederick Taunton *Swanswell Gate*, ca.1850-1867

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[38] W.F Taunton (1834-1907) was the Headmaster of the Coventry School of Art.
[39] J.H Fretton was the Headmaster of Katherine Bayley's Charity School in Coventry (1842-56).

Figure 1.33 J.H Fretton, *Swanswell Gate* [the image may remain difficult to interpret as the original drawing is quite dirty]*, ca.1860-1890

Despite the lack of documentary evidence for the building of Swanswell Gate, John Leland's *Itinerary* implies that the gate was of a "ferruginous" colour in the sixteenth century ([1540] 1908: 107). This 'ferruginous' colour came from the distinctive red sandstone dug from local quarries at Cheylesmore, Radford Road, Primose Hill Park and London Road Cemetery (Demidowicz 2003: 23). By the nineteenth century there appears to have been little change to the colour of Swanswell Gate as it was frequently depicted as a 'reddish' structure. W.H. Brooke, for example, showed the medieval gate with distinct red sandstone walls (see Figure 1.34). Several decades later, W.G. Sharp showed the medieval gate in much the same light and colour (see Figure 1.35).

Sharp's depiction can be supported by more recent exterior photographs of the gate's red sandstone walls (see Figure 1.36), although the survival of the gate's medieval colour is somewhat curious as Coventry's atmosphere was condemned by leading medical reports as "intolerable" and "impure to the extreme" during the mid-nineteenth century (Martin 1845: 19;

Yarrow 1852: 3)[40]. The poor air quality could have eroded the medieval gate, or even subdued its colour, as it appears to have done to the red sandstone corbels on the entrance porch of St Mary's Guildhall (Poole 1847: 59).

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Figure 1.34 W.H Brooke, *Front of Swanswell Gate*, 1819   Figure 1.35 W.G Sharp, *Swanswell Gate*, 1897

Furthermore, while the gate's exterior walls may have retained their original medieval colour, recent photographs of the interior fabric indicate that it had previously been concealed under layers of whitewash (see Figure 1.37). The original fabric may have been obscured from the seventeenth century onwards as it displayed a royal coat of arm or civic image that was deemed to be unsuitable for the time. This hypothesis is strengthened by the Coventry City Annals which record that "most of the houses" and gates were "painted black and white [...] against the king's coming" in 1617 (Ingram 1981: 404). At Leicester, the king's arms were taken down in 1649-1650 to be rapidly replaced by those of the Commonwealth, which were themselves swapped

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[40] Coventry's 'tainted' atmosphere appears to have been caused by the "noxious gases" that arose from River Sherbourne, which had "always" been filled with raw sewerage and other foul matter (Poole 1852: 4).

with those of the Charles II following the Restoration in 1660 (Creighton and Higham 2005: 142). However, there is no surviving evidence to suggest that there were any civic images or medieval coats of arms uncovered inside Swanswell Gate during the nineteenth or twentieth centuries.

Figure 1.36 *Swanswell Gate, Coventry*, photo by author, 2024

Figure 1.37 *Flecks of white paint on the lower storey of Swanswell Gate, Coventry*, photo by author, 2021

1.3 Timber-Framed Houses

1.3.1 Earl Street

Earl Street was one of the wealthiest thoroughfares in Coventry in the fifteenth century as it straddled the City's major east-west road (Leech 2007: 39). The Pittancer's Rental of 1410-11[41], which works through Coventry street by street, listing the properties owned by St Mary's Priory,

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[41] The Office of Pittancer for St Mary's was established by William Brightwalton (Prior from 1249 to 1280), and the Sub-Prior and Chapter had the right of nomination of the Pittancer (Gooder 1973: iv).

offers valuable insight into the street's high standard of housing by recording that Margaret Hall paid the large sum of £4 per year for a "tenement with a tavern" on the side of Earl Street (Coss and Lancaster-Lewis 2013: 133). Many of Coventry's leading drapers and mercers also tended to live in the street, including Julian Nethermill, who in 1524-25 was one of the wealthiest men in England ([1529] 1944: 82). Nethermill's "tenement" appears not to be described in any great detail, but it may have been elaborately decorated and fairly substantial in order to reflect his high status ([1529] 1944: 82).

In the nineteenth century, Troughton depicted many substantial timber-framed dwellings along Earl Street in the fifteenth and sixteenth century styles, including some with elaborate doorways and carved wooden panels (see Figures 1.38 and 1.39). The presence of the ornate doorways and panels suggests that much of the street's late medieval wealth and character was visible in the nineteenth century, although the exact locations of the features are not recorded as Troughton was primary interested in creating a 'visual' archive of Coventry's medieval past. He does not make this idea explicit, but it is strongly suggested by contemporary journal articles which comment on his habit to rise early in the morning to sketch Coventry's medieval buildings and ruins. *The Architect*, for instance, reveals in an article after his death that he was "generally on summer mornings about four or five o'clock taking his sketches when the streets were quiet" (1876: 241).

Troughton's industry and dedication was clearly recognised by the journal as they add that "there was scarcely an old building of timber, gable, or pillar, or post, or ornamental carving of which he did not make an accurate copy" (1876: 241). His drawings were treated like archival material as there were discussions about how best to preserve them for "future generations" who, according to the journal, would find the drawings to be a "gift" and "very valuable" (1876: 241). Their 'delicate' nature was a cause for concern as they would not "bear the wear and tear which would be involved by placing them at the disposal of all who would desire to inspect them" (1876: 241). As such, Troughton's drawings were moved to St Mary's muniment room, where they could be "photographed or engraved [...] over the course of time" under the watchful eye of the Town clerk (1876: 241).

Furthermore, the reliability of Troughton's sketches is strengthened by the *British Architect* which records some "interesting old [...] half-timbered buildings" on the southern side of Earl Street during the late nineteenth century (1889: 462). The use of the word "interesting" implies that the old buildings were visually stimulating due to their complex architectural features inserted by the wealthiest households over four hundred years previous. One timber-framed dwelling appears to have been particularly valuable and well maintained as the article adds that it was sold for £3450 (1889: 462). This was a considerable amount in the nineteenth century and clearly generated considerable interest amongst the media.

Figure 1.38 Nathaniel Troughton, *Earl Street, Decorated Doorway* [digitally enhanced by author. However, the drawing may remain difficult to interpret as it was produced using a light pencil], ca.1850-60

Figure 1.39 Nathaniel Troughton, *Earl Street, Carved Panelling* [digitally enhanced by the author. However, the drawing may remain difficult to interpret as it was produced using a light pencil]*,* ca. 1850-60

1.3.2 Much Park Street

Much Park Street was developed as the main thoroughfare to London in the early fourteenth century (Demidowicz 2012: 112). The northern part of the street appears to have been especially wealthy since the 1410-11 Priory Rental records that it was primarily inhabited by mercers and drapers, which were the most powerful trading groups in the city (Coss and Lancaster Lewis 2013: 402-404). John de Sartery, for example, appears to have been living in a particularly substantial and well-furnished property as he was paying the high rental value of 40s[42] to live in Much Park Street (Coss and Lancaster Lewis 2013: 337). Another valuable source of evidence for Much Park Street's high standard of housing and socio-economic character is Coventry's 1522 Muster Roll, which lists nineteen households in Much Park Street which could afford to pay both servants and apprentices. Robert Smith's household, for example, comprised himself, his wife, an apprentice and three maids (Hulton 1999: 128).

Much Park Street had lost much of its medieval character and wealth by the mid-nineteenth century, as many of the medieval houses appear to have been in a poor and 'unhealthy' state. In Troughton's album, for example, we can see the wattle and daub skeleton of a two-storied timber-framed house of the late fifteenth or early sixteenth centuries (see Figure 1.40). In another sketch, we can see a substantial timber-framed dwelling of the fifteenth or sixteenth centuries, with a projecting upper storey which appears to be leaning dangerously close to the building opposite (see Figure 1.41 and Appendix 2). Many medieval buildings along the street may have been in a dilapidated state as the area was notoriously unhealthy during the nineteenth century. In 1845 J.R. Martin, who was tasked with reporting on the sanitary infrastructure of England's largest towns, following Edwin Chadwick's damning *Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Great Britain* (1843), expressed great concern over the poor ventilation and inadequate sewerage along Much Park Street (1845: 19). Additional problems highlighted in the report were insufficient drainage, poor water supplies, cesspools and filth being emptied into the street (1845).

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[42] Shillings.

Figure 1.40 Nathaniel Troughton, *East side of Much Park Street* [labelled in red and digitally enhanced by the author. However, the drawing may remain difficult to interpret as it was produced using a light pencil], ca.1850-1860

Figure 1.41 Nathaniel Troughton, *House on the East side of Much Park Street* [digitally enhanced by the author. However, the drawing may remain difficult to interpret as it was produced using a light pencil], ca.1850-1860

Five years later the situation had clearly not improved as William Ranger's 1849 *Inquiry into the Sanitary Condition of Coventry* records that he found "very aggravated cases" of fever at the top of Much Park Street (1849: 6). Much Park Street may have also been in a poor state as it was primarily inhabited by poor Irish immigrants, who arrived in Coventry shortly before and after the Great Famine of 1845 (Prendergast 2019: 19). Many Irish families could ill-afford to pay for the upkeep and repair of their medieval surroundings as they were generally poor factory weavers or spinners (Prendergast 2019: 20). Nonetheless, Much Park Street clearly retained some of its medieval character and wealth, since Fretton records the presence of a "long vaulted" stone undercroft with a north entrance leading out of the street (1871: 4). There are no surviving images of the undercroft from the nineteenth century, but it may have belonged to the remains of the so-called 'stone house', which has a vaulted undercroft and is situated to the south end of Much Park Street (see Figure 1.42). The building can be interpreted as a surviving example of

Much Park Street's rising social status and wealth in the late medieval period (Lilley 1998: 12) since stone-built houses were always the prerogative of the rich (Schofield 2003: 103). The presence of the stone-built house is also highly unusual in a city full of timber-framed buildings.

Figure 1.42 *The Stone House, Much Park Street, Coventry*, photo by author, 2024

1.3.3 Bayley Lane

Bayley Lane was primarily inhabited by Coventry's wealthiest mercers and drapers[43] in the fifteenth century, as it was centrally situated and close to Earl Street, a busy and prosperous part of the city (Coss and Lancaster Lewis 2013: 405-407). Recent archaeological excavations conducted by the Museum of London Archaeology team revealed that many of the houses had stone-built cellars for the storage of expensive goods and wares (MOLA 2018). The cellars may have been visible and accessible in the early nineteenth century as the medieval buildings in and around the area survived to be depicted by W.H. Brooke (see Figure 1.43). Moreover, W.G

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[43] Such as the Botoners, who were credited with funding the new tower on St Michael's Church tower in 1373 (Goodard 2011: 40).

Fretton recorded the presence of an early fourteenth-century stone cellar under the "house belonging to C. Woodcock" (the most northerly building in Brook's painting) in the late nineteenth century (1876: 10).

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Figure 1.43 William Henry Brooke, *Old Bayley Lane* [labelled in red by the author]*, 1820*

Fretton's dating is difficult to substantiate as the documentary records for the property, more commonly known as No.38-39 Bayley Lane, only date to the fifteenth century. The earliest known tenant appears to have been Richard Allesley, a girdler, who leased the property from the Benedictine Priory in 1410-11 (Coss and Lancaster-Lewis 2013: 405). An analysis of the cellar's surviving architectural features also fails to resolve the matter with certainty, for though the

narrow profile of the ribs is more typical of the second half of the fourteenth century, the size of the four-light window[44] in the north wall suggests that it was added in the last quarter of the fourteenth or early fifteenth centuries (see Figure 1.44 and 1.45). However, this still confirms that the remains of a late medieval cellar could be found below the "house belonging to C. Woodcock" in the late nineteenth century (Fretton 1876: 10).

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Figure 1.44 *Late medieval undercroft of No.38-39 Bayley Lane*, Coventry, photo by author [brightened by the author as the undercroft is very dark], 2021

Figure 1.45 *North-facing window in the late medieval undercroft of No.38-39 Bayley Lane*, *Coventry,* 2012

1.4 St Mary's Guildhall

1.4.1 The Original Timber Framed Hall

In 1340 the Merchant Guild of St Mary was founded, at a cost of 100s, by Coventry's wealthiest merchants (CA: BA/B/16/2/1). Their primary meeting place was St Mary's Hall, which is first

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[44] The window was most likely blocked when Priory Street was built in the 1840s (then called Edward Street, after the new-born Prince of Wales, Edward VII) (Soden 2005: 23).

mentioned by Henry de Deodenhalle[45] when he granted a "newly-built messuage [property] opposite St Michael's called Seynte Marie Halle [sic]" to other guild members on 14th April 1347 (CA: BA/B/16/14/1). The appearance of the early fourteenth-century hall remains elusive due to the lack of documentary evidence, but more than one authority has proposed that it was timber-framed (Emery 2000: 372; Demidowicz 2011: 171). This may have been the case as there were abundant supplies of timber nearby, especially in the Forest of Arden, during the fourteenth century (Berger 1993: 61).

Figure 1.46 Extract from Speed's 1610 map of Coventry, showing the square footprint of St Mary's Hall [labelled in red by the author]

Figure 1.47 Thomas Sharp, *Plan of St Mary Hall, Coventry* [digitally enhanced by the author. The author was unable to obtain a higher quality image as the original drawing has gone missing] 1823

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[45] A merchant and future master of the guild of St Mary.

Figure 1.48 Extract from Charles E. Goad's 1897 *Insurance plan of Coventry*, showing the footprint of St Mary's Hall [labelled in red by the author]

Nonetheless, the first timber-framed hall was neither seen by the antiquaries nor the topographical artists of the nineteenth century, as it was demolished and replaced with the present stone structure by the early fifteenth century[46]. The main evidence for this is an entry in the City Annals, transcribed and translated by Thomas Sharp, which states that "St Mary's Hall was finished" in 1414 (1871: 211). Speed's 1610 map of Coventry shows the hall's fifteenth-century rectangular layout (see Figure 1.46), which appears to have been remarkably resilient as it is seen on Sharp's 1823 plan of St Mary's Hall (see Figure 1.47) and Charles E. Goad's 1897 fire insurance plan of Coventry (see Figure 1.48). Goad's plan is especially useful for demonstrating the continuity of St Mary's Guildhall since it records the names of original rooms and key building materials.

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[46] The original hall was replaced to reflect the power and prestige of the 'new' Trinity Guild, formed from the Guilds of St Mary, St Catherine, St John the Baptist and Holy Trinity during the reign of Richard II (Lancaster 1981: 1).

1.4.2 Entrance Gate

In the 1850s, Troughton depicted the entrance gate of St Mary's Guildhall from the south-east and north-east of Bayley Lane (see Figures 1.49 and 1.50 and Appendix 2). His drawings indicate that the gate had a lierne vaulted roof with a large octagonal keystone representing the Coronation of Virgin Mary. Surrounding the keystone we can see several decorative bosses, including a woman's head and a green man (see Figure 1.51). According to Morris (1988: 26), the centre carving can be compared with the hollowed-out bosses seen in the fourteenth-century chancel and vestry of St Mary's Church, Warwick. This interpretation is supported by Lancaster (1981: 27) who also dated the gates corbels and bosses to the last decade of the fourteenth century.

Figure 1.49 Nathaniel Troughton, *Entrance Gate from the South East of Bayley Lane, St Mary's Hall, Coventry* [digitally enhanced by the author. However, the drawing may remain difficult to interpret as it was produced using a light pencil]*, ca.1850-1860*

Figure 1.50 Nathaniel Troughton, *Entrance Gate from the North East of Bayley Lane, St Mary's Hall, Coventry* [digitally enhanced by the author. However, the drawing may remain difficult to interpret as it was produced using a light pencil]*, ca.1850-1860*

Nevertheless, more recent archaeological interpretations and surviving documentary evidence suggest that Troughton may have been looking at a fifteenth-century entrance way. Demidowicz (2011: 176), for instance, argued that the gate was constructed in c.1410-1420 in order to provide the rebuilt hall with a fitting new entrance. The date of 1420 is much more likely, however, as the Coventry Priory cartulary of 1411 records an earlier "portam super introitum" [gateway above the entrance of St Mary's Hall] which was occupied by a tenant of the Trinity Guild (Coss and Lancaster-Lewis 2013: 406). The lierne vaulted gate depicted by Troughton may not have been let out to tenants as it seems to be expensively executed (see Figure 1.52).

Nonetheless, documentary evidence suggests that the fifteenth-century entrance-way was in a poor state by the nineteenth century. In Benjamin Poole's *The History of Coventry*, for example, he maintained that the "projecting stone [was] fast mouldering away" (1847: 59). This description appears to have been directly copied by the antiquary, Thomas Sharp, who similarly declared that the stone presenting the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary was "mouldering away" in the late nineteenth century (1871: 216). Poole and Sharp neglect to explain why the projecting stone was rapidly deteriorating, as they only had space to touch upon the entrance-way very briefly, but it may have been deliberately neglected in the nineteenth century because St Mary's Hall was used by notorious anti-Catholic lecturers. In May 1854, the *Coventry Herald* reported that Alessandro Gavazzi addressed a "crowded" audience in St Mary's Hall on the unnecessary restoration of the Catholic bishoprics. His lecture "could not fail to make the audience gape with astonishment and delight", the article continues, and was "loudly applauded at the conclusion of his oration" (1854). Gavazzi later returned to Coventry in July 1876 to denounce what he regarded as the growing ritualism in the Church of England.
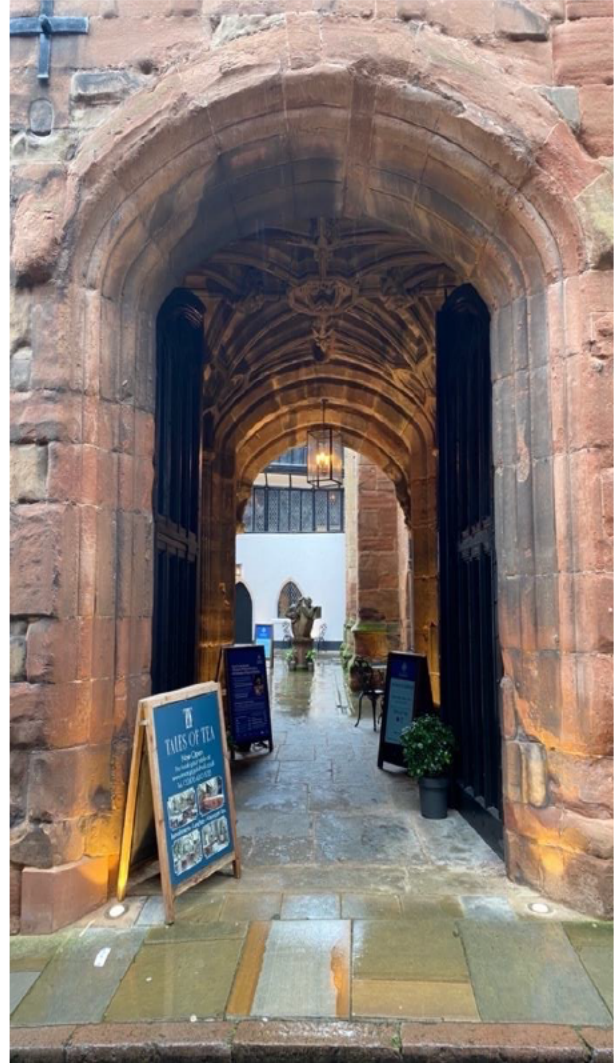
Figure 1.51 Nathaniel Troughton, *Gateway Bosses* [digitally enhanced by the author. However, the drawing may remain difficult to interpret as it was produced using a light pencil], ca.1850-1860

Figure 1.52 *Entrance Gate, St Mary's Hall, Coventry*, photo by author, 2024

1.4.3 Undercroft

In 1871 W.G Fretton maintained that the undercroft below St Mary's Hall "consists of two chambers" (the 'northern' chamber and the 'south' chamber) which both date from c.1394-1414 (1871: 21). The northern chamber could not have dated from the early fourteenth century as a deed of 1336 indicates that there were five cottages "opposite St Michael's", which would have occupied the space of the north bay (CA: BA/H/8/350/1). It also appears that the cottages were converted into three shops sometime during the second half of the fourteenth century and were

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still standing as late as 1393 (CA: BA/B/16/14/5). Furthermore, Demidowicz (2011: 171) recently suggested that the two-foot-thick wall dividing the undercroft into two chambers was installed before c.1394, as an external end wall against the shops that fronted the street. This hypothesis is supported by Rudebeck (2007: 24) who proposed that the dividing wall must have been an external wall since it has scars from where buttresses may have stood. Fretton appears not to mention the wall as his work was not intended to describe and assess all the key features in the undercroft, yet it is clearly depicted on his 1871 ground floor plan of St Mary's Hall (see Figure 1.53).

Figure 1.53 William George Fretton *Ground Plan of St Mary's Hall, Coventry* [digitally brightened by the author], c. 1871

Figure 1.54 Nathaniel Troughton, *Crypt looking south* [digitally enhanced by the author. However, the drawing may remain difficult to interpret as it was produced using a light pencil], c.1850-1860

Moreover, it is possible that the south undercroft pre-dated the northern chamber by several years as there are key decorative differences between the two. For example, while the vaulting of the south chamber springs from responds like those seen in the undercrofts of Warwick Castle (c.1340) (Morris 1988: 22), the vaulting of the northern chamber springs from corbels (Demidowicz 2011: 171). In addition, the most recent archaeological investigations have revealed that the south chamber is much lower than northern compartment, suggesting two distinct building phases (Edgar 2018: 1). Fretton, therefore, may have been looking at a much earlier fourteenth-century undercroft than he proposed in his study.

The undercroft also appears to have been in a poor and neglected state in the nineteenth century as Fretton maintained that it was used for "stowing away rubbish" until it had "accumulated several feet in thickness" (1871: 216). Troughton supports these descriptions by depicting the

undercroft strewn with ladders, buckets, chairs, tools, and discarded building materials (see Figure 1.54). The undercroft may of course have always been in a poor state as it had previously served as a tavern, which were typically dirty and darky places, in the fifteenth century (Fretton 1871: 213)[47]. In 1856, "all" the rubbish in the undercroft was cleaned away (Fretton 1871: 216). The cleaners appear to have somewhat overzealous in their efforts as the 'original' tiles in the undercroft were damaged and replaced during this process (Fretton 1871: 216). It is unclear whether the original tiles were sold or repurposed elsewhere due to the lack of documentary evidence, but they may have looked similar to the patterned floor tiles uncovered around the surviving north-west tower of St Mary's Cathedral in the nineteenth century, since the buildings were in the same vicinity (see Figure 1.55 and 1.56).

Figure 1.55 Nathaniel Troughton, *Cathedral Tiles, Hinges, and War Instruments* [the text at the bottom of the drawing may remain difficult to read as it was written using a faint pencil], ca.1850-1860

Figure 1.56 Nathaniel Troughton, *Keys and Tiles (Cathedral Remains) found in the river Sherbourne* [the text at the bottom of the drawing may remain difficult to read as it was written using a faint pencil], ca.1850-1860

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[47] The Church expressly forbid their priests from visiting taverns and inns as they were often frequented by dissenters (Cowell 1999: 46).

1.4.4 The Kitchen

In 1830 Thomas Walker (1811-1860), an architectural draughtsman and pupil of A.C Pugin, produced two detailed plans of St Mary's Kitchen (see figures 1.57 and 1.58). The plans have long been overlooked by both art and architectural historians as they were never published[48]. However, they usefully suggest that the kitchen had a pair of chimneys inserted within the east and south walls during the early nineteenth century. It is difficult to accurately date the chimneys as two are now missing and the surviving guild records are wholly silent on the kitchen's original appearance. Yet, it is possible that they dated from the fourteenth century as this is when it became common to build fireplaces within the thickness of the walls (Adamson 2004: 59). Furthermore, Walker appears to depict the kitchen with a square based footprint. This is unlikely to have been the original medieval layout as Demidowicz (2011: 173) recently suggested that the kitchen was built at an awkward and irregular angle due to the relative tightness of the whole site. This interpretation is supported by the Coventry Priory Register of 1411, which reveals that Henry Waterfalle had been granted a tenement on the west side of St Mary's Hall called "Castelbachous" (Coss and Lancaster Lewis 2013: 143). The "Castelbachous" refers to the three bake-houses that formerly lay to the north of the 'Castle Ditch' alignment in the thirteenth century (Goodard 2004: 77). There was also no space to expand further south due to location of Caesar's Tower (a three-storey structure attached to the 'low' part of the kitchen), the "little garden" directly below the tower (owned by St Mary's Priory) and the rear of properties on Earl Street (Coss and Lancaster Lewis 2013: 143).

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[48] A.C Pugin died in 1832.

Figure 1.57 Thomas Larkin, *Ground plan of St Mary's Hall, Coventry, showing the location of the medieval kitchen* [digitally enhanced and labelled in red by the author. The measurements remain difficult to read due to the faintness of the pencil markings], 1830

Figure 1.58 Thomas Larkin Walker, *Plan of the kitchen, St Mary's Hall, Coventry* [digitally enhanced and labelled in red by the author. The text remains difficult to read due to the faintness of the pencil], 1830

From the Trinity Guild accounts of 1532-33, we also know that the feasts served in St Mary's Hall were occasions of great splendour. In May 1533, the Trinity Guild marked the orbit of Richard Spicer, who had represented the city in Parliament in 1415, with a feast of cakes and four gallons of wine ([1533] 1944: 155). The same year the Trinity Guild celebrated an orbit for Nicholas Burwey and his wife with cheese, comfits, wine, ale, and cakes ([1533] 1944: 153). In the mid-nineteenth century, such feasts may not have been possible as *The Builder* (1862: 327) reported that the kitchen was in a "disgracefully dirty and neglected state". John Le Creux (1783-1846), a topographical artist, confirmed that the kitchen was in a 'disgracefully dirty and neglected state' by depicting a large pile of waste overflowing from an arched recess on the south wall (see Figure 1.59). Nonetheless, the poor condition of the kitchen is unsurprising as the kitchens at Glastonbury Abbey and Whitefriars' Monastery, Coventry, were being used as barns in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (see Figures 1.60 and 1.61).

Figure 1.60 Michael 'Angelo' Rooker, *Abbot's Kitchen in Glastonbury Abbey*, ca. 1799-1800

Figure 1.61 Anon, *Kitchen, Whitefriars Coventry* [digitally enhanced by the author for clarity as the Birmingham Library have no digitisation services], 1800

1.4.5 North Window

In the 1890s Thomas John Grylss (1845-1913), a prominent stained-glass artist, dated the original glass in the North window of St Mary's Hall to the 1450s (Coventry Evening Telegraph 1893). It is unclear whether Grylls based his interpretation on surviving documentary evidence which has long been lost, or stylistic analysis, since the newspaper article was fairly brief. However, it is possible that the North window (see Figure 1.62) was much older than the nineteenth-century artist suggested as Andrew Rudebeck more recently dated it to around 1420, on the grounds that the couters (medieval elbow armour) depicted on the monarchs are similar to those seen on the monumental brass for Sir Peter Halle (died in 1420) in Herne Church (2007: 25). The year 1420 was also the date of the Treaty of Troyes, Rudebeck continues, which consolidated English gains in France and fits well with the militaristic overtones in the window (2007: 27).

Nevertheless, there is much debate about the date of the window due to the lack of surviving documentary evidence and it is important to consider other existing interpretations. Liddy (2012: 218), for example, more recently suggested that Rudebeck's proposal of 1420 was "not wholly convincing" because the windows iconography acknowledged the debt which the city owed to its connection to Henry VI in the 1450s. This is a persuasive argument since we know from the *Leet Book* that Coventry benefited from the king's favour during the fifteenth century. In an entry dated 1451, during the King's visit, Coventry's leading oligarchy negotiated a new treaty which would be the "most profitable and most necessary to the city" ([1451] 1908: 266). This description is absolutely right since it transformed Coventry into a county and added a number of neighbouring hamlets to the town's jurisdiction (Hartrich 2016: 195).

Figure 1.62 *North Window in St Mary's Hall, Coventry*, Historic Coventry, 2022

While nineteenth-century audiences explored the construction date of the North window, they also showed considerable interest in its colour and appearance. Thomas Sharp's 1800 watercolour painting shows the North window with bright, colourful monarchs, who are depicted in bold reds and yellows (see Figure 1.63). Medieval glazers created remarkably rich colours by adding metal oxides during the molten process (White 2003: 125). However, Sharp's painting may have artificially brightened the window as nineteenth-century descriptions suggest that it had become quite dirty and poorly maintained. In George Goodwin's description of St Mary's Hall, he suggested that the window was in such a poor and unhygienic state that it admitted a "dirty light" (1862: 27). Nathaniel Hawthorne appears to have agreed as he briefly acknowledged the window's poor condition by revealing that its colours glimmered very "faintly" (1883: 368). The window may have become quite dirty as St Mary's Hall was frequently used to host events, such as phantasmagoria shows, which polluted the atmosphere by using clouds of smoke to project frightening images (1855: 440).

Furthermore, George Scharf suggests that the window's iconographic effects had diluted over time by the insertion of "odd-shaped pieces" of "plain" stained glass (1855: 440). Plain glass became increasingly fashionable in the seventeenth century as ornamental windows were widely regarded as lasting symbols of popery and idolatry (Stoll 2015: 29). Early Puritan reformers removed visual images which were perceived to glorify human activities and distract the viewer from the preaching of God's word (Stoll 2015: 29). Interestingly, Scharf was not the only antiquarian scholar to suggest that the window's power had been diluted and weakened. W.G Fretton himself suggested that the window's effects had been reduced by the "ludicrous" replacement and re-ordering of the ancient stained glass (1891: 27). Fretton clearly lamented the removal of the stained glass as he suggested that the window had gotten into a discordant "mess" (1891: 27).

By the early twentieth century, Sharp's painting was openly criticised by the art historian Bernard Rackham, who declared that it was "manifestly unfaithful" in its use of colour and tone (1930: 96). However, Rackham also conceded that Sharp's painting gives a "fair idea" of the general character and composition of the window (1930: 96). Rackham's assessment can be supported as Sharp's painting greatly adds to our understanding of the North window by betraying its poor condition in three key areas. First, the window appears to have been in a disordered and mutilated state as the right leg seen on King Arthur has the appearance of a left leg. Second, Sharp neglected to depict the surcoats of Henry III, Henry IV, and Richard I, presumably because they were too defaced. This may have been the case as Sharp previously noted, whilst condemning the 'callous' repair of the North window in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, that the window had received many "injuries" which he feared were "irreparable" (1793: 1103). And third, the head of Henry VI is missing as it appears to have been smashed by a falling scaffold pole (Sharp 1793: 1103).

Figure 1.63 Thomas Sharp, *North Window, St Mary's Hall* [digitally enhanced by author as the Birmingham Library have no digitisation services]*, ca. 1800

Sharp's painting is further useful as it records fourteen coats of arms which were visible to the nineteenth-century antiquarian (see Figure 1.64). Sharp's depiction appears to be relatively accurate as only ten years later William Reader recorded thirteen coats of arms left in the north window – one may have been broken or destroyed – including the arms of King Henry VI and the Earls of Cornwall (1810: 183)[49]. Henry VI's arms may not have been original, however, as the surviving accounts of the Trinity Guild reveal that John Holme was paid for "mending windows at Saint Mary's Hall" and replacing the arms of Henry VI with those of Edward IV in 1471 (Sharp 1871: 218). Rudebeck (2007: 26) recently investigated the window's coats of arms and implied that the arms of Henry VI had been removed because he had been captured and deposed by Edward IV during the Battle of Tewksbury in 1471. The arms of Henry VI, seen by

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[49] See: Reader's *The History and Antiquities of Coventry* (1810: 183) for the full list.

Sharp and Reader in the early nineteenth century, may have nonetheless been reinstated in

memory of the King after the overthrow of the House of York at the Battle of Bosworth. The

Guild may have been pleased to erase the memory of Edward IV since he had seized Coventry's

Charter of 1451 after Richard Neville, 16th Earl of Warwick, had been defeated and killed during

the Battle of Barnet (Rudebeck 2007: 26). This was in punishment for the city's support of the

Lancastrians, until they paid the substantial fine of five hundred marks (Rudebeck 2007: 26).

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Figure 1.64 Thomas Sharp, *North Window, St Mary Hall, Coventry* [coats of arms labelled in red by the author. The image has been digitally enhanced by author as the Birmingham Library have no digitisation services], ca.1800

Figure 1.65 William Dugdale, *Coats of Arms in the North Window, St Mary's Guildhall, Coventry* [digitally enhanced by author as the illustration remains faint], 1656

From Dugdale's *Antiquities of Warwickshire* (1656) we can also see that there were at least nineteen coats of arms in the North window, compared to the fourteen depicted in Sharp's watercolour painting (see Figure 1.65). The five arms that appear to have been removed were those of Edward I, Edward III, Earl Leofric, the Earls of Hereford, and the City of Coventry. Dugdale's depiction may be reasonably reliable as we know from the introduction of this thesis that *Warwickshire* sought to preserve the "magnificence and state" of the English nobility, by making 'exact' copies of heraldic images, coats of arms and sepulchral monuments (1656: 155). Although it is curious that he appears to have drawn a blank on the ancient arms of England as there are no records to suggest they were difficult to read or defaced.

Regrettably, it is now impossible to be certain of the original arrangement of the coats of arms as there are no surviving documentary records or contemporary visual depictions. However, the shields were clearly reordered during the nineteenth century, as there are striking differences

between Sharp's watercolour painting and an unpublished late nineteenth-century plan showing the arrangement of the figures and shields in the North window (see Figures 1.66 and 1.67). One key difference is that Sharp records the arms of the Duke of Normandy and Duke of Aquitaine on the far-right hand side of the window, whilst in the late nineteenth-century plan, they can be seen in the centre. There is little doubt that the reordering of the heraldic shields was due to the window's extensive restoration by Burlison and Grylls in 1893 (see Chapter Four for greater discussion).

Figure 1.66 T. J Grylls, *Key Plan Showing the Arrangement of the Figures and Shields in the North Window, St Mary's Hall, Coventry* [the image appears brighter on one side as the paper has faded], 1893

Figure 1.67 T. J Grylls, *List of the Coats of Arms in the North Window, St Mary's Hall, Coventry*, 1893

1.4.6 Coventry Tapestry

Below the North window, according to Henry Shaw's 1843 *Dresses and Decorations of the Middle Ages*, hung the Coventry Tapestry which was much "defaced" in the middle compartment (1843: 64). The meaning of the word "defaced" appears not to be elaborated upon or defined since Shaw's study is predominately concerned with the visual reconstruction and depiction of medieval-style dress (1843). Nonetheless, we can gain greater insight into the tapestry's changing appearance by examining Brooke's nineteenth-century watercolour album. In one unfinished painting of the tapestry, we can distinguish the enthroned figure of Justice in the central compartment (see Figure 1.68). This section was clearly a post-medieval amendment since the original image, according to the most recent analysis of the tapestry, was the Holy Trinity (Liddy 2012: 213). The presence of God the Father is intimated by the inclusion, above the head of Justice, of the tetragrammaton (the four-letter Hebrew name for God) (Liddy 2012: 213). On either side of the figure of Justice are angels carrying the instruments of Christ's crucifixion (Liddy 2012: 213).

Figure 1.68 William Henry Brooke, *Top Middle Tapestry in St Mary's Hall*, 1819

Despite the tapestry's post-medieval insertion, Shaw reasoned that the tapestry must have been made before 1447 as it shows Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester (d.1447) and his uncle, Cardinal Beaufort (d.1447) assembled together (1843: 49). This assessment is difficult to substantiate as there are no extant documents which record the date of the tapestry's commissioning or confirm the identities of the figures. However, it is unlikely that the tapestry dated from the early fifteenth century as the Trinity Guild Inventory of 1441, which listed the fraternity's goods in each room of St Mary's Hall, records an earlier and more 'generic' textile. This earlier textile, listed as "vnum dorsour lyned with Canvas of Arras werk of hawking" [a hanging made of arras depicting the pastime of falconry], appears to have portrayed a hunting scene ([1441] 1944: 143)

In 1851 *Knight's Excursion Magazine* reported that the picturesque tourist could similarly find the Coventry Tapestry beneath the North window, but implied that the work dated from the mid-fifteenth century as it was made to commemorate the visits of Henry VI and Margaret of Anjou to Coventry (1851: 14). This may have been the case as Maria Hayward recently maintained during the latest conference on the tapestry that the banderoles seen in the corner of the tapestry have the letters 'H' and 'M' on them, presumably in acknowledgement of Henry VI and Margaret of Anjou (see Introduction). There are also similarities between the two regal persons seen in the tapestry to contemporary visual depictions of Henry VI and Margaret of Anjou. One of the earliest drawings of Margaret of Anjou and Henry VI can be found in the Harley Collection and dates from around the mid-fifteenth century (see Figure 1.69). The image of the kneeling king and queen, as in prayer, mirrors how the regal figures are depicted in the Coventry Tapestry. We can also see the image of God the Father holding Christ on the Cross, above Henry VI and Margaret of Anjou, which is how the middle compartment of the Coventry tapestry may have looked before the insertion of the figure of Justice. This positioning not only reminds the viewer that the earthly monarch derived their authority directly from their divine superiors, but also suggests that earthly society should be a mirror image of the harmony and equilibrium found in the celestial kingdom (Liddy 2012: 216).

Figure 1.69 Anon, *Henry VI and Margaret of Anjou* [the original image features dirt and stain marks], ca.1445

In contrast to *Knight's Magazine*, there were many antiquarians who considered the tapestry to been wrought at the close of the fifteenth century. James Planché (1796-1880) for example, ascribed the Coventry Tapestry to the reign of Henry VII (1485-1509) and maintained that it was made to commemorate the king's attachment to his uncle, Henry VI (1851: 137). Henry VI's presence in the Coventry tapestry has been confirmed by recent visual analysis, as discussed above, but it is crucial to consider that Henry VI was extremely popular by the late 1470s due to the widespread belief in his 'innocent' death and miraculous intercession (Freeman 2005: 128).

Following the Battle of Bosworth, Henry VII actively petitioned the papacy to investigate Henry VI's reported miracles and by 1500, a collection of 174 posthumous miracle stories had been compiled for the inquiry (Theilmann 1980: 459). Henry VII had various political objectives in mind when campaigning for the canonisation of his half-uncle and predecessor. One goal was to

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promote and legitimise his own claims to throne since he had much spent much of his life in Brittany, away from the English people (Theilmann 1980: 456). Another key goal of the canonisation was to bring peace and harmony to England, which had been beset by turmoil and dynastic upheaval throughout the mid-fifteenth century (Cooper 2003: 37-38). Henry VI was generally characterised as a peaceful and innocent king in the literature of Henry VII's court as he pursued a policy of peace with France (Lin 2016: 116). Against this background of events, Planché can be supported for ascribing the tapestry to the reign of Henry VII, who may well have sought to capitalise on the posthumous popularity of his uncle.

Moreover, the full panoply of saints and angels in the upper compartments may have been intended to reinforce strict adherence to the Catholic faith (Liddy 2012: 221). This orthodox imagery may have been carefully designed by Coventry's ecclesiastical hierarchies to confront the growing threat of heresy in the city during the late fifteenth century (Liddy 2012: 221). In March 1485, eight Coventry Lollards were accused of heresy before the Bishop of Coventry and Litchfield in St Michael's Church (Munden 1995: 7). Those accused were recorded in Bishop Hale's register to have all been united in their opposition to the image of the Virgin Mary, who is depicted surrounded by the royal court, whilst angels accompany her ascent to heaven (McSheffrey and Tanner 2003). This positioning of the Virgin reminds the onlooker of her pivotal role as an intercessor between God and the earthly realm.

In addition to the religious iconography, the choice of imagery may have been intended to reflect Coventry's internal unrest and political disorder around the reign of Henry VII. In the lower compartments, the Lancastrian kings expressed a sense of hierarchy and authority to the commons, who became increasingly restless over their limited access to the City's common lands in the late fifteenth century (Liddy 2012: 220). The *Leet Book* provides valuable insight into Coventry's unrest by recording that a series of verses were "found upon the Minister's door" in 1496, which condemned the imprisonment of those who had sought to 'open' the fields and pastures encircling the city wall ([1496] 1908: 577). Coventry's poor may have been struck forcibly by this clear image of hierarchy and authority as the tapestry hung at the dais end of the great hall (Liddy 2012: 216). The dais was also occupied by a bench covered with "quysshenes with oliphantes in red and grene" [cushions decorated with the arms of the city] for the senior

members of the mayor's brethren ([1441] 1944: 143). The positioning of the bench directly beneath the tapestry suggests that Coventry's mayoralty ultimately owed their legitimacy to the king and God.

As the Coventry tapestry 'spoke' directly to local audiences, nineteenth-century audiences can be justified to some extent for suggesting that it was a surviving example of English medieval workmanship. The Superintendent of the Art Collections of the South Kensington Museum, for example, declared that the tapestry was "in all likelihood wrought in the city itself" and "by the monks and nuns there" (1863: 264). Nonetheless, the origins and workmanship of the Coventry Tapestry have been the focus of growing interest due to the recent restoration of St Mary's Hall, and there is considerable evidence to suggest the nineteenth-century art-critic was not looking at extant piece of sixteenth-century English workmanship. For a start, we now know the tapestry was partially woven from dyed silk thread, which was considerably more expensive to produce than wool or linen (CA: JN7463). It is unlikely that the silk was made by Coventry's medieval weavers or drapers as they specialised in producing high quality broad cloth for domestic and international use. Firm evidence of sericulture in England also does not occur until the seventeenth century (Wendelken 2014: 75), which is clearly far outside the time range for when the tapestry was most likely produced.

In contrast to the Superintendent, George Scharf considered the Coventry tapestry to be a surviving example of sixteenth-century Flemish workmanship and contacted Dr Gustav Waagen (1794-1864) to confirm his suspicions (1855: 42). Waagen was a Prussian art historian and often the first foreign authority to be consulted on the art collections of England, since his three volumes of the *Treasures of Great Britain* "excited a good deal of attention" (The Athenaeum 1838:162-4). The first volume, translated into English in 1854, was widely celebrated as it offered detailed insight into British art collections which had been accumulated with no coherent record of their contents (Waterfield and Illies 1995: 50). Waagen's travels around England were recorded in his letters to Blandline von Seehausen (1811-1880), his wife, but it appears that he was unable to personally examine the Coventry tapestry as there is no extant documentation recording his visit to the city. Scharf nonetheless maintained that Waagen studied his drawing of the Coventry Tapestry (see Figure 1.70), which has hitherto remained unpublished in leading

(see Figures 1.71 and 1.72).

Figure 1.70 George Scharf, *Painting of the tapestry at St Mary's Hall* [digitally enhanced by the author for greater clarity. The painting may remain difficult to interpret as it is too delicate to be removed from its frame], ca.1855

Figure 1.71 Arnould Poissonnier, *Return of Vasco da Gama*, ca.1525

Figure 1.72 Arnould Poissonnier, *Scenes from the story of Judith and Holofernes* [the image may remain difficult to interpret as the light appears to have been dimmed to reduce deterioration], ca.1500-1520

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Another key point to consider about the tapestry is that it was woven using a range of dyed wools and wefts which create a more accurate impression of the subjects. The colour of the Coventry Tapestry nonetheless appears to have subdued by the nineteenth century as William Reader (1782-1852) noted that they were "somewhat faded [...] but still beautiful and various" (1827: 25). George Scharf's painting of the tapestry strengthens this assessment by depicting the upper and lower compartments using a range of brown and yellow shades. He proposes in his article on the tapestry that it had deteriorated over time due to dirt and the "lodgement of dust" (Scharf 1855: 442). However, the tapestry may have also faded due to light exposure, since there were many windows which surrounded the North wall. Nathaniel Hawthorne's 1907 guide to *Our Old Home*, which is returned to in Chapter Five, reveals that the tapestry had faded to such extent that the figures "vanish drearily into the old stitch work of their substance when you try to make them out" (1907: 534). There is little evidence to suggest that the tapestry had been damaged by insects in the nineteenth or early twentieth centuries.

1.4.7 Coventry's Medieval Churches

Having explored the survival of Coventry's medieval houses and guildhall, it is important to turn our attention to the visibility of the city's medieval churches to nineteenth-century audiences. The core focus of this section is on the survival of St Michael's Church, but we will also briefly explore the transformation of Holy Trinity Church and Greyfriars Church as Coventry was known as a city of three spires.

St Michael's appears to have been originally built as a small seignorial chapel as a twelfth-century charter of Ranulph II, the Earl of Chester, refers to the restoration of the chapel of St Michael to prior and monks of Coventry (Coss 1986: 3). St Michael's most likely stood within a graveyard as a surviving letter of Hugh II, Ranulph II's successor, contains a clear reference to the "cimit[er]iu[m] cappelle sancti Michaelis [cemetery of the chapel of St Michael's" (Coss 1986: 3). The chapel appears to have stood within the cemetery for several hundred years as the *Leet Book* records several orders to respect and maintain the church grounds in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. One entry forbid Coventry's local citizens from carrying "tymber [timber]" thorough the churchyard on "pyne of forfature of the tymber] [on the pain of forfeiting

the timber] ([1419] 1907: 22). Speed's map appears to shows the church situated within the cemetery (see Figure 1.73). Speed's map may have been fairly accurate as early nineteenth-century maps similarly show that the church was still visible within a large burial ground (see Figure 1.74). The burial ground extended towards the remains of the ancient cathedral and the surrounding churches. However, the single row of houses previously seen on the north-east corner of the church appears to have been demolished and a new pathway had been installed thorough the centre of the grounds.

By the mid-nineteenth century, the cemetery had fallen into a "state of neglect" as it was no longer used for interments (Fretton 1879: 37). Burials instead took place in a new cemetery which was laid out by Sir Joseph Paxton, who also represented Coventry in parliament, along London Road (Poole 1847: 106). However, Fretton was "glad to record" that the authorities had brought the ancient burial ground into a "decent condition" by "planting trees and shrubs therein" in the late nineteenth century (Fretton 1879: 37). The trees and shrubs may have helped to remove the foul odors that were reported to have been present during the early nineteenth century (Fretton 1870: 37).

Figure 1.73 Extract from Speed's map of Coventry showing the location of St Michael's Church and the Row of Houses on the North-East Corner [labelled in red by the author]

Figure 1.74 Extract from Sharp's 1807 map showing the location of St Michael's Church and the Row of Houses previously seen on the North-East Corner [labelled in red by the author]

St Michael's exterior appearance is similarly worth investigating in this section as it was discussed in a range of surviving local documentary records. The Coventry Annals are a particularly useful source as they suggest that the brothers Adam and William Botoner funded the construction of the church tower in the 1370s (see CA PA355/1). The Botoner brothers were most likely involved in the patronage of the steeple as their family were prominent patrons of several religious foundations in the city (Monckton 2011: 144). Adam funded a cell at the newly found Charterhouse, for example, whilst William gave a parcel of land to the Whitefriars (Monckton 2011: 144). In the seventeenth century, the rehanging of the church bells led to the destruction of the "stone groined roof constructed in one of the upper stories of the tower" (Fretton 1871: 63). The tower appears to have undergone considerable repairs around this period as several "decayed and fractured stones" were similarly "taken out" and replaced with "new ones" (Fretton 1871: 64).

Nonetheless, Brewer (1814: 123) maintained that St Michael's tower continued to "rise high into the air" and prepared the "approaching traveller for an entrance to a place of...striking architectural importance" in the early nineteenth century. Brewer's description should be

considered as fairly accurate as nineteenth-century visual artists regularly depicted the tower towering above the city's medieval houses and surrounding natural landscape (see Figure 1.75). However, in the mid-nineteenth century, Benjamin Poole conceded that the ornamental details on the tower had "unfortunately" become "very indistinct" as a "consequence of the action of time on the soft stone of which the building consists" (1847: 70). St Michael's decay clearly made a lasting impression as Frederick Woodhouse, a local historian, wrote over sixty years later that the decay on the tower was "particularly grievous" (1909: 29). Some of the tower buttresses had also reportedly "lost so large a proportion of their substance...that they appeared to hang to the walls rather than support them" (Woodhouse 1909: 29).

Figure 1.75 George Fennel Robson, *S.E View of the City of Coventry*, 1827

Moving inwards, surviving guild registers reveal that St Michael's interior consisted of a nave with several side aisles, which were built before the completion of the tower (Monckton 2011: 145). The nave of the medieval church was unlikely to have had any seating and would have

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presented an essentially empty space as far as the rood screen (Demidowicz and Scott 2015: 55).
Nonetheless, as the new religion took hold in the reign of Queen Elizabeth (1558-1603), the
interior was fitted up with various galleries and box pews which were let out by the church
wardens (Demidowicz and Scott 2015: 55). The pews appear to have been an important source of
income as it was reported by the parish wardens that "£34" was raised from pew rents alone in
the early seventeenth century ([1635] 1854: 87-88). Further changes to the interior included the
erection of a gallery at the west end of the church to support a new organ designed by Thomas
Swarwick of Warwick (Demidowicz and Scott 2015: 57).

By the early nineteenth century, the local artist and engraver William Turner of Allesley depicted
the box pews and organ gallery from the west side of the church (see Figure 1.76). The pews and
galleries appear to have transformed the interior as local antiquaries often criticised them for
"disfiguring" and mutilating the "whole interior" (Poole 1870: 135). Antiquarian scholars were
perhaps the fiercest critics as they claimed that the original interior had become "greatly
obscured and damaged by the absurd and anomalous accumulation of pews and galleries" (Poole
1870: 135). However, as we shall discover in subsequent chapters, the pews and galleries were
ultimately cleared away as nineteenth-century audiences sought to return the interior to its
ancient form (see Chapter Four). The medieval decoration on the roof also appears to have
survived as it was similarly depicted in nineteenth-century engravings (see Figure 1.76).

St Michael's interior is further intriguing as it also maintained various chapels which were
regularly used by the city's craft guilds (see Chapter Four for greater discussion on medieval
guilds) (Anderson 1963: 45). The earliest documentary mention of the Mercer's Chapel was
found in an ancient Account Book, "Preserved in the Corporation Treasury", which recorded the
annual payment of two shillings" by the City Wardens for "lights in it" (Fretton 1871: 28). The
Mercers appear to have maintained the chapel for several years as surviving documents,
transcribed in the nineteenth century, record that they paid for the "mending" and repair of
carved work in the late sixteenth century (Fretton 1871: 28). However, the Mercers also
transformed the chapel as the City Annals record in 1616 that a small gallery was built in "ye
Mercers Chappell" (Berger 1973: 113). The chapel continued to be altered in the post-
Reformation period as Jacob Schnebbelie's *Antiquaries' Museum* (1791), which describes and

illustrates various architectural remains from across Great Britain, records that an ancient carving of a "dying man" was taken from the roof of the chapel.

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Figure 1.76 William Turner of Allesley, *St Michael's Coventry* [the image usefully shows the box pews and galleries which were inserted in the eighteenth century], 1839

Nonetheless, the chapel may have retained several key architectural details in the late nineteenth century, as Fretton reveals that "on the south side" of the chapel "are the remains of a niche" which may have formerly been occupied by a "full length statue of the patron saint of either the church or this chapel" (Fretton 1871: 29). The niche was also close to the "only altar tomb remaining in Coventry bearing recumbent effigies to "Ralph Swillington (recorder of this city in 1515) and his two wives" (Fretton 1871: 29). Interestingly, it is worth mentioning here that St

Michael's pavement was described as "almost all tombstones" (Harrington 1608: 85). The tombstones were clearly valuable as a thief, pretending to be acting on official instructions, stole all the brasses from the tombs in the early seventeenth century (Harrington 1653: 85). The *Church Journal* (1876: 70) nonetheless claimed that some of "these stones from which the brass was pilfered may still be found in the flooring of the church" in the late nineteenth century.

While St Michael's interior was altered over the centuries, its stained-glass windows were perhaps the severest casualty as they were extensively reduced and removed. In Dugdale's *Warwickshire* he lists twenty coats of arms in the windows, including those of France quartered with England, as well as the arms of several dignitaries such as William Beauchamp (1656: 107). However, in the late eighteenth century, medieval glass was widely seen as unfashionable and visitors to the church saw "certain panes" of "exceedingly ancient glass" thrown away as "mere rubbish" (Kelly 1854: 42). St Michael's great north window was particularly altered during this period as its ancient panels were removed and replaced with new glass fragments (Fretton 1871: 59). Fretton (1871: 58) made clear the loss of St Michael's glass by suggesting that only three arms "mentioned by Dugdale" remained in the north clerestory window in the late nineteenth century. Fretton (1871: 58) was clearly shocked by the destruction of the St Michael's glass as he goes on to denounce the "work of the reformation" which he claimed had "proceeded here with so much zeal that not a particle of the original glazing remains in the whole series of windows in the ground floor".

Moving onwards, we must now turn our attention to the survival and transformation of Holy Trinity Church, which was one of the earliest and most important medieval churches in the city. Holy Trinity was first mentioned in the early twelfth century and stood adjacent to St Michael's on an area of land more commonly known as 'Hill-Top' (Monckton 2011: xvi). Hill-Top was a prominent location in the medieval period as it was home to Coventry's earliest religious chapels and establishments (Monckton 2011: xvi). Trinity Church remained in its 'original' location as post-medieval visitors to the city often observed that it could still be found in close vicinity to St Michael's. The travel writer Thomas Pennant (1782: 82) made clear that the two churches were closely situated by pointing out that was Trinity church was in the immediate "vicinity to St Michael's" in the late eighteenth century.

Holy Trinity appears to have been a fairly resilient building as nineteenth-century visitors emphasized that it could still be found "less than one hundred yards" from St. Michael's (Jaffray 1862: 111). The close proximity of the two churches appears to have particularly appealed to nineteenth-century tourists as they frequently suggested that it helped form a striking and attractive view of the town (Jaffray 1862: 111). The tourists were most likely correct as an early twentieth-century postcard shows the churches as landmark buildings within the cityscape (see Figure 1.77). The churches are likewise shown in close proximity and dominant over the surrounding buildings (see Figure 1.77).

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Figure 1.77 Elmer Keene, *The Three Spires, Coventry,* c.1900-1920

Holy Trinity's exterior appearance was discussed in the Churchwardens Accounts[50] which suggest that it originally had a large "steeple" ([1563] 1871: 109). The steeple appears to have deteriorated over time as the Churchwardens Accounts reveal that it was repaired and re-pointed by a "steeple pointer" ([1652] 1871: 110). The 'steeple pointer' clearly undertook considerable repairs as he worked on the church for "69 days" in the mid-seventeenth century ([1652] 1871:

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[50] A miscellaneous collection of memoranda, parts of accounts and deeds (Ingram 1981: 491).

110). Nevertheless, just a few years later, the upper part of "the stately Spire of Trinity Church" completely collapsed due to a great lightning storm (1696: 13). The storm caused considerable damage to the church, but nineteenth-century visitors reported that they could still see "portions" of its ancient fabric (Bonney 1887: 81). The ancient 'portions' included a "deeply recessed north porch" and a "exterior arch" which was pierced with quatrefoils (Fretton 1871: 101).

Holy Trinity's interior decoration is rarely commented on within key medieval sources such as the Coventry Leet Book and the Coventry Annals. The reasons for their silence are unclear, yet it is evident that the church was lavishly decorated as there are numerous documentary references to the removal and pulling down of its 'popish' images in the post-Reformation period. The Churchwardens Accounts of Holy Trinity are again useful as they record the "taking down ye rode, & Marie & John iijs. iiijd. To ye carpenter for pullinge downe ye rode loft, iiijs. viijd [taking down the rood loft of Marie and John. The carpenter was paid for the pulling down of the rood loft]" (McGrory 2003: 126). Trinity's popish images were also "blotted out" and six pence was paid for "pullige downe the idols [pulling down the idols]" in the last quarter of the seventeenth century (McGrory 2003: 126).

The destruction of Holy Trinity's Church coincided with the removal of other popish images across the city, yet nineteenth-century visitors to the church could still find vestiges of the ancient religion. Nathaniel Troughton himself uncovered three historic murals in the church, including a fragmentary scene of the crucifixion mural in the chancel area, which he described and depicted using watercolour paints (Gill 2011: 209). The great Doom painting was similarly uncovered on the east wall of the nave in the early nineteenth century (Gill 2011: 2). However, the painting appears to have become difficult to decipher as nineteenth-century artists inaccurately depicted the central religious figures. James Cherry's engraving of the Doom, for example, depicts St John the Baptist as a hairy devil with a pitchfork (see Figure 1.78). The painting most likely became rapidly difficult to decipher as it appears to have been varnished with coatings of paintwork (Gill 2011: 207-208). The principal coating has more recently been identified as 'megilp', a bituminous mixture commonly applied to easel paintings to give them an 'antique' appearance (Gill 2011: 207-208).

Figure 1.78 James Cherry, *The Interior of Holy Trinity Church* [digitally enhanced by the author for clarity. The figures remain difficult to interpret as the painting had faded into obscurity by the early nineteenth century], c.1837

Finally, brief mention must be made to the Church of Greyfriars, which was built in the early thirteenth century by Franciscan monks (McGrory 2003: 47-49). The Franciscan friars were first mentioned in the Pipe Rolls of 1234 which show that Henry III granted them timber from the woods in Kenilworth to shingle their oratory and church (McGrory 2003: 47-49). In the fourteenth century the Black Prince, who owned the Manor and park of Cheylesmore, gave the

friars stone from his quarries to build a more substantial church with a spire and tower (McGrory 2003: 49). However, soon after the Dissolution of the Monasteries, documentary records reveal that the church was dismantled for building materials which were needed for the repair of the city walls. The Chamberlains Accounts for 1539, for example, record the "cariag of stone from the grey freers [the carrying of stone from Grey Friars]" ([1539] 1871: 203). Greyfriars tower appears to have survived the demolitions as it was frequently mentioned by seventeenth-century antiquaries and travel writers. William Dugdale himself reported that the tower was "yet standing...giving occasion unto strangers that pass through" the town (1656: 113). He also suggested that the tower was part of the 'original' church and could not have been constructed without "very great" coin (1656: 1130-114).

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the base of the tower was being used as a garden shed and lumber store (1801: 222)[51]. Many leading antiquaries were horrified by the tower's new purposes as they classified the original church as being one of the city's "noblest objects"[52]. Yet, it was perhaps unsurprising as an early nineteenth-century watercolor painting of the tower indicates that it had fallen into ruin (see Figure 1.79). Greyfriars spire similarly suffered the loss of some "peculiar features", but it was widely acknowledged as the only remaining vestige of the ancient church (Fretton 1880: 48-48)[53]. The spire appears to have remained standing as parts of the churchyard were sold to private owners, such as William Reader, who were sympathetic to medieval art and architecture (Fretton 1880: 47). Coventry's local citizens clearly sought to preserve the spire as they deliberately attached it to Christ Church, a new Anglican church, which was constructed in the nineteenth century for the city's growing population (Munden 1991: 1). The church and ancient spire can be seen together in a late nineteenth-century oil painting produced by a local female artist (see Figure 1.80).

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[51] The base of the tower was also used as a pigsty. Peter Seager, the owner of the garden and orchard surrounding, recalled that: "I have many a pig there, and I used to boast that I had the highest pigsty in the kingdom ([1880] Munden 1991: 1).

[52] See: *The Gentleman's Magazine* (1801: 222) and Fretton's *Memorials of the Franciscans or Greyfriars, Coventry* (1870: 48).

[53] See: Henry Hawkes *The History and Antiquities of the City of Coventry* (1843: 28) which similarly notes that Greyfriars spire was the only remaining feature of the ancient church.

During the erection of Christ Church, remains of the ancient church and monastery were uncovered and recorded by local antiquaries (Fretton 1870: 48). It was discovered that the church was "cruciform in plan" and originally had an internal length of about "250 feet" (Fretton 1870: 50). The greatest breadth across the transepts was around "96ft" and there were several chapels around the north aisle (Fretton 1870: 50). Many fragments of "worked stone" and "carved heads" were similarly found around the church remains (Fretton 1870). However, Fretton (1870: 52) admitted that he was unable to form "an idea of their nature and purpose" because he was busy with other archaeological remains and observations.

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Figure 1.79 Anon, *Greyfriars Spire*, c.1800

Figure 1.80 Annie Gilbert, *Christ Church*, c.1880-1900

1.5 Conclusion

This chapter has shed new insight into the survival and visibility of Coventry's medieval defences during the nineteenth century by analysing 'new' cartographic sources and drawings. It

has suggested that the Lady's Tower and Round Tower in the southern 'half' of the city had been much reduced in height by the early nineteenth century. Yet, it has also shown that Swanswell Gate retained its original square footprint and distinct red sandstone colour in the late nineteenth century. The survival of Swanswell gate may well have been due to its use longstanding isolation and fragments of the city wall were clearly visible throughout the nineteenth century.

Moreover, this chapter has brought new light to the condition and character of Coventry's medieval dwellings in the nineteenth century, as the literature review revealed that they had been consistently overlooked due to their 'decayed' state. Although it has been argued that the medieval houses in Much Park Street were in a poor and unhealthy state by the mid-nineteenth century, due to the changing socio-economic character of the area, it has also underlined that the ornate doorways and elaborate wooden panels depicted by Troughton were surviving reminders of the great medieval houses which lined Earl Street.

Furthermore, the chapter has developed new knowledge on the form and layout of St Mary's Hall in the nineteenth century, by analysing key antiquarian drawings which have long remained hidden to the art and architectural historian. The drawings revealed that the late nineteenth-century antiquary could discern the hall's fifteenth-century square footprint and gatehouse. However, it is also clear that the coats of arms in the North window had been removed and extensively re-arranged in order to reflect changing political allegiances. The image of God the Father in the Coventry Tapestry had also been removed and replaced with the figure of Justice during the post-medieval period, but it also preserved much of its original iconography.

Finally, the chapter has developed a deeper understanding of the survival of Coventry's medieval ecclesiastical heritage during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. One key finding was that both St Michael's and Greyfriars Churches retained their 'original' medieval towers as they were protected and admired by a diverse range of audiences. Holy Trinity's medieval tower had collapsed during a great lightning storm, yet it retained vestiges of the ancient religion on its walls and arches. By establishing that there was much of medieval Coventry left to examine and interpret, the next chapter moves on to discuss how the city's medieval heritage was received and re-imagined by leading antiquaries in the early nineteenth century.

Chapter Two: Coventry's Medieval Heritage in the Age of the Romantic Antiquarian

2.1 Introduction

In Chapter One, I established that much of Coventry's medieval heritage was standing and visible in the early nineteenth century, by taking a 'forensic' approach to surviving cartographic evidence and antiquarian drawings. In this chapter, I will uncover how Coventry's medieval antiquities were received and re-imagined by the 'Romantic antiquaries' during the late 1820s and early 1830s. In recent years, there has been a revived interest in the relationship between the medieval Gothic past and the Romantic antiquaries, as scholars have increasingly sought to 'rescue' antiquarianism from disapprobation and neglect. Rosemary Sweet (2004: 304) offers deeper insight into how antiquarian scholars played a key role in stimulating the taste for Salisbury Cathedral, for example, as she explains that antiquarianism has often been an easy target for condescension since the antiquary has traditionally been regarded as an eccentric figure.

This image of the antiquary as an eccentric, and almost amateur, researcher can be traced back to the early seventeenth century when John Earle's *Micro-cosmographie* mockingly defined the antiquary as someone who has a "unnatural disease" for all things "mouldy and worm-eaten" ([1628] 1811: 33-34)[54]. Rosemary Hill's *Time's Witness* offers substantial revisions to this interpretation by exploring how the antiquaries of the Romantic age played a central role in the popularisation of the medieval Gothic past (2021: 9). However, she does not seek to define Romantic antiquarianism, since, as she argues, "definitions are not easy to apply to a period before disciplinary boundaries were invented" (Hill 2021: 5).

In the first half of this chapter, the term 'Romantic antiquarianism' is broadly defined as both an 'archaeological' and 'emotional' response to the past. It explores why the antiquaries'

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[54] Earle's definition continues as follows: "Hee is one that hath that unnaturall disease to bee enamourr'd of old age, and wrinckles, and loves all things (as Dutchmen doe Cheese) the better for being mouldy and worme-eaten. He is of our religion, because wee say it is most ancient; and yet a broken statue would almost make him an Idolater. A great admirer hee is of the rust of old monuments, and reads onely those characters, where time hath eaten out the letters. Hee will goe you forty miles to see a Saint's Well, or a ruin'd Abbey; and if there be but a Crosse or stone footstool in the way, hee'l be considering it so long, till he forget his journey [sic]" ([1628] 1811: 33-34).

traditionally archaeological vision of the medieval Gothic 'evolved' to become much more emotional and considers how these approaches can be characterised as inherently 'romantic'. The antiquaries who feature in this chapter include Augustus Charles Pugin (1762-1832), Thomas Sharp (1770-1841), Edward James Willson (1787-1854), and John Britton (1771-1857), with brief mention to Henry Shaw (1800-1873) and Sir Samuel Meyrick (1783-1848). I have chosen to concentrate on these specific antiquaries because little attention has been paid to establishing how they received and reinvented Coventry's medieval heritage.

Britton's reception of Coventry's medieval heritage has long been ignored, for example, because scholars have principally been concerned with understanding how he built a more Romantic view of the Cities of Oxford and York. In J. Mordaunt Crook's essay on *John Britton and the Genesis of the Gothic Revival*, he suggests that Britton aimed to build a more Romantic view of York's medieval heritage by commissioning leading visual artists such as the Le Creux brothers to produce picturesque views of York Minister (1968: 113). In contrast, this chapter illuminates how Britton sought to portray Coventry's medieval churches as nationally significant in the late 1820s, by drawing on a range of prints and drawings which have largely been ignored in the Aylesford Collection and the Herbert Art Gallery. This discussion, in turn, develops new knowledge on how Coventry's image as the 'City of Three Spires' was developed and disseminated in the early nineteenth century.

Moreover, A.C Pugin's perception of medieval Coventry has long been understudied because scholars have primarily been interested in his activities in London, Lincoln, and Oxford. In Rosemary Hill's *A.C Pugin*, she usefully explores how he made drawings of Westminster Hall in 1806, yet she was unable to devote any detailed attention to his reception of Coventry as her study was only intended to provide the reader with a brief overview of his activities (1996: 16). In contrast, a key concern of this chapter is to shed new light on how A.C Pugin employed the language of the picturesque to suggest that Coventry's medieval decorative heritage was vital to an emerging understanding of 'nationhood'. It also draws on rarely-examined pencil sketches in the RIBA's Archives, to uncover how A.C Pugin and his students created a detailed 'visual database' of Coventry's decorative heritage for England's 'future' interior designers.

In addition to Britton and A.C Pugin, Edward Willson's response to Coventry's surviving medieval buildings has been wholly overlooked and hitherto much neglected. This may, on the one hand, be due to the fact his writings have largely been eclipsed and subsumed under the more famous works of his contemporaries (Pevsner 1972: 25). Yet, on the other hand, it is highly likely that his response has been 'censored' because he was a fierce defender of the Roman Catholic faith and caused much controversy during his lifetime. His obituary in *The Builder*, written by Britton, described him as an "inveterate Roman Catholic who after the decease of his parents poured forth invectives and many anathemas against Protestant architects which provoked much enmity and ill feeling" (1855: 13).

While this chapter is primarily devoted to investigating the Romantic antiquarian response to Coventry's medieval heritage, the connection between antiquarianism and Catholicism also forms a pivotal focus of exploration. In the first half of this chapter, we investigate how the Romantic antiquaries were often subtle propagandists for the Catholic faith and its 'spiritual' and 'mystical' meanings. Their perception of the Gothic as 'mystical' and 'heavenly' was, as we shall also discover, also influenced by the wider revival of medieval art and architecture in Catholic circles on the Continent.

2.2 Defining Romantic Antiquarianism

In the nineteenth century, antiquarianism was a key cultural practice which aimed to 'resurrect' the physical remains of the national past through archaeological and forensic study. One of the most important antiquaries was John Britton, whose study on *The History and Antiquities of the Cathedral Church of Salisbury* (1814) aimed to bring the 'nation's' medieval ecclesiastical past back to 'life' through detailed study, as he regretted how it had been deeply misunderstood due to "old prejudices" (1814: vii). The 'old prejudices' appear not to be elaborated as this may have undermined the purpose and importance of his study. However, Britton may have been referring to the fact that the English Gothic style had traditionally been interpreted as 'barbaric' and 'debased', while 'foreign' Classical remains were seen as 'rational' and 'serene' (Sweet 2013: 240).

Richard Gough (1735-1809), the Director of the Society of Antiquaries from 1771 to 1791, was one such antiquary to call for a more coherent understanding of the English Gothic style as he wanted to restore the architecture of "our forefathers" to a state of respectability (1780: xxiv). Britton appears to answer Gough's call by depicting the West end of Salisbury Cathedral in plan, elevation, and section (1814). He also shows the Cathedral's external architectural details side by side to allow systematic comparison, which suggests that he wanted to 'elevate' the study of Gothic architecture by showing how it followed a similar set of 'rules' or 'systems' like Classical architecture (1814).

Yet, in spite of Britton's 'forensic' approach, he also seriously engages with the emotive power of the Gothic as he directly encourages his readers to: "analyze their emotions, after first viewing this noble pile and endeavour to ascertain the causes of amazement, admiration or delight" (1814: 66). Britton encouraged his readers to have a deeper, and more emotional, encounter with Salisbury Cathedral because his vision of the medieval past was 'awoken' by the Romantic picturesque. Gilpin's *Essay on Picturesque Beauty* has been discussed elsewhere in this thesis (see Introduction), but it should be remembered here that he proposed the "picturesque eye" "delighted" in Gothic ruins, as they preserved the memory of a distant time and were thus capable of provoking "imaginative" associations and pleasing "sensations" in the beholder (1792: 49).

Gilpin's focus on feeling over intellect, on imagination over rules, explains much of his thinking towards the medieval past and can be interpreted as characteristically 'Romantic'. The word Romantic has often been described as a notoriously 'difficult' and 'slippery' term to define since the romantics were often intentionally individualistic (Honour 1979: 14). Yet, it can largely be understood as a challenge against the Enlightenment's emphasis on the sovereign power of order and human reason, which were considered to be illusions as Europe returned to autocratic tyranny and oppression (Honour 1979: 18)[55]. Romanticism also sought to escape from society's harsh realities by appealing to strong emotions and irrational feelings (White 2007: 163).

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[55] The Reign of Terror was a period of mass-executions and state-sanctioned violence during the French Revolution (Tackett 2015: 1-2). Radicals took over the revolutionary government and executed anyone who they suspected to be disloyal to the revolution (Tackett 2015: 1-2).

Britton clearly admired Gilpin's Romantic approach as he declared in his *Autobiography* that he read Gilpin's writings on the Picturesque with "great delight and advantage" (1850: 109). He was particularly drawn to Gilpin's 'sensory' approach to the medieval past as he was repelled by the dry pedantry so often associated with antiquarian writing (Hill 2011: 58). In his *Autobiography*, Britton revealed that he found all the 'standard' antiquarian publications such as Richard Gough's 1789 edition of Camden's *Britannia* and Edward King's *Munimenta Antiqua* to be "dull and uninviting" (1850: 135). Antiquarianism was often considered to be deeply 'uninviting' to all but those who had specialist knowledge, as the 'traditional' antiquaries compiled 'endless' notes, and recited manuscripts with abstruse etymological derivations (Sweet 2004: 6).

We can be confident that the criteria of the romantic Picturesque thoroughly permeated Britton's work, as he also appears to have embraced Uvedale Price's Picturesque theories. In Price's first *Essay on the Picturesque*[56], he describes the Picturesque as an independent aesthetic category which was primarily based on 'roughness', 'variation' and 'irregularity': "the two [...] qualities of roughness, and of sudden variation, joined to that of irregularity, are the most efficient causes of the picturesque" (1794: 44-45). Price championed these qualities not only because he considered that they "excite a sensation" in the beholder, whose mind would be temporarily 'paused' by their complexity, but because he thought they were commonly found in wild natural scenes (1794: 173).

Nature was important to the Romantics as it lay beyond the bounds of human reason and logic which, as we know from previous discussions, they rejected as they valued individuality and subjectivity (Honour 1979: 18). Price adds, however, that the picturesque tourist should perceive England's Gothic buildings as the tangible emanation of 'nature' as they exhibited great variation and irregularity: "In Gothic buildings the outline of the summit presents such a variety of forms [...] some variously enriched that even where there is an exact correspondence of parts, it is often disguised by an appearance of splendid confusion and irregularity" (1794: 53). Price does not name any specific examples, but he does suggest that "our cathedrals and ruined

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[56] Price wrote three *Essays on the Picturesque*.

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abbeys" are the most picturesque sources as they exhibit "much variety" and "extreme richness" (1794: 51).

In addition to the Picturesque, Price also appreciated and recognised the sublime, an aesthetic category that was perceived to evoke a sense of reverence and awe from the viewer (Davenport 2016: 73). In Price's *Essay*, he examines the Gothic through the sublime, revealing how he experienced a strong sense of "awe" upon seeing a "massive" tower on a "venerable castle-like mansion built in the beginning of the 15th century" (1794: 194). He creates a dark, yet almost deliciously terrifying image of the medieval building, by adding that it had a "deep gloom" which "forcibly" stirred his imagination for the days of "chivalry" (1794: 194-195).

Shortly after Price's *Essay* was published, Britton personally visited Price "on a long pedestrian tour" as he had been caught up in the debate surrounding the Picturesque (1850: 137)[57]. Britton's visit appears to have encouraged him to take a more Romantic approach to the medieval past as he repeatedly employs the terms varied, rich, and irregular in his discussions on England's Gothic cathedrals. For example, he declares that the west front of Salisbury Cathedral consisted of "five divisions [...] of *varied* decoration [author's emphasis]" (Britton 1814: 106). He also wrote in the preface to *Salisbury* that it was necessary to "associate them [the Gothic cathedrals] with sublimity" in order to achieve a full appreciation of these "wonderful edifices" (Britton 1814: vii).

In addition to Gilpin and Price, Richard Payne Knight's *Analytical Enquiry into the Principles of Taste* extended the theory of the Picturesque, by suggesting that various "combinations of light, shade and colour" could also produce a pleasurable impression on the eye (1805: 68). The most pleasing effect of Gothic architecture, Knight adds, was "dim and discoloured light diffused [...] through unequal varieties of space, divided but not separated [...] thus effects more imposing have been produced, than are, perhaps to be found in any other works of man" (1808: 178). Knight's theory is of particular interest here as it appears to have encouraged the English antiquaries to highlight the colour, vibrancy, and sensory power of the Gothic past.

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[57] Britton spent "many hours" with Price (1850: 188-189). They walked around his house, his grounds, and discussed a variety of different topics (1850: 188-189).

In Britton's *Salisbury,* he echoes Knight's enthusiasm for the colourful medieval past, by encouraging his readers to imagine how a "dim religious light passing through the many coloured stained-glass windows" must have "refracted a countless variety of tints [...] and produced a *coup-d'oeil* of transcendent richness and splendour" (1814: 76). Britton may have offered a similar description to the picturesque theorist as his *Autobiography* reveals that he had read Knight's *Analytical Enquiry* (1805) and was familiar with its various revisions (1850: 134). Britton had also personally visited Knight during his pedestrian tour in the eighteenth century, and his visit clearly made an impression on him as he declares that it "excited my curiosity" for the romantic Picturesque (1850: 134).

Nonetheless, what is also significant about Britton's description is that it suggests that the English antiquaries' had a 'spiritual' awakening to the 'transcendent', mystical powers of God. From the twelfth century, Gothic cathedrals were built to evoke the Celestial City, as described in the Book of Revelation (Honour and Fleming 2005: 378). Stained glass windows became a major feature of the Gothic cathedrals, as they represented the translucent crystals carved into the walls of the Celestial City and were designed to 'transform' natural sunlight into ethereal light (Honour and Fleming 2005: 378). Britton's description of the stained-glass windows pouring transcendent coloured light into Salisbury Cathedral not only suggests that he wanted to highlight the presence of God, but also suggests that he wanted to spiritually 'transport' his readers' imaginations to the City of God (1814: 76). This focus on the spirit, and on the imagination, can be characterised as 'Romantic' since it defied human comprehension.

On the Continent, many writers such as Friedrich von Schlegel similarly portrayed the Gothic cathedrals as the earthly embodiment of heavenly Jerusalem. In Schlegel's *Letters on Christian Art* (1802-04), he creates the image of the Heavenly City by recalling how the coloured glass in the Gothic cathedrals increased the potency of the light of heaven, and had a powerful effect upon his emotions: "in the old Gothic cathedrals [...] the strongly contrasted colours employed in glass painting seem to have a most powerful effect [...] upon the eye and heart of the spectator [...] the light of heaven [entered] like a dazzling flame" ([1802-04] 1848: 101). The finest specimens of glass painting, Schlegel adds, could be found in the church of St Gudule in Brussels and across Cologne ([1802-04] 1848: 101). Schlegel specifically encourages his readers

to view the Gothic cathedrals in the Rhine- and German lands as 'heavenly' structures, as he appears to have felt a growing appreciation for the Germanic 'spirit', in the wake of Napoleonic conflict ([1802-04] 1848: 101).

Schlegel's *Letters on Christian Art* were disseminated and widely reissued in English, several decades after Britton's *Salisbury* had been published, in 1848 and 1860 (Simpson 2021: 132). Yet it is possible that Britton was inspired by Schlegel's description of the heavenly Gothic cathedrals, as he was clearly familiar with his brother, August Wilhelm von Schlegel (1767-1845). In Britton's 1818 *Remarks on the Life and Writings of* Shakespeare, he described August as a "German author", who made some of the most "admirable and judicious remarks" on Shakespeare in his 1809 *Lectures on the Dramatic Art and Literature* (1818: 37). The Romantic antiquaries found a kind of 'patron saint' in Shakespeare as they valued his lack of classical training, his emphasis on the local and particular, his personal genius, and his interest in the Middle Ages (Hill 2021: 214)[58].

In addition, there is little doubt that Friedrich von Schlegel greatly admired the Gothic cathedrals as he was drawn to the Catholic faith in 1802, and 'officially' converted to Roman Catholicism in 1808 (Riasanovsky 1995: 64). Schlegel's support for the Catholic faith is strikingly apparent in his *Letters on Christian Arts*, which not only condemned the Reformation for causing a "violent" change, but also for "estranging" the ideas of art from their 'true' Christian purpose ([1802-04] 1848: 75). Schlegel's Catholic 'awakening' is of particular interest here as we can also argue that Britton had a deeper, and more 'spiritual' encounter, with Salisbury Cathedral because he was sympathetically Catholic. This is highly likely as the connection between Catholicism and antiquarianism had been well established since the Reformation, with the earliest antiquaries often being accused of harbouring Catholic sympathies if they had an interest in the Middle Ages (see Introduction). However, Britton appears to avoid associating Salisbury Cathedral with its Catholic past, as this may have caused him serious complications. Georgian antiquaries were not at risk from imprisonment, like their Tudor predecessors had been, but they were often deeply mistrusted and could still encounter extreme opprobrium (Hill 2011: 199).

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[58] David Garrick (1717-1779), an English actor and playwright, rewrote *The Taming of the Shrew* as *Katharine and Petruchio* (Hill 2021: 214).

Britton himself was clearly unwilling to openly acknowledge the Catholic origins of the medieval cathedrals as he admitted, only two years later, that he was afraid of causing "doctrinal disputes" between the Protestants and Catholics (1816: iii).

Like Schlegel, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe similarly used the Gothic cathedral to build a renewed German national narrative of pride and identity in the late eighteenth century. In his 1772 essay *Von Deutscher Baukunst* [On German Architecture], Goethe compared Strasbourg Cathedral to a 'tree of God'[59] which had its roots deep within the German lands, and had 'naturally' grown from the 'genius spirit' of its creator: "[Strasbourg Cathedral] was a lofty, wide-spreading tree of God which, with its thousand branches, millions of twigs, and leaves more numerous than the sands of the sea, proclaims to the surrounding country the glory of its master, Lord" ([1772] 1980: 106). Goethe's awe-struck praise of the cathedral as the almost 'living' emanation of the German landscape and spirit gave greater impetus to the idea that the Gothic style was German (Emery 2001: 12). Yet, more importantly to our discussion, it appears to have 'awakened' the antiquaries' passion for England's Gothic cathedrals. In Britton's *Salisbury,* he suggests that the "grand cathedral Church" was an organic manifestation of "God's nature" because we can find "trees, brooks and stones" in its fabric (1814: 2). The "enriched spire" of Salisbury Cathedral, he later adds, was also the 'organic' manifestations of an "original and daring genius" (1814: 75-76). Britton's *Salisbury* does not refer directly to Goethe's *Von Deutscher Baukunst*, but it is possible that he had been influenced by his work, as we know from our discussion above that he was familiar with other notable German writers such as August Wilhelm von Schlegel.

Another key Romantic antiquarian that we must consider in this section is Edward James Willson (1787-1854). Willson was in many ways a 'typical' antiquary because he sought to 'resurrect' the past through detailed study, primary documentary evidence and close observation of actual remains. In his introductory essay for A.C Pugin's *Specimens of Gothic*, for example, he declared that he sought to "assist in perfecting the practical knowledge of Gothic architecture"

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[59] The German architect Joseph Decker (1677-1713) imagined Gothic architecture as the inspiration of nature, its tall columns and vaults like an avenue of trees (Hayman 2003: 6). This became a cliché in Germany and Britain, where cathedrals were often praised as nature inspired (Hayman 2003: 6).

and would "introduce" the reader to the earliest "specimens" of the Gothic through detailed study (1823: vi). Willson was eager to provide greater knowledge on the Gothic style as, like Britton, he lamented how it had been deeply misunderstood and often censured as "barbarous" due to the interest in Classical antiquities (1823: ix)[60].

Willson's essay reveals that he had a thorough knowledge of the various theories surrounding the origin of the Gothic, and he provides a long chronological overview of the development of English architecture (1823: xi-xv). Throughout Willson's overview, he reinforces his wide knowledge of the medieval style by drawing on a range of technical terms commonly used in the early nineteenth century to describe the Gothic (1823: xi-xv). Among them compound arch, mouldings, mullions, pendant, quatrefoils, and Perpendicular English (1823: xi-xv). Willson provides greater information on the origins of the term 'Perpendicular' by noting in a footnote that it "originated with" Thomas Rickman (1776-1841), an architectural antiquary, whose *Attempt to Discriminate the Styles of English Architecture* (1817) is still generally used to describe Gothic architecture (1823: xiv).

Nonetheless, we can also argue that Willson evoked the Romantic antiquary as his essay appears to draw on the 'emotive' terminology of the Picturesque, in order to 'elevate' the Gothic style to the canon of good "taste" (1823: xix). Willson appears to seriously engage with the Picturesque as he employs the terms 'rich', 'richest', 'variety', 'rough' and 'irregular' to build a more Romantic view of the English Gothic cathedrals (1823). In one passage, for example, he maintained that Westminster Abbey had a "richer character" than Salisbury Cathedral (1823: xiii). Willson clearly immersed himself in the vocabulary of the Picturesque, as well as the debate surrounding its founders, as the catalogue of his post-mortem sale records that he had books such as: Knight's *Analytical Enquiry into the Principles of Taste* (1805), Edmund Burke's *Philosophy into the Sublime* (1757) and Humphrey Repton's *Enquiry into Changes of Taste* (1806) (Lang 1966: 260).

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[60] The English antiquaries' 'rejection' of the 'barbarous' Gothic past was, of course, far from uncommon as there were efforts in the nineteenth century to 're-evaluate' the medieval art and architecture on the Continent. In Franz Kugler's *Handbook of the History of Painting in Germany and the Low Countries*, he sought to re-evaluate the aesthetic and cultural qualities of the medieval art in the Northern German lands as it had been treated with "cold contempt" and "prejudice" (1846: 1).

According to Hill (2009: 53), Willson was a particularly critical reader of Payne Knight, and he brought his Picturesque theories to bear in his studies. This argument is well supported by the fact that Willson's introductory essay echoes Knight's, as well as Britton's, interest in the intense effects of light and shade in Gothic buildings: "the strong effects of light and shade which delight the eye in the best ancient examples are produced by curves and indentations" (1823: xx). However, unlike Britton, Willson does not describe the light which streamed through the Gothic cathedrals as the embodied and 'mystical' spirit of God. On the one hand, this was to be expected, as Willson's introductory essay was intended to provide greater practical knowledge on the Gothic through detailed study. Yet on the other, Willson collaborated with John Britton on several publications, including the *Beauties of England and Wales* (1801-1815), and could have absorbed his ideas.

Despite these slight differences, Willson's vision of the Gothic had clearly been 'awakened' as he also appears to present the Gothic as an 'organic' reflection of the 'spirit' and artistic individuality of the medieval craftsman: "There can be no doubt that the infinite variety, the spirit, and originality, observable in the knots and small carvings of Gothic buildings, are owing to their being designed and executed by the same persons [medieval masons and carpenters]" (1823: xxvi). Willson's interest in the natural 'spirit' of the Gothic may have been aroused by Goethe as he appears to have been bilingual[61] and interested in the Gothic cathedrals on the Continent. Indeed, in the introduction to *Specimens,* he leaned heavily on Georg Moller's 1815 *Denkmähler der Deutschen Baukunst* [Monuments of the German Architecture of the Middle Ages] in order to provide greater knowledge on Strasbourg Cathedral (1823: xvii). In this chapter, we will continue to bring greater visibility to the connections between Goethe and the Romantic antiquaries, by investigating how his language shaped their understanding of Coventry's medieval architectural heritage.

Moreover, Willson may have been keen to admire the spirit of the medieval craftsman as he was a 'cradle' Catholic, who had learnt the principles and tenements of the 'ancient' faith from an early age (Britton 1850: 13). Yet, Willson does not explicitly associate the 'spirit' of the

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[61] Many Catholics, especially before the Emancipation Act of 1829, spent long periods abroad where they could enjoy complete religious freedom (Hill 2009: 175).

medieval Gothic past with the Roman Catholic faith as he may have wished to avoid religious controversy (1823: xxi). Willson himself may have been in no real danger of causing religious controversy as it was only after the death of his parents several years later, as Britton suggests, that he became an "inveterate Roman Catholic" (1850: 13). However, anti-Catholic sentiment was still deeply ingrained as the Roman Catholic Elective Franchise Bill, which sought to secure the English Catholics the right to vote, had been rejected by Parliament in the same year as Willson's essay had been published (1823: 1257).

Returning to the term 'Romantic antiquarianism' and this section's main area of interest, Romantic antiquarianism can be defined as the fusion of the emotional and the analytical. The Romantic antiquaries, while 'resurrecting' the medieval past through knowledge and detailed study, also appear to have used a 'emotional' lexicon to build a more romantic response to the 'nation's' Gothic art and architecture during the nineteenth century. In the next section, we will investigate how the antiquaries used the Romantic picturesque and the language of German Romantic writers to inspire a renewed interest for Coventry's medieval architectural, decorative, and visual arts heritage in the early nineteenth century.

2.3 John Britton's Picturesque Antiquities of the English Cities

In 1825, Britton employed George Fennel Robson (1788-1833), an English watercolourist, to supply "at least thirty" watercolour engravings of the English cities for his *Picturesque Views of the Cities of England* (Britton 1850: 42). In Britton's original advertisement for the publication, which was republished several years later by the antiquary John Holmes (1800-1854), he suggested that the cathedral of each city would constitute the "chief object" of the drawings as they pointed "heaven-wards", "raising their long and lofty" spires "above the adjoining dwellings of man" (1828: 273). Here, Britton brings to mind Goethe's description of Strasbourg Cathedral 'towering' above the surrounding countryside with its 'lofty' spire, which suggests that he wanted the reader to similarly perceive England's Gothic cathedrals as 'trees of God' and the 'natural' product of the English environment.

Figure 2.1 George Fennel Robson, *S.E View of the City of Coventry,* 1827

In Coventry, the early Gothic cathedral of St Mary's had been predominately destroyed by the early sixteenth century (see Introduction). However, Britton still appears to have compared Coventry's medieval churches to the 'trees of God', since Robson depicted Coventry's medieval skyscape from the south-east, surrounded by oaks trees and vegetation (see Figure 2.1). Britton does not explicitly explain why Coventry's medieval skyscape was chosen, as he notes in his *Autobiography* that the *Picturesque Views of the English Cities* was deliberately published without a letterpress, as the financial crash of 1825-6 had brought "panic and dismay" to many commercial publishers (1850: 70). Nonetheless, he may have perceived Coventry's medieval churches to be pointing 'heavenwards' like a 'tree of God', as there was emerging interest in their great height and lofty proportions in early nineteenth-century topographical accounts.

In James N. Brewer's 1814 account of *Warwickshire*, published in the *Beauties of England and Wales*, he recounts how he was visibly struck by Coventry's medieval spires rising high into the

sky when approaching the City from a distance: "Coventry [...] has three spires which rise high in the air and prepare the examiner for an entrance to a place of [...] striking architectural importance" (1814: 123). Brewer specifically concentrated on the three spires as he goes on to remind the reader that the "churches are three in number" and "truly worthy of attention" (1814: 125). However, he only includes two engravings of St Michael's and Holy Trinity's steeples, as they convey in "so satisfactory a manner an idea of the architectural beauty of [their] fine elevations" (1814: 124-5). The prints not only appear to be depicted from different vantage points across the city, but also by different artists, which suggests there was a wide circle of people who sought to 'reframe' and reinvent the nation's perception of Coventry's medieval past through visual images (see Figures 2.2 and 2.3).

Figure 2.2 Joseph Clarendon Smith, *Coventry*, ca. 1800-1810

Figure 2.3 Henry Jeayes *Coventry*, *(showing the Churches of Trinity, and St Michael's etc)*, ca. 1800-1815

Upon closer examination, Brewer echoes Goethe's interest in the 'genius' spirit of Strasbourg Cathedral, by similarly recognising the 'genius' of Coventry's medieval builders in St Michael's 'irregular' architectural detail: "An elevation more [...] ornamented [...] was, perhaps, never designed by the great school of builders who ranged, without restraint or rule, over all the beauties which genius could combine for the purpose of effect or display" (1814: 127). Britton himself may have shaped this description as he was known to have "supplied information relating to Coventry to the compiler of the Warwickshire section" (Fretton 1871: xi)[62]. There is no surviving evidence to explain why Britton wanted Brewer to infuse his account of Coventry's medieval spire with the language of German Romanticism, but it is tempting to suspect that he

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[62] Britton's *Autobiography* likewise confirms that he had been in contact with Brewer after he had retired from the *Beauties* (1850: 38). He provided Brewer with an ample list of contacts he had used over the years (1850:38).

wanted to demonstrate how Coventry's medieval skyscape was equal to that on the Continent, as he was clearly motivated by a powerful nationalist agenda.

Four years later, Thomas Sharp's 1818 *Illustrations of the History and Antiquities of St Michael's Church* continued to draw attention to the great height of Coventry's medieval churches, by noting that the tower of St Michael's "extended to a full 100 yards" (1818: 46). Sharp appears to have felt a sense of local belonging and a deeper emotional connection to St Michael's Church as he credited it to the "architectural skill and religious spirit of *our* Ancestors [author's emphasis]" (1818: 46). Sharp's use of a possessive pronoun to describe St Michael's spire is important, as it reinforces how there was a wider, cultural awakening of Coventry's medieval ecclesiastical heritage (1818: 46). Britton was doubtlessly aware that St Michael's Church had been linked to Coventry's local people, and was therefore suitable to portray as a symbol of English 'nationhood', as he had personally visited Sharp in Coventry to ask for his "co-operation and assistance" in producing a "new history" of his county (1850: 125). Sharp appears to have been happy to help Britton as he offered him the use of his collections and his assistance (1850:125). Their meeting clearly made an impression upon Britton as the *South East View of the City of Coventry* is dedicated to Sharp, whom he described as having "zealously devoted" his talents to "elucidate the annals of Topography and Antiquity".

Yet, in spite of this admiration for St Michael's tower, many leading antiquaries[63] of the time neglected to comment on the church's interior because they appear to have had little time or space. Sharp himself may have had little time to explore the interior as his study also provides a comprehensive history of the surrounding medieval buildings using "original and mostly unpublished manuscripts" (1818: 1). Sharp included lengthy extracts from the original documents as he appears to have considered them to be a reliable source of information. However, it is much more likely that many antiquaries remained wholly silent on the interior because they disagreed with its post-Reformation alterations and changes (see Chapter One). Britton may have been particularly horrified by St Michael's alterations as he later condemned those "fanatics" who were previously permitted to "deface" and "commit devastations" on ancient buildings (1836: viii). Britton particularly cited the "furious fanatics of the seventeenth

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[63] Including John Britton, Edward James Willson and Augustus Charles Pugin.

century" who he claimed had "destroyed" the "dignity" of ancient "churches and chapels" (1836: 40).

From the earliest reviews of Britton's *Picturesque Views of the English Cities*, it appears that the series played a central role in helping Coventry's medieval skyscape become the focus of national interest. In 1827, one reviewer in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, notably ranked Coventry's medieval spires as equal to those of York Minster and Ely Cathedral: "York, with its splendid cathedral, its walls and fortifications; Canterbury with its metropolitan church, ruins, and beautiful country; Ely, with its Cathedral, majestically arising above the adjoining wood; Coventry with its *lofty* spires [author's emphasis]" (1827: 613). In the same year, the *London Literary Gazette*, suggested that Coventry looked like a "gem" in Britton's *Picturesque Views*, which reinforces the idea that medieval Coventry was perceived as 'heavenly' since the City of God sparkled like a precious gemstone (1827: 509) [64]. Even so, there is no contemporary evidence to suggest that Coventry's medieval skyscape was perceived by those on the Continent as being of international significance in the 1820s.

Three years later, Britton published the *Picturesque Antiquities of the English Cities* (1830). This publication went far beyond the focus upon ecclesiastical architecture that had dominated his earlier publications, to include the characteristic structures of urban life which he termed as "street scenery" (1830: vii). This included inns, guildhalls, almshouses, market crosses, gatehouses, town walls, and ordinary timber-framed dwellings (Britton 1830: vii). The 'rediscovery' of the English 'domestic' Gothic style was primarily motivated by expanding ideas of nation, national 'character' and nation hood in the early nineteenth century (Sweet 2019: 168). The building of a 'national' English style was a central aim of Britton's *Picturesque Antiquities*,

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[64] Although it is beyond the scope of this study, we should add that medieval Coventry was also directly compared with New Jerusalem before it was largely destroyed during a night-time bombing raid in November 1940. In John Harvey's 1947 *Gothic England: A Survey of National Culture 1300-1550*, he recalls how he once saw Coventry appearing like a crystal city, set up on a hill and shinning like a beacon of purity: "Once travelling in an express train between Nuneaton and Rugby, I glanced out to the west, and by some accident which had cleared the atmosphere, Coventry appeared like a crystal city in the brilliant sunshine, set upon its hill, and dominating, above its two attendant spires, soared the 300 feet of St. Michael. It has never been my fortune to see it thus again, but memory remains to prove that the possession of one masterpiece can make even Coventry glorious as the New Jerusalem" (1947: 30).

as he lamented how "our country men are too much in the habit of travelling to foreign kingdoms" before they "are familiar with the characteristics of their own nation" (1830: ix).

Coventry appears to have been seen as key destination to help forge a 'new' national identity, as Britton's *Picturesque Antiquities* includes three full-page engravings of its medieval buildings, and several lengthy discussions on its medieval decorative and visual arts heritage. In contrast, Britton devoted less than two pages to Durham's medieval antiquities, with only fleeting reference to the thirteenth century Bishop's Palace, which he merely describes as sitting on a "lofty rock" (1830: 61). The cities of Litchfield and Bath were similarly treated to little detailed discussion as Britton revealed that he had struggled "in vain" to find subjects which were suitable for his study (1830: viii)[65]. In his introduction to Coventry, Britton suggests that he prioritised Coventry above many other English cities because its medieval "timber houses" still illustrated man's "historical relations and distinctive characters" (1830: 57). Britton does not consider to directly attribute the 'distinctive character' of Coventry's medieval houses to the 'spirit' or skill of the city's medieval craftsman, as he had to "confine" himself to only a few buildings (1830: 57). However, he was clearly alluding to them as he opens his study by declaring that every "remaining antiquity" is a memento [...] of former persons" (Britton 1830: x). These persons might have been, he adds, "heroes, statesmen, patriots [or] philosophers" (Britton 1830: x).

In 1831, one reviewer in the *Quarterly Magazine* suggested that the 'national character' also attached itself to the English domestic Gothic style, because it had been "modified by the [...] local peculiarities of climate and soil" (1831: 471-2). Britton clearly perceived Coventry's medieval houses as being 'homegrown', as he "would not hesitate in calling" them "rough" and "rugged", which were key picturesque terms used by the Uvedale Price to describe the Gothic as nature (1830: vii). Britton takes his use of the Romantic picturesque even further by commenting on the richly carved gables of Ford's Hospital: "Ford's Hospital [...] is an interesting specimen. The *richly* carved gables, the elaborate tracery of the windows, and the small buttresses with crocketed pinnacles, are finely executed [author's emphasis]" (1830: 59). The term 'rich' appears

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[65] Chester, Exeter, and Carlisle were also entirely omitted as he was "mortified" and "disappointed" by some of the buildings (Britton 1830: viii).

to have been a particular favourite of Britton's for describing Coventry's medieval almshouses as he also noted that Bablake's Hospital had "enriched" gables (1830: 59). Britton does not consider explaining why he specifically chose the term 'richly' above the other picturesque terms, but it reinforces that Coventry's medieval timber-framed buildings were an organic manifestation of the 'local' environment and therefore suitable for the 'national' style.

There is little doubt that Britton's understanding of Coventry's medieval dwellings and almshouses was shaped by the language of the Romantic picturesque, as he maintained in the opening few pages of the *Picturesque Antiquities* that the works of Gilpin, Price, and Knight were of "essential and paramount import" (1830: vii-viii). The reader, Britton continues, should clearly "understand" and "recognise" the terms used by the picturesque theorist in order to grasp the key arguments running throughout his study (1830: vii). However, as we established earlier in this chapter, Britton was also influenced by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's perception of the Gothic as the tangible emanation of 'nature' and the 'spirit' of a place. Britton's vision of Coventry's medieval houses as being representative of a distant environment, people, and time, may, therefore, have been informed and influenced by the German Romantic movement.

Nonetheless, we should add that Britton's vision of a 'national' art and architecture was increasingly under threat in the early nineteenth century, as he noted that many medieval buildings faced "demolition" and "defacement" (1830: x). In Coventry, Britton recalled that many of its 'rough' and 'rugged' medieval houses had already been "swept away" or "smoothed down" by modern improvements (1830: 56). Britton purposefully avoided the quality of 'smoothness' as it was commonly associated with 'beautiful' classic architecture, which had been imported from "foreign kingdoms" (1830: -ix). Britton does not reveal which of Coventry's medieval dwellings had been 'smoothed' down, or swept away, as he was primarily interested in the city's surviving antiquities. Yet, it may be fair to suggest that they were situated along Much Park Street, as it had lost much of its medieval character and features by the mid-nineteenth century (see Chapter One). Britton's use of the Romantic picturesque to describe Coventry's medieval dwellings, therefore, appears to have been used to encourage his readers to protect the nation's character, cultural memory, and future identity.

Moving inwards to Coventry's medieval urban core, Britton labelled St Mary's Hall as being "pre-eminent" among the city's medieval architectural antiquities, since he argued that it was commenced as early as 1394 and completed in 1414 "on the site of an old hall" (1830: 57). Britton's interest in the construction date of St Mary's Hall is a useful reminder here that he still had, despite his emphasis on the picturesque antiquities, 'antiquarian' pursuits and was intrigued by the building's architectural development. Indeed, Britton approached St Mary's Hall in a particularly systematic, forensic manner, by first recording that it could be entered by an "arched-gateway from the street" which had "large ribs" and a "vaulted ceiling" (1830: 57). One architectural detail that Britton neglected to mention, however, is that the central boss in the arched gateway represented the Coronation of the Virgin. On the one hand, this omission may have been motivated by the fact that the boss was in an unstable condition, which would have made it difficult for Britton to accurately record its minute details (see Chapter One). Yet on the other hand, Britton may have deliberately neglected to mention this detail as Coventry was still largely anti-Catholic in the early nineteenth century, and he could not afford to lose any sales as he had already paid, as he declares in capital letters, "above FORTY THOUSAND POUNDS" in publishing fees[66] (1830: x).

There is no clear evidence to suggest that Britton was aware of Coventry's attitudes towards the Roman Catholic Church in the early nineteenth century. However, there is considerable primary source material to suggest that the City would have negatively reacted to a publication which drew attention to its Catholic past. In a letter of 1825 to the Freemen of Coventry, on the subject of their Member of Parliaments' attitudes towards the Roman Catholic Emancipation act, Thomas Worsley usefully underlines the depth of anti-Catholic sentiment by recalling how he saw them jubilantly ringing their parish bells upon hearing that the bill had been defeated in the House of Lords:

> passing through your city [...] from London, whither [sic] I had been for several weeks on public business, my attention was arrested by the sound of your parish bells, ringing merry peals: on enquiring the cause, I was told it was on account of the Catholic Relief Bill having been lost in the House of Lords (CA: PA506/243/9).

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[66] Britton's publishing fees were so high as there had been a financial crash in 1825-6 (Tate 2020).

Figure 2.4 J.C Smith, *Entrance Gateway of St Mary's Hall, Coventry*, ca. 1800-1810

Figure 2.5 D. Roberts, *The Pilgrims of the Rhine* [digitally enhanced by the author. However, the image may remain difficult to interpret as the original image has faded over time]*, 1834*

In one of the three illustrations of St Mary's Hall, which Britton published shows the gateway from Bayley Lane, being opened by a young boy (see Figure 2.4). It is a typically romantic picturesque composition as it shows the view from one space into another. The heads of the green man on the outer porch are clearly distinguishable and we can also see the outline of the Coronation of the Virgin on the central keystone. The gateway has clearly been elongated and widened on the engraving, but this arouses the viewers curiosity since it gives the impression that we are looking down a tunnel or Gothic 'portal', which leads into a distant time and place. Lavishly ornamented portals were a defining architectural feature in Gothic cathedrals as they were built to symbolize the Gates of Heaven (Jütte 2015: 40). In the process of walking through

the portals, the faithful were meant to understand that they were crossing the threshold between a profane external space and sacred interior space (Jütte 2015: 40). The Gothic portal appears to have been the object of renewed artistic interest in the early nineteenth century as the German art historian, Karl Schnaase (1798-1875), mentions the Gothic portals of Fribourg, Strasbourg, Amiens, and Chartres in his *Geschichte der bildenden Künste* [History of the Fine Arts] (1843). We can also see a large portal, leading to the Heavenly City, on the title-page of Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton's *Pilgrims* (see Figure 2.5).

Bulwer-Lytton's title-page invites the viewer to almost 'step' through the portal and bears some resemblance to the engraving of St Mary's gateway. This resemblance is significant as it suggests that while Britton may have been hesitant to explicitly describe the Catholic origins of St Mary's Hall, he felt confident to use visual images to encourage his readers to perceive medieval Coventry in a much more Romanticized, spiritual light. It is difficult to know if Britton's readers did in fact have a 'spiritual' response to the entrance-gate of St Mary's Hall as this was an intensely personal feeling. However, contemporary reviews of Britton's *Picturesque Antiquities* suggest that the engraving was well received and widely admired. In one early review, published by the *Gentleman's Magazine*, the engraving was portrayed as being one of the most important in the volume (1829: 543).

Figure 2.6 T.H Clerke after J.C Smith *The Hall of St Mary, Coventry*, ca. 1830

Figure 2.7 J.C Smith, *St Mary's Hall, Coventry* [digitally enhanced by the author as the Birmingham Library have no digitisation services], 1809

Passing through St Mary's gateway, Britton appears to encourage his readers to continue their romantic journey into the past, by drawing upon the terminology of the Picturesque to describe the hall's medieval visual heritage. The Coventry Tapestry, for instance, was described as 'visually' stimulating to the eye because it "is an *interesting* piece of Tapestry which contains two groups of figures representing Henry the Sixth and Margaret of Anjou [author's emphasis]" (1830: 58). There are no individual illustrations of the Coventry Tapestry since Britton suggested that he only wanted to provide more "general views" of the principal features and buildings of the English cities (1830: viii). However, he does include an illustration of St Mary's Hall which shows the tapestry below the North window (see Figure 2.6). Britton's illustration was based on an earlier pencil sketch by the artist Joseph Clarendon Smith (1778-1810), who had been

engaged by Thomas Sharp in 1809 to produce sketches of Coventry's medieval domestic and ecclesiastical heritage for the Aylesford Collection (see Figure 2.7).

One striking difference between Smith's pencil drawing, and the one included within the *Picturesque Antiquities,* is that Britton depicts the colours of the Coventry Tapestry in bold and bright colours. These colours are highly inaccurate, however, as the tapestry had become discoloured and faded due to intense light exposure by the early nineteenth century (see Chapter One). Britton may have intensified the colour of the Coventry Tapestry as the colourful Gothic past transported his imagination, his emotions, and his soul to the City of God. Friedrich von Schlegel had 'awakened' Britton's enthusiasm for the 'vibrancy' of the Gothic and he may have similarly wanted to stir his readers' feelings by heightening the colours of the tapestry.

Britton may have also wanted to restore the colour of the Coventry Tapestry because he lamented the whitewashing of Coventry's medieval visual arts heritage during the Reformation. This a reasonable argument as he openly laments the destructive impulses of the Reformation, in one brief but striking discussion on St Mary's Cathedral: "in the reign of Henry the Eighth [...] the cathedral [was] dissolved [and was] soon desecrated and ruinous. Only a portion of a tower of this church now remains to mark the site and character of this once proud cathedral" (Britton 1830: 57). It would not have been unusual for Britton to lament the whitewashing of the medieval past, as it was an issue for many Catholic sympathisers on the Continent during the mid-nineteenth century. For example, W.H James Weale (1832-1916) was an English art historian and Catholic convert who settled in Bruges's English colony in 1855 (Simpson 2021: 146)[67]. Weale has been described as being too argumentative to be fully accepted into the official life of Bruges, but he gained some recognition in 1861 when he addressed the Belgian Royal Commission on Public Restoration (Simpson 2021: 147). Weale's speech, reprinted in his Memoir *Restauration des monuments publics en Belgique* [Restoration of Public Monuments in

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[67] By 1870, there were approximately 1,200 British residents living in Bruges (Thorp 2017: 4). Bruges attracted thousands of foreign tourists in the nineteenth century because it was cheap, convenient, and Catholic (Thorp 2007: 4).

Belgium], denounced Belgium's modern architects for their "white washing" and "vandalism" which was carried out in the name of rescuing medieval architectural remains (1862: 6)[68].

2.4 Augustus Charles Pugin's Gothic Furniture

Turning now to A.C Pugin's reception of medieval Coventry, A.C Pugin and his pupils personally visited Coventry between November 1830 and August 1831, as there is a large volume in the RIBA's archives which comprises several pencil drawings in their hand from this period (RIBA: VOS/167). In one unfinished pencil sketch by Benjamin Ferrey (1810-1880), who was one of A.C Pugin's most successful students as he went on to become the Vice-President of the RIBA, we can see St Mary's Guild Chair from the rear (see Figure 2.8 and Appendix 2). Ferrey's sketch is typically 'antiquarian' as it shows the chair in great detail. In another unfinished sketch by Francis T. Dollman (1812-1899), we can similarly see the late medieval Guild Chair from the rear, surrounded by measurements detailing its width and height (see Figure 2.9 and Appendix 2).

The drawings remained unpublished as A.C Pugin died shortly after their trip in 1832. However, it is likely that Pugin encouraged his students to make a highly 'forensic' study of the hall's medieval Guild Chair, as he wanted to build a more accurate understanding of England's most important medieval decorative antiquities. In the early nineteenth century, there was clearly a need to build a more 'archaeological' understanding of the nation's medieval decorative antiquities as they had long been overlooked in antiquarian publications. In the pages of *Archaeologia*, the journal of the Society of Antiquaries, there had only been a handful of articles on ancient furniture from its initial publication in 1770 until the end of the eighteenth century (Westgarth 2020: 65). Publications such as the *Gentleman's Magazine* and the *London Magazine* were similarly parsimonious in their discussion and illustration of the ancient decorative style (Westgarth 2020: 65). This was, of course, due to the fact the domestic Gothic style was only beginning to emerge as nationally important.

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[68] The original quotation is as follows: "badigeonnées, plâtrées et dénaturées [whitewashed, plastered, and distorted]" (Weale 1862: v).

Figure 2.8 Benjamin Ferrey, *Oak Chair in St Mary's Hall, Coventry* [digitally enhanced by the author as the original image was produced using a faint pencil], 1830

Figure 2.9 F. T Dollman, *Back of Chair, St Mary's Hall, Coventry* [digitally enhanced by the author as the original image was produced using a faint pencil], 1830

Alongside his more antiquarian motives, A.C Pugin may have also been interested in creating a more accurate inventory of Coventry's medieval decorative heritage, in order to provide the future designer with enough inspiration to create the ideal romantic Gothic interior. A.C Pugin was clearly interested in creating the model Gothic interior as had been appointed several years earlier, in 1827, to design furnishings and fittings in the medieval style for George IV's private apartments at Windsor Castle (Lindfield 2016: 209). In the same year, he also published *Gothic Furniture* (1827: iv), which aimed to furnish the reader with the most 'magnificent' examples of the Gothic furniture for imitation, through twenty-seven coloured engravings and a descriptive letterpress. Many of the examples appear to have been taken from England as Pugin maintained that there was little need to borrow from "other countries" (1827: iv). Coventry's medieval

decorative heritage appears to have been of 'national' importance as his *Gothic Furniture* contains a lengthy paragraph on the Guild Chair in St Mary's Hall, which is worth quoting at length:

> Some of the remaining specimens of ancient chairs are remarkable for the beauty and of their design and richness of their ornaments. Such is that at St Mary's Hall, Coventry, which has so justly excited the attention of the curious and admiration of the decorator. This chair, which is of the style termed florid, is carved in oak, and has a high rising back, which is divided into three panels of tracery, surmounted by two richly-carved string courses. At each end of rises a sort of bracket, on which are placed the armorial bearings of the person for whom the chair was designed. The seat is supported by tracery; the elbows are formed by figures on a ridge of oak leaves, which has a very rich effect; and the whole is designed in a very harmonious and agreeable manner (Pugin 1827: 12).

A.C Pugin's passage suggests that the Guild Chair was important to the nation, as it could inspire a highly charged and deeply emotional response for the historic "person" that the chair was designed for (1827: 12). We cannot now be certain as to whom the chair was designed for due to the lack of primary source evidence, but the traditional interpretation is that the chair was originally divided into 'three', in order to seat the masters of the three major medieval guilds in Coventry (Tittler 1992: 172)[69]. Augustus himself appears to have seen the local pride, power, and prestige of Coventry's medieval guilds in the Guild Chair as he mentioned its "three panels of tracery" (1827: 12). A.C Pugin's excitement for the Guild Chair is also an important reminder here that he had absorbed the theories of the Picturesque when he worked for John Nash (1752-1835), when he was closely associated with Uvedale Price (Hill 1996: 36). Price's interest in the 'natural' Gothic ruin appears to have informed Pugin's description of the Guild Chair, as he clearly described it in 'organic' terms by noting that it had "oak leaves" and a flowery, "florid" appearance (1827: 12). This language suggests that Pugin wanted his readers to imitate the style

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[69] Mayoral seating was very much a seat of honour in this period, which was associated with dignity, with formal occasions, and of course with power (Tittler 1992: 210).

of the Guild Chair because he perceived it to be an almost 'natural' living organism, which was representative of the local environment.

Moreover, Pugin's use of the terms 'richly' and 'rich' resonates with Britton's deployment of the term 'rich' to describe Coventry's medieval almshouses. This is significant as it not only hints at a wider re-evaluation of the 'barbaric' medieval past, but also suggests that there was an emerging network of antiquaries, who were actively using the picturesque lexicon to 'awaken' the nation's interest in Coventry's medieval heritage. A.C Pugin certainly knew Britton as they had collaborated together for over ten years on a range of projects, including the *Specimens of the Antiquities of Normandy* (1828) and the *Illustrations on the public Buildings of London* (1825-8).

The connections between the two antiquaries are further strengthened by the fact that Augustus, like Britton, was most likely sympathetic to the Catholic faith as he appears to have allowed Benjamin Ferrey to depict the figure of the Virgin and Child on the left-hand spandrel of the Guild Chair (see Figure 2.10). A.C Pugin's Catholic sympathies have received some attention in recent years[70] but were most importantly hinted at in Ferrey's 1861 biography, *Recollections of A.W.N Pugin, and his father, Augustus Pugin*, which notes that the elder "only occasionally attended the services of the English Church" (1861: 48). Nonetheless, A.C Pugin appears to have been reluctant to write about Coventry's Catholic past, since his description of the Guild Chair neglects to mention that the 'figure' on the left hand represented the Virgin and Child (1827: 12). There is no evidence to suggest that A.C Pugin was at risk of being accused of harbouring Catholic sympathies. But it is important to remember here that the image of the Virgin Mary had long been a point of conflict in Coventry since the sixteenth century (see Introduction), which A.C Pugin may have been aware of since he spent some time in the city.

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[70] See: Macdonell, C. (2016) 'The American Pugins: Ralph Adams Cram and Bertram Goodhue '. in Gothic Revival Worldwide: A.W.N. Pugin's Global Influence. ed. by de Maeyer, J., Bressani, M., and Brittain-Catlin, T. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 94-106

Figure 2.10 Benjamin Ferrey, *Oak Chair in St Mary's Hall,* Coventry [digitally enhanced by the author as the original image was produced using a faint pencil], 1830

Figure 2.11 Henry Shaw, *Chair from St Mary's Hall, Coventr*y [digitally enhanced by the author as the paper has faded over time], 1836

Another key point to consider is that the creation of the Gothic interior was becoming increasingly popular in the 1820s, as the dismantling of the Gothic cathedrals and religious houses during the French Revolution and Napoleonic wars, provided a rich source of material for curiosity dealers (Westgarth 2020: 82). Many Gothic churches across Rouen, Caen and Normandy were stripped of their medieval interiors and sold to raise cash (Tracy 2001: 39). At St Étienne in Dijon, for example, its early sixteenth-century choir stalls were taken out by the Jacobins and sold at auction (Tracy 2001: 40). Few Belgian churches escaped the attention of the sans-culottes either, notably the collegiate church of St Gudule in Brussels, which was completed in 1519 (Tracy 2001: 40).

In Benjamin Ferry's *Recollections*, Ferrey suggested that A.C Pugin had watched the plunder of the medieval churches and religious houses as he fled revolutionary France (1860: 20-21). Pugin, we are told, fiercely contested the practice of "sacrilegious pilfering" and admonished his students to respect the remains of the medieval past (1861: 20-21). Pugin's strong reaction to the loss of the decorative remains of the French Gothic cathedrals is noteworthy, as it may also explain why he appears to have had a heightened and deeper emotional response to the medieval Guild Chair in St Mary's Hall. However, Pugin's 'emotional' response may have been entirely appropriate as only a few years later Coventry's antiquaries revealed that St Mary's Hall was stripped of some its medieval treasures. In W.G Fretton's 1880 *Antiquarian Losses in Coventry During a Century and a Half*, he recalls that a large "quantity of miscellaneous property" from the hall, which was better "suited to a city museum" as it included various pieces of china and paraphernalia, was "disposed of" by public auction on the 1st of January l836 (1880: 326). The old Corporation, Fretton argued, were also "careless guardians" of their medieval documents which found their way from the Muniment Room way into private hands (1880: 326).

Interestingly, in the same year as the public auction, the antiquaries Samuel Meyrick (1783-1843) and Henry Shaw (1800-1873) included an illustration of the Guild Chair within their 1836 *Specimens of Ancient Furniture* (see Figure 2.11). *Specimens* was not published in reaction to the auction, but instead to aimed to provide interior designers with ancient "existing authorities" to copy for the "English interior" (1836: 26). St Mary's Guild Chair was chosen as a key, English 'authority' as they considered it be a "magnificent architectural chair [which] may be assigned to the [...] reign of Henry the Sixth" (1836: 30). *Specimens* was well received by its readers as it was republished as late as 1866, which suggests that the antiquaries played a pivotal role in developing the taste for Coventry's medieval decorative heritage.

As well as St Mary's Guild Chair, A.C Pugin and his pupils also visited Coventry's medieval timber-framed dwellings during their visit between November 1830 and early August 1831, since his album comprises detailed cross-sections and architectural details of the medieval houses along Bayley Lane and Grey Friar's Lane (RIBA: VOS/167). There are also several measured drawings, elevations, and ground plans of the timber-framed dwellings in Hill Street and Well's Street (RIBA: VOS/167). Many of these drawings appear to have been sketched in

situ, and suggest that Pugin wanted to create a highly comprehensive visual record of Coventry's medieval houses, in order to help the architect of the future build in the English medieval domestic style. The construction of a 'new' England which was based on examples of the Gothic past was important to A.C Pugin, as around this time he was also preparing the second volume of his *Examples of Gothic Architecture* (1836). The second volume of *Examples* was ultimately published several years after A.C Pugin's death by his son, A.W.N Pugin, in 1836. However, it has been suggested by Wedgwood (1977: 35), that he had at one time intended to devote part of this volume to Coventry's medieval timber-framed dwellings. This could have completely transformed how Coventry was perceived in the nineteenth century, since nearly every eminent architect of the day had subscribed to the first volume of *Examples*, including Robert Smirke and Decimus Burton (1831: iv-viii).

One reason why Bayley Lane may have been important to A.C. Pugin's vision of a 'national' architectural style was because it preserved much of its rich and elaborate medieval character in the early nineteenth century (see Chapter One). Auguste and his students clearly saw the 'richness' of Bayley Lane's medieval past during their visit, as in one illustration we can see a timber-framed dwelling on the corner of Bayley Lane, with a carved bracket post and elaborate spandrels (see Figure 2.12). At the top of the drawing, we can see a shaky hand-written note which declares that "this window did belong to St Mary's Hall – it was removed about 7 years" (see Figure 2.12 and Appendix 2). This note was most likely written by A.C Pugin as he was coming to the end of his life and had been suffering from a long illness for some time (Trappes Lomax 1932: 37). It is a particularly important detail which is worth focusing on here as it implies that Coventry's medieval houses were so important to A.C Pugin, and indeed, the nation, that he was willing to battle through his failing health to provide a more accurate record of their architectural development.

Figure 2.12 F. T Dollman, *Gothic House at the End of Bayley Lane* [digitally enhanced by the author clarity. However, the text remains difficult to read due to the faintness of the image], 1830

2.5 Edward James Willson's Series of Ornamental Timber Gables

Although A.C Pugin died before he could devote the second volume of his *Examples* to domestic

timber-framed buildings, we can gain a greater understanding of how he perceived Coventry's

medieval houses, by analysing Edward Willson's and Benjamin Ferrey's 1831 *Series of*

Ornamental Timber Gables, which was published under the name of the elder Pugin and his

drawing school in Great Russell Street. In Willson's descriptive letterpress to *Gables*, he

maintained that the publication aimed to supply the architectural student with "carefully measured" examples of the ornamental gables, found on the medieval edifices "constructed from timber and plaster", as he argued that "so little attention" had been paid to them (1831b: 5-6).

Willson does not explain why there had been previously little taste for the domestic Gothic style. Yet, he goes on to note in one short but revealing passage that a "greater part" of the gables were taken from Coventry because the city still abounded in many "curious examples of ancient timber work" (1831b: 6). Willson's use of the term 'curious', while suggesting that the features of the gables were of interest because they were complex and not immediately discernible, reinforces how Coventry's medieval timber-framed buildings had become increasingly bound up with 'newer' nineteenth-century national narratives. Willson appears to link Coventry's medieval almshouses with the idea of a kinder, and more generous, English 'nation' as he provides a lengthy discussion on their history as homes for poor men and women (1831b: 6). Ford's Hospital, for example, was described as an almshouse for the "support of five poor men and one woman [which] was afterwards so much improved by charitable persons that the number of inmates has been increased to twenty-one" (Willson 1831: 6). He also noted the Bablake's Hospital was founded in the early sixteenth century for "ten poor men and one women" (Willson 1831b: 6).

Willson's concern for the welfare of the poor, and their accommodation, is intriguing as it draws comparisons with Christian Socialism. Christian Socialism emerged in the mid-nineteenth century in response to the unprecedent, visible, urban poverty which had been triggered by the rise of industrial capitalism (Turner 2021: 18). It sought to address and improve the plight of the poor by calling for mutual charity and a return to Christendom (Turner 2021: 8). Many Christian Socialists often looked to the Middle Ages for a society organised around common good rather than private wealth (Turner 2021: 18). The Christian Socialist barrister John Malcom Ludlow (1821-1911), for example, looked back to the medieval past as a time of collectivism rather than "competition" (1851: 33). Willson may well have had socialist leanings as the Roman Catholic Church, to which he belonged, expressed an interest in socialism and urban poverty since it was essentially a church of poor immigrants (Williams 2022: 34). Cardinal Manning, the Archbishop of Westminster from 1865 to 1892, was a leading promoter of Christian Socialism as he

sponsored Catholic education for the poor and established several orphanages for Catholic children (Williams 2022: 34). Christian Socialism also had followers in France, Germany, and the United States (Chadwick 2003: 310). French socialist Catholics included dozens of priests, for instance, who attended a six-hundred-person dinner in Paris in 1849 (Chadwick 2003: 310).

As well as being representative of a more 'generous' English nation, Willson appears to present Bond's Hospital as the 'organic' product of the local environment, as he repeatedly described it using the 'natural' terms "enriched" and "richly" (1831b: 7-13). This reinforces how there was a network of antiquaries who used the picturesque lexicon to create an 'unified', and almost utopian, image of medieval Coventry in the nineteenth century. We can gain some impression of the 'enriched' state of the gables from Benjamin Ferrey's finished lithographic print (see Figure 2.13). This print appears to have been based on the preliminary drawings made by another pupil of A.C Pugin, Joseph Nash (1809-1878), who 'anatomised' the bargeboard during his visit in August 1831 to Coventry (see Figure 2.14 and Appendix 2).

Figure 2.13 Benjamin Ferrey after Joseph Nash *Wooden Gable, From Bond's Hospital, Coventry* [digitally enhanced by the author for clarity], 1831

Figure 2.14 Joseph Nash, *Wooden Gable, Bond's Hospital, Coventry* [digitally enhanced by the author. However, the text remains difficult to read due to the faintness of the pencil], 1830

Willson's interest in the gables past history, present condition, and future importance is striking as it creates the impression that he had a deep yearning to return to the Middle Ages. This was not unusual as the economic, political, and social upheavals of the early nineteenth century encouraged a more a romanticised view of the Middle Ages (Honour 1979: 19). The growing division between the rich and the poor proletariat in the nineteenth century (Chandler 1980: 5), for example, may explain why the English antiquaries often focused on the 'enriched' features of Coventry's medieval Gothic heritage. Willson also clearly linked Coventry's medieval gables to England's past, present, and future because he was Catholic. Willson's Catholicism appears to have been mostly suppressed throughout *Gables*, but there is an underlying tension to his work, as he sharply notes in one section that Ford's Hospital had "fortunately escaped the *rapacious* hands that seized on such an immense mass of patrimony [author's emphasis]" during the Reformation (1831b: 10).

2.6 Conclusion

To conclude, this chapter has sought to address the longstanding mistreatment of the antiquaries' and antiquarianism in historiography, by providing a firmer definition of the 'Romantic antiquarian' and how they responded to the medieval Gothic past in the early nineteenth century. One key point that has emerged from this discussion is that there was a network of Romantic antiquaries, who perceived Coventry to be the ideal place to help 'forge' a new English national 'style' and identity between the late 1820s and early 1830s. Coventry's medieval churches were clearly important to Britton's vision of a better, and more appealing, 'future nation' as he likened them to the trees of God and Heavenly Jerusalem. This image of heavenly Coventry appears to have been directly inspired by Goethe and the German Romantic movement and was widely disseminated in antiquarian circles.

Nevertheless, we have also discovered that A.C Pugin and Willson prized Coventry's medieval timber-framed houses even above the city's medieval churches. This is demonstrated by the fact they consistently used a variety of picturesque terms, including rich and irregular, in order to portray them as the 'natural' product of the local and national environment (see Appendix 1 for a full inventory of Picturesque Descriptors). In addition to this language, the two antiquaries clearly aimed to create an accurate and comprehensive visual record of Coventry's medieval dwellings. This record would not only serve to preserve the skill of the city's medieval craftsman but would also inform the architects of the future.

Finally, we have also explored the connection between Romantic antiquarianism and Catholicism in greater depth. Britton, A.C Pugin, and Willson were all clearly reluctant to openly write of the links between Coventry's medieval heritage and its Catholic past as they were afraid of religious controversy. Yet, at the same time, they hint at a revival of interest in the Catholic past by recording or publishing images of Coventry's medieval heritage which featured the figure of the Virgin Mary. In the following chapter, we will take the idea of the Catholic 'awakening' even further, by investigating how A.W.N Pugin responded and reinvented Coventry's 'nationally' important medieval heritage.

Chapter Three: A.W.N Pugin and Coventry's Medieval Heritage

3.1 Introduction

In the second chapter of this thesis, we explored how the Romantic antiquaries associated Coventry's medieval heritage with ideas of nationhood and local 'belonging' because they were Catholic sympathisers. Their Catholicism was predominately suppressed and hidden from public audiences, however, as they were afraid of religious controversy and doctrinal disputes. In this chapter, a key concern is to shed new light on how A.W.N Pugin brought Coventry's 'unseen' and 'lost' Catholic past into new visibility in the late 1830s and early 1840s, by drawing upon a range of drawings in the V&A Museum and RIBA's Archives which have long warranted greater scholarly attention.

In recent years, there has been an emerging scholarly interest in Pugin's connections to the English Midlands. O'Donnell's *The Pugins and the Catholic Midlands* (2002), as we established in the Introduction, is of particular importance as he revealed that the English Midlands was a major centre for the revival and 'reawakening' for medieval art and architecture. Not only did Pugin meet some of his wealthiest patrons and closest friends in the Catholic Midlands, as O' Donnell points out, but it was also where he exercised a crucial influence on the restoration of Catholicism (2002).

In the first half of this chapter, we similarly begin by providing deeper knowledge on A.W.N Pugin's activities in the English Midlands in the 1830s. It explores why and how he designed St Mary's Church in Derby and St Chad's in Birmingham in the Germanic Gothic style by following his extensive tours across Germany to - Nuremberg, Cologne, and Belgium. However, the aim of this chapter is to develop a new understanding of Pugin's interest in the English Midlands between the 1830s and 1840s, by uncovering when and why Pugin was motivated to undertake his own 'tour' of Coventry. In particular, it will consider how Pugin visited Coventry during a pivotal movement in his career when he was developing his taste for medieval timber-framed dwellings.

Following Pugin's 'taste-making route', this chapter brings greater visibility to A.W.N Pugin's rarely-examined illustrations for Daniel Rock's *The Church of our Fathers* (1849-1853). It analyses Dugdale's *Antiquities of Warwickshire* (1656) and Wenceslaus Hollar's *Prospects of Coventry* (1656) to argue that Pugin's illustration of the procession of the Blessed Sacrament through a medieval town was based around Coventry's medieval architecture and Corpus Christi celebrations. It also examines why Pugin may have felt a sense of urgency to draw attention to Coventry's medieval Catholic ceremonies.

The final section of this chapter sheds new light on how Pugin's treatment of Holy Trinity's Doom painting was influenced and informed by the German Nazarene Brotherhood. It illuminates the ways in which there was a new-found appeal for the Doom painting, as well as Coventry's so-called 'primitive' and 'pious' medieval guilds in the early nineteenth century, by drawing upon a number of contemporary accounts and depictions of the painting. A key concern is to bring greater visibility to James Cherry's engraving of c.1831-1837, which has long remained unpublished and overlooked, as there has been little scholarly interest in the artistic reception of the Doom painting in the nineteenth century (see Literature Review).

3.2 A.W. N Pugin in the English Midlands and the 'Awakening' of the Catholic faith

In 1829, the Catholic Emancipation Act was passed by the British Parliament. This was a landmark bill which removed almost all of the remaining civic and political disabilities under which the Roman Catholics had lived in England for centuries (Belcher 2001: 172). Catholics could now worship openly, sit in parliament, hold public office, and vote[71] (Evans 2014: 123). The relief act brought renewed confidence to the English Catholic community and instigated a significant church-building programme, with several large churches and cathedrals built in quick succession across the country (Douglass 2013: 6). At the centre of this new church-building programme was A.W.N Pugin, who had converted to the Roman Catholic faith in 1835 after he had researched the systems and rites of the Church of England (Pugin 1837: 21). Pugin initially studied the Church of England, its systems, ordinances, and creeds in the old cathedral libraries as he wanted to become a stricter "Church of England man" (1837: 21). He soon began to

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[71] If they could afford to pay ten pounds.

realise, however, that the "Established Church of this country" would "die a natural death" as he maintained that it was based on the 'villainous' political motives of Archbishop Cranmer (1489-1556) and William Laud (1573-1645) (Pugin 1837: 21).

Figure 3.1 St Mary's Church, Derby, photograph by author, 2024

Pugin's first major parish church was St Mary's in Derby (see Figure 3.1). In March 1838, Pugin recorded in his diary that he had "working drawings" for the church and it was consecrated soon after in June 1838 ([1838] 2001: 80). John Talbot (1791-1852), the sixteenth Earl of Shrewsbury and Waterford, secured him the commission as he belonged to one of the oldest and wealthiest Roman Catholic families in Britain (Trappes Lomax 1932: 103). Shrewsbury's forefathers had kept the ancient faith alive during the long years of persecution by financially supporting various Catholic missions across the country, including at Cheadle, Uttoxeter, and more distantly in Oxford and Cheshire (O'Donnell 2002: 12). Shrewsbury first came into contact with A.W.N Pugin through his domestic chaplain, Dr Daniel Rock (1799-1786). Rock was a noted antiquarian and ecclesiologist, who was keen to revive medieval English Catholic liturgical practices. Rock's first major study, *Hierurgia or the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass with Notes and Dissertations* (1833), was a two-volume commentary on medieval church ceremonies. Written primarily for the benefit of a Protestant audience, it dealt closely with the use of ancient sacred vessels and the history of liturgical vestments (Rock 1833). Rock's zeal for ancient vessels led him to Pugin's 1836 *Designs for Gold and Silversmiths*, which contained detailed etchings of pyxes, chalices and candelabras in the fifteenth and sixteenth century styles.

In Ferrey's *Recollections*, he inserted a letter of 1836 from Rock to Pugin, which reveals that he had asked the young Catholic convert where he found the original models for his "beautiful" designs and encouraged him to send his reply letter to Lord Shrewsbury (1861: 124). Pugin's *Designs for Gold and Silversmiths* stood out to Rock as few among the English public would have had much knowledge about such vessels and how to make them (Wedgwood 1977: 52). Lord Shrewsbury, according to Rock, would similarly benefit from Pugin's study because he was an admirer of that "correct and refined taste" for the Catholic faith (Ferrey 1861: 124). Rock was certainly right to suggest that Shrewsbury would admire Pugin's designs as in a letter of 1837 to Ambrose Phillipps de Lisle (1809-1878), the founder of the first post-Reformation Cistercian Monastery and future patron to Pugin, Shrewsbury stated that he looked upon the young architect as the "greatest acquisition for our body for an immense time past" (Shrewsbury [1837] 2002: 35). Shrewsbury principally admired Pugin for his enthusiasm and his strength of his conviction, which he had not encountered among the young Catholic architects he had previously employed (O'Donnell 2002: 15).

In Thomas Mozley's 1840 review of the *New Churches*, which was copied from an article published in the *Orthodox Journal* in 1839, the tower of St Mary's Church was described as rising to "100 feet high to the top of the embattled parapet" and "117 to the top of the pinnacles" (1840: 514). The scale and height of the Gothic churches was important to Pugin, as he had told his students[72] during his *Lectures on Ecclesiastical Architecture*, that a good Gothic church should be at a "distance [...] one great imposing mass" to "astonish [...] the beholder, before a single feature or detail indistinctly visible" (1838: 196). At Derby, St Mary's Church appears to have struck Mozley, since he conceded that the church was "painfully beautiful" besides the three Anglican Churches which stood nearby (1840: 513). However, Mozley also went on to criticise the church by noting that "the want of a spire at present leaves the tower in a most disadvantageous contrast with the tower of All Saints" (1840: 520). Pugin had originally intended St Mary's Church to have a spire as he had depicted it in a series of engravings that he had sent to Mozley and the *British Critic* for publication, but it was ultimately never constructed due to a lack of funds ([1840] 2001: 154). Had it been built, it may have helped redeem St Mary's "uncanonical" positioning on the edge of town, as Pugin described it, which he deeply regretted as it was 'impractical' for Derby's "fast and increasing" congregation to access ([1840] 2001: 80 154).

In addition to St Mary's location, Mozley also revealed that Pugin had designed the church in a mixture of different architectural styles and periods. On the one hand, the exterior was noted to be of the "earlier decorated" Gothic style which had "prevailed about the commencement of the reign of Henry the Sixth" (Mozley 1840: 516). Yet, on the other hand, Mozley highlighted how the "mouldings of the arches" in the interior nave were "more foreign than English" (1840: 516). Pugin combined the styles of different countries and periods as he was still, in the early stages of his career, developing his taste for Gothic art and architecture (Hill 2006: 180).

In 1834, Pugin undertook one such 'taste-making' tour across the Rhine- and German lands, which he records and describes in his surviving letters. One surviving letter records his unfolding

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[72] In 1837, Pugin was made Professor of Ecclesiastical Antiquities at Oscott College.

taste for the "glorious [...] spires of Strasbourg" and the "Great tower of Malines"[73] ([1834] 2001: 38). It also reveals that Pugin visited a church in Nuremberg[74], which not only had a tabernacle "containing hundreds" of "perfect" images, but also "such stained glass as you cannot form an idea of" as it was "infinitely superior to anything in our country" ([1834] 2001: 38). Pugin does not elaborate on the 'superior' qualities of the glass as he appears to have become overwhelmed by the "grandeur" and "magnificence" of his surroundings ([1834] 2001: 38). However, Pugin doubtless admired it for its rich colours and imaginative effects, as he later wrote that "the windows of a Gothic edifice may be rendered a glowing picture of almost imperishable materials" ([1835] 2001: 54). He goes on to develop this idea, asserting: "To those who have witnessed the glowing hues of stained-glass windows when illuminated by the setting sun, any panegyric on this most fascinating style of painting would be superfluous" (Pugin [1835] 2001: 54). Pugin may have had a heightened response to the glowing hues of the medieval stained-glass windows as the intervening centuries had made glass much lighter and much thinner (Hill 2009: 344). In the seventeenth century, colourful medieval windows were often removed and replaced with white glass, as they were perceived by the Puritan iconoclasts to be dangerous distractions (White 2003: 125).

As we follow Pugin's extensive journeys, we also get the distinct impression that he was undertaking a 'pilgrimage' to all the most important Catholic sites across the Continent. Pugin's rediscovery of the medieval pilgrimage was important to his vision of the Gothic past, as his earliest surviving letters reveal that he encouraged his friends to undertake similar pilgrimages to the most significant medieval cathedral cities in England. Writing to William Osmond (1791-1875)[75] in 1832, Pugin appears to have encouraged him to undertake pilgrimage to Wells Cathedral in order to learn more about the Gothic style before he fixed any more modern stone 'blisters', as he called them, to the ancient fabric of Salisbury Cathedral: "pray come down and don't be ruled by your wife for without you make a pilgrimage to this shine you will never obtain

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[73] Pugin does not describe the tower in any further detail. However, Belcher (2001: 40) suggests that he was referring to the tower of St Rombout's Cathedral in Melchelen (Belgium), which was built to a height of ninety-seven metres in the early sixteenth century.

[74] Pugin's letter does not reveal the name of the church. Nonetheless, he was doubtless referring to St Lawrence's Church in Nuremberg, as he often discussed and described the building in great detail. His article on the *West Front of St Lawrence's Church*, for example, suggestively echoes his letter by referring to the church as a "perfect specimen of the fifteenth century" (1838b: 321).

[75] Osmond was a stone mason of Salisbury Cathedral.

absolution for the number of (*blisters*) you have been the instrument of fixing and polluting against ancient art [Pugin's emphasis]" ([1832] 2001: 13).

By 1839, Pugin was working on St Chad's Cathedral for Birmingham (see Figure 3.2). Birmingham was a powerful industrial town in the early nineteenth century as nails, brass articles, and various other metal products were produced by highly skilled craftsmen across the region in purpose-built factories (Heward 2003: 134). Birmingham's reputation for small-scale engineering was so great, that industrial spies from less technologically developed countries were sent to glean all they could from the town's innovative factories (Gissen 2012: 47). One such industrial spy was Karl Fredrich Schinkel (1781-1841), a distinguished Prussian architect, artist, and town planner, who toured the town on behalf of his government in 1826 (Bindman and Riemann 1993: 2). In Schinkel's private journal he wrote of Birmingham's "monstrous shapeless buildings", the frightening sight of "twelve thousand [factory] workers rotting together", and the town's "smoking obelisks" ([1826] 1993: 126)[76]. Pugin appears to have agreed with Schinkel as he wrote in a letter of 1834 to William Osmond, that he had to pass through "that most detestable of all detestable places - Birmingham, Where Greek buildings & smoking chimneys - radicals and dissenters are all blended together" ([1834] 1982: 23). However, it is unlikely that Schinkel personally met Pugin as he was on a discreet spying trip.

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[76] Schinkel also hated Birmingham's "horrific surroundings", "unremarkable redbrick houses" and "smoking ironworks" ([1826] 1993: 124).

Figure 3.2 St Chad's Cathedral, Birmingham, photo by author, 2024

Pugin's dislike for the modern factory town was also made clear in his architectural publications. In *Contrasts*, for example, Pugin compares a "Catholic Town in 1440" with the "Same Town in 1840" (1836a). The Catholic town is shown as a clean and largely unblemished place, while its modern equivalent is dominated with belching chimneys and a large panopticon-style prison (1836a). Pugin portrayed the new industrial cities as bleak and unappealing places as he perceived them to be indicative of society's moral, social, and religious "decay" (1836a: 6). This

'decay' is repeatedly discussed and emphasized in *Contrasts*, although he also used the term in his *True Principles* in order to explore the "early decay" of true Christian architecture (1841a: 8).

Despite Pugin's fierce critique of the new industrial cities, however, Birmingham's industrialisation made him more determined to transform the town into a holy sanctuary: "Never shall I rest satisfied till I see a cross raised above every chimney in Birmingham and hear the sound of St Chad's bells drowning the steam whistle and the proving of gun barrel" ([1837] 1987: 175). Lord Shrewsbury contributed around £1400 to the Cathedral's building fund, but this was very little compared to the financial gifts of Bishop Walsh (1776-1849), who was Vicar Apostolic of the Midland District from 1826 to 1840 (Foster and De 2005: 48). Having been deeply impressed by Pugin's work at Oscott College, Walsh contributed nearly £14,000 of the total cost of just under £20,000 (Foster and De 2005: 48). A large church was felt to be necessary, seeing as the powerful industrial town was home to a rapidly growing Roman Catholic population (Paz 1992: 95).

Dr Nicholas Wiseman (1802-1865), who had been appointed Rector of the English College in Rome in 1826, effectively confirmed that Birmingham was an emerging centre for the English Catholic Revival by visiting the town in 1835 (Ward 1897: 215). The purpose of his visit was to meet with the town's Roman Catholic hierarchy: "my first station will be in the neighbourhood of Birmingham, and other Midland Cyclopean towns, where I have several short calls to make" (Ward 1897: 215). Here, the word 'cyclopean' particularly stands out as it evokes Schinkel's description of the monstrous buildings which he encountered on his tour across Birmingham. This 'monstrous' lexicon appears not to be elaborated upon or developed, yet it is worth briefly focusing on as it stands in marked contrast to how Pugin perceived Coventry's medieval heritage, as we shall discover in the second part of this chapter.

Like St Mary's, Pugin based St Chad's on a foreign style of pointed architecture because he considered it to be "both cheap and effective and [...] totally different from any *protestant* errection [sic]" ([1837] 2001: 77-78). St Chad's was certainly different from any Protestant church as its western towers have been compared to those seen on St Elizabeth's Church, Marburg (Harries 1973: 33). Its commodious interior also gives the impression of being in a

great 'hallenkirchen', such as Munich Cathedral, and it is filled with imported antiquities (Harries 1973: 33). The most notable antiquities include a fifteenth-century latten lectern from Leuven, as well as a set of fifteenth-century choir stalls which likely came from St Maria's Church in Cologne (O'Donnell 2002: 59). Pugin was dependent upon a network of dealers to help him purchase and transport these items (Westgarth 2009: 3). The main dealers that he worked with included Francois Deschryver (d.1846), John Webb (1799-1880) and Edward Hull (1826-1860) (Westgarth 2009: 4). Hull was particularly useful in giving Pugin access to carved woodwork, sometimes in large quantities, for his commissions. In Pugin's sketchbook of 1840-41, he recorded the huge debt of £413 18s owed to Hull (Tracy 2001: 60). However, Ferry's *Recollections* also reveals that Pugin brought many carvings and antiquities back himself by organising his own transport:

> [Pugin] successfully commanded a smack [ship], afterwards a schooner [sailing
> vessel], in which amongst other merchandise he generally managed to bring
> over many interesting carvings, and other antiquities purchased in the old stores
> of Holland and Flanders. Thus, he used these excursions as subservient to the
> object of forming a museum (1860: 62).

Pugin also deliberately chose to make his first cathedral look so foreign because he had been influenced by the writings of Count Charles de Montalembert (1810-1870), a wealthy Catholic aristocrat and renowned Germanophile. In Montalembert's 1837 *De l'Etat Actuel de I'Art Religieux en France* [The Present State of Religious Art in France], he urged his readers to look to Germany, where the spirit of the Middle Ages was stronger than it was in France (1837: 4). Pugin was clearly influenced by Montalembert as he included a lengthy quote from *De l'Etat Actuel* in the second edition of *Contrasts* (1841b). The quote, translated into English, contests that "modern Catholics" had raised "their churches" and "their paintings" on the "detestable models of pagan error" (1841b: 8). In the appendix of *Contrasts*, Pugin also reproduced Montalembert's 1838 *Account of the Destructive and Revived Pagan Principle in France*, which draws attention to the "paganizing" of Catholic architecture on the Continent (1841b).

3.3 Pugin's 'Pilgrimage' to Medieval Coventry

In Pugin's diary, he recorded that he first "left for Coventry" on the 9th of March 1837 and stayed there for three days (NAL: MSL/1969/5156-5170). In Wedgwood's *Catalogue on A.W.N Pugin and the Pugin Family*, it should be acknowledged here that she has recorded this entry as "left for country" (1985: 44). However, it is possible that she may have misread this entry as Pugin's handwriting is notoriously hard to read. Typical terms used to describe Pugin's writing include erratic, wobbly, idiosyncratic, clumsy, and quirky (Belcher 2001: xvi). Pugin's writing may have suffered because he was raised as bilingual, but it is highly likely that he was in Coventry in March 1837 as around this time he was also working on a range of projects across the English Midlands.

We cannot now be certain why Pugin specifically 'left for Coventry' as his diary is cryptically brief. Nevertheless, he may have purposefully visited the city to view its medieval timber-framed dwellings, as at this point in his career he was looking into timber-framed construction. Just a year earlier, he published his *Details of Ancient Timber Houses of the 15th and 16th Centuries* (1836). In the prospectus for Pugin's *Timber Houses*, which was printed in J.C. Loudon's *Architectural Magazine*, he underlines his passion for these "curious buildings" and promises to reveal how the "designers of those times invariably suited the style of their compositions to the materials in which they were executed" (1837: 145). Its plates were devoted to the medieval timber-framed houses he had encountered on his tours around the medieval cities of Abbeville, Strasbourg, Rouen, Beauvais, and Caen in Northern France. However, it could be argued that his visit to Coventry was part of his 'route' or 'artistic' pilgrimage.

Pugin may well have included Coventry on his taste-making route as he had a close friendship with Edward James Willson, who had presented Coventry's medieval timber-framed houses as being the 'past' and future of Catholic England (see Chapter Two). In Pugin's surviving letters, we get the distinct impression that he was often eager to discuss his travels and architectural interests with Willson. In a letter of 1834 to Willson, for example, Pugin wrote that he would visit him in "ten days" and bring "a variety of interesting documents from abroad and some drawings that I think will afford you pleasure" ([1834] 2001: 40). But more importantly, perhaps,

they appear to have bonded over their devotion to the Catholic faith. In a letter of 1836 to Willson, on the subject of *Contrasts* and its significance, Pugin argued that the publication would be popular amongst all his "Catholic acquittance [...] for it shows truly [...] the noble influence of Catholic sentiments" ([1836] 2001: 61). There are no surviving letters between Pugin and Willson, as far as the author is aware, which explicitly discuss Coventry's medieval timber-framed dwellings. However, they doubtless discussed them given that they touched upon almost every other subject.

Pugin's 'pilgrimage' to Coventry would, of course, have been highly appropriate as the City had long been a major site of pilgrimage due to the Priory and the Lady our Tower Shrine located near the Carmelite Friary (see Chapter One). In John Foxe's 1563 *Acts and Monuments of Martyrs*, he revealed that the Lady of our Tower had been grouped with other nationally famous pilgrimage destinations, such as the Holy Blood of Hailes and the Virgin at Doncaster and Walsingham, by the defendants who refused to make an offering to the shrine ([1563] 1837: 133). Pugin may not have personally visited the Lady of our Tower as its remains were uncovered after he had visited the City (see Chapter One). However, he may have known that Coventry had become an important site of pilgrimage and been moved to undertake his own devotional journey to the City, as the catalogue of his post-mortem sale records that he owned two copies of Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* (Pugin [1853] 1972: 251). Pugin was clearly interested in Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* as he included a direct quote from the publication, on the subject of Henry VIII's Six Articles[77], in his *Contrasts* (1836a: 41). Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* had also been republished in 1837 and again in 1838, which may have brought Coventry to the forefront of Pugin's mind and stimulated his own tour to the city.

Furthermore, there appears to have been a revived interest in Coventry's pilgrimage sites around the time of Pugin's visit, as there were attempts to 'reconstruct' the Pilgrim's Rest House[78] which had stood in Palmer Lane until it was demolished in 1820 (McGrory 2003: 123). The Coventry antiquary, George Eld (1791-1862), visually reconstructed the rest house as a large

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[77] Henry VIII's Statue of Six Articles, passed in 1539, affirmed six key Catholic beliefs and practices (Redworth 1986: 42).
[78] The Pilgrim's Rest was an early fifteenth-century guesthouse.

timber-framed building with jutting upper floors (see Figure 3.3). This depiction may have been a fairly accurate reconstruction as W.R Goate's lithograph of the Pilgrim's Rest similarly shows the building as a large timber-framed dwelling (see Figure 3.4). These examples have further significance for this thesis as they reinforce how artistic productions played a key role in bringing the 'lost' medieval past into new prominence. Visual artists were able to spotlight 'hidden' medieval features and developed new ways of looking at the 'unseen' medieval past during the early nineteenth century. Eld's depiction particularly strengthens this idea as it shows the Pilgrim's Rest House emerging from the shadows and into the sunlight.

Figure 3.3 George Eld, *Old house, supposed to have been an hostel / corner of Palmer Lane, Coventry - (From the Bull Ring)*, ca. 1806-1855

Figure 3.4 Mrs W.R Goate, *The Pilgrim's Rest House, Palmer Lane, Coventry*, ca.1860-1890

Many pilgrims that stopped in the house may have come from the Continent as Fretton's 1879 study, *Memorials of the Franciscans or Greyfriars*, records that "excavations made on and near the site of the monastery [uncovered] numerous Jettons[79] and other Pilgrims' tokens [...] principally of the Nuremberg type" (1879: 52). Excavations around the former monastery appear to have attracted considerable interest as various archaeological societies made excursions to visit them in the late nineteenth century. Fretton himself led the Worcester Diocesan Architectural and Archaeological Society to the "only fragment of the Greyfriars' Monastery" (1880: 283). He was most likely right to suggest that coins uncovered during the excavations were of the 'Nuremberg type' as Coventry's extensive trade links with the Low Countries and Northern France may have made it easier for the pilgrims to visit the shrines. The presence of the 'Nuremberg' tokens is highly significant as it reveals that Pugin was effectively following in the 'footsteps' of the medieval pilgrim by stopping at Coventry on his route to other key medieval sites in Northern France and the German lands.

Pugin's rediscovery of the medieval pilgrimage was not unusual for the time as there were also efforts to recover the lost sounds and sensations of Coventry's Catholic past. Augusta Theodosia Drane (1823-1894), an English Catholic nun, for example, recalled how Sister Mary Hallahan (1803-1868) had instructed Coventry's young Catholic girls to "take her at once" to the Lady Chapel in St Michael's Church (1869: 65). When she entered the chapel, she "recited with them aloud the Litany of Our Lady with the intention of recovering that beautiful building to the Catholic church" (1869: 65). Their recitation of the Litany of Our Lady, as Drane recalled with an air of pride, attracted considerable attention from onlookers (1869: 65). One Protestant congregation member was so shocked by their reciting that they proclaimed: "Why, that's an old nun! You shouldn't go about with an old nun!" (1869: 65).

Hallahan may have felt a deeper sense of urgency to rediscover Coventry's rich Catholic past as she had previously lived in the "magnificent" Gothic city of Bruges, where, as Drane suggested, she first "beheld the solemn offices of the Church with becoming splendour" and was "thoroughly endowed with the capacity of appreciating the church ritual" (1869: 22). Bruges was a key Catholic 'hot spot' in the nineteenth century as it still abounded in Gothic monuments and

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[79] Tokens or medals which were produced across Europe from the thirteenth century.

works of art, which were discussed and sketched in 'new' travel guidebooks (Simpson 2021). Hallahan herself left Bruges for Coventry at the request of Bishop William Ullathorne, who thought she would prove a "valuable assistant in all his plans for the good of the congregation" (Drane 1869: 44). However, the fact that Hallahan was drawn to Coventry underlines the enduring connections between the English Midlands and the Catholic Continent. It also implies that Coventry's Catholic community was looking to revive and re-establish Coventry as a 'sacred' place on the international stage in the early nineteenth century. In Ullathorne's *Autobiography*, he likewise appears to have sought to 'transport' Coventry's Catholic community to the city's medieval past during a series of "familiar fireside talks" (1891: 230). On one Monday night, around the fireside, he recalled how they went into the "Catholic antiquities of Coventry and its old religious customs" (Ullathorne 1891: 230). The fact that his talk was undertaken in the evening, around a fire, no doubt helped him to create a sense of intimacy and heightened sense of mood for Coventry's mystical and mysterious medieval ceremonies. A.W.N Pugin himself may have been aware of Ullathorne's 'fireside' talks, and his attempts to conjure medieval Coventry, as the two were in contact around this period (see Introduction).

Figure 3.5 A.W.N Pugin, *The End* [digitally enhanced by the author as the original image has faded over time], 1837

Returning to Pugin's *Details of Ancient Timber Houses* (1836), he also appears to have been motivated to visit Abbeville and Beauvais in Northern France, as he was concerned about the loss of their medieval houses. On the final plate, he protested against the rapid demolition of the old timber-framed houses, by showing a blazing bonfire of ancient 'foreign' carpentry, labelled "shewing [sic] the fate which will shortly be fall the few remains of ancient carpentry" (see Figure 3.5). Pugin may have been concerned about the loss of the 'ancient' carpentry as he had met Eustace-Hyacinthe Langlois (1777-1837), a French artist and antiquary, who denounced the destruction of the medieval timber-framed houses in Rouen in his 1821 *Description Historique*

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des Maisons de Rouen [Historical Descriptions of the Houses in Rouen] (Ferrey 1861: 18) [80]. We need to put a stop to the devastations, as Langlois passionately suggested, which remove every day all the most curious houses from the sixteenth century (1821: 2)[81]. Pugin likely read these descriptions as the catalogue drawn up after his death shows that he owned a copy of Langlois' *Description Historique des Maisons de Rouen* (Munby 1972: 258).

Across the Channel, Coventry's medieval timber-framed houses had displaced the churches as the defining architectural features of the city (see Chapter Two). Yet, they were also at risk from modern improvements and demolition around the time of Pugin's visit, as Coventry's Catholic community was largely made up of poor tradespeople who could not afford to protect or fund the repair of the city's medieval antiquities (see Chapter One). Pugin may well have been moved by the threats to Coventry's medieval timber-framed house as he was an old acquaintance of John Britton, who, while openly linking the houses to newer national narratives, had highlighted how they were at risk from 'smoothing down' and demolition (see Chapter Two). In Pugin's surviving letters to Edward Willson, he reveals that he visited Britton on a number of occasions to pay for his contributions to *Examples* (1836) ([1834] 2001: 36). His visits were usually quite brief as he had others matters to attend to, but they discussed their business affairs, and, it is tempting to suspect, Coventry's medieval houses.

3.4 'Reinventing' Coventry's Medieval Houses for Charles Scarisbrick

On the 14[th of] March 1837, four days after he arrived in Coventry, Pugin noted in his diary that he went to see Charles Scarisbrick (1801-1860) of Scarisbrick Hall in Ormskirk near Lancashire (NAL: MSL/1969/5156-5170). Scarisbrick was a wealthy Catholic landowner, whose family had been recusant since the Reformation and had previously entertained strong Jacobite inclinations (Tracy 2001: 76). It is not known how Scarisbrick was introduced to Pugin, but he appears to have commissioned Pugin to design a timber-framed lodge for his estate (see Figures 3.6 and

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[80] In Ferry's *Recollections* (1861: 18), he reveals that Pugin met Langlois during a trip to Rouen in 1825. Ferrey, however, was not impressed with Langlois as he noted that he lived in on a "second floor in an obscure street in Rouen (1861: 18).
[81] For the full quotation see: Langlois's *Description Historique des Maisons de Rouen* (1821: 2).

3.7). This was Pugin's first major commission for a rich recusant Catholic family and the drawings for the lodge show a half-timbered building with prominent decorated bargeboards.

Figure 3.6 A.W.N Pugin, *Lodge A* [digitally enhanced by the author for clarity. However, the text remains difficult to read due to the faintness of the pencil], 1837

Figure 3.7 Extract from A.W.N Pugin's *Lodge A* [digitally enhanced by the author for clarity. The text remains difficult to read due to the faintness of the pencil], 1837

Pugin's design does not explicitly record, or explain how he designed the lodge, as these were working drawings which were intended to be used by his builders. Yet, there are three key reasons why we can be confident that he looked to Coventry's medieval timber-framed for stylistic authority. First, Pugin would have most likely had Coventry on his mind when he was undertaking this commission as he had only just left the city. Second, the bargeboards with 'wavy' edges illustrated on Pugin's design bear some resemblance to those illustrated in Willson's *Ornamental Timber Gables* (1831b) (see Figures 3.8, 3.9 and 3.10). Pugin was clearly aware of Willson's *Timber Gables* as just a year earlier, in 1836, he published Willson's *Remarks on Gothic Architecture and on Modern Imitation* in the second volume of *Examples of*

Gothic Architecture (1836). Willson's essay promoted *Ornamental Timber Gables* as a useful architectural sourcebook for the modern architect because, as Willson contested, a "greater part of the specimens" were taken from Coventry as it "[is] a city well known to the English antiquary" for its "old domestic architecture of a rich and picturesque character" (1836d: viii).

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Figure 3.8 Extract from A.W.N Pugin's *Lodge A,* showing Timber-Framed Bargeboard [digitally enhanced by the author as the original image was produced using a light pencil], 1837

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Figure 3.9 Benjamin Ferrey, *Wooden Gables, From Bond's Hospital, Coventry* [digitally enhanced by the author for clarity], 1831

Figure 3.10 Benjamin Ferrey, *Wooden Gables, From Bayley Lane, Coventry* [digitally enhanced by the author for clarity], 1831

Pugin was certainly familiar with the Romantic Picturesque as he frequently deployed the same terminologies as Uvedale Price (Hill 2009: 133). Here, it is perhaps useful to remind ourselves that the key terminologies included the qualities of roughness, variation, and irregularity, which Price argued could be found in 'natural' Gothic architecture (see Chapter Two). In Pugin's discussions on medieval domestic architecture, he drew on the language of the Picturesque by noticing how it demonstrated "variety in form" and great "irregularity" (1841a: 60-63). However, Pugin also appears to have taken the picturesque much more seriously than his predecessors, as he goes on to claim that it was the natural consequence of the "ingenious methods by which the old builders overcame local and constructive difficulties" (1843: 62). Coventry's medieval houses, with their rich, picturesque features, would therefore have been highly suitable for Pugin's designs for Scarisbrick Lodge.

Figure 3.11 F. T Dollman, *Ford's Hospital, Coventry, Principal Entrance, Grey Friar's Lane, West Front* [digitally enhanced by the author. However, the text remains difficult to read due to the faintness of the pencil lines], 1830

Figure 3.12 Benjamin Green, *Ford's Hospital, Built from Oak* [digitally enhanced by the author for clarity. However, the image remains difficult to read due to the faintness of the pencil]*, 1830

Third, A.W.N Pugin's own father and his pupils had visited Coventry in the autumn of 1830 and 1831, in order to depict the City's surviving medieval timber-framed dwellings for the nation's 'future' architects (see Chapter Two). Pugin had a close relationship with his parents as he lived with them for half his life in a large house along Great Russell Street, London (Hill 2009: 5). His father's pupils, including Joseph Nash, Benjamin Ferrey, and Thomas Larkin Walker became his daily companions and he would often sit with them during their practical drawing lessons (Hill 2009: 60). In Ferrey's *Recollections*, he recalled how their work made a distinct impression on the young Pugin, who reportedly remarked that "his father's pupils [...] excelled in their artistic efforts" (1861: 33). Ferrey does not specifically reveal if A.W.N Pugin admired their drawings of

Coventry's medieval houses, as he quickly goes on to explore how the younger pupil made various games for their amusement (1861: 33). However, a brief comparison of Pugin's design with Walker's and Dollman's drawings of Ford's Hospital, strongly suggests that he was inspired by their visit to Coventry.

On Pugin's design, he noted that the timber-framed door in the centre of the lodge was to measure 6 feet high and 4 feet wide, which was roughly similar in proportion to the oak door recorded by Dollman on the front elevation Ford's Hospital (see Figure 3.11 and Appendix 2). The connections between the two buildings are further strengthened by the fact that the plinth at the bottom of Pugin's lodge was intended to be 2 feet high, while Benjamin Green noted that the plinth on Ford's Hospital was only slightly bigger at 2.2 feet high (see Figure 3.12 and Appendix Two). Pugin's plan also shows that the lodge was to have two rooms, either side of an entry lobby and staircase. Ford's Hospital was clearly too big to copy in its entirety, as it was originally intended for multiple residents, who could not afford to pay for their own accommodation. However, Walker's ground floor plan of the hospital similarly shows that it had two ground-floor rooms on the street frontage which were split by a central entrance passageway (see Figure 3.13 and Appendix 2). Ford's Hospital was certainly important to Pugin's vision of a new Catholic nation as he later referred to the building in his *True Principles* as a "beautiful [...] Christian institution" (1841a: 33).

Another key point to consider about Pugin's design for Scarisbrick Lodge is that the cusped timbers on the lodge look like they have been directly taken from the 'foreign' houses seen on frontispiece of his *Details of Ancient Timber Houses* (1836) (see Figure 3.14 and Appendix 2). Pugin's mixing of Coventry's medieval architectural heritage with the French Gothic style is highly significant, as it implies that he considered them to possess unique characteristics which could not be found or easily surpassed on the Continent. It is impossible to know how Pugin's design was received as it remained unexecuted, like so many of his early domestic designs[82]. Nonetheless, it may have aroused some curiosity as Pugin was chiefly known, and indeed continues to be known, as a church architect (Hill 2009: 179).

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[82] Such as Mousehill Cottage, which constituted of little more than a kitchen and scullery (Brittain-Catlin 2004: 82).

Figure 3.13 T.J Walker, *Ground Plan of Ford's Hospital, Grey Friar's Lane, Coventry* [digitally enhanced by the author. However, the image remains difficult to read due to the faintness of the pencil, 1830

Figure 3.14 A.W. N Pugin, Frontispiece of *Details of Ancient Timber Houses* [digitally enhanced by the author for clarity. However, the image remains quite faint as the image has deteriorated over time], 1836

In addition to Scarisbrick Lodge, Pugin was also commissioned to make extensive alterations to

Scarisbrick Hall, an early sixteenth-century manor house (Stanton 1971: 29). Scarisbrick Hall

had already been refurbished by Rickman and Slater earlier in the century, but it has been

suggested that Pugin persuaded Scarisbrick to make radical changes to the house because he disliked Rickman's 'plain' Gothic alterations (Stanton 1971: 29-30). Stanton (1971: 29-31) has also argued that Pugin composed the interior of the Hall from Northern Gothic sources which he sketched during his tour across Northern France and the Low Countries. Details of the carved fittings of the church of St Pierre in Caen, for example, were to appear throughout the hall (Stanton 1971: 29). The interior provided a fitting setting for Charles Scarisbrick's growing collection of early Flemish wood carvings, which he imported from the Continent with the assistance of the prominent antique dealer, Edward Hull (Stanton 1971: 31).

Given the importance of Coventry's medieval houses in shaping Pugin's design for Scarisbrick Lodge, however, it is also worth investigating if they played a similarly pivotal role in his shaping his designs for Scarisbrick Hall. In Pugin's designs for the West Front of Scarisbrick Hall, he designed a window with diamond cusps and distinct tracery (see Figure 3.15). Pugin's design is astonishingly similar to Benjamin Ferrey's 1830 drawing of the window tracery on a medieval timber-framed house along Hay Lane (see Figure 3.16). But more importantly, perhaps, this particular type of window tracery appears to have been common to medieval Coventry as it was also depicted on the timber-framed houses along Bayley Lane (see Figures 3.17). What this suggests is that Pugin's design for Scarisbrick Hall *was* partially shaped by Coventry's medieval timber-framed houses.

Figure 3.15 A.W.N Pugin, *Tracery Head of Oriel, ¼ Real size*, 1837

Figure 3.16 Benjamin Ferrey, *Tracery of Windows* [digitally sharpened by the author as the original drawing was produced using a light pencil], 1830

Figure 3.17 Benjamin Ferrey, *Gothic House at the end of Bayley Lane* [digitally enhanced by the author for clarity as the original drawing was produced using a light pencil], 1830

3.5 Daniel Rock's Church of our Fathers and Coventry's Corpus Christi Celebrations

By October 1837, Pugin noted in his diary that he "began Dr Rock work" (NAL MSL/1969/5156-5170). Pugin's meaning is not entirely clear at this point, but contemporary evidence suggests that he began making illustrations for Daniel Rock's book on the *Church of our Fathers* (1849-53), which are of key concern to this discussion as we now consider why and in what ways these illustrations were based around Coventry's medieval architecture and ceremonies. In the prospectus for Rock's *Church of our Fathers*, which was published in the *Laity's Directory*, he revealed that the book aimed to "explain and describe the various parts of ancient ecclesiastical edifices" (1838: 3). It would also deal with the "various rites [...] which used to be exclusively performed at different places about the church" and would "enquire into the doctrines and disciplines of the Church of our Fathers" (1838: 3).

In England, there had previously been little scholarly investigation into the doctrines and disciplines of the medieval Church as it was a forbidden subject (Saint 1995: 193). Rock himself was sent to Rome for two years to study the doctrines of the ancient faith by Lord Shrewsbury (Saint 1995: 194). Rock's *Church of our Fathers* would have been a highly attractive commission for Pugin because, whilst he was a talented architect, he was also a passionate liturgist, keen to revive the ceremonies and customs of the pre-Reformation Church. In Ferrey's *Recollections*, we are told that Pugin spent "upwards of three years [from ca.1831/2] learning all he could about the rites and ceremonies of the Catholic Church" (1861: 104). The study of Catholic liturgy became "all-important" to him as it opened his eyes, as he opined, to a whole "new field" of doctrine and theology (Ferrey 1861: 104).

Pugin produced twenty-three illustrations for Rock's *Church of our Fathers*. In one of Pugin's illustrations, which is the focus of this section, he appears to depict the procession of the Blessed Sacrament through the streets of a medieval city on the Feast of Corpus Christi (see Figure 3.18 and Appendix 2). Corpus Christi was a feast of the Passion which celebrated the sacramental presence of Christ in the Eucharist as a priceless gift bequeathed to the church at his death (Sadgrove 1994: 178). It was added to the liturgical calendar by Pope Urban IV (1261-4) in 1264 and was widely celebrated throughout Europe by the early fourteenth century (Sadgrove 1994: 178). Coventry's Corpus Christi celebrations are frequently mentioned in the *Leet Book*, which records as early as 1445 that the wealthiest craft guilds, including the Drapers and Mercers, would lead the Eucharist through the streets ([1445] 1907: 220)[83].

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[83] Members of the guilds would walk behind a priest, who carried the Eucharist beneath a richly decorated canopy, dressed in their finest livery (McGrory 2003: 66).

Figure 3.18 A.W.N Pugin, *Illustration of the Procession of the Blessed Sacrament* [digitally enhanced by the author for clarity. The image remains difficult to interpret due to the faintness of the pencil], 1837

It is highly likely that Pugin based his drawing around Coventry's Corpus Christi celebrations, as his principal authority on the medieval period was Sir William Dugdale (Hill 1999: 33), who built a comprehensive picture of medieval Coventry and its Catholic ceremonies using a range of primary sources (see Introduction). In the catalogue of his books sold after his death, Pugin appears to have owned a "very fine" eighteenth-century edition of William Dugdale's *Antiquities of Warwickshire*, which contained a detailed account of Coventry's Corpus Christi guild (Munby

1972: 255). Coventry's Corpus Christi guild, wrote Dugdale, not only counted Prince Edward IV amongst its patrons but also paid for "divine service in the Churches of the Holy Trinity and St Mich [sic]" ([1656] 1730: 195).

Alongside these services, Dugdale adds that Coventry was pre-eminently "very famous" for its Mystery Plays, which were "played there upon Corpus Christi day" and attracted a "confluence of people from far and near" ([1656] 1730: 183). Pugin may have been aware of Coventry's nationally famous Corpus Christi celebrations, as he often used Dugdale's *Warwickshire* (1656) to help him portray the pre-Reformation world as a place of beauty and harmony. For example, in the second volume of his *Examples of Gothic Architecture*, he quoted directly from Dugdale's *Warwickshire* to shed greater light on the medieval history and splendour of Kenilworth Castle (1836d: 13). There are no images of Coventry's Corpus Christi celebrations within Dugdale's *Warwickshire* which Pugin could have directly copied from. However, this may not have concerned Pugin, as he later admitted in his *Remarks* that he also used "the histories of the devout and painful Dugdale" to stir his imagination for the glory and richness of the Catholic past (1850: 18). Coventry's joyful Corpus Christi celebrations appear to have captured Pugin's imagination as he depicts a crowd of men, women, and children walking in the procession. Here all take part, no one turns away indifference or disgust, and we can see a number of eager faces leaning out of every window.

According to Belcher (1982: 332), Pugin's *Church of our Fathers* creates the impression that he was expressing his own private Catholic 'utopia'. This may well have been true as Pugin later recalled in his *Remarks* that he constructed "a sort of Catholic utopia" in his mind when he was young and full of optimism (1850: 18). Pugin did not define his Catholic 'utopia' as the principal focus of his article was to criticise some remarks made in *The Rambler* about the state of ecclesiastical architecture. However, his vision of a Catholic utopia appears to have been based around a selfless, devout, and generous people. It was a society which gained its strength from its beautiful Gothic buildings, joyful ceremonies, and harmonious brotherhoods. Everybody was looked after by the church and worked together to live a true Christian life.

Pugin may well have looked to Coventry to help build his dream Catholic city as it was not, unlike Birmingham and Derby, a factory town in the late 1830s (Prest 1960: 45-47). Indeed, it had actually fallen behind with the latest technological developments as there were many traditional weavers who were opposed to the introduction of new machinery and techniques (Prest 1960: 45-47). In November 1831, Joseph Beck attempted to open a factory in Coventry which was powered by new steam looms, but it was burned down by a group of weavers who feared that the new machinery would lessen the demand for traditional skills and labour (Prest 1960: 45-47). This behaviour allowed competitors in other towns to gain an edge, but it may have encouraged Pugin to envisage Coventry as a utopia which remained untouched and unspoiled by what he perceived to be the 'evils' of modern society.

Nonetheless, in spite of Pugin's 'utopian' vision of the medieval past, he appears to have based the architecture in his illustration on 'real' or 'living' subjects. Pugin does not explicitly define the term 'real' as he was more concerned with ecclesiastical terminologies, but he appears to have used the term to refer to truthful architectural structures which honestly expressed their original purpose. He could not abide structures which were imaginary, supposed, or a deceptive illusion as he wanted to demonstrate the truthfulness of the ancient Catholic faith. In Pugin's *True Principles*, for example, he condemns "those mansions" which had been erected in the "guise of the solemn architecture of religion and antiquity" (1841a: 59). He particularly disliked how their 'transepts' turned out to be drawing rooms and argued that their "*kitchens alone* are real [Pugin's emphasis]" (1841a: 59).

In the foreground of Pugin's illustration, we can see three timber-framed dwellings with jutting storeys and decorative bargeboards which were most likely based on Coventry's 'living' medieval houses (see Figure 3.19). Pugin, as this study has shown, was highly familiar with Coventry's surviving medieval dwellings as he had used them to build a 'new' Catholic timber-framed lodge for Charles Scarisbrick. Comparison of the three dwellings with other contemporary depictions of Coventry's medieval houses quickly reveals that they are also similar in style (see Figure 3.20). What is most striking about the houses, however, is that Pugin appears to have inaccurately staged them as a kind of 'frame' around the procession and the people. The 'framing' of the houses is nonetheless significant as it acts as a kind of 'portal' which leads the

viewer to Coventry's 'glorious' and 'untroubled' distant past. Pugin's 'portal' has further significance as it is suggestively similar to those created by the Romantic antiquaries in the early 1830s (see Chapter Two). He may have been aware that Coventry's medieval buildings had been similarly 'staged' to appear to like 'portals' into the medieval past as he was familiar with Britton's work.

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Figure 3.19 Extract from A.W.N Pugin's *Illustration of the Procession of the Blessed Sacrament*, showing timber-framed houses [digitally enhanced by the author for clarity], 1837

Figure 3.20 Extract from W.H Brook's *Saint Mary's Hall*, showing timber-framed houses [digitally enhanced by the author as they were depicted in the far background], 1819

Figure 3.21 Extract from A.W.N Pugin's *Illustration of the Procession of the Blessed Sacrament*, showing the medieval market cross [digitally enhanced by the author for clarity], 1837

Figure 3.22 William Dugdale, *The Prospect of Coventre Crosse*, 1656

In addition to the timber-framed dwellings, Pugin's illustration also shows see a large, tiered market cross which may have been inspired by the Coventry Cross (see Figure 3.21). Coventry's market cross has a rich and complex history as the *Leet Book* records as early as 1423, that all seized "possessions should be given to "Henrici Peytoo to help make a "cross" ([1423] 1905: 55). It was later rebuilt in the early sixteenth century using "all stone" and lime and set up to a height "of forty five feet" like the cross seen in the cloth town of Abingdon (Reader 1810: 231). Pugin himself would not have personally seen the Coventry Cross as contemporary documents

suggest that it was demolished in the seventeenth century. In William Bray's 1778 *Sketch of a Tour,* he revealed that the upper part of the cross had been "taken down about twenty years ago" as it had become "much decayed" due to weathering (1778: 37). The lower half appears to have demolished between 1778 and 1782, when the renowned travel writer Thomas Pennant (1726-1798) visited the city but neglected to mention it. However, Pugin may well have had the Coventry Cross in mind as it was the only public monument illustrated in Dugdale's *Warwickshire* (1656) (see Figure 3.22). Dugdale does not explicitly explain why it was the only moment he chose to illustrate, but it appears to be dedicated to his friend Gervase Holies (1547-1627), whose ancestors helped fund the construction of the cross.

Figure 3.23 Samuel Bradford, *A Plan of the City of Coventry* [labelled in red by the author for clarity], 1750

On an adjacent page to Dugdale's prospect of the Coventry Cross, he devoted a lengthy passage to its importance and early construction (1656: 95). The Coventry Cross was "one of the chief things wherein this city", as Dugdale contended, which for "workmanship and beauty is inferior to none in England" (1656: 95). He goes on, highlighting how Coventry's Mayor and Aldermen had all been involved in its construction since they had a "special affection" for the city (Dugdale 1656: 95). Dugdale's descriptions clearly made a deep and lasting impression, as they revived the interest in the Coventry Cross in early nineteenth-century antiquarian accounts. For instance,

both William Reader's 1810 *History and Antiquities of Coventry* and Benjamin Poole's 1847 *New History of Coventry* use the phrase 'inferior to none in England' to describe the Coventry Cross. Poole's *New History* particularly emphasises the shift in taste for the Coventry's medieval monuments by condemning those who had "totally neglected" the market cross (1847: 48).

However, Pugin once again 'rearranged' Coventry's medieval heritage to build his ideal Catholic utopia, as he positioned Coventry's market cross right directly below what appears to be St Michael's Church. This was inaccurate as Samuel Bradford's 1750 Map of Coventry suggests that the cross was actually located slightly further to the west of the city, on the border between Cross Cheaping and Broadgate (see Figure 3.23). Pugin may well have modelled his church on St Michael's as his image of the medieval past was formed by Wenceslaus Hollar, who was one of the most important topographers of the seventeenth century and depicted Coventry's medieval skyline from two different vantage points (see Introduction). Pugin clearly learned from Hollar like one might a master as in one letter to John Weale (1791-1862), on the subject of his publications, he insists that he would do 'anything' to include his etchings alongside his text like Hollar:

> Looking over Dugdale's history of Warwickshire the other day I saw
> several etchings of Hollar's printed *among the text* [...] now cannot we
> manage to print *some* of my etchings among the text [...] I think it is of
> great advantage in some cases to have the illustration before you as you
> are reading without turning to a plate. Now I will take any pains to do the
> thing well & would willingly engrave these separately if you could
> manage to print some of them among the text ([1841] 2001: 208).

As well as being easy to examine, Hollar's architectural drawings were also important to Pugin as they offered sensitive evocations of major and minor Gothic monuments (Stanton 1971: 156-157). In Hollar's *Prospect of Coventry*, he appears to offer a 'sensitive' and 'sympathetic' depiction of St Michael's Church by using 'soft' and gentle lines to draw its architectural features (see Figure 3.24). Hollar's 'sensitive' drawing of St Michael's Church was highly unusual for the time as many medieval churches across the country had been stripped of their

features and pulled down for building materials (see Introduction). Yet, it appears to have appealed to Pugin as he similarly creates an almost nostalgic impression of the church by depicting it with a light pencil (see Figure 3.25).

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Figure 3.24 Extract from Hollar's *Prospect of Coventry*, showing St Michael's Church [digitally enhanced by the author as the church was depicted in the far background], 1656

Figure 3.25 Extract from A.W.N Pugin's *Illustration of the Procession of the Blessed Sacrament*, showing medieval church [digitally enhanced by the author for clarity], 1837

In Hollar's drawing, he also gives a useful impression of St Michael's character and proportions before it was subject to alterations in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. There is little doubt that this would have appealed to Pugin since he was horrified by the 'recent' restorations which have been "effected in certain cathedrals and other churches" (1836a: 22). Pugin

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particularly cited the "modern alterations in the choirs of Peterborough and Norwich", which, as he describes, were so "utterly wanting" that he would "not hesitate" to call them "detestable" (1836a: 22). In contrast, St Michael's Church made a much more positive impression upon Pugin. In a letter to the Reverend John Ingram (1774-1850), on the subject of medieval church spires and towers in England, Pugin appears to have classified St Michael's spire as being amongst the "finest models" in the country as it was "pure" and "beautiful in design" ([1843] 2003: 59). Pugin's admiration for St Michael's testifies to its increasing importance to the nation's identity and strengthens the idea that he based his drawing around the church. Indeed it is further clear that Pugin was only interested in St Michael's appearance, rather than its history or dating, as he misdated the spire to the "Late Decorated" period ([1843] 2003: 60). This date is inaccurate as more recent interpretations of the spire have ascribed it to early fifteenth century, which is more commonly known as the 'Perpendicular Gothic' (Monckton 2011:155).

On the far left of the illustration, Pugin depicted a large structure with pointed roofs (see Figure 3.26). This building is difficult to identify as it appears to be incomplete and far out of sight, though it is tempting to suspect that it was a row of timber-framed houses or even St Mary's Guildhall. There is no evidence to suggest that Pugin had written about the Guildhall. However, it was one of the key buildings depicted during his father's tour of Coventry and it appears to have had 'pointed' roofs, as evidenced by Benjamin Ferrey's pencil drawing (see Figure 3.27 and Appendix 2). Pugin may have also been advised to include St Mary's Guildhall within his illustration, as it was characterised by Rock in the first volume of his *Church of our Fathers*, as a key medieval building which "bore witness to the cheerful doings and kindly hospitalities of its first Catholic owners" (1849: 436-437). Pugin relied on Rock's advice as he revealed in his *True Principles* that he had been "rescued by the advice and arguments of my respected and revered friend Dr Rock, to whose learned researches and observations on Christian antiquities I am highly indebted" (1841a: 67). Pugin goes on, highlighting that it was Rock who ultimately encouraged him to look more to "our own peculiar style of English Christian architecture", over the "beauties of foreign pointed architecture" (1841a: 67).

Figure 3.26 Extract from A.W.N Pugin's *Illustration of the Procession of the Blessed Sacrament*, showing medieval houses [digitally enhanced by the author for clarity], ca. 1837

Figure 3.27 Benjamin Ferrey, Transverse Section of St Mary's Hall, [digitally enhanced by the author. However, the drawing may remain difficult to interpret as it was produced using a light pencil], ca. 1837

Nonetheless, Rock was unable to exercise full control over Pugin as the architecture in the rest of his *Church of our Fathers* illustrations appears to have been based on a range of buildings across France, England, and the Low Countries. For example, Wedgwood (1977: 53) suggested that the chapel depicted in Pugin's illustration of a priest saying requiem mass in a chantry chapel is similar to that of Abbot Lichfield's chantry chapel in the church of St Lawrence, Evesham. The ornate octagonal font and cover in Pugin's illustration of the baptism of a child are also reminiscent of fifteenth-century Flemish woodcarvings (Wedgwood 1977: 53). Pugin's use of both 'native' and foreign architectural sources underlines how he travelled extensively in the early nineteenth century, yet it also reinforces how Coventry was a key destination on his Catholic 'taste-making' route. His illustration of medieval Coventry stands out amongst his other drawings as it is the only drawing to show a medieval church, timber-framed dwellings, market cross and a Catholic ceremony. The majority of his illustrations in contrast show the interior view of a medieval dwelling or the exterior façade of a medieval church. While this suggests that Pugin wanted Rock's readers to perceive medieval Coventry to be of transnational interest, it also implies that he considered Coventry to be *the* most 'complete' Gothic city, which could 'totally' revive the Catholic faith.

Although Pugin carefully re-imagined and re-constructed Coventry's Catholic past, using a range of seventeenth-century authorities and sources, it is impossible to tell if his illustration would have appealed to Catholic audiences as it was ultimately never published. Instead, Rock included illustrations by the wood-engraver, Orlando Jewitt (1799-1869). There is no evidence to indicate that the two had any major dispute during their acquaintance. However, Rock may have disagreed with Pugin's utopian vision of Coventry's medieval past, since his *Church of our Fathers* presents the Middle Ages as a time of "censures" and "excommunications" (1849: 212). Rock also appears to have been especially mindful of the tyranny of those "mighty ones who laughed the civil laws to scorn" (1852: 388).

3.6 The Coventry Doom Painting and the Nazarene Brotherhood

Following Pugin's 'taste-making' tours, his diary records that he made his second visit to Coventry on 21st April 1844 (NAL: MSL/1969/5156-5170). He was only passing through

Coventry as he records that he left for Northampton and from thence to Peterborough the next day (NAL: MSL/1969/5156-5170). However, he appears to have had time to view the Doom painting in Holy Trinity Church as he later described it as "rude but interesting" in his *Glossary of Ecclesiastical Ornament and Costume* (1844). Pugin's description is tantalisingly brief as his *Glossary* was only intended to provide the reader with an alphabetical glossary on church furnishings, devotional equipment, and liturgical colours (see Introduction). Yet, as we shall now discover, his terminology and understanding of the Coventry Doom painting was shaped by wider developments on the Catholic Continent.

Pugin's use of the term 'rude', for example, suggests that he perceived the painting to be unsophisticated, rudimentary, and rustic. His valuation of the Doom appears to be less than enthusiastic, yet it clearly resonates with the Nazarene Brotherhood's interest in the 'primitive' and pious art of the Middle Ages. The Nazarenes, who had initially organised as the Brotherhood of Saint Luke in 1810, were a group of German painters who aspired to return to the art of Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528) and other early German masters as they were opposed to what they perceived to be the sterile classicism of the Vienna Academy (Boime 2004: 37). Most of its members, including Johann Friedrich Overbeck, were Roman Catholic converts who saw the art of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries as morally pure because they argued that it had been created before it had been corrupted by the 'heresies' of the Reformation (Boime 2004: 37). The 'unskilled' and 'unsophisticated' work of the early German masters needed to be admired, according to the Nazarenes, as it testified to the painters innocence and spirituality (Boime 2004: 36)

In the 1830s, the Nazarenes were much admired by the French Liberal Catholics, who similarly sought to revive the Christian inspiration of art. Count Charles de Montalembert, for example, classified the Nazarenes in his *Du Vandalisme en France* "as a new German school [...] of painting, which, under the dual direction of Overbeck and Cornelius, shines every day more brightly" (1833: 425)[84]. Through Montalembert, who had encouraged Pugin to look to Germany

[84] The original quotation is as follows: "J'es père vous entretenir un jour, plus au long, de la nouvelle école allemand et surtout de celle de peinture, qui chaque jour jette un nouvelle éclat sou la double direction d'Overbeck et de Cornelius" (Montalembert 1833: 425).

for stylistic inspiration, Pugin appears to have come into contact with the Nazarenes. In the expanded edition of Pugin's *Contrasts*, he made clear his support for the Nazarene Brotherhood by describing Overbeck as "that Prince of Christian Painters" and encouraged "all those who are interested in the revival of Christian art" to "possess engravings from the works of this great artist" (1841a: 18).

Pugin was sympathetic to the Nazarenes as he similarly wanted to recapture the faith-based purity of medieval art before, as he claimed in the first edition of his *Contrasts*, it had been subject to the "disastrous effects" of Protestantism and Paganism (1836a: 16). He had also long admired Dürer as he proudly revealed in a letter of 1834 to Edward Willson that he had "seen the house of Dürer" and had "sketched his tomb" (Pugin [1834] 2001: 38). Pugin's description of Coventry's Doom painting suggests it was inspired by the Nazarenes. His description is further noteworthy as it suggests that he perceived the painting to be a natural reflection of the so-called primitive piety of Coventry's medieval painters. Pugin clearly had an interest in Coventry's medieval artists as his description included a reference to Thomas Sharp's 1825 *Dissertation on the Coventry Mysteries*, which briefly implied that there was a community of painters in medieval Coventry who were valued for their workmanship and artistic skill (1825: 33).

Another key point to consider is that Pugin's interest in the rude and 'unsophisticated' qualities of the Doom painting was shared in antiquarian accounts. In George Scharf's article, *Observations on the Last Judgement,* he argued that the central figure of Christ in the painting was "especially undignified, with very large feet" (1855: 385). Scharf's reference to the 'undignified' nature of the painting is strikingly similar to Pugin's use of the term 'rude' as he appears to have similarly been drawn to the works of Overbeck and the Nazarene movement. Ten years prior to his study on the *Last Judgement*, Scharf produced thirty-seven engravings after Overbeck and other renowned German artists for Owen Jones's *Book of Common Prayer* (1845). On the one hand, this suggests that there was an emerging lexicon used to describe the Doom painting which was shaped and influenced by the Catholic Continent. Scharf himself likely looked to Germany as he was the son of the Bavarian émigré artist, George Johann Scharf (1788-1860). Yet on the other, it also implies that there was a group of artists who sought to

build the taste for so-called 'primitive' and 'unsophisticated' Catholic art in the nineteenth century.

Figure 3.28 James Cherry, *The View of the Interior of Trinity Church, Coventry* [the view has been digitally brightened by the author for clarity. The figures in the painting remain difficult to interpret as the Doom had almost faded into obscurity in the nineteenth century], ca. 1831-1837

Figure 3.29 Extract from James Cherry's *View of the Interior of Trinity Church, Coventry,* showing the Doom painting [digitally brightened by the author for clarity. However, the figures in the painting remain difficult to interpret as the Doom had faded into obscurity by the nineteenth century], ca.1831-1837

While Pugin's enthusiasm for the Doom was shared and built upon, contemporary depictions of the painting nonetheless reveal that it had become increasingly difficult to decipher by the late 1830s. In James Cherry's engraving, the figure of St John the Baptist on the right-hand side of the painting is misidentified as a hairy devil with a pitchfork (see Figure 3.28 and 3.29). Cherry's engraving also shows that the apostles, hell-mouth, chained alewives, and angels on the far right-hand side of the painting were almost invisible to the naked eye. Pugin's *Glossary* had little room to elaborate on the poor, and rapidly declining condition, of the Doom painting. Yet, it is possible that he wanted to preserve the painting, and bring its Catholic heritage into greater

visibility, as he acknowledges that many Doom paintings "might be restored" by carefully removing those "accumulated coats of wash" which had been applied during the Reformation (Pugin 1844: 110).

3.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has developed a new understanding of the Catholic Revival movement in the English Midlands, by exploring when and why A.W.N Pugin visited Coventry. We have discovered that Coventry was a key destination on Pugin's 'pilgrimage route' to all the most important Gothic capitals across England and the Continent in the late 1830s, as he feared for the City's medieval timber-framed dwellings which were increasingly under threat from demolition and modern improvements. Pugin's interest in Coventry's medieval timber-framed houses predominately derived from his father, and Edward Willson, who made many detailed drawings of the City's dwellings for the architectural student. Yet, he clearly built upon their work by using Coventry's surviving medieval houses and churches to construct a 'new' Catholic England which was based on truth, beauty, and morality. Coventry's medieval houses, with their picturesque charm, natural features, and spiritual associations, represented the antithesis of the 'ugly' modern world which Pugin had condemned as the expression of Protestantism.

At the same time, Pugin also felt a sense of urgency to bring Coventry's hidden and lost Catholic heritage into greater visibility. He wanted to revive the joy, fellowship, sounds, and lost sensations of Coventry's Corpus Christi celebrations to construct a more harmonious and peaceful world. Pugin's multi-sensory experience of Coventry not only underlines how important the city was to the revival of the Catholic faith, but also suggests that his vision of the medieval past was transformed and awakened by his trips to the city.

Above all, perhaps, Pugin aimed to preserve the memory of Coventry's so-called primitive and pious medieval artisans as he rallied against the 'immoral' and 'dishonest' Industrial Revolution. The people of medieval Coventry constituted the very essence of Pugin's vision of Catholic England and were carefully portrayed to build the most appealing image of the nation's medieval past. In the next chapter, we will explore how and why Coventry's identity became increasingly bound up with the city's medieval guilds and craftsmanship in the late nineteenth century.

Chapter Four: The Reception of Coventry's Medieval Guilds and Craftsmanship

4.1 Introduction

In Chapters Two and Three, we uncovered how there was an emerging interest in Coventry's medieval guilds and craftsmanship in the early nineteenth century. This chapter is similarly concerned with Coventry's medieval guilds and craftsman, yet it seeks to bring them into greater visibility by shedding new light on their under-explored significance between the 1870s and 1890s. The reception of Coventry's medieval craftsmanship in the late nineteenth century is worthy of greater scholarly study since, as far as I am aware, it has never been considered as a distinct subject or treated to a developed discussion. This is a major gap in scholarship especially since there has been a revived interest in guild histories and medieval craftsmanship in recent scholarly publications. Harvey and Press (1991: 59-60), for example, suggest that there were a growing number of firms in the English Midlands which sought to revive the principles of medieval metal work and stained glass craftmanship in the late nineteenth century. The firms included Skidmore's Art Manufactures Company and the Birmingham firm of Hardmans (Harvey and Press 1991: 59-60). Alice Robinson (2018) has also recently argued for the revival of interest in medieval craftsmanship in the English Midlands. Robinson (2018) suggests that Francis Skidmore of Coventry (1817-1896), who established the Skidmore's Art Manufactures Company, synthesised medieval and modern aesthetics to produce some of the most ambitions and spectacular ecclesiastical designs of the late nineteenth century.

Yet, neither Robinson nor Harvey are interested in connecting these developments with the reception of Coventry's medieval guilds. This chapter therefore builds upon their work by exploring how the English Midlands became a major centre for the revival of medieval glass and metal working in the late nineteenth century, in order to frame the reception of Coventry's medieval craftsmanship. It particularly highlights how the Chance Brothers of Birmingham and John Hardman had extensive connections to a group of 'medieval' craftsmen on the Catholic Continent. These networks, as we shall see, helped to draw new visibility to Coventry's medieval guilds and craftmanship the late nineteenth century.

Coventry had a flourishing guild culture by the fifteenth century comprising the carpenters' guild, the weavers, the tailors, the drapers, and the painters (Leech 2007: 115). This chapter primarily focuses on the reception of three medieval craft guilds and their surviving art. A key concern is to illuminate how and why female antiquaries, such as Isabel Stuart Robson (1863-1950), responded to Coventry's medieval wood carvings and carpenters in the late nineteenth century. The connections between Coventry's medieval craftmanship and women antiquaries is a central theme as they have been largely overlooked and obscured in antiquarian publications due to gender discrimination[85].

Second, it sheds new light on why and how the nineteenth-century craftsman followed in the footsteps of Coventry's medieval stone masons during the restoration of St Michael's Church. We explore how the church became bound up with ideas of nationhood, local belonging, and nationalism by analysing rarely-examined newspaper articles in the Society for the Protection of Ancient Building Archives. This chapter also offers new insight into how leading nineteenth-century artists reacted to the carved figures in the upper niches of St Michael's Church tower, by focusing on a number of previously unseen photo-lithographic prints in the Herbert Art Gallery and Museum.

Third, discussion investigates how Coventry's medieval glass painters were received in the 1880s and 1890s. A core ambition is to develop new knowledge, relating to the ways in which John Thornton (b.1415) of Coventry, a master glazier, became the focus of national attention during the restoration of the North window in St Mary's Guildhall. It argues that the response to Thornton's art and workshop marked a key turning point in the attitudes towards Coventry's medieval visual arts heritage. Not only would the response demonstrate how there was a renewed respect for the skills of the craftsmen, but it would also illustrate how the wider public had come to openly lament the destructive effects of the Reformation.

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[85] In Rosemary Hill's *Time's Witness* (2021: 39), she suggests that female antiquaries encountered much discrimination as they were barred from the Society of Antiquaries and other learned societies. However, she devotes less than three pages to the female antiquary, even though it is specifically devoted to antiquarianism (2021: 39-41).

4.2 The English Midlands and the Revival of Medieval Craftmanship

Before exploring how the English Midlands became a key centre for the revival of medieval craftsmanship, it is important to provide deeper knowledge on the different guilds and their roles since they were complex organizations which often had overlapping functions. The two main types of medieval guilds were the craft guilds and merchant trade guilds, but there were also religious guilds and frith guilds (Little 1984: 190). Frith guilds[86] were the earliest type of guild as they were created in the tenth century to preserve peace and maintain order within a specific local area (Payne 2012: 102). The guilds were important associations as they provided crucial defence and protection from criminals during economic and socially unstable periods (Gaffney 1950: 13). Coventry itself may have had a frith guild as it faced economic instability and decline, but it difficult to know for certain as there are no known guilds records for any organisation in the city before the fourteenth century (Willcox 1992: 1).

Much like the frith guilds, religious guilds were one of the earliest types of guilds and carried out important social functions (Gaffney 1950: 207). They offered support to widows and orphans and helped guild members who had fallen on hard times (Alamichel 2008: 299). Coventry had two large religious guilds which provided relief to impoverished and sick members of society (Knight 1996: 13). Holy Trinity Guild was one such religious guild which provided accommodation at a reduced rent, or even free rent altogether, and operated a loan system which allowed poorer members to obtain loans to start their businesses again (Knight 1996: 13-14).

However, religious guilds were much more than social fraternities as their primary purpose was to pray for the salvation of living brethren (Good 2009: 105). Praying devoutly was a crucial objective as Christian doctrine proclaimed that the way one lived their life determined the fate of their soul after death (Richardson 2005: 148). The religious guilds also sponsored masses, organised funerals for deceased brethren and identified their name with a patron of the church (Davidson 20000: 4). Coventry's Corpus Christi Guild was one of the largest religious guilds and maintained thirteen full time priests to help pray for the souls of living members (Knight 1996: 13).

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[86] Frith, a now obsolete relation to the word friend, connotated peace and security.

In contrast to religious guilds, merchant guilds were associations of nearly all the merchants in a particular area or town who were principally involved in long-distance trade (Payne 2012: 104). Merchants imported a range of raw materials from overseas and tended to sell their merchandise to wholesale traders (Payne 2012: 104). Coventry's earliest merchant guild was the Merchant Guild of St. Mary which was founded in the fourteenth century (see Chapter One). The guild performed an important economic role as it helped make Coventry one of the wealthiest and most powerful cities in the kingdom (Goddard 2004: 247). Its wealth was reflected in the construction of the merchant guildhall of St Mary (see Introduction and Chapter One).

Nonetheless, merchant guilds maintained the earlier charitable work of the religious guilds by dispensing aid to incapacitated brethren (Wright 2015: 274). Coventry's Merchant Guilds offered aid and relief by providing short-term loans to impoverished members of the guild (Nicholas 2014: 255). Incapacitated members who were unable to work were also maintained at the guild's expense (Nicholas 2014: 255). The Merchant Guild of St Mary evidently had a religious character as it was dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary and founded several chantries (Monckton 2011: 143). The chantries were particularly important as merchant guilds wanted to protect the spiritual and temporal welfare of their members (Heijden 2011: 60). However, it is important to stress here that the religious orientation of the merchant guilds was nothing compared to the devotion shown by the members of the religious societies (Payne 2012: 106).

In contrast to merchant guilds, craft guilds were associations of nearly all the specialist craftsmen or artisans in a particular industry (Ralls 2007: 88). There were guilds of painters, carpenters, stonemasons, smiths and tanners (Ralls 2007: 88). Coventry itself had numerous medieval craft guilds which were mentioned in a range of city records and documents (Stephen 1969d: 157-162)[87]. The earliest craft guild was perhaps the Fullers' Guild as it was mentioned in a late fourteenth-century property license (Stephen 1969d: 157-162). The guild appears to have been fairly successful as it acquired property across Coventry, although they were certainly not as powerful as the merchant guilds which dominated both the municipal government and city oligarchy (Stephen 1969d: 157-162). The power of the mercantile guilds even appears to have negatively influenced perceptions about the status of the craft guilds (Davis 2011: 170). This is

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[87] Including the cappers, tanners, painters, carpenters, stonemasons and smiths.

suggested by the fact that the craft guilds have often been described as 'lesser guilds' (Davis 2011: 170). Craft guilds were also different to the merchant guilds as they tended to sell their goods and products directly to local customers (Ogilvie 2019: 10). However, it should be acknowledged here that the craft guilds relied on the merchant guilds for access to the raw materials they needed to make their products (Davies 2011: 170). The craft guilds' reliance on the mercantile guilds may further colour perceptions about their status and importance. Although, some craft guilds resented their dependence and fought for greater autonomy (Waugh 1991: 51).

Furthermore, it is important to mention here that merchant guilds and craft guilds shared some similar traits. They both regulated the standards by which their members worked and controlled the quality of goods which were produced (Jovinelly and Netelkos 2006: 7). They also protected their members from outside competition and helped ensure that they were financially stable (Jovinelly and Netelkos 2006: 7). Coventry's medieval craftsmen were trained for around seven years in small family workshops, after which they would go before the craft masters, who would make them swear to obey the rules of the guild (McGrory 2003: 65). Craftsmen were particularly secretive as they wanted to preserve the skills and knowledge from outside traders.

While craft guilds were driven by economic purposes, they also had a religious orientation as they embodied the name of religious figures in their titles. In Coventry, the Tailors' Guild was described as the brethren of the Guild of the Nativity of Christ, the Fullers' Guild adopted the patronage of St James and the Shearman's Guild embodied the name of St George (Stephen 1969d: 157-162). Coventry's craft guilds also encouraged their members to sponsor and subsidize the city's famous Corpus Christi pageants (King and Davidson 2000: 4). The Coventry Cappers' pageants were amongst the most prestigious as they became one of the largest and wealthiest craft guilds in the city in the sixteenth century (King 2004: 55). Members of the guild often used the pageants to display their wares and wore lavish ceremonial robes to showcase their weaving skills (Groves 2019: 35). Some craft guilds asked to be discharged from contributing to the pageants as they found them to be a financial burden (King 2004: 57). However, the city council forced them to continue as they claimed that they brought prestige and trade to the city (King 2004: 57).

From the above discussion, it is therefore clear that there were four main types of medieval guilds, which had dissimilar and yet common roles. The common link between the guilds was that they all embodied the name of patron saints and pursued pious goals in order to ensure the eternal salvation of their members. They also carried important social functions in order to maintain order and engaged in a wide variety of economic activities which helped to advance their interests. Medieval guilds declined in the sixteenth century as they were seen as superstitious Catholic institutions (Bosshardt and Lopus 2013: 66). However, nineteenth-audiences sought to reconstruct the medieval guilds and return to hand craftsmanship in order to counter the 'dehumanizing' effects of the industrial revolution (Mitchell 2012: 49- 50).

One of the earliest crafts to undergo a revival was stained-glass production which expanded at an unprecedented rate during the early nineteenth century (Allen 2018: 1). A major producer of stained-glass was Chance Brothers and Company at Smethwick, near Birmingham which had been founded in 1824 (Cowen 2008: 25). In their surviving sample book on *Church Windows* (1862), the Chance Brothers reveal that they worked in a range of medieval styles, including Perpendicular and late Gothic. *Church Windows* is a useful and informative sample book as it guides its readers through the creation of a full window, from its smallest details to its overall design. Many of the examples depict a specific Catholic saint or scene, including the Virgin and the Child below a selection of winged angels (1862). Iconographic scenes became increasingly common in the mid-nineteenth century as the Catholic Revival was gathering momentum (Shepheard 2010: 23-24). James Chance himself had received a Catholic education and worked closely with other deeply religious figures, including Hardman Powell and John Hardman of Birmingham, who went on to establish his own stained-glass workshop (Shepheard 2010: 23-24).

The Chance Brothers nonetheless looked beyond the English Midlands, as they imported a body of glass blowers from France and Belgium, after they had been struck by the superior quality of their craftsmanship during their tours across the Continent ([1919] 2016: 65). Foreign glass, as Lucas Chance wrote, is "ported to all the parts of this country and all over the world" because it is of a "better colour than ours" ([1919] 2016: 65). Coloured glass was important to the stained-glass manufacturer as it conveyed a range of symbolic, iconographic and spiritual meanings (Shepheard 2010: 22-24). Medieval examples were carefully studied by stained-glass

manufacturers as they had to effectively re-learn the craft as it had almost been wiped out by the Reformation and the systematic iconoclasm that followed (Shepheard 2010: 22-24).

George Bontempts (1799-1893), for instance, was an eminent French stained-glass manufacturer who gained employment at Chance Brothers in 1848 (Powell 1923: 92). He doubtlessly studied medieval glass as he later declared in his *Guide du Verrier* [Glassmaker's Guide], a practical treatises on the development of glassmaking, that the art of stained-glass was perfected and soared with the most brilliance during the Gothic period (1868: 694)[88]. He also enthusiastically describes how medieval glass had been chiefly inspired by Christian sentiment, which, as he proposes, is the most sublime material expression (Bontempts 1868: 694). Nonetheless, the French glass-makers were generally reluctant to share their techniques and skills with the English glass painters (Chance [1919] 2016: 65). The secrecy of the French glass-makers frustrated Chance as he subsequently had to pay them higher wages to ensure that they remained in the country ([1919] 2016: 65). Yet it was not unusual since medieval craft guilds often introduced laws and restrictions on their members to limit the spread of craft knowledge (Prak and Zanden 2013: 9)[89].

Besides the Chance Brothers, John Hardman Jr. (1811-1867) of Birmingham was another master craftsman who was interested in the production of stained-glass and metalwork. In 1838, Hardman set up a firm of Medieval Metalworkers at the insistence of A.W.N Pugin, whose interest in metalware was kindled two years earlier in 1836 when he produced his *Designs for Silver and Gold Smiths* (Harvey and Press 1991: 60). The two men collaborated as they had become close friends due to their Catholicism and devotion to the revival of the ancient faith (Fisher 2008: 8). Together they designed a wide range of ecclesiastical metal work such as steeple crosses, brass chalices, silver crosses, and iron hinges.

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[88] The original quotation is as follows: "Il est d'ailleurs rationnel que l'art des vitraux se soit principalement perfectionné dans ce pays, où s'élançait avec le plus d'éclat l'art architectural que l'on a appelé gothique, ogival et chrétien, mais que nous préférons appeler l'art chrétien, parce qu'il est de fait qu'il a été principalement inspiré par le sentiment chrétien, dont il est la plus sublime expression matérielle" (Bontempts 1868: 694).
[89] Craft secrets were often described as 'mysteries' (Applebaum 1992: 283).

Pugin's first clients were members of the Tractarian movement, led by John Henry Newman (1801-1890), John Keble (1792-1866), and Edward Pusey (1800-1882), which sought to revive and assert the Catholic identity of the Church of England through a series known as the *Tracts for the Times* (Binney and Burnman 1977: 95). Edgar Edmund Estcourt (1816-1884), a young Oxford graduate who later became the canon of St Chad's Cathedral in Birmingham, was one such Tractarian client who wrote a letter to Hardman in 1842 to enquire about a "chalice, chaste and good, to cost about £18 or £20 [...] of a good ancient ecclesiastical form" ([1842] 1977: 95). According to W.C Aitken's article on the *Early History of Brass and the Brass Manufactures of Birmingham* (1866: 540-541), Hardman's metal workers were like the medieval craftsman because their works were "labours of love" and a reflection of their personal "ingenuity" and superior "taste". The firm had "painstakingly" revived at least three key methods of medieval manufacture including saw-piercing, 'beating-up' and chasing (Aitken 1866: 538). The revival of these methods was described as a "necessity" since "three centuries of neglect" had caused the degeneration and "loss" of traditional craftsmanship (Aitken 1866: 538). Aitken's emphasis on the 'three centuries' of neglect is intriguing here as it suggestively echoes that of Franz Kugler (1808-1858), a German art historian, who declares in the second volume of his *Handbook of the History of Painting in Germany and the Low Countries* that for "three hundred years [...] the Reformation has endeavoured to destroy and annihilate all that preceding times had left of great and excellent [art]" (1846: 2)[90]. There is no evidence to suggest that Aitken had been directly influenced by Kugler, yet he may have been aware of the wider re-evaluation of the Reformation on the Continent since he begins his article by focusing on the "Nuremberg artifices" (1866: 537).

As well as the decline of traditional craftsmen following the Reformation, Aitken argued that mechanical inventions had particularly "intruded on the domains of art" and had subverted the "principles they were intended to advance" (Aitken 1866: 538). His report calls for the revival of the "old methods of working" as it argues that new technologies had dehumanized the individual work men by producing "monotonous" and "repetitive" designs (Aitken 1866: 538-539). Hardman may not have been aware of this article as he fused the medieval with more modern methods of manufacture (Eatwell and North 1994: 177). Many objects were cast or die-stamped,

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[90] Translated by Elizabeth Rigby (1809-1893), a leading German art historian, in 1846.

bowls of chalices spun using large industrial machines, and large quantities of brass tubing were brought in for staffs and rails (Eatwell and North 1994: 177). Hardman's metal-working techniques were indirectly criticised by the art critic John Ruskin several years later, when he wrote that metalwork should be hammered into form by the craftsmen, rather than produced by mechanical inventions since it is an "eminently natural" product (1878: 178).

Yet, Hardman's more modern, and no doubt more efficient metal-working techniques, were likely intended to help lower the cost of their products which had become increasingly expensive. In a letter of 1845 to Hardman, on the question of costs and rival competitors, Pugin wrote that an acquaintance of his had "told me about your things being so dear and said he was going to Coventry where Dr Ullathorne had got many of his candles at half price" ([1845] 2003: 435). Pugin's reference to Coventry here is a brief but important reminder that it was a key centre for the revival of medieval art which stuck both in his mind and his acquaintances (see Chapter Three). The particular Coventry firm referred to in this instance was probably that of Francis Skidmore and Sons as it was founded in the same year.

According to Aitken (1866: 182), Francis Skidmore entered the medieval metalworking business in 1845 as he had been influenced by a "powerful taste and sympathy with the revivalists". Skidmore was clearly familiar with A.W.N Pugin's *True Principles* (1841) as he revealed how metalwork might, under the skill of the craftsman, be "developed truthfully and usefully" during a lecture to the Architectural Association (1862: 233). In Skidmore's lectures, he also paid attention to the "natural treatment of metal" and investigated how the most "skilled artisans" were capable of producing great "variety" in their designs (1862: 233). While is tempting to suspect that Skidmore was responding to Coventry's local medieval craftsman here, there is little evidence to suggest that he sought to deliberately emulate their techniques and styles. Indeed, he was most likely responding to wider developments.

However, Skidmore appears to have emulated the naturalistic style of the medieval craftsman, by designing ecclesiastical ironwork with elaborate spandrels which represented curling branches and vines (Robinson 2017). Skidmore's designs were widely praised in contemporary church publications for revivifying, but also bettering, the metalworking techniques of the medieval

craftsmen. *Modern Churches*, for instance, claimed that we are especially "indebted" to Mr Skidmore for reviving the "artistic spirit" and "feeling" of the medieval craftsmen (1867: 43). Yet, it also suggests that he improved on the work of the medieval craftsmen as he had adopted their designs for modern gas fittings and lights (1867: 43).

In response to Skidmore's success, A.W.N Pugin appears to have encouraged John Hardman to expand their business to include stained-glass production. "I am scheming a stained-glass shop", he wrote to Hardman, but "this is only between ourselves" ([1845] 2003: 343). Pugin appreciated the beauty of stained glass for its imaginative associations and aesthetic qualities (see Chapter Three). The glowing hues of the stained-glass windows captured his attention and transformed his understanding of the medieval church interiors (see Chapter Three). Pugin's workshop is of particular interest here as it sheds greater light on the extensive networks between the English Midlands and the Catholic Continent, as we will now briefly explore.

In the 1850s, Jean-Baptiste Bethune (1821-1894), a Belgian architect and designer, visited Pugin's stained-glass workshop as he had long admired A.W.N Pugin's built and written work (Maury 2016: 43). Bethune first discovered Pugin's work through his English friend and mentor, George Mann (1804-18), who had sent him lithographs of his ecclesiastical designs and written publications (Maury 2016: 43). The two architects met at least four times as they bonded over their Catholic faith and their interest in the construction of Catholic edifices (Maury 2016: 43)[91]. In one of Pugin's last letters, he reveals that he was "beginning to work again" and had thought about Bethune's "altar for the nuns" ([1852] 2015: 517). The altar referred to here, remains unidentified but it may have been made in England and then sent abroad as Pugin added that "we are going to begin it immediately [...] it is <u>impossible</u> to send it to Belgium [Pugin's emphasis]" ([1852] 2015: 517).

Following Pugin's death, Hardman taught Bethune about the techniques of stained-glass production and authorised him to copy numerous designs as they had developed a close

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[91] There are twenty-six surviving letters between Bethune and A.W.N Pugin (Maury 2016: 45).

friendship (Maury 2016: 43)[92]. Hardman had an important influence over Bethune as only a few years later, in 1859, he set up a stained-glass atelier in the Prisenhonf in Ghent (Rambaut 2021: 13). The Prisenhof, literally meaning 'Princes Court', was a fifteenth-century walled castle which originally served as the official residence of the Counts of Flanders (Rambaut 2021: 13). Bethune's surviving diaries suggest that he sought to emulate Hardman's workshop by importing paints, brushes, antimony, and flux from England (Rambaut 2021: 10). Bethune suffered various technical problems in the early stages due to the complexities of stained-glass production, yet it also became one of the most important workshops in Ghent and prepared the way from other glass painters such as Joseph Casier (1852-1925) (Rambaut 2021: 10)[93]. Bethune also spread the principles of A.W.N Pugin through the Gilde de Saint-Thomas et de Saint-Luc [The Guild of Saint Thomas and St Luke], which he co-founded in 1863, with the art historian W.H James Weale (Maury 2016: 251). The Bruges-based guild brought a committed fraternity of Puginian architects and decorative artists together "for the study of Christian Antiquities and the propagation of the true principles of Christian Art" (1871: 1)[94]. In the guilds surviving *Bulletin*, they reveal that their members were involved in the preservation, study and conservation of medieval art and architecture (1871: 1).

As well as being associated with the Catholic faith, medieval guilds were also linked to ideas of community, co-operation, and social cohesion in the late nineteenth century (Mitchell 2012: 50-51). They were reinvented by leading reformers as a means to solve social problems and restore pride in the workers. A key example is John Ruskin's Guild of St George, which was conceived and inaugurated in 1871, with the aim of showing how the Englishman could co-operatively work together to "help the poor and the needy" (1882: 2). Ruskin's Guild followed the example of a medieval monastic order as he created quasi-feudal ranks for its members, who became known as 'Companions' or 'Delivering Knights' (Frost 2014: 4). At the apex was Ruskin, the

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[92] In the surviving correspondence between Hardman and Bethune, they discuss how they belonged to the same "community of feelings and faith" ([1854] 1906: 91). Bethune also appears to have been particularly close to the Hardman family as he found a place for one of Hardman's daughters in an English convent in Belgium (Maury 2016: 49).

[93] The first official assignment that Bethune received was for the execution of a stained-glass window depicting the Annunciation for the Congregation Chapel in Zottegem, commissioned by Florimond Van de Poele (1832-1875) (Rambaut 2021: 10).

[94] The original quotation is as follows: "Il est formé une Société pour l'étude des Antiquités Chrétiennes et pour la propagation des vrais principes de l'Art Chrétien" (1871: 1).

Master of the Guild, who could be deposed by a majority vote against him, but ruled like a dictator when he was in power (Frost 2014: 4). Next came the Companion Servants, who would devote themselves to administration, pastoral care of companions, and the overseeing of daily life (Frost 2014: 4). Companions Militants would undertake labouring work or work on a specific task set by the Master (Frost 2014: 4). The third and lowest companions were the Companions Consular, who remained in their own profession, but vowed to give a tenth of their income to the Guild (Frost 2014: 4). Ruskin's Guild has previously been criticised for being little more than a romantic, Utopian vision which largely played out inside his head and imagination (Hardy 1979: 80). This interpretation is to some extent true as it failed to attract wide support and membership as its leader was undermined by deteriorating mental health (Frost 2014: 4). However, it is also an inaccurate interpretation as the Guild was an important source of reference for other organisations and guilds, such as the Birmingham Guild of Handicraft.

Founded in 1890 by Arthur Dixon (1856-1929), the Birmingham Guild of Handicraft appears to have been based on the teachings of Ruskin's Guild of St George, as it similarly looked back to the Middle Ages as a Golden Age for craftsmanship and communal effort (Miller 2006: 175). Their motto, 'By Hammer and Hand', was a deliberate reference to the techniques of the medieval craftsman and reinforced how they avoided the use of industrial mechanisation (Miller 2006: 175). The Birmingham Guild also conveyed and circulated the ideas of the medieval craftsman through their hand-printed magazine, *The Quest*, the title of which suggestively brings to mind the idea of a medieval crusade or pilgrimage to a distant land (Codell 2016: 388). In the fifth number of *The Quest*, the magazine compares the ancient craftsmen's techniques and practices with the methods and approaches of 'our' modern builders (1896: 57). It suggests that while "our modern stonemasons" are "highly educated and skilled", we should look to the medieval craftsmen for guidance as they had a "distinct style and tradition" which was a product of their "personal interest" (1896: 57). The magazine goes on, questioning those who do "not recognise the difference between the look of an adzed beam and one turned out die square from a small mill" (1896: 63).

4.3 Wood Carvings and the 'Resuscitation' of the Carpenter's Guild

By the time that the English Midlands saw a revival of interest in medieval craftmanship, Coventry's medieval wood carvings were emerging into greater visibility in leading antiquarian journals, as there were growing concerns for their condition and appearance. The *Gentleman's Magazine*, for instance, published an article which brought attention to the "withered faces carved upon the beams" of Coventry's "houses of wood" (1894: 450). The author suggests that the faces withered over time as the inhabitants built more modern houses of "lath-and plaster" (1894: 450). Nonetheless, as noted in previous discussions, Coventry's medieval timber-framed houses could still be seen across the city and there was a revival of interest in their 'delicate' wood carvings (see Chapter One).

In Isabel Stuart Robson's article on *England's Oldest Handicrafts: Workers in Wood* (1899) she proposed that Coventry possessed a "mass of carved imagery and delicate images [...] on all sides" (1899: 344). In the roofs of Coventry's medieval houses, she goes on to suggest, "the hammer beams [...] showed the figures of angles gracefully supporting the timbers behind them on outstretched wings" (Robson 1899: 344). It is unclear which houses Robson was specifically referring to as she moves on to the carvings seen on the medieval timber-framed dwellings in Chester and London. However, her detailed analysis of the interior carvings stands out, as it suggests that she was seeking to provide a deeper and more complex view of the home for women. This may well have been the case as she still operated in an inherently gendered society, where the home was principally seen as the woman's natural domain (Verdon 2002: 196).

At this point, it is important to note that most women took part in antiquarianism in the contingent role of wives and daughters, as they were barred from joining the Society of Antiquaries until the early twentieth century (Hill 2021: 40). However, some were socially and intellectually independent enough to undertake solo projects, which were published and occasionally read on their behalf by men (Hill 2021: 40). Robson was the daughter of an Essex tradesmen, yet she was ultimately able to apply herself to antiquarian study as she was a gifted woman who first made her fortune writing popular romance novels.

Robson was unsurprised that Coventry possessed a 'mass' of carved imagery as she suggests that the Carpenter's Guild "rivalled the smith in prosperity and influence" (Robson 1899: 344). This was a fairly accurate assessment as Coventry's Carpenters' Guild was one of the largest craft guilds in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries as it had around 40 members (Phythian-Adams 1979: 102). The craft embraced the largest numbers of members as most secular building was of wood and there was a steady supply of timber from the surrounding forests (Phythian-Adams 1979: 102). Robson appears to have been eager to draw attention to the role and importance of Coventry's Carpenters' Guild as the primary purpose of her article was to focus on the "zenith of the woodworker's craft in England" (1899: 344).

Robson was not alone in her interest in Coventry's Carpenters Guild. In William George Fretton's paper on Coventry's *Memorials of the Fullers Guild* (1877), which explored the history of the Fuller's Guild[95] using original documentary evidence, he openly queried the reconstruction of the Coventry's Carpenters' Guild: "what is there to prevent the reconstruction of the Carpenters?" (1877: 45). Fretton was clearly serious about the revival of Coventry's medieval Carpenters' Guild, as he goes on to suggest that it that it would be "worthwhile considering whether their resuscitation and re-construction on a basis suitable to modern requirements, would or would not be advantageous to the trading interests of the day" (1877: 45). He makes a strong case for their reconstruction by noting that they were "effective in their operation [...] of trading" and fostered a "common bond of brotherhood" between master and workmen (Fretton 1877: 45-46). Fretton was right to suggest that Coventry's Carpenters' Guild had a close 'bond' as they heavily fined those that "tells scandals or tales that he can make no proof of" ([1446] 2002: 110).

The main reason why Fretton appears to have felt a sense of urgency to revive Coventry's medieval 'brotherhoods' was because there were frequent clashes between the City's employers and employees in the late nineteenth century. In 1860, the Report of the Committee on Trades' Societies recorded that Coventry's factory masters insisted on paying their workers weekly wages, by which the operative receive the same payment no matter the amount of work

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[95] The Fullers Guild was originally founded in the fifteenth century to honour the Nativity of Jesus Christ (Rosser 2015: 181). They washed, cleansed, sheared, and finished woollen cloths (Rosser 2015: 181).

produced, in order to monopolise the benefits of the larger looms (1860: 325). This was a blatant inequity as the larger looms required more skill and labour (1860: 325). It was also problematic for Coventry's traditional outdoor weavers, who retained their freedom by working from their own homes, as they could not compete with the more productive steam powered machinery (1860: 325). In order to protect their craft, they encouraged strikes and forced other weavers to revert back to payment by piece (1860: 325)[96].

Fretton's response to Coventry's Carpenters' Guild is also important as it suggests that he had been reawakened to the importance and value of the medieval craftsmen. This is highly likely as he openly calls for the "*dormant* fraternities [author's emphasis]" to "speedily revive" (1877: 46). Coventry's Carpenters' Guild had many fraternity feasts in Whitefriars' Monastery, according to Fretton, as he draws on several expenses receipts to illustrate how they dined on a variety of rich meats such as pig and beef (1871: 66). Fraternity feasts were occasions in which the guilds could display their wealth and prestige, but they were also designed to reinforce an idealised sense of community between members (Giddens 1984: 32). There is no evidence to suggest that that any individual or organisation revived the techniques of Coventry's medieval carpenters in the late nineteenth century.

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[96] The treatment of the Coventry weavers was not dissimilar to the exploitation of the Belgium lace-makers. Belgium lace-making was one of the most exploitative and oppressive industries as it relied heavily on child labour (Hopkin 2020: 53). Thousands of young girls were enrolled in so-called lacemaking 'schools' from the age of five where they were forced to work for ten, twelve, even fourteen hours every day before they could even consider their domestic duties (Hopkin 2020: 54). In a campaign novel directed against the schools, the Flemish writer Johanna Courtmans-Berchmans (1811-1890), railed against those who "by forcing them to labour well beyond their years and strength had transformed [...] golden youths into pale flowers bending towards the grave even in the morning of life" (1864: 67).

Figure 4.1 Nathaniel Troughton, *Pillar Posts* [digitally enhanced by the author. However, the drawing may remain difficult to interpret as it was produced using a light pencil], ca.1850-1860

Figure 4.2 Nathaniel Troughton, *Wood Carvings from Ironmonger Row, Coventry* [digitally enhanced by the author. However, the drawing may remain difficult to interpret as it was produced using a light pencil], ca.1850-1860

However, Coventry's medieval wood carvings were seen as being of transnational importance due to their quality and style. In the *Builder*, for example, it argues that "Rouen, Blois, and Coventry" all had carved "angle posts [which] were occupied by niches having statuettes in them" (1886: 569). These carvings not only reflected the "individual" craftsmen's "ideas" but were also the outcome of "careful artistic work" and "independent architectural control" (1886: 569). This comparison with the carvings seen in the medieval cities of Rouen and Blois is striking, as it brings to mind A.W.N Pugin's extensive taste-making journeys to the cities of Abbeville, Caen, and Coventry forty years earlier (see Chapter Two). Nevertheless, the *Builder* does not consider including any contemporary depictions of the carved angels and statues which survived on Coventry's timber-framed dwellings. Yet, we can be confident that they were the

focus of artistic attention in the nineteenth century as they were depicted by Nathaniel Troughton. In Troughton's topographical album, we can see the image of St Michael thrusting his spear into the head of a dragon on a timber-framed house along West Orchard (see Figure 4.1). In another pencil sketch, he depicts a hunting scene showing a man on a horse, with three dogs and a stag (see Figure 4.2). It is easy, perhaps, to understand why Coventry's medieval carvings were compared with those on the Continent as Troughton's sketches bears some resemblance to A.W.N Pugin's drawing of the carvings seen on the medieval houses in Rouen (see Figure 4.3). In the three drawings, we can see that all the carvings were extremely sophisticated, elaborate, and intricately designed. Nonetheless, there is no evidence to indicate that Troughton knew of Pugin or his drawings of medieval Coventry.

Figure 4.3 A.W.N Pugin, *Timber Details in Rouen* [digitally enhanced by the author as the original illustration is covered in dirt and pencil markings], 1836

By the 1890s, the wood carvings and statues in St Mary's Guildhall were similarly treated to detailed discussion in antiquarian magazines. The *Gentleman's Magazine Library*, for example, revealed that there were wooden carvings of the "effigies of the Almighty on His Throne, St Mary, St John, St George, and St Margarite [sic], and the symbols of the four evangelists" on the ceiling of the Old Council Chamber[97] (1890: 103). There are no surviving images of the carvings in the late nineteenth century, as far as I am aware, but we can argue that the article was fairly reliable as there are surviving photographs of the figures from the early twentieth century (see Figures 4.3 and 4.4). These photographs show that the carvings were attached to the ceiling and were in a good state of preservation.

One key reason why the *Gentleman's Magazine* may have focused on the carvings was because there was a revival of interest in the patron saints and mythological figures in the late nineteenth century. The story of St George, who often appears as a knight in armour, was revived and reintroduced in a range of popular literatures in order to show that the English nation was guided by patriotic duty and self-sacrifice (Collins 2018: 20). In George Alfred Henty's *St George for England*, for example, he portrays St George as a "chivalrous king" who helped create the "greatest empire in the world [...] around a small island" (1885: iii). Henty's study creates a strong and distinctly masculine impression of the British empire for young "dear lads" (1885: iii). Yet, it is also necessary to consider here that the carved figure of St George may have been seen as a negative and imposing symbol by those who had been subject to British colonialism and imperialism. This may have been a particular issue during the late nineteenth century as British soldiers had recently fought in the Afghan and Zulu Wars (1879) and the first Anglo-Boer War (1881) (Bryden 2020: 662). However, there is no documentary evidence to confirm that the carved figure was negatively interpreted or depicted.

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[97] The Old Council Chamber was used for meetings between the guild members (McGrory 2003: 63). The ceiling most likely featured the carved figures of St Mary, St John the Baptist, and God the Father in order to represent the guilds.

Figure 4.4 F.H Crossley, *Carved Figures of St George, St Michael, and the Virgin Mary, St Mary's Hall, Coventry* [digitally enhanced by the author. However, the image remains indistinct as the original photograph is quite poor], ca.1940

Figure 4.5 F.H Crossley, *Carved Figure of the Virgin Mary, St Mary's Hall, Coventry*, ca.1940

4.4 'Ravaged' Stonework and the Mysteries of the Medieval Craftsmen

While Coventry's medieval woodcarvings were emerging into greater visibility, nineteenth-century audiences also deliberately sought to uncover the city's ancient stone carvings, as they had been damaged and hidden by extensive post-medieval alterations. The interior of St Michael's Church became the focus of particular attention as its medieval mouldings had been "greatly obscured and damaged" by an "absurd accumulation of bow pews and galleries" (1870: 135). The parishioners were clearly aware that the church's medieval fabric had been obscured, as they commissioned the architect George Gilbert Scott to remove the pews and restore the interior in a "proper manner becoming the dignity of the church" (1871: 22). The phrase 'becoming the dignity' was not elaborated upon, yet it was most likely a reference to the period's vision of medieval craftsmanship as a 'dignified' art form which reflected man's self-expression and happiness (Donovan 2007: 47). Scott does not reveal if he sought to replicate the 'dignity' of St Michael's craftsmen and stone masons during his restoration work[98]. However, he may have admired and respected their craftsmanship as he had previously noted in his paper on the *Conservation of Ancient Architectural Remains* that the restoration of ancient buildings should be carried out in the "spirit of the old work" (1862: 43). Coventry's local antiquaries clearly appreciated Scott's removal of the bow pews and galleries as they suggested that it had helped bring the church's medieval carvings back into visibility. W.G Fretton himself appears to have been particularly pleased with the removal of the pews as he revealed that he could finally interpret and examine the original mouldings in their "full extent' (1880: 318-319).

Shortly after the removal of the box pews and galleries, Scott "thoroughly" cleaned the interior stonework of the "coatings of whitewash" and paintwork which had accumulated over the centuries (Fretton 1871: 22). He also removed the "vulgar plaster work of Cromwell's time" from the interior pillars and arches (Hawthorne 1870: 343). Scott's cleaning of St Michael's stonework was widely admired as it was seen to have played a key role in returning the church to its 'original' appearance as it "existed in the days of its founders" (Jaffray 1862: 111). Benjamin

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[98] Coventry had a small Masons Guild as the Leet Book records that it had only seven members by 1450 (Ingram 1981: 545). This was not uncommon as medieval masons were usually on the move, either voluntarily or by impressment (Applebaum 1992:283). Coventry's Masons' Guild was also particularly small as it was to all intents and purposes a timber-framed city, which was clearly reflected in the number of surviving timber-framed dwellings in the late nineteenth-century (see Chapters One and Two).

Poole was pleased with the removal of the whitewash as he proclaimed that the stonework had returned to its "primitive purity and simplicity" (1870: 135). Poole's statement is particularly noteworthy as it echoes the ideas of Friedrich Overbeck and further supports the argument that the reception of Coventry's medieval heritage was influenced by the Nazarene brotherhood.

In addition to the cleansing of St Michael's interior walls and mouldings, several medieval monuments were re-sited to "entirely different parts of the church", in order to protect them from the 'sweeping' away of "all the offensive things by which the interior had become disfigured" (Poole 1870: 135). The memorial brass of the draper Thomas Bond was most notably taken from "the floor" of the Lady Chapel and placed between two windows (Astley 1885: 30). The tomb of Julian Nethermyl, a wealthy medieval draper and Mayor of Coventry in the early sixteenth century, was likewise moved from the Drapers' Chapel into the Mercers' Chapel (Astley 1885). Nonetheless, many monuments were damaged and lost during the "general shifting" process (Poole 1870: 135). The loss of the ancient monuments appears to have particularly upset John Astley, a local antiquary, as he declared in the preface to his study on St Michael's memorial inscriptions that we have lost the "record of many a worthy citizen whose generous gifts are enjoyed by the needy of the city and parish" (1885). Astley was shocked by the removal of the monuments as he perceived them to be the "greatest evidence" to the "historian and genealogist" (Astley 1885). He also suggested that they were akin to "domestic records" which could be read by "each succeeding generation with reverence and interest" (Astley 1885).

Following the cleansing of St Michael's interior, local newspapers published several lengthy newspapers articles which focused heavily on the decayed state of St Michael's exterior. In the *Coventry Herald,* it was noted that the "eastern part" of St Michael's Church was "almost ruinous", with "large portions" threatening to fall away from the main structure (SPAB-CWK-2-C-1467). The poor condition of the church appears to have been attributed to the "effects of time" which had made many "ravages" on the "beautiful spire" (SPAB-CWK-2-C-1467).

In response to the poor condition of St Michael's Church, the *Coventry Herald* recorded that a team of "qualified" craftsmen and stonemasons were employed to restore the church before it collapsed (SPAB-CWK-2-C-1467). The main craftsmen involved in the restoration of St

Michael's were listed in the *Coventry Herald* as Mr John Thompson of Peterborough, Mr Tebbs, Mr Russell, Mr Gardiner and Mr George Webster (1888: 8). George Webster appears to have been well 'qualified' as he was employed as the Clerk of Works. This was an important position as the clerk of works is primarily responsible for overseeing the construction and maintenance of building works. They are also responsible for liaising with clients, inspecting the quality of building materials and undertaking regular site visits to identify defects in workmanship.

Webster himself appears to have undertaken regular site visits to Coventry as he produced a series of drawings of St Michael's tower, steeple and carvings in the late nineteenth century. He also produced two drawings of the statues of saints which survived in the upper niches of St Michael's tower, which are worth examining in detail here, as they suggest that there was a heightened artistic response to the loss and destruction of Coventry's medieval craftsmanship (see Figures 4.6 and 4.7). Amongst the saints included St George, St Michael and the dragon, St Andrew with a cross and a book, St Nicholas with an anchor and book, and St Anne with the Virgin as a child. Webster's drawings reveal that the statues had been severely damaged. The head of St Andrew is missing an eye, a large crack can be seen through the head of St Laurence, and the head of St Anne is shown without a mouth. It is highly unlikely that Webster purposefully omitted these details due to anti-Catholic prejudice, as he goes on passionately to declare in his accompanying notes that "time had made many great *ravages* in these remaining figures [author's emphasis]" (CA: PA2018/1/4).

The word 'ravages' is a significant terminology as it appears to have been commonly used in Catholic narratives to describe the destruction and mutilation of the medieval edifices on the Continent. W.H.J Weale (1832-1917), a Catholic artist, used the terminology in his *Restauration des monuments publics en Belgique: Mémoire* to denounce the loss and destruction of the Gothic monuments in Belgium: "Je ne suis pas le seul qui s'attriste de voir ravager les édifices où l'on fait des travaux, et disparaître les monuments de notre ancienne civilisation [I am not the only one who is saddened to see the buildings where work is being done ravaged, and the monuments of ancient civilization disappear] (1862: 5).

Figure 4.6 George R. Webster, *Ancient Figures from the Canopies of the Steeple of St Michael's Church, Coventry* [digitally enhanced by the author for clarity], ca.1880

Figure 4.7 George R. Webster, *Ancient Figures from the Canopies of the Steeple of St Michael's Church*, *Coventry* [digitally enhanced by the author for clarity]*,* ca.1880

Webster's interest in the stone carvings may have similarly been motivated by the revival of interest in England's patron saints. The figure of St George appears to have been well represented throughout Coventry as he was one of the most popular and important saints by the late fifteenth century (Ruddick 2013: 293). The rise of St George can be attributed, in part, to the devotional cult which worshiped and venerated him as a martyr for his refusal to renounce the Christian faith (Ruddick 2013: 293). Webster himself shows little interest in the cult of St George or the reasons for his prominence across medieval Coventry. Yet, it could be argued that he focused on the figure of St George as he wanted to project St Michael's Church as being a 'carrier' of Englishness and English identity.

The projection of St Michael's as a symbol of national identity appears to have become a key focus in the late nineteenth century as local newspaper articles argue that it was a national monument. According to the *Leamington Courier* (1888: 6), the architect Sir George Gilbert Scott Jr (1839-1897), reportedly declared that he looked upon the "church as a monument belonging to the people of England". He makes a key link between St Michael's Church and England's identity by declaring that it would be a "disgrace not only to the people of Coventry", but also the "whole nation" if the church was left to decay (1888: 6). Yet, perhaps even more importantly, the newspaper adds that the church was appreciated by prominent Nonconformists such as Mr W.H Wills[99], who suggested that he would be "glad to subscribe" to the rebuilding of the church (1888: 6). Willis's interest in St Michael's suggests that the church had different symbolic meanings for diverse groups and could unite the nation.

Leading architects may have also been motivated to present St Michael's as a symbol of Englishness as many Gothic cathedrals on the Continent were increasingly perceived as national landmarks. Cologne Cathedral, for example, was restored and completed in the late nineteenth century as it had been left unfinished since 1473 (Leerssen 2017: 103). The Cathedral's restoration was carried out according to the original plans and drawings which had been found by the Boisserée brothers in the early nineteenth century (Emery 2001: 12). Sulpiz and Melchoir Boisseré were leading German art historians who, we are told in Blanche Murphy's article *Glimpses on the Rhine,* had exhaustively "studied and worked amongst the existing [surviving]

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[99] Mr W.H Wills (1830-1911) was a Member of Parliament for Coventry between 1880 and 1885.

documents, treasuring every hint or allusion and tracing the whereabouts of this and that section" (1881: 470).

In Sulpiz Boisserée's *Histoire de description de la cathédrale de Cologne* [History and Description of Cologne Cathedral], he explains that he was drawn to the history and architecture of Cologne Cathedral because he perceived it be: "c'est le monument le plus grandiose, le plus imposant, le plus parfait de toutes les époques [the most grand, the most imposing, the most perfect monument of all ages" (1843: vii). The completion of Cologne Cathedral was widely celebrated as it was seen as an acknowledgment of German nation hood and cultural identity, which had long been perceived been as 'fragmented' (Leerssen 2017: 103). As the art historian Carl von Lützow (1832-1897) wrote, "what we older ones marvelled in our childhood as a gigantic fragment [...] now stands physically before our eyes in glorious consummation a far-seeing monument to national unity and power regained" ([1880] 1997: 18).

Cologne Cathedral appears to have been seen as the Germanic counterpart to St Michael's Church as they were often compared in late nineteenth-century educational magazines. For example, in the *Papers for Teachers*, it records that the towers of Cologne Cathedral were amongst the highest in the world as they measured "515ft 1 inch from the floor of the church" or "524 1 inch from the pavement of the cloisters" (1880: 262). The magazine then compares the towers of Cologne Cathedral with the spire of St Michael's Church as it was similarly perceived to be one of the "loftiest in the world" at "300ft" (1880: 262). The great height of St Michael's Church was clearly seen as a great source of pride and prestige as a surviving newspaper cutting reveals that one local newspaper had frequently "been asked [...] in our correspondence" about its proportions (CA: PA2409/2/10/8/2). Through the "kindness of Mr Webster", the newspaper was able to place "before our readers the exact height" which they maintained was around "295ft" (CA: PA2409/2/10/8/2).

Yet, in spite of Webster's interest in the height of St Michael's Church, he also suggests that its carvings had turned a "whitish grey" due to the effects of "weathering" (CA: PA2018/1/4). Weathering could have naturally changed the colour of stone over time, yet it is also important to recall here that Coventry was increasingly seen by local health boards as a polluted city (see

Chapter One). Coventry's pollution may have played a pivotal role in St Michael's changing appearance and caused the loss of much of its medieval fabric. Webster himself appears to have lamented the stone's "whitish grey" colour as he reveals that parts of the statues which had been protected from the weather, "bore traces of colour" and had originally been "richly painted and decorated" (CA: PA2018/1/4). Webster's use of the term 'richly' is striking as it echoes the language of the Romantic antiquaries, who, as we know from previous chapters, commonly used the term 'rich' to suggest that Coventry's medieval heritage was an organic manifestation of the City's local environment and people (see Chapter Two). It is possible that Webster purposefully drew on the language of the Romantic Picturesque as he adds that the craftmanship of St Michael's was also "peculiar", "irregular", and "interesting" (CA: PA2018/1/4).

Webster does not elaborate on where and why the stones were originally painted, as his notes were only intended to provide a brief overview of the appearance of Coventry's medieval buildings. However, it worth noting here that there were discussions about the connections between Coventry's medieval stone masons and painters in the late nineteenth century, as we will now explore. In 1895 Mary Dormer Harris (1867-1936), a local antiquary, produced a paper on the *Craft Guilds of Coventry* which argues that Coventry's medieval masons and painters formed a close "fellowship" by merging together in the fifteenth century (1895: 20). Harris's emphasis on the 'fellowship' of Coventry's craft guilds is noteworthy, as it not only evokes Fretton's interest in the City's medieval 'brotherhoods', but also suggests that she was helping to build a new lexicon of terminologies intended to develop the taste and sympathy for Coventry's medieval guilds. Harris' paper is of further importance as it reinforces how women were not only homemakers and wives, but also cultivated antiquaries who had a keen interest in Coventry's medieval past. Harris herself could focus on antiquarian study as she was from a wealthy family who encouraged her passion for history, languages, and educational learning (Leamington History 2015)[100]. Her paper on Coventry's craft guilds appears to have been well received since it was presented to the Society of Antiquaries (1895).

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[100] Harris read English Literature at Oxford University between 1866 and 1888 (Leamington History 2015). Although, she was unable to formally obtain her degree (Leamington History 2015).

Webster, of course, may have openly regretted St Michael's loss of colour as the vibrancy of the medieval past was increasingly contrasted with the 'brown' modern world. In the third volume of John's Ruskin's *Modern Painters*, for example, he portrayed the Middle Ages as the "bright ages" while the modern world was described as the age of "umber" (1856: 268). He goes on to underline the superiority of the colourful medieval past by suggesting that the new industrial world was one seamless mass of brown: "we build brown brick walls [...] because we have been blunderingly taught to do so and go on doing so mechanically" (1856: 258). Ruskin's *Modern Painters* was a highly influential publication as it was extensively reprinted and republished in the late nineteenth century. Nonetheless, Webster reveals that St Michael's statues were ultimately "replaced by new ones in white Hollington stone" (CA: PA208/1/4). It is unclear if the original statues were sold to a local citizen for building materials or simply left to decay in a nearby garden[101]. Yet, it is possible that they were stored in the crypt of St Michael's Church for safe keeping, as the *Reliquary and Illustrated Archaeologist* suggests that the new figures were modelled on the saints (1889: 116). The exact tools used to construct the statues are recorded in the *Coventry Herald*, which are worth quoting at length as they reveal that the nineteenth-century stone masons used more modern machinery and equipment:

> The stone which is to be used is being prepared for the builders at the canal wharf, to which it is brought in boats from Runcorn. A 25-horsepower portable engine is stationed on the canal bank, and supplies the motive power for the machinery, by which the stone is transformed from its rough state into smaller blocks with graceful mouldings. Two saws are erected, one a Cox's patent, which works horizontally, and another a Hunter's patent revolving saw. There is also a rubbing bed, and a machine for carving the mouldings and planning the surface, and the stones when finished are carted to the church (SPAB-CWK-2-C-1467).

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[101] The fourteenth-century statues on the West front of Lichfield Cathedral were similarly taken down in the nineteenth century and left in a nearby garden (Goring 1954: 27).

Figure 4.8 George R. Webster, *The Steeple of St Michael's Church, Coventry (under restoration)* [digitally sharpened by the author], ca.1880

As well as using more modern machinery to shape the new stones, contemporary drawings appear to show the church steeple enveloped in a web of iron scaffolding, which was only developed in the late nineteenth century (see Figure 4.8 and Appendix 2). The scaffolding was most likely made from iron as the *Coventry Herald* reported that it had a "light and graceful appearance" (SPAB-CWK-2-C-1467). The use of modern scaffolding and equipment to restore the church is surprising as there are examples of nineteenth-century craftsmen using medieval tools to restore and complete the Gothic churches on the Continent. During the completion ceremony of Cologne Cathedral, for example, the medieval construction crane which had been left on the Cathedral's half-finished south tower was used to add its final stone finial (Lenman 1997: 16). The use of the medieval crane was of great symbolic significance as it was perceived to have "darkly overtopped the masses of houses" like an "imposing ruin" for "three centuries" (Stieler 1888: 243).

On the whole, St Michael's restoration was well received and rarely criticised, as it was supported by a wide range of audiences and organisations. The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings appears to have taken an interest in St Michael's restoration as its members frequently asked for news on its progress and reception. In one note to the architect John James Stevenson, Thackeray Turner[102] asked for information on "St Michael's Church" during the early restoration works (SPAB-CWK-2-C-1467). Turner was clearly eager to find out more about St Michael's restoration as he asked Stevenson for information on the condition of the exterior pinnacles and tower at the time of their restoration (SPAB-CWK-2-C-1467). Stevenson appears to have been fairly impressed with the restoration as he revealed that "nothing had been lost" during the initial stages (SPAB-CWK-2-C-1467).

However, perhaps more importantly for this discussion, Turner wrote a short note to Stevenson informing him that the SPAB had taken "no action" against St Michael's Restoration Committee (SPAB-CWK-2-C-1467). The SPAB's lack of criticism was unusual as they often protested against the restoration of historic churches and monuments across the country as they viewed restoration as vandalism (Donovan 2007: 85). On one occasion they protested against the restoration of the north transept in Westminster Abbey (Donovan 2007: 76). They also tried to

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[102] Thackeray Turner was the secretary of the SPAB from 1885 to 1911.

prevent the restoration of the tombs and monuments already existing within Westminster Abbey as they maintained that they were part of the original fabric (Donovan 2007: 76).

It appears that SPAB raised no objections against St Michael's restoration because their informants argued that it would have been controversial and pointless. One anonymous informant deliberately discouraged the SPAB from protesting against St Michael's restoration by informing them that "any protest by the society against the works would be useless" (SPAB-CWK-2-C-1467). It is unknown how the informant knew that their protest would be 'useless'. However, Stevenson clearly agreed with the informant as he suggested that they could not publicly protest against the restoration as this may have turned the public against their "views" and played into the hands of the "other side" (SPAB-CWK-2-C-1467). The 'other side' was most likely a reference to St Michael's Restoration Committee, who not only guided the restoration works, but also played a central role in galvanising support for its completion.

Stevenson was most likely correct to suggest that the SPAB's objections would have been rejected, as St Michael's restoration was widely supported by the local population, who were extremely proud and protective of the works. Coventry's local newspapers may have been the greatest champions of the restoration as they frequently commented on its importance to the city and nineteenth-century craftsmen. The *Coventry Herald* was particularly proud of the restoration as they claimed that it was "something more to all concerned than a mere mechanical operation, it was a labour of love" (1888: 8). The phrase 'labour of love' has been seen in previous discussions and implies that the nineteenth-century craftsmen were re-building the church out of their devotion to God. The art critic John Ruskin may have particularly inspired the nineteenth-century craftsmen to restore the church out of their devotion to God as he argued that church building had nearly always been a "labour of love" and condemned those that took on artistic work simply as a means of making money (1849: 18-19). Ruskin's comments appear to have been influential as the *Church Times* reveals that the great cost of St Michael's was of little concern to Coventry's parishioners, who raised "no less than £20,335" in the "last six months of 1884" (SPAB-CWK-2-C-1467).

The *Church Times* was clearly proud of Coventry's local craftsmen as they similarly argued that they were effectively following in the footsteps of "twenty generations of men" and were reviving "all the mysteries" of their forefathers (SPAB-CWK-2-C-1467). Medieval crafts often had 'mysteries', or secrets, which were restricted to their guild members in order to ensure that they protected their trade (Cooper 2011: 35). The use of the word 'mysteries' here stands out as it creates the impression that the newspaper sought to heighten and stimulate their readers' curiosity for the Coventry's medieval craftsmen. It is highly likely that the nineteenth-century masons looked to the medieval craftsmen for guidance and inspiration, as we know from previous discussions that they were widely praised for their artistic individuality and personal creativity (see Chapter Two). The individual creativity of Coventry's medieval craftsman was clearly important as the *Coventry Herald* added that the "construction [...] of these noble edifices [...] depended upon each individual man [...] whether he worked at the bottom of the scaffold or at the crow's nest" (1888: 8). Mr Thompson's work appears to have particularly stood out as he was described as a "worthy successor" to the medieval craftsman (1888: 8). The Restoration Committee were pleased with Thompson as they "felt that he had not only done what he ought to have done, he had gone a step further, and had taken great personal interest in the work" (1888 :8). Thompson's 'personal interest' in the work suggests that he was following in the medieval craftsman's footsteps by infusing his spirit and passion for the building during its restoration.

Local newspapers were also supportive of St Michael's restoration as they commented on the crowds of people who had turned up to view its opening ceremony. The *Coventry Herald* was particularly enthusiastic about the ceremony as it reported on the "crowds of people" who had eagerly "assembled in the neighbourhood of the church to watch the operations" (1888: 8). The ceremony was clearly viewed as a significant historic event as the newspaper adds that "some people...perched on housetops" and climbed "on the battlements of Holy Trinity Church" to get as near "as possible" (1888: 8). The *Kenilworth Advertiser* echoed these statements by noting that the completion ceremony had been "anticipated" with great "interest" and "satisfaction" (1888: 6). It also proposed that the best vantage point to view the opening ceremony was "from the west-front" near the "present county hall" (1888: 6).

Interestingly, St Michael's completion ceremony was strikingly similar to the opening ceremony of Cologne Cathedral in the late nineteenth century. The opening ceremony of Cologne Cathedral was clearly similar as crowds of "enthusiastic" people were reported to have packed into the streets like "never before" (Leslie 1881: 113). The ceremony was likewise viewed as a significant historical moment as it was noted that "rarely has history been able to record such a triumph of devotion and persistency as the completion of the Rhenish cathedral" (Leslie 1881: 113). The similarities between the two ceremonies are important as they reinforce how St Michael's was increasingly seen as being in the same league as other great Gothic churches on the continent.

Nonetheless, it should be acknowledged here that Coventry's local newspapers occasionally published their readers' concerns about St Michael's restoration. In a letter to the *Coventry Herald*, one reader informed the newspaper that it was with "much regret" that they learned from "successive reports" that the "strength of the tower and spire" had been "impaired" by the addition of new masonry (PA1935/68). The reader also appears to have been concerned with the Restoration Committee's understanding of the word 'restoration' as they suggested that "there is some danger of an irredeemable blunder being committed, owing to some misconception as to what is meant by the word Restoration" (PA1935/68). The reader may have been concerned with the term 'restoration' as there were intense debates regarding the differences between 'restoration' and 'conservation' in the nineteenth century (Jokilehto 2010: 74). These debates were instrumental in helping to further define conservation practices and principles (Jokilehto 2010: 74). However, Coventry's pride for the restoration works clearly trumped conservation principles and practices as there was little further mention of the reader's concerns.

4.5 'Heavenly' Stained Glass Windows and John Thornton's Workshop

As Coventry's medieval wood carvings and stonework emerged into greater visibility, there was a heightened interest in Coventry's medieval stained-glass windows, as they had reportedly lost much of their colouring and iconographic power by the late nineteenth century. In a surviving newspaper clipping of 1893, entitled *Coventry and Some of its Stained Glass*, an anonymous correspondent implied that the colour of the stained-glass windows in Holy Trinity had "faded

away in the light of those great religious and political convulsions" (CA: PA1935/75/1). The 'fading' of the stained-glass windows is a powerful image as it reveals how Coventry's local citizens had come to openly the regret the iconoclasm of the sixteenth century. The destruction of Coventry's medieval visual arts heritage clearly triggered a deeply emotional response from the correspondent as they go on passionately to remind the reader that Coventry had possessed a "wealth of ancient painted glass [...] which we know in former times enriched and adorned the many glorious religious houses in this once powerful home and centre of the church" (CA: PA1935/75/1).

Coventry's importance as a centre for 'ancient painted glass' became the focus of increasing attention in the late nineteenth century as leading designers sought to understand their techniques and influence in greater depth. In John Westlake's *History of Design in Stained and Painted Glass* (1881), he argues that Coventry was amongst several urban-based painting "schools" in the fifteenth century. Each school had a distinctive style which was reflective of the local areas geography, prosperity and craftsmen (Westlake 1881: 26). Coventry's school was very large and successful as it reportedly produced some of the finest glass in the country (Westlake 1881: 63-64). The 'school' label has more recently been described as "inappropriate" when applied to medieval artistic production, since it evokes the image of an Athenian academy with rows of glaziers and their apprentices faithfully sitting at their benches (Marks 2011: 199). Nonetheless, Westlake was certainly right to suggest that Coventry was a key centre for stained-glass production as we know the names of several glass-painters (Marks 2011: 201). One master glazier was John Thornton of Coventry, who most likely ran workshops from Coventry since the surviving cartulary of St Mary's Priory reveals that he had leased a property in St John Bridges in 1413 for sixty years (Scott 2011: 227)[103].

Thornton has recently been accredited as the original glazier of the North window in St Mary's Hall (Rudebeck 2007: 30). However, late nineteenth-century newspapers suggest that there was a need to bring Thornton's art back into the spotlight as he had long been undervalued and

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[103] Thornton's style of glass can also be found at sites across Nottinghamshire, Warwickshire, Leicestershire, and Shropshire, which suggests that he had a large workshop which was capable of producing great quantities of glass (Scott 2011: 227).

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overlooked. Writing to the *Kenilworth Advertiser* on the subject of the North window in St Mary's Guildhall, an anonymous but clearly well-informed correspondent pointedly noted that it had been "a moot point with many who are conversant" with these questions "how much of the ancient glass art left for us in Coventry [...] is the work of this great citizen" due to the "great destruction effected at the Reformation" (1893: 6). It is impossible to know if the correspondent was a Catholic, but the fact that they openly comment on the destructive impulses of the Reformation reinforces how there was deep sense of the loss for Coventry's medieval past.

In September 1892, the *Coventry Herald* revealed that the North window had lost much of its rich colour since a "few unhappy monarchs have legs of plain, transparent glass" (1892: 8). The newspaper appears to have particularly lamented the insertion of the plain glass as it notes that the window had originally been designed in an array of "beautiful" colours which had been "imposing" (1892: 8). It also suggests that the window had lost its iconographic power as its "figures, arms and emblems" were "in a much-confused state" (1892: 8). It provides a detailed account of the window's damage by adding that some monarchs had "exchanged their legs with their neighbours", others were "helplessly turning out their toes", and some were "standing in attitudes more suggestive of Guy Fawkes" (1892: 8). The muddled arrangement of the kings greatly distressed the newspaper as it goes on to condemn the windows "mutilation", yet it also appears to have stimulated deeper discussions about Thornton's skill as a stained-glass artist, since the article adds that when the North window was first exhibited its "effects were no doubt harmonious [yet] time is a mocker as well as a destroyer" (1892: 8).

Thornton's workshop became the focus of transnational attention in the late nineteenth century, as German chemists sought to understand the techniques and styles of the medieval glazier through more scientific analysis. In 1891, Friedrich Stohmann (1832-1897),[104] and Bruno Kerl (1824-1905)[105] suggested in *Theoretische, Praktische und Analytische Chemie* [Theoretical, Practical and Analytical Chemistry] that Thornton's workshop improved the quality of stained glass: "In England, there were many glass painters, including John Thornton [who] rapidly

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[104] A leading German chemist at the University of Leipzig.
[105] A German metallurgist and chemist.

improved the quality of glass from Coventry (1891: 1361).[106] Thornton's workshop was clearly of great interest to the foreign chemist as *Theoretische, Praktische und Analytische Chemie* was extensively republished. This is perhaps not surprising, of course, as we know from the first half of this chapter that there was an extensive network of stained-glass craftsmen on the Continent who looked to the English Midlands for guidance and inspiration in the late nineteenth century. These extensive networks doubtless played a pivotal role in bringing Coventry's medieval past and visual arts heritage to new audiences in the late nineteenth century.

Nonetheless, there is no evidence to suggest that Thornton's actual workshop was re-created or rediscovered during this period. Yet, it seems that there were many leading stained-glass artists and antiquaries who were anxious to ensure that the glass in the North window was authentically restored by returning to the techniques and practices of the medieval craftsmen. In a letter of 1895 to W.G Fretton, who may have been contacted as he had long been sympathetic to Coventry's medieval architectural and visual arts heritage, the Secretary for the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings asserted that the Society was "strongly of the opinion" that the surviving glass fragments which had been taken out of the North window should be restored in a local "workshop" (SPAB-CWK-2-C-1483). It is likely that they wanted to restore the window in a traditional handicraft 'workshop' because leading art critics, including William Morris (1834-1896), condemned the society that "set our slave to the machine" ([1884] 2012: 315). What Morris is suggesting here is that only when the modern craftsmen was as free from the capitalist factory systems like his medieval counterpart could he produce meaningful art. Morris could not tolerate machine-made glass or mechanical imitations of medieval glass since he argued that "glass is especially an art of the middle ages [...] any departure from the medieval method of production in this art with only lead us astray" (1892: 247).

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[106] The original quotation is as follows: "In England gab es früberer Glasmaler, unter anderen John Thornton Qualität des Glases verbesserte sich von da ab sebr rasch von Coventry" (1891: 1361).

Figure 4.9 T.J Grylls, *Key plan Showing the Arrangement of the Figures and Shields in the North Window*, 1893

Figure 4.10 T.J Grylls, *List of the Coats of Arms in the North Window* [digitally enhanced by the author for clarity. The paper has faded in sections over time], 1893

According to the *Coventry Evening Telegraph*, the restoration of the North window was given to Thomas John Grylls (1845-1913), a leading stained-glass artist who had worked on a range of Gothic cathedrals and churches[107] across the country (1893: 3). Grylls had been specifically chosen by the Corporation of Coventry, who had reportedly "awoke just over a year ago [in 1892]" to the necessity of restoring the "fine old window" (1893: 3). The term 'awoke' here is noteworthy as it was, perhaps, the first time that the awakening of interest in Coventry's medieval heritage had been directly acknowledged and openly praised. There is no surviving documentary evidence, as far as I am aware, to suggest that Grylls restored the glass by returning to Coventry's medieval modes of manufacture. However, he appears to have perceived the window to be of great importance as he produced a detailed plan showing the arrangement of its figures and coats of arms (see Figures 4.9 and 4.10). Like many of his contemporaries, Grylls

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[107] Including Rochester Cathedral, St Giles' Cathedral, and Auckland Castle.

clearly lamented the windows extensive rearrangement during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as his plan records that only "fourteen shields remained at the time of the Restoration" (CA: CCA/3/1/3928). Many shields, he regretfully adds, had also been added since the publication of Dugdale's *Warwickshire* (CA: CCA/3/1/3928).

Grylls appears to have treated the window with great care and respect as one correspondent to the *Kenilworth Advertiser* declared that Thornton would be proud of his work: "if the old master could see it [the window], how his heart would rejoice to know that so remote a generation had lovingly and faithfully restored and cared for the works of his hands" (1893: 6). Interestingly, the restoration of the North window also encouraged the correspondent to longingly look back to when medieval Coventry was a paradise to skilled artisans, builders, and architects:

> As I stood, a few days ago, watching the work men sort up the kings, ready to
> place and fix them in their proper panels in the great north window of
> Coventry's ancient Guildhall [...] I could not refrain from thinking what a
> perfect little paradise the old city must have been to architects and builders as it
> is no doubt was also the regular home of all descriptions of skilled artificers and
> workers in wood, stone, and metal, and particularly stained glass (1893: 6).

While this quotation ties neatly in with our previous discussions about the revival of interest in Coventry's medieval stone and wood craftsmanship, the use of the word 'paradise' recalls the Romantic antiquaries vision of medieval Coventry as the earthly embodiment of the Heavenly City (see Chapter Two). The correspondent does not reveal if they were aware of the Romantic antiquaries, who encouraged their readers to view medieval Coventry as the City of God by drawing attention to its lofty church spires (see Chapter Two). However, it appears that they were not the only person to suggest that Coventry had been a heavenly place for the medieval stained-glass artisan. Five years earlier, in November 1888, one correspondent to the *Coventry Herald* recalled that "Coventry must had seemed like a little *heaven* below to the glass painters [author's emphasis]" (1888: 7). This vision of Coventry as a 'little heaven' and 'little paradise' is significant as it suggests that Coventry's newspapers were seeking to build and expand upon the taste for the Gothic past. What is also significant about this particular article is that it was entitled

Godiva's City. This was a direct reference to the "courageous" Lady Godiva, who, according to legend, rode a horse completely naked through the streets of Coventry (1888: 7). Lady Godiva's story is worth briefly focusing on before we conclude this chapter, as it was part of a carefully constructed vision of the medieval past in Victorian England.

4.6 Lady Godiva and the Making of Coventry's Identity

Godiva was the wife of Leofric, the Earl of Mercia, who reportedly rode a horse naked through the streets of Coventry in the eleventh-century in order to persuade her husband to abolish an oppressive tax that he had opposed upon its citizens (Donough 2003: 7). Her story was often revived in the late nineteenth century as she was seen as a champion for the common people, and, at the same time, as a model for the modern woman (Donough 2003: 81). In Abraham Honeyman's 1895 *Coaching through Merrie England*, he takes his readers on a journey back to Merrie England[108], where the "beautiful Lady Godiva" fought back against "unjust oppression" and "desperate conditions" (1895: 201). In Honeyman's vision of the medieval past, Godiva emerges as an emblem of selflessness, beauty, and virtue (1895: 201-202). He uses her story to encourage the reader to take their own romantic journey to Coventry, where, as he enthusiastically notes, the city re-enacted her ride "every seven years" (1895: 201-202).

At the same time, Lady Godiva became a frequent subject of Victorian visual art (Clarke and Day 1982: 12-15). Painters, wood carvers, engravers, sculptors, and weavers were increasingly drawn to her legend as it entered the national framework of English folklore (Clarke and Day 1982: 14). In David Gee's 1861 painting of the Godiva procession, Godiva is depicted sitting gracefully on a horse in front of St Mary's Hall and St Michael's Church, which suggests that her legend had become entwined with Coventry's medieval architecture (see Figure 4.11). The armoured knight alongside her, holding the flag of St George, similarly helps build a romantic and chivalric impression of the medieval past.

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[108] Merrie England refers to an idyllic or utopian vision of England. It was a place where if there were battles, betrays, and gruesome murders, there was also a happy ending for anyone who deserved a romantic death (Hill 2011: 133).

Figure 4.11 David Gee, *The Lady Godiva Procession,* 1861

Nonetheless, Godiva's procession also sparked a fierce backlash from Catholic audiences. In the *Life of Mother Margaret Hallahan*, for example, the author explains that she was disgusted by Godiva's procession as she perceived it to be a mockery of the Corpus Christi celebrations: "[The Godiva procession] is disgraceful in its character [as] it is the modern substitute for those solemn processions of the Blessed Sacrament which were formerly celebrated with unusable solemnity in this city" (1869:112). Godiva's nakedness particularly displeased the Catholic

community as the author of *Mother Margaret Hallahan* argued that it gravely offended the "public sense of decency" and encouraged immoral behaviour (1869: 112).

In response to the Godiva pageant, Margaret organised a rival procession which focused on the celebration of the Virgin Mary. An image of the Virgin Mary, adorned with "flowers and surrounded by young girls", was pulled along in cart through the streets of Coventry (1869: 122). Such a thing as a "procession of Our Lady had not been witnessed in England", as the author points out, "since the overthrow of religion" (1869: 113). "Religious images like these were still rare in this country, and such expressions of devotion had not as yet been revived as yet among us" (1869: 113). Quotations like these are useful reminders of how Marian iconography had been one of the most important images in the Middle Ages, but also one of the severest casualties of the Reformation (see Introduction). In Chapter Five, we will return to Godiva's legend as we consider how it was used by postcard publishers to build a much more mythical and more romantic image of St Mary's Hall.

4.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has sought to provide a more interconnected view of the reception of Coventry's medieval guilds, artisans, and craftsmen in the late nineteenth century. One key finding is that Coventry's medieval guilds were seen as an exemplar of fraternity, social unity, and fellowship. Leading antiquaries sought to revive their bonds of brotherhood as they perceived them to be useful and important for modern society which was experiencing severe unrest. The resuscitation of the Coventry Carpenters' Guild, in particular, appears to have been especially important as their wood carvings were viewed as a tangible reflection of their genuine thoughts and talent.

A second, although no less significant discovery, is that there was a renewed sense of appreciation for Coventry's medieval stone masons in the 1880s. The nineteenth-century craftsmen involved in the restoration of St Michael's Church clearly respected their medieval predecessors as they appear to have wanted to revive their spirit, artistic creativity, and individualistic talent. The rediscovery of Coventry's medieval stone masons is also demonstrated

by a revival of interest in their carvings of the patron saints, which were used to build a more appealing and more romantic view of the City's medieval past. The carved figure of St George was particularly key to constructing this vision as he was seen as a symbol of nationhood. Yet, we have also discovered that there were other legendary figures, such as Lady Godiva, who were similarly revived and reintroduced in to portray medieval Coventry as a place of romance and chivalry.

Third, this chapter has underlined how Coventry's medieval stained-glass became the focus of significant artistic interest in the late nineteenth century, as it was seen as a tangible reminder of the City's talented and highly skilled glass painters. The North window in St Mary's Hall was treated to particular attention as it was connected to John Thornton, who this study has brought into great visibility in order to demonstrate how medieval Coventry was a leading centre for glass-painting. His workshop was closely bound up with Coventry's identity and there were clear attempts to follow in his footsteps by devoting great care to the restoration of the North window.

However, this chapter has also revealed that there was a deep sense of loss for Coventry's medieval craftsmen and craftsmanship in the late nineteenth century. The destruction of Coventry's medieval craftsmanship was directly attributed to the destructive impulses of the Reformation and triggered a deeply emotional response from a range of individuals. This is evidenced by the fact that they deployed the terms 'ravaged', 'mutilated' and 'destroyed' to describe Coventry's medieval wood carvings and stained glass which were clearly perceived to be of national and transnational interest. In the fifth and final chapter of this thesis, I shall explore why and in what ways, Coventry's medieval art and architecture became the focus of international attention by drawing on a range of previously unseen and undocumented early twentieth-century picture postcards.

Chapter Five: Coventry's Medieval Heritage in the Age of the Picture Postcard

5.1 Introduction

In the previous four chapters, we have discovered that there was a network of antiquarian scholars who fuelled a powerful interest in Coventry's medieval art and architecture. They stimulated, heightened, and shaped the taste for Coventry's medieval heritage during the nineteenth century by drawing on a specific lexicon of picturesque terminologies. This chapter aims to build on previous discussions by uncovering how Coventry's medieval heritage was consumed, disseminated, and circulated beyond antiquarian networks by analysing a plethora of undocumented picture postcards between 1900 and 1920.

Previously, adherents of a more traditional, fine art focused history had regarded picture postcards as ubiquitous, cultural detritus (Mendelson and Prochaska 2010: xi). The German art critic Walter Benjamin (1892-1940), for example, was one of the earliest critics to dismiss picture postcards as life's ephemera because of their wide spread prevalence and simple messages ([1935] 1970: 299)[109]. Benjamin was highly sceptical of picture postcards as he dismissed them as degraded images which had destroyed the "aura" of original art works by virtue of their mechanical production ([1935] 1970: 299). This interpretation is partly accurate as picture postcards were relatively inexpensive images which could be easily disposed and reproduced on mass (Pyne 2021: 7). Historical estimates suggest that six billion postcards passed through the Royal Mail between 1902 and 1910, which is generally considered as the postcard's golden age (Pyne 2021: 7).

Nonetheless, Benjamin's writings have come under recent scrutiny and interrogation, as leading historians have posed new questions about the uses of reproduction and the impacts of reproducibility. In their introduction to *La reproduction des images et des textes* [Reproducing Images and Texts], for example, Kaenel and Bell critique Benjamin's work by questioning the extent to which images and texts have been reproduced since the Middle Ages (2021: x). They

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[109] Phrases such as "fine weather here", "arrived safely", "love to all" and "having a good time" were especially common on picture postcards (Holt 1978: 42).

substantially revise Benjamin's work by proposing that different modes of reproduction inform not only our access to images, but also our ways of seeing and understanding the wider world (Kaenel and Bell 2021: x). This chapter similarly revises Benjamin's work by exploring how picture postcards were powerful carriers of nationalist propaganda and used to build a more nostalgic vision of Coventry's medieval past.

Another core objective of this chapter is to illuminate how picture postcards of Coventry's medieval buildings crossed far beyond the borders of Warwickshire. It sheds new light on why postcard publishers, such as Evelyn Wrench and Raphael Tuck, printed their views of medieval Coventry on the Continent by focusing on their markings and stamps. This chapter often draws comparisons with the postcard publishers in the German lands, France, and Italy in order to frame the interest in Coventry's medieval heritage. However, it also illustrates how Coventry's medieval heritage was used to challenge German nationalism and propaganda in the early twentieth century.

The chapter similarly develops new knowledge on how and why female audiences collected picture postcards of St Mary's Hall and St Michael's Church during the early twentieth century. It brings previously 'unheard' female voices into the limelight by offering a close and detailed reading of their messages. Mary Dormer Harris's compendious 1911 guidebook, *The Story of Coventry*, is analysed throughout this chapter in order to demonstrate how female tourists were encouraged to develop expanded encounters and experiences with Coventry's medieval past. However, it should be noted here that the chapter has not ignored how male tourists and writers responded to Coventry's medieval heritage.

Moreover, this chapter links with earlier discussions by exploring how postcard publishers portrayed Coventry's medieval buildings as the organic manifestation of the local environment. It argues that leading postcard publishers sought refuge in Coventry's medieval buildings and ruins as they were concerned by the growth of new industrial centres. St Mary's Cathedral ruins, as this chapter shows, were particularly important to postcard publishers in search of spiritual solace and refuge during the early twentieth century.

The final section of this chapter explores how picture postcards often conveyed a deep sense of loss for Coventry's medieval past. It argues that they were particularly concerned by the fading of the stained-glass windows in St Mary's Hall and Holy Trinity Church as contemporary guidebooks perceived them to be a tangible reminder of medieval craftsmen and practices. The chapter goes on to suggest that the postcard publishers were encouraged to focus on Coventry's vanishing medieval art and architecture because they were Catholic sympathisers. It explores how twentieth-century guidebooks made a play for Catholic audiences and continued to build the taste for Coventry's Catholic art using key terminologies.

5.2 Carriers of Nationhood and Propaganda

In the early twentieth century, postcards bearing views of local towns and villages became widely available, as they were seen as the ideal vehicle for nationalistic propaganda (Fraser 1980: 42). One of the earliest British postcards companies was Evelyn Wrench of Haymarket, London. In Wrench's autobiography, *Uphill, The first Stage in a Strenuous Life* (1934), he recounts his early uphill struggle to produce the "best series of postcards in England" for prospective tourists (1934: 81). Wrench was driven by a fierce sense of nationalism as he excitedly goes on to add that he would "select only the best photographs [...] employ only the most up-date methods of salesmanship [...] devise special packets [...] and focus on the chief sites in Britain" (1934: 81- 83). Coventry's medieval skyline appears to have been important to Wrench's 'Buy British' campaign as he produced a picture postcard of the 'Three Spires' (see Figure 5.1 and Appendix 2). It is difficult to determine if the postcard became a best seller as Wrench's autobiography offers little detailed insight into the exact quantities produced. However, it is highly likely that the card was sold thousands of times, as he records that they had "over four thousand customers" and a monthly turnover of five figures (Wrench 1934: 121-122). Wrench's picture postcards had clearly become a cultural and social phenomena as he adds that they were in such demand that they were "choked by a plethora of orders" (Wrench 1934: 115-122).

Picture postcards bearing views of medieval churches were, of course, becoming increasingly common in the early twentieth century as they appear to have been closely bound up with ideas of nationhood and nationalist propaganda. At Notre-Dame de Reims, tourists could remember

their visits by purchasing different views of the whole cathedral, its sculptured saints, and even views of the medieval gargoyles (Schor 1992: 225). The prolific imaging of the cathedral suggests that the French postcard publishers were proud of their medieval past and wanted to promote a more comprehensive vision of their cityscape on the international stage. Wrench's postcard creates a similarly 'comprehensive' and unified vision of Coventry's medieval past as it bears some resemblance to Wenceslaus Hollar's *Prospect of Coventry* (see Figure 5.2). However, it may have been inspired by more recent descriptions in early twentieth-century guidebooks. Mary Dormer Harris's 1911 *Story of Coventry*, which, to date has been largely neglected by scholars, was one of the earliest guidebooks to assist the "sight-seer" in identifying "the historic sites" and "historic buildings" across Coventry (1911: vii). The publication was clearly intended as a guidebook which could be slipped into the tourist's coat pocket as it only measures 11cm (width) by 17.5cm (length) and 2cm (thick). It also contains a fold-out map, drawings of the principal sites, and engaging descriptions of the historic sites across the City. Harris may have had the foreign 'sight seer' in mind as it was published as part of a *Medieval Town Series*, which included many other great Gothic cities on the Continent, such as Nuremberg, Bruges, Cologne and Rouen.

Figure 5.1 Evelyn Wrench, *The Three Spires, Coventry*, ca.1900-1920

Figure 5.2 Wenceslaus Hollar, *The Prospect of Coventre* [digitally sharpened by the author], 1656

One of the first sites that Harris focused on was the three spires as she gives a scrupulously detailed description of their appearance in the opening section of her guidebook: "the three spires remain yet, and give greeting to all who approach Coventry, dominating the flat midland country for many a mile, changing their relative position as the spectator moves, and their colour in the shifting lights" (1911: 1). If the tourist made their journey from the south, Harris suggests that they could view the "proud pyramids" over the "flat fields of Stoneleigh Road" (1911: 4). This was the most "common view" of the spires, although she adds that the "nearness" of Greyfriars spire somewhat "dwarfs the rest" (Harris 1911: 4). Harris appears to have been highly sensitive to needs of the sight-seer as she suggests that those who "possess indomitable physical and mental energy" should "ascend the S. Michael's spire for the view's sake" (1911: 317). She records the opening times of the church and encourages her readers "to have an opera glass" so they could "linger over a charming effect, a boss, inscription or even painted windows" (Harris

1911: 317)[110]. Portable travel accessories, including opera-glasses and small knapsacks, were often recommended in nineteenth-century guidebooks in order to help the tourist have expanded and developed encounters with a particular medieval building (Simpson 2021: 150). In W.H James Weale's 1859 guidebook, *Belgium, Aix-la Chapelle-Cologne*, he provides a lengthy section on the appropriate "outfits" for the traveller to the medieval past (1859: xvi-xvii). His recommended accessories included: a "portmanteau, which should not exceed 27 inches in length by 15 in breadth and 13 in height; a macintosh [sic], or waterproof coat 2, and a pair of goloshes 1; 3 or 4 straps for umbrellas, books, and small parcels (Weale 1859: xvi)[111].

Like Weale, Harris was encouraging her readers to develop expanded responses and encounters with Coventry's medieval heritage past. Early twentieth-century tourists may have followed Harris's suggestions as contemporary reviews of her guidebook were extremely complimentary. The *Geographical Journal*, for example, argued that Harris's guidebook was worthy of being included within the *Medieval Town Series* as she brought England's 'fourth' medieval city into greater visibility:

> There are few provincial towns possessed of a more interesting and fertile
> history than Coventry, once the fourth city in this kingdom [...] It therefore
> finds an appropriate place in this well-known series, and its story is effectively
> told and illustrated [...] the value of this book is [also] enhanced [by the fact that
> it serves as] a memorial [to] antiquity (Anon 1912: 60).

The quotation above is an important reminder of Coventry's status, wealth, and power in the later Middle Ages. The other three medieval cities mentioned by the reviewer are not discussed or elaborated upon as their principal objective was to provide a series of short reviews (1912). However, it seems certain that they were referring to London, York and Bristol as they were amongst the wealthiest cities in the fourteenth century (Walters 2013: 61). Postcard publishers

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[110] St Michael's Church "closes at 5 o'clock in summer" and "4 o'clock in winter" (Harris 1911: 317). The "other churches" close at "4 all year round" (Harris 1911: 317).

[111] W.H James Weale also suggests that the tourist should bring "a polyglot washing-book, in ordering which be careful to state the language required and if for a lady or gentleman; a scent-bottle; a small pocket telescope or a powerful double opera-glass (1859: xvi-xvii).

clearly sought to build a comprehensive, and more intriguing, view of Coventry's medieval skyscape as they depicted it during different times of the day. The firm of Charles Worcester, for example, produced a 'moonlight' postcard of the medieval spires (see Figure 5.3 and Appendix 2). Moonlight views were typically intended to stimulate night-time conditions and were created by painting a large white disc in the sky (Holt 1978: 52). The 'moons' in the views often look a little too round to be considered credible, yet a great deal of effort went into making the views look more authentic (Holt 1978: 52). Shadows were added, windows would be lit up in bright lights, and the chill night air was replicated by adding white mist (Holt 1978: 52). Many figures in the views would also be shown wearing evening dress, silk hats, long black coats, and white silk mufflers (Holt 1978: 53).

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Figure 5.3 Elmer Keene, *The Three Spires, Coventry*, ca.1900-1920

Figure 5.4 William Henry Bartlett, *The Town Hall, Brussels* [digitally sharpened by the author], 1837

The 'moonlight' postcard of the Three Spires, originally designed by Elmer Keene (1853-1929), may have been 'fake' as many windows appears to be artificially brightened and illuminated. Yet it also creates a powerful, and almost unearthly, impression of the medieval churches by illuminating them with the moon's rays. It also closely fits Britton's description of the 'heavenly' moonlit views of the Gothic churches in the second volume of his *Cathedral Antiquities* (1814), which is worthy quoting at length here at it draws attention to the imaginative associations of the medieval past:

In the twilight of evening, or when the moon is about forty-five degrees above

the western horizon, and displays her silvery face amidst solemn azure and

fleecy vapours, then the effect is still more awful and impressive; the

enthusiastic spectator is riveted to the scene; his mind wanders in reveries of

delight; and his enraptured imagination 'darts from heaven to earth, from earth

to heaven', in rapid and daring flights (1814: 67-68).

There is no evidence to suggest that Keene was directly inspired by Britton's quotation. Yet he may have been familiar with Britton's apprentice, William Henry Bartlett (1809-1854), who made many delicate moonlit views of the Gothic buildings in Ghent and Antwerp for Professor Nicolaas Godfried Van Kampen's *The History and Topography of Holland and Belgium* (1837). In the preface to the *History and Topography of Holland and Belgium*, Kampen explains that nearly all the sketches are architectural as the two countries "produce few of the grand or sublime characteristics of nature" (1837: iv). In W.H Bartlett's 'moonlight' sketch of the Town Hall, Brussels, he shows the fifteenth-century building illuminated by the moons rays (see Figure 5.4).

Bartlett was apprenticed to Britton at the tender age of thirteen (Ross 1973: 7). Britton followed A.C Pugin's example by taking in pupils so that he could train them to make the sketches and architectural drawings which he needed to embellish his publications (Ross 1973: 7). Bartlett produced sixty-seven engravings for Britton's *Picturesque Antiquities of the English Cities* (1830), which also included views of Coventry's medieval buildings by local artists (see Chapter Two). Bartlett's early sketches for the *Picturesque Antiquities* exhibited his talent as an architectural draughtsman and doubtlessly influenced his treatment of the Gothic architecture on the Continent. Indeed, it perhaps not unreasonable to suggest that his reception of the great medieval cities in Bruges, Antwerp, and Ghent was influenced and informed by Coventry's medieval heritage.

Another key point to consider about Keene's 'moonlight' postcard of Coventry is the almost complete absence of the industrial city. There are no automobiles, no smoking chimneys, no large industrial factories with hundreds of workers and no motorised tramways. These omissions

are important as they strengthen the idea that Coventry's identity and image remained firmly situated within the past until the early twentieth century. Indeed, it was clearly perceived to be a fundamentally Gothic city as the eye of the viewer is drawn to the medieval churches, which dominant the skyline.

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Figure 5.5 Tuck and Sons, *Ford's Hospital, Coventry* [digitally sharpened by the author], ca.1900-1920

Raphael Tuck and Sons were another leading postcard manufacture who claimed in their *Catalogue* that they published a series of 'Oilette views' of England's most "picturesque spots" and "most charming subjects" for the tourist (1903). 'Oilettes' can be defined as reproductions of real oil paintings produced by a range of artists such as Walter Hayward Young (1868-1920), Henry Wimbush (1858-1943) and Charles Flower (1871-1951), and John Heyerman (Willoughby 1992: 79). Ford's Hospital appears to have been seen as one of the "most charming" buildings in the country as it was depicted in the forefront of a picture postcard (see Figure 5.5). The artist responsible for depicting the building is unknown as the firm neglected to record their name, studio, and trademark on the postcard. This was not uncommon as the postcard publishers were usually in such a rush to keep up with the public's demand for new designs that they neglected to credit their artists (Willoughby 1992: 83). Nonetheless, the artist in question may have been Charles E. Flower (1871-1951) as he was responsible for producing the views of many other medieval cities and buildings, such as Westminster Abbey (Holt 1978: 57).

Figure 5.6 Tuck and Sons, *Butcher's Row, Coventry* [digitally sharpened by author], ca.1900-1920

Figure 5.7 Anon, *Ye Olde Curiosity Shoppe, Coventry* [digitally sharpened by the author], ca.1900-1920

Harris's guidebook confirms that Ford's Hospital was an important destination, by providing a lengthy discussion on its "beautiful black and white" features (1911: 321). Tuck's does not depict the building as a black and white timbered house, however, but instead chooses to show the building with deep red timbers. The difference in colour is important as it suggests the firm were seeking to build a more colourful and vibrant view of Coventry's medieval past for the

picturesque tourist. Oil paints may have been specifically chosen to amplify this vision as they appear to almost 'glow' and shimmer with colour in the light. The warm 'glow' of the paints similarly creates the impression that the postcard publishers nostalgically looked back to the medieval period as a place of colour and depth.

Tuck and Sons also produced a picture postcard of Butcher's Row (see Figure 5.6). Butcher's Row, along with Ironmonger Row, were demolished in 1936 to make way for Coventry's growing motorcar and engineering industries which employed thousands of people across the City (Webb 2018: 643). Nevertheless, Tuck's appears to have seen the street as a predominately 'medieval' in character and appearance as there are no modern vehicles in the postcard. They also show the timber-framed houses in a range of bold and vibrant colours, which not only excite the viewers visual senses, but also reinforce how they were seeking to build a more colourful and brighter view of the medieval past. Picturesque tourists may have been able to obtain Tuck's postcard, and indeed other picture postcards of medieval Coventry during their visits, as a contemporary photograph appears to show a shop keeper in Little Butcher Row[112] selling several postcards on a revolving stand (see Figure 5.7). The photograph is further intriguing as it shows a large 'Old Curiosity Shoppe', with open windows, and distinctive carved beams on its side elevation. The exact items sold in the shop appear not to be recorded in any contemporary newspaper advertisements or catalogues. However, it is tempting to suspect that it may have sold Coventry's medieval woodwork and carvings as 'souvenirs', due to the street's close proximity to many key tourist destinations.

5.3 The German Lands and Crossing Boundaries

By the early twentieth century, picture postcards of Coventry's medieval architecture transcended far beyond the nation's boundaries and borders. Wrench's picture postcards of Coventry's medieval skyscape, for example, almost certainly crossed into the German lands as they are marked 'Printed in Saxony'. The name of the Saxon firm is omitted on the postcards presumably because of the limited amount of space. Yet, it is highly likely that Wrench looked to the firm of Stengel & Co, a Dresden-based German printing company, as they dominated the

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[112] Little Butcher Row was adjacent to Butchers Row.

postcard publishing business in the twentieth century (Holt 1978: 153). Stengel & Co were pre-eminent amongst the postcard publishers as they operated from a large factory in Bärensteiner Straße, Dresden, which is depicted on a surviving 'General Instruction' prospectus for their English-speaking customers (see Figure 5.8). The prospectus is split into ten sections which provide their customers with instructions on colour schemes, titles, time of delivery, quantity, and photographs. In their section on Colour Schemes, for example, they instruct their customers to mention the "principal colours when ordering their cards" (The Postcard Album 2010). The colour schemes would be attended by the firm as "far as the different processes of printing will allow" (The Postcard Album 2010). Stengel & Co's factory employed fourteen to twenty-two litho-stones to achieve subtle coloration (Undivided Back Postcards n.d).

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Figure 5.8 Stengel and Co, *Kunstanstalt Stengel & Co Limited*, ca.1900-1910

Wrench himself most likely visited Stengel's factory as he claimed that he toured the "leading printing firms in Dresden" as he admired the "experience and technical knowledge" of the German postcard publishers (1934: 81). Germany dominated the postcard publishing industry as new printing techniques were developed which enabled German photographers and postcard publishers to produce more faithful pictures (Holt 1978: 35). Almost every town in Germany had its own card bearing two, or three, pictorial vignettes of key local landmarks (Holt 1978: 35). The cards were typically labelled 'Gruss Aus' (Greetings from) and were produced in a variety of colours to attract the viewers eye (Holt 1978: 35).

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Figure 5.9 Eduard Hölzermann, *Köln a. Rh*, *Dom Südseite* [digitally sharpened by author], ca.1912

Figure 5.10 Evelyn Wrench, *St Michael's Church, Coventry* [digitally sharpened by author], ca.1900-1920

Stengel and Co may have circulated Wrench's postcard of Coventry's medieval skyscape as their prospectus adds that they reserved the rights for reproduction: "We accept orders only with the understanding that the right for reproduction of the photographs, drawings etc. has been obtained by the firm placing the order" (The Postcard Album 2020). The reproduction of Wrench's postcards may have been useful to the German printers as they could illustrate their talent and

skill to potential customers and new audiences. Wrench himself suggests that German printers were eager to impress their customers as they were "meticulous" and would "not pass" his postcards until they were "quite sure" (1934: 89). Interestingly, Stengel and Co may have also reserved the rights to reproduce views of Oxford and Cambridge, since they published various picture postcards of their medieval churches and buildings[113].

Another key point to consider is that Wrench's postcards bear striking resemblance to German picture postcards, as we will now explore through a brief comparison. In Eduard Hölzermann's postcard of Cologne Cathedral, postmarked 1910, the cathedral is shown as landmark building against a blue skyline (see Figure 5.9). It appears to have been carefully studied and depicted as we can clearly see its key architectural features. Wrench's postcard of St Michael's Church is remarkably similar to the postcard of Cologne Cathedral as it is similarly shown as a kind of landscape in itself (see Figure 5.10 and Appendix 2). The Church almost completely fills the postcard with its lofty spire and tower and stands dramatically against a cloudy blue skyline. The similarities between the two postcards also extend to the text as they both use tall, thin, spidery writing to label the churches.

Wrench may have modelled his postcard on 'foreign' examples in order to demonstrate how England's medieval heritage equalled that on the Continent. There was clearly a sense of competition with the German postcard publishers as leading magazines of the period challenged British manufactures to produce picture postcards which could rival those of the German printers (Holt 1979: 10). The *Pall Mall Magazine*, for example, argued that "Britain can do as well as the German [postcard publishers] and their very beautiful productions should stimulate their production" (1901: 1). Wrench himself clearly felt a sense of competition with the German nation as he mocked them for being "obsessed by the consciousness of their own destiny" (1934: 74). Not only had they "all the confidence of successful youth", Wrench adds with a touch of bitterness, but they also perceived themselves to be the "greatest nation in the world" (1934: 74).

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[113] Trinity College European Postcards Collection, which is one of the few archives that appears to have a systematic collection of postcards, retain many postcards of medieval Oxford and Cambridge by Stengel and Co. Stengel and Co similarly reproducing paintings by the Old Masters, including Rembrandt, Titan, and Carlo Dolci. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore why Stengel and Co were looking at the Old Masters, but it possible that their picture postcards were intended for high-end art collectors and dealers.

Wrench also needed to undermine the German printers as he claimed that his "chief aim in life" was to see the "expansion" of the British Empire (1934: 39). The Gothic past appears to have had a key place in Wrench's vision of Empire, as he produced a range of picture postcards of 'all' the key medieval churches across the country, including York Minister and Lincoln Cathedral. The domestic Gothic style appears to have similarly important to Wrench's vision of Empire as he produced several picture postcards of the surviving medieval timber-framed dwellings in Chester and Southampton. There is no documentary evidence to suggest that Wrench's postcard of St Michael's Church was deliberately sent to overseas colonies in order to 'expand' the British Empire. However, it is highly likely that the postcard had at one point been negatively interpreted, as they were mass produced using mechanical technologies. St Michael's Church may have also aroused some hostility overseas as it carried the image of St George and the Dragon, who had long been connected with military crusades and medieval conquests (see Chapter Four).

Wrench may, of course, have seen direct parallels between St Michael's Church and Cologne Cathedral as he extensively toured Germany during the opening years of the twentieth century. In his autobiography, he traces his journeys from Oberammergau to Schandau, then from Hochstein north, to Dresden and Leipzig (1934: 79-81). He similarly made his way to "Prague and to Sächsische [...] just over the Austrian border" (1934: 79). Coventry was almost certainly on the route to many other great Gothic capitals as it was treated to detailed discussions in German guidebooks and travel literatures. Karl Baedeker (1801-1859) was a leading German guidebook publisher who produced travel guides of all the great medieval cities on the Continent, including Cologne, Nuremberg, and Rothenberg (Hagen 2016: 88). Coventry was portrayed as an important destination as his firm provided a lengthy description on its medieval churches, guildhall, almshouses, and timber-framed dwellings (1906: 267). St Michael's Church, for example, was viewed as one of the most important buildings as it was described as a "noble specimen of perpendicular architecture" which was amongst the "highest parish churches in England" (1906: 267).

Baedeker's, like Harris, similarly recommended that the tourist should take a number of items on their visits to help them fully enjoy their encounters with St Michael's Church (1906: xxii). One

of the most essential items was "strong and well tied boots" since the tourist would be constantly on their feet (1906: xxii). The guidebook also recommends a "light waterproof, a stout umbrella, a couple of flannel shirts, a pair of worsted stockings, slippers [and] the articles of the toilet" (1906: xxii). Wrench himself may have been aware of these recommendations, and Baedeker's account of Coventry, as his autobiography argues that "Baedeker was a great luminary in my world" (1934: 34).

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Figure 5.11 Raphael Tuck and Sons, *Coventry, Ford's Hospital,* ca.1900-1920

Figure 5.12 William Henry Bartlett, *Part of the Town Hall, Ghent,* ca. 1830

Nonetheless, Wrench was not the only postcard publisher to produce views of medieval Coventry on the Continent. Tuck and Sons produced a series of 'Silvervette'[114] postcards of Ford's Hospital, Bablake's Hospital, Priory Row, and St John's Church which are marked

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[114] Silverette postcards were intended to give the appearance of a metal postcard, which were seen as novelty in the early twentieth century (Holt 1978: 135).

'Bavaria'. The Bavarian firm responsible for printing the Silverette series is unknown as Tuck's original records, such as their day-to-day history and correspondence, were destroyed during a bombing raid in November 1940 (Apkarian-Russell 2001: 20). However, Tuck's most likely turned to the Bavarian-based printers as they became renowned for their high-quality printing processes and techniques (Apkarian-Russell 2001: 20). Tuck's Silverette postcard of Ford's Hospital appears to have been produced during the day time as there are no 'moons' or stars above the medieval almshouse (see Figure 5.11). However, it bears some resemblance to Bartlett's moonlight view of the Town Hall in Ghent, as it similarly has an almost luminous appearance (see Figure 5.12). The luminous glow of the postcard creates a spiritual, and almost transcendent ambience, and strongly suggests that the firm was seeking to build on Coventry's image as a heavenly city (see Chapter Four). Tuck and Sons may have been aware of Bartlett's visits to the Continent as they had lived in Germany for several years in the nineteenth century (Eliassen 1995: 47).

Tuck's postcard may have become the stimulus for a renewed interest in Ford's Hospital on the Continent, as I have found another picture postcard of the almshouse which was sent to a Miss Yvonne in Hamoir, Belgium (see Figure 5.13). This particular postcard is, admittedly, just outside the timeframe of this thesis as it was sent on the 13th of June 1921. Yet, it is worth mentioning here as it underlines how the image of medieval Coventry was consumed and disseminated far beyond the borders of Warwickshire. The sender of the postcard suggests that they visited the almshouse due to its historic importance as "an almshouse for very old men and women" (see Figure 5.14). Nonetheless, they may have been more interested in its pictorial qualities as they incorrectly declare that it was "Built in 1159" (see Figure 5.14).

Figure 5.13 Boots the Cash Chemists, *Ford's Hospital, Coventry*, ca.1900-1910

Figure 5.14 Boots the Cash Chemist, Reverse of the card featuring *Ford's Hospital*, *Coventry* [digitally enhanced by the author as the writing remains difficult to read], ca.1900-1910

Harris's guidebook may have made the foreign sight-seers voyage to medieval Coventry much easier, and much smoother, as it includes a fold-out map showing the principal medieval buildings and railway station (see Figure 5.15). Rail travel became an important vector of nation-building in the nineteenth century as it enabled new audiences to rediscover key medieval sites across the Continent (Simpson 2021: 154). W.H James Weale, for example, made considerable use of the railway networks between London and Belgium in order to visit the Northern Gothic cities (Simpson 2021: 154). In Weale's *Belgium, Aix-la Chapelle-Cologne* (1859), he encourages his readers to make use of the new rail networks by including railways schedules and plans. He even includes a fold-out map showing the entire route network across Belgium and the Rhine (Weale 1859). Harris's guidebook is further useful as it demonstrates how the rediscovery of Coventry's medieval heritage had become more interconnected and joined-up by the early twentieth century. Indeed, tourists were even encouraged to follow a specific route around

Coventry as Harris's guidebook lists the key medieval buildings and sites that the tourist could see when walking from the station:

> In coming from the station [look at] the spire of Christ Church [...] which is close before you [...] those who wish to keep up illusions [...] should avoid modern Hertford Street [...] It is best to go right on down Pepper Lane [...] until you come down to St Michael Churchyard [...] here stood the cathedral and the two great parish churches [...] what first strikes the spectator on entering [St Michael's] is the great size of the building [...] the width of the arches and slightness of the pillars displays the technical skill of the architects of this period [...] It is a church where a large congregation may be comfortably housed [...] (1911: 319-324).

Here again, Harris's guidebook offered the sight-seer expanded encounters with Coventry's medieval heritage by encouraging them to use their imaginations and senses. They could see the 'actual' buildings, but also experience them through an imaginative lens. Whitefriars Monastery was also included on Harris's route as it had a "fine monastic cloister" and "fifteenth-century groaning" (Harris 1911: 318). However, Harris adds that only the most hardened travelled should visit the building as it was used as a "depressing" workhouse (1911: 317-318). The use of the monastery as a 'depressing' workhouse most likely explains why there are no picture postcards of its surviving cloister or interior features.

Figure 5.15 Mary Dormer Harris, *Map of Coventry* [digitally enhanced by the author for clarity. However, the map may remain difficult to read as the original map is slightly dirty from use], 1911

5.4 Female Tourists and the Revival of Lady Godiva

Whilst Harris's guidebook encouraged more developed responses to Coventry's medieval buildings, it may have been specifically written for female travellers, as she often draws attention to the key women who played an important role in their construction. In one section, she confidently asserts that "Women have always been to the fore in Coventry; the names rise of S. Osburg, Godiva, Isabella, Margaret of Anjou, of the virgin sisters Botoner, who built the spire [St Michael's], and of Joan Ward, the first Coventry Lollard martyr" (1911: 319). Harris was particularly interested in Lady Godiva as she devotes a whole chapter to her legend, noting how

she was closely associated with Coventry's medieval buildings and principal historic sites (1911: 14-23).

In one paragraph, she reveals that Godiva's image had been found in the stained-glass windows of Holy Trinity Church (1911: 20). She also provides a detailed account of Godiva's ride through the streets of Coventry by analysing surviving historical documents, including two medieval documents formerly in the possession of the Smiths' company, and Dugdale's *Warwickshire* (1911: 18-23). Harris was, of course, undoubtedly motivated to draw greater attention to the contributions of women as she was active and committed suffragist throughout her life (Leamington History Group 2015). She played a prominent role in the Leamington and Warwick branch of the NUWSS (the National Union of Women's Suffrage Society) in order to achieve votes for women through non-violent means, and regularly wrote to local newspapers to petition for women's suffrage (Leamington History Group 2015).

Figure 5.16 Valentine and Sons, *St Mary's Hall, Coventry*, ca.1900-1920

Figure 5.17 Valentine and Sons, reverse of the card featuring the image of *St Mary's Hall, Coventry* [digitally enhanced by the author as the writing remains difficult to read], ca.1900-1920

Like Harris, early twentieth-century postcard publishers were clearly aware of Godiva's aesthetic and cultural appeal, as they produced a range of postcards under her name. The firm of Valentine's and Sons, for example, published a highly detailed picture postcard of St Mary's Hall from Bayley Lane in their 'Godiva Series' (see Figure 5.16 and Appendix 2)[115]. In doing so, they were not only encouraging female audiences to perceive the hall as a place rooted in legend and romance, but were also presenting the medieval hall as a site associated with women's history. Local female audiences appear to have admired Valentine's postcard, as the reverse of the card reveals that it was sent from 'Emily' to a Mrs Wagstaff in Berkswell, Coventry (see Figure 5.17). This is perhaps not surprising as postcard collecting was seen as a predominately feminine activity as it provided women with an opportunity to publicly display their taste, personal interests, and individuality at a time when there were few other avenues available

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[115] This particular postcard was inserted on the front cover of Monckton's *Coventry: Medieval Art, Architecture and Archaeology in the City and Its Vicinity* (2011) (see Introduction). However, it was not discussed or described, as the authors were principally focused on the early construction of Coventry's medieval architecture.

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(Lethbridge 2022: 144). James Douglas (1867- 1940), a prominent London journalist and critic, made clear the association between femininity and postcards in a lengthy article: "The postcard has always been a feminine vice. Men do not write postcards to each other. When a woman has time to waste [...] she writes a postcard" (1909: 379). Douglas further trivialised the connection between femininity and postcard collecting, by suggesting that women "drag" their husbands into shops, where they are "forced to choose dozens of sticky [...] postcards with tissue paper over their ghastly colours" (Douglas 1909: 379). Nevertheless, this quotation also draws attention to the increasing importance of postcard collecting by women as both a new cultural and social phenomenon.

Figure 5.18 Valentine and Sons, *St Mary's Hall, Coventry*, ca.1900-1920

Figure 5.19 Valentine and Sons, *The Kitchen, St Mary's Hall, Coventry* [digitally sharpened by author], ca.1900-1920

Postcard collecting had developed to such an extent amongst women that one commentator in *The Illustrated Standard* likened it to a disease which had overtaken the entire country: "The illustrated postcard craze, like the influenza, has spread to these islands from the Continent [...] Young ladies [...] have been known to fill albums with missive of this kind from abroad" ([1899] Staff 1979: 60). Valentine clearly recognised the importance of the female collector as their *Godiva Series* also included a picture postcard of St Mary's courtyard, which shows a glimpse of elaborate carved panelling through a half-open door (see Figure 5.18). This was a typically romantic picturesque composition since it shows the space from one area into another. It was also exactly the composition that Payne Knight attributed to the essential criteria of the Gothic, to "dim and discoloured light diffused [...] through unequal varieties of space, divided but not

separated [...] thus effects more imposing have been produced, than are, perhaps to be found in any other works of man" (1805: 177).

Moving inwards, Valentine's *Godiva Series* also included a picture postcard of St Mary's Hall Kitchen, which may not seem like a traditional tourist destination due to its dark and cramped appearance (see Figure 5.19). However, it may have been made into a postcard, as early twentieth-century guidebooks presented it as a place of pageantry and ceremony. Harris's guidebook clearly encourages her readers to view the Kitchen as a place of ceremony and pageantry by noting that it was "full of memories of the great feasts which were once cooked there and whence dishes were borne smoking hot up the stairs to the Hall above" (1911: 330). Valentine may have similarly recognised that the Kitchen belonged to a much older, and more mythical part of history, as they include a painting of Lady Godiva on a white horse. However, this also reinforces how St Mary's Hall was associated with women and women's history. The medieval hall may have indeed been viewed through a gendered lens as male tourists had previously been barred from entering the Kitchen. Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864), an American tourist, recalled in his *Our Old Home* that he was restricted from viewing St Mary's Kitchen and its "great [medieval] fireplace" by an elderly woman (1900: 220). Hawthorne does not elaborate on the reasons why he was stopped from entering and viewing the kitchen as he acknowledges that he was admitted into the Hall.

Valentine and Sons were not the only postcard publisher to play a pivotal role in encouraging female audiences to visit and explore Coventry's medieval buildings. Tuck's picture postcards of medieval Coventry, for example, were clearly intended to appeal to female audiences as they often feature women and young children. In their picture postcard of the Lychgate Cottages, we can see a small child wearing a pretty red dress, holding a woman's hand (see Figure 5.20 and Appendix 2). The woman and children may have been purposely depicted walking towards the viewer, in order to create the impression that they felt comfortable and confident in their medieval surroundings. The cottages may have been seen as suitable subjects for the female gaze since they had been leased as private homes, a woman's purported natural domain, since the sixteenth century (see Chapter One). The sender of the postcard appears to confirm that the Lychgate Cottages were suitable and desirable for female audiences as the address on the reverse

reads to a Miss Mary Burnett on the 19th of January 1905 (see Figure 5.21). It is impossible to determine Miss Burnett's exact response to the Lychgate Cottages due to a lack of documentary evidence. However, it is highly likely that she was an avid collector and 'owner' of Coventry's medieval past, as I have found two picture postcards of No.22 Bayley Lane and Bablake's Hospital on eBay which were also sent to her address.

Figure 5.20 Raphael Tuck and Sons, *Priory Row, Coventry* [featuring the Lychgate Cottages], ca.1900-1920

Figure 5.21 Raphael Tuck and Sons, reverse of the card featuring the Lychgate Cottages, *Priory Row, Coventry* [digitally enhanced by the author as the writing remains difficult to read, ca.1900-1920

On the 21$^{st\,of}$ January 1905, Mary Burnett was sent a picture postcard of Number Twenty-Two Bayley Lane, St Mary's Guildhall, and St Michael's Church (see Figure 5.22). It is important to note here that Number Twenty-Two Bayley Lane was used as an antique dealers in the early twentieth century, as Harris's guidebook depicts it with notices in its windows stating, "Wanted to buy antique" and "Wanted Chairs and Tables" (see Figure 5.23). It is difficult to now know the types of antiques chairs and tables sold in the shop due to the lack of documentary evidence. However, like the Old Curiosity Shop in Little Butcher Row, they may have sold Coventry's medieval heritage to the picturesque tourist or art dealer. This seems highly likely as there was a growing market for Gothic woodwork and carvings in the English Midlands (see Chapter Three). Harris herself may have been seeking to turn her readers into Gothic collectors as travel guidebooks often featured notices for purveyors of rare (but affordable) medieval antiquities,

ecclesiastical vestments, and objets d'art (Simpson 2021: 152). Weale's guidebook of *Belgium*, for example, contains a notice for several medieval metalwork shops in Cologne (1859: 3). One such shop, called Mr Leer's, sold "carefully executed [...] specimens of medieval sculpture" and had "recently published casts of the statuettes [...] of the shrines of the 3 Kings in Cologne" (1859: 3).

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Figure 5.22 Raphael Tuck and Sons, *St Mary's Hall, Coventry*, ca.1900-1920

Figure 5.23 Albert Chanler, *Oriel Window and Stocks, St Mary's Hall*, 1911

Travel literatures similarly contained long and elaborate notices for antique collectors (Müller 2017: 425). In Johanna Schopenhauer's 1831 guidebook, *Ausflug an den Niederrhein und nach Belgien* [Excursion to the Lower Rhine and Belgium] she characterised Belgium as a "country of collectors" for "nearly everyone possesses a place in his house where he keeps works of art of all kinds in a sanctuary" (1831: 249)[116]. Schopenhauer visited several important collections during

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[116] The original quotation is as follows: "Belgien ist noch immer, wie das benachbarte Holland eben auch, das Land der Sammler und der sogenannten Liebhabereien. Fast jeder [...] besitzt in seinem Hause irgend ein heimliches Plätzchen, wo er Kunstgegenstände aller Art, die ihm besonders lieb sind, zu seinem und ihm gesinnter (1831: 249).

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her time in the City of Antwerp, including Florent van Ertborn's German Primitives (Müller 2017: 428)[117]. There is no contemporary evidence to suggest that Harris knew of Schopenhauer, yet she was clearly part of a broader network of women who consumed and interpreted the medieval past[118].

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Figure 5.24 Raphael Tuck and Sons, *Bablake Hospital, Coventry*, ca.1900-1920

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[117] Surviving visitor books also reveal that the collection was visited by the German art historian, Gustav Freiderich Waagen (Müller 2017: 428), who would go on to analysis St Mary's Hall Tapestry at the request of George Scharf (see Chapter One).

[118] In the nineteenth century, there were a number of female collectors who sustained the collections of their deceased husbands, including: Madame Stevens in Antwerp, 'Veuve' Gilhoul in Brussels, Madame 'la douairière', D'Hane De Steenhuyse in Ghent and Madame Wuyts in Antwerp (Müller 2017: 429). Other female collectors included Madame Ullens in Antwerp and Madame Vervier in Ghent (Müller 2017: 429).

Figure 5.25 Raphael Tuck and Sons, reverse of the card featuring the image of *Bablake Hospital, Coventry* [digitally enhanced by the author as the writing remains difficult to read] ca.1900-1920

On the 23$^{rd \, of}$ January 1905, Miss Burnett was sent a postcard of Bablake's Hospital (see Figure 5.24 and Appendix 2). Bablake's Hospital may have been seen as a suitable site of interest for female audiences, as it had historically served as a place of relief and charity, which became one of the key means of defining respectable femininity in the late nineteenth century (Nead 1988: 196). Many women were involved in charitable institutions as they enabled them to function beyond the home and to learn new skills (Nead 1988: 196). Tuck's may well have had female, middle-class tourists, in mind as the postcard features a smartly dressed woman with tailored clothing. Nonetheless, the sender reveals that they admired the image of Bablake's Hospital due to its "pretty" aesthetic qualities, which they were clearly intending to discuss with Mary as they add that they would tell her "all about it" when they returned home from their trip (see Figure 5.25). Interestingly, Miss Mary may have been a young girl as the messenger affectionally adds that they were glad she was a "good little pet" for her minders. Mary's young age is an important detail to consider here as it reveals that Coventry's medieval almshouses were used to shape and influence the next generations taste.

Furthermore, Coventry's medieval skyline was also perceived to be appealing for female tourists, as Wrench's postcards of the Three Spires were collected and preserved by women. On the 9th of January 1904, for example, a 'Miss Ground' was sent Wrench's picture postcard of the Three Spires (see Figure 5.26). Miss Ground may have been familiar with Coventry's medieval churches as the messenger, who signed his name as Arthur, simply wrote "here is one of the three spires" and "I hope you will like it". It is difficult to know the ratio between men and women senders due to the lack of documentary evidence. However, it is clear that Wrench's postcard was well liked as it continued to be posted for several years. On the 17th of February 1906, Miss Maria Allison was sent the picture postcard of the Three Spires (see Figure 5.27). The messenger, who signed her name as 'Alice', reveals that she sent the postcard because she felt a sense of fondness for "dear old Coventry". She boasts about her visit by using the well-known phrase, "Don't you wish you were here", and suggests that Miss Allison collected picture postcards of the Three Spires by asking after her "collection".

Figure 5.26 Evelyn Wrench, reverse of a card featuring the *Three Spires*, *Coventry* [posted to Miss Ground] [digitally enhanced by the author as the writing remains difficult to read], ca.1900-1920

Figure 5.27 Evelyn Wrench, reverse of a card of the *Three Spires*, *Coventry* [posted to Miss Allison] [digitally enhanced by the author as the writing remains difficult to read], ca.1900-1920

Harris's guidebook may have helped legitimise the interest in St Michael's Church amongst female audiences as she argues that it was built by the Botoner sisters: "The tower, begun in 1373, was the gift – says tradition – of the men of the Botoner family, the spire of its women, not least amongst the many noteworthy achievements that in Coventry history are linked with a woman's name" (1911: 1-2). It is also possible that she sought to 'reclaim' Coventry's medieval churches for female audiences, as male writers and antiquaries had previously downplayed the importance of the Botoner sisters, by arguing that they made no contribution to the building of St Michael's Church spire. G.R Webster, for example, had argued in his nineteenth-century notes on Coventry's medieval buildings that it was an "utter fallacy" that Ann and Mary Botoner had financed the spire (CA: PA2018/1/4). Harris's defence of the Botoner sisters may not have been unusual as we know that she was an active and committed suffragette.

5.5 Coventry's 'Natural' Medieval Heritage and the Return of the Romantic Antiquaries

While postcard publishers were building a more romantic image of Coventry's medieval architecture to appeal to female audiences, they were also clearly concerned with its natural origins. Wrench's picture postcard of St Michael's Church, for example, recalls the Romantic antiquaries vision of Coventry's medieval churches as the 'Trees of God' as the church appears to be almost sprouting from the trees and vegetation below (see Figure 5.28). It is highly likely that Wrench was aware of St Michael's treatment as a natural living edifice as it continued to be described using organic metaphors in the early twentieth century. In Harris's guidebook, she employed an organic lexicon by suggesting that there "rose a *forest* [author's emphasis] of magnificent spires" high above the "market-place and church-yard" (1911: 269). Harris may have been aware of the Romantic antiquaries' vision of the medieval past as the natural manifestation of the local environment as she was also an antiquarian scholar. However, it seems more likely that Harris was aware of Goethe's *Von Deutscher Baukunst* [On German Architecture] and its treatment of Strasbourg Cathedral as a 'Tree of God', since she proudly wrote in an undated letter to her mother that she read and "spoke a little German" (WCRO: CR3874/1/13).

Figure 5.28 Evelyn Wrench, *St Michael's Church, Coventry* [digitally sharpened by the author for clarity], ca.1900-1920

Interestingly, Harris's letter provides further evidence that Coventry was on the route to the Rhine- and German lands, as she records that she visited Bodenthal and Harz with a "large party" of a women (WCRO: CR3874/1/13)[119]. Travelling by rail and coach, Harris's trip opened her eyes to the beauty of the Rhine-lands as she recalls that she had never seen "anything so lovely under the sun as the Bodenthal" (WCRO: CR3874/1/13). The old houses in the nearest "local village" particularly caught her eye as they were "nearly all painted in regal green and

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[119] Harris travelled with "4 Miss Lords" and the "Wheelers" (WCRO: CR3874/1/13).

salmon colour" (WCRO CR3874/1/13). Harris also sent a picture postcard to her mother, which features a small vignette of the Roßtrappe[120] in the Harz mountains and confirms that she had undertaken a "long excursion" into its most "beautiful parts" (see Figures 5.29 and 5.30). Harris's tours shaped her treatment of Coventry as she later claimed in her notes on the *Sketches of Nathaniel Troughton* that it had "borne the look of an English Nuremberg" (1908: 52). She neglects to provide a detailed comparison of the two cities, as the primary purpose of her study was to provide a selection of Nathaniel Troughton's topographical sketches of medieval Coventry, which were described as being "full of feeling for the beauty of the ancient buildings amongst which he had passed his days" (Harris 1908: 1-2).

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Figure 5.29 Postkarte to Mrs Harris, ca.1880-1900 [digitally enhanced by the author as the writing remains difficult to read]

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[120] The Roßtrappe is a granite crag in the Harz Mountains.

Figure 5.30 Reverse of Postkarte to Mrs Harris, ca.1880-1900 [digitally enhanced by the author as the writing remains difficult to read]

In contrast to Harris, Wrench may have also admired Coventry's 'natural' medieval past as he found the modern industrial world to be harsh and oppressive. In a surviving radio interview with Edward R. Murrow (1908-1965), an American journalist and correspondent, Wrench openly condemned Britain's industrialisation by declaring that "most of the large industrial cities in the land" were hotbeds for "slums and human degradation" (Tufts Digital Library 2023). He was clearly shocked and horrified by the large industrial cities as he goes on to suggest that they were a force of "darkness", a "great evil", and a place of "suffering" (Tufts Digital Library 2023). Wrench's descriptions resonate with A.W.N Pugin's descriptions of the 'monstrous' modern industrial cities in his *Contrasts* (1836: 6) and suggest that he looked to Coventry's medieval past for refuge and spiritual solace.

Figure 5.31 Raphael Tuck and Sons, *Priory Row, Coventry*, ca.1900-1920

Figure 5.32 Raphael Tuck and Sons, reverse of a postcard featuring the image of *St Mary's Hall, No. 22 Bayley, and St Michael's Church* [digitally enhanced by the author as the writing remains difficult to read] ca.1900-1920

Like Wrench, Tuck and Sons may have similarly sought to build on the image of Coventry's medieval heritage as the natural product of the City's environment, as their picture postcards are often framed by trees and natural foliage. In their postcard of Priory Row, the trees are almost touching the Lychgate Cottages, and there are several grass verges which peek out from beside the buildings (see Figure 5.31). Tuck's picture postcard of No.22 Bayley Lane, St Michael's Church and St Mary's Hall appears to have inspired one tourist to perceive the buildings as natural products as they use a key picturesque terminology to describe them: "I don't think it possible to get a more *interesting* group of buildings on one card than this [author's emphasis]" (see Figure 5.32). The term 'interesting' was a key picturesque term as it was often used by the Romantic antiquaries to suggest that the medieval past was complex, irregular, and varied like nature (see Chapter Two). Although, it is impossible to know if the messenger was familiar with the theories and ideas of the picturesque as the postcard was too small for detailed correspondence.

5.6 Postcards of Coventry's 'lost' Medieval Heritage and Catholic Tourists

Despite being used as carriers of nationhood and propaganda**,** picture postcards were also used to bring greater attention to the loss and destruction of Coventry's medieval heritage. Two firms, for example, underlined the loss of Coventry's medieval architecture by evocatively labelling their picture postcards of the Lychgate Cottages as a 'Bit of Old Coventry' (see Figure 5.33 and 5.34). The title, a 'Bit of Old Coventry', is particularly noteworthy as it suggestively echoes the picture postcards of 'Bygone Florence'. Postcards of 'Bygone Florence' and 'Old Florence' were produced by the firm of the Barocchi in the early twentieth century in order to capture the loss and destruction of Florence's medieval heritage (Lasansky 2004: 53). Many medieval buildings across the City had been demolished in order to make way for new urban renewal projects (Lasansky 2004: 53).

Furthermore, the title 'A Bit of Old Coventry' closely resonates with the postcards which record the vanishing 'Vieux Paris' (Schor 1992: 219) [121]. Postcards of vanishing Paris showed deserted medieval streets, melancholic ruins, and decayed buildings which were contrasted with new

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[121] Dark narrow medieval streets also came under increasing attack in the early twentieth century as the authorities classified them as slums and health risks (Rearick 2011: 25).

railway stations and tram lines that were emerging into view (Schor 1992: 219). Eugène Atget (1857-1927), a French photographer and artist, captured the disappearing medieval city by producing picture postcards which were labelled 'Lost Paris' (Rearick 2011: 24-25). Atget's postcards immerse the viewer in the loss of place, and social memory, and preserve the memory of a hidden medieval Paris (Rearick 2011: 25-26). They are also roughly similar to the picture postcards produced by Étienne and Louis-Antonin Neurdein, who were one of the leading commercial photographic firms of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Szarkowski 1981: 17). Views of cathedrals, castles and architectural details made up a large portion of the firm's productions as they were documenting architectural and artistic monuments (Rostenhal 2013: 991).

Figure 5.33 Shurey, *A Bit of Old Coventry*, ca.1900-1920

Figure 5.34 Anon, *Priory Row, A Bit of Old Coventry* [digitally enhanced by the author. However, the image remains slightly distorted due to the quality of the postcard], ca.1900-1920

There is no firm evidence to suggest that postcard publishers were deliberately seeking to present 'Old Coventry' in the same style as 'Bygone Florence' and 'Lost Paris'. However, the loss and destruction of Coventry's medieval heritage clearly shocked the postcard publisher, as they depicted a range of 'ruined' sites. Evelyn Wrench captured the destruction of St Mary's Cathedral by showing its ruins almost entirely buried beneath the shrubbery and completely surrounded by modern buildings (see Figure 5.35). Wrench may have focused on the ruins of St Mary's Cathedral as he was a Catholic sympathiser, who, as he claimed in his interview with Murrow, had "never been strictly orthodox" in his "outlook" as the "God head was larger than

one creed" (Tufts Digital Library 2023). He had "worshipped, surrounded and been inspired by the ritual of the Roman Catholic" (Tufts Digital Library 2023).

Catholic tourists may have been a key target market for the postcard publisher as the support for the ancient faith was increasingly permitted by the early twentieth century. Coventry became the leading centre for Catholics in Warwickshire, as it had around 2600 Roman Catholics, who worshipped and visited the local churches (Stephens 1969c). Many new Catholic churches had also opened across Coventry around the turn of the twentieth century, including St Mary and St Benedict in Raglan Street, which had been constructed in the Early English style (Stephens 1969c)[122].

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Figure 5.35 Evelyn Wrench, *Cathedral Ruins, Coventry* [digitally sharpened by the author], ca.1900-1920

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[122] It is worth mentioning here that there has, until now, been little scholarly research into the treatment and activities of Coventry's Catholic community since Stephen's study. This thesis clearly builds upon his work by suggesting that they may have been increasingly drawn to Coventry's medieval heritage due to the growing interest in its Catholic origins.

In Harris's guidebook, she appears to make a play for the Catholic tourist by often focusing on the destructive impulses of the Reformation. In one section, she highlights how St Mary's Cathedral had been "defaced", "desecrated", and "seized" during the Reformation (1911: 161-162). In another, she argues that the "iniquitous" suppression of the guilds and chantries in the sixteenth-century had brought the citizens of Coventry to the "brink of ruin" (Harris 1911: 162). Yet, perhaps more importantly, she appears eager to draw greater attention to Coventry's Marian connections and iconography, which had previously been overlooked by the Romantic antiquaries as they were afraid of religious controversy (see Chapter Two).

In Harris's discussion on St Mary's Cathedral, she highlights how "it was dedicated to S. Mary, S. Peter, S. Osburg, and All Saints" (1911: 342). She also encourages the sight-seer to view vaulting of the entrance porch" of St Mary's Hall as it "still bears on its central boss a carving which represents the coronation of the Virgin" (Harris 1911: 82). Catholic tourists may have therefore been increasingly drawn to Coventry as they could still see their religion and the pre-Reformation world reflected in the built environment. Nonetheless, Valentine suggests that the tourist may have found it difficult to engage with St Mary's Hall and its medieval heritage, by producing a picture postcard which shows the room completely devoid of human inhabitants (see Figure 5.36). Valentine's postcard further stands out as picture postcard publishers often re-imagined the medieval past by depicting their scenes with 'medieval' figures and characters. Barrochi's picture postcards of the Cistercian Monastery at Galluzzo, for example, featured figures dressed in 'medieval' garb (Lasansky 2004: 53). These details not only give the viewer the impression that they could still visit the medieval past, but also makes it easier for the viewer to place themselves in the scene. However, they may have also been unique to the postcards of 'Bygone Florence' as the Parisian postcards primarily feature the standard dress for the time.

Figure 5.36 Valentine and Sons, *St Mary's Hall, Coventry* [digitally sharpened by the author], ca.1900-1920

Valentine's picture postcard of St Mary's Hall is further striking as the Coventry Tapestry is almost completely indistinguishable. Valentine's most likely omitted the tapestry as contemporary guidebooks highlighted how it had lost much of its colour and vibrancy by the early twentieth century. In Hawthorne's *Our old Home*, he notes that the figures in the tapestry are "as colourless as ghosts" and "vanish drearily into the old stitch work of their substance when you try to make them out" (1907: 534). The "faded tapestry", together with the "partly coloured" windows, cast a "gloom" over the whole hall (Hawthorne 1907: 534). Overhead, you "could hardly discern" the angels and many other "admirable" pieces of Gothic art which were hidden in the "duskiness" that has so "long been brooding there" (Hawthorne 1907: 535). Hawthorne's description creates a bleak and almost superstitious image of the medieval tapestry, yet the obscured presence of Coventry's medieval heritage appears to have become the stimulus for a

deeper, heightened sensory response. Hawthorne himself was clearly fascinated by St Mary's 'gloomy' appearance as it propelled his mind and imagination back in time (1907: 534-536). It gave me, as he recalls, the most "vivid image" of antiquity that had been "very little tampered with" (Hawthorne 1907: 536). Hawthorne embraced the imaginative associations of St Mary's Hall as he goes on to suggest that he expected to see "a group of steel-clad knights [...] come clanking through the doorway" or a "face of beauty [...] stepping majestically to the trill of [a] harp and viol in the minstrels' gallery" (1907: 536). Here, Hawthorne's notes closely mirror Harris's guidebook, as they offers the tourist expanded encounters with Coventry's vanishing medieval past. Not only could the tourist actually journey to St Mary's Hall, but they could also imagine it when it was used as a place of medieval pageantry and celebration.

Figure 5.37 Valentine and Sons, *Pulpit and Choir, Holy Trinity Church, Coventry* [digitally sharpened by the author]*,* ca.1900-1920

Nonetheless, Valentine appears to have been particularly shocked by the dirty condition of Coventry's medieval stained-glass, as the firm depicted the windows in both St Mary's Hall and

Holy Trinity Church using pale blue colours (see Figure 5.37 and Appendix 2). The muted appearance of the glass may have been intentional as there was widespread acknowledgement that they had lost much of their 'glow' and vibrancy. In Harris's guidebook, she devotes a lengthy paragraph to the loss of Holy Trinity's glass, highlighting how "scarcely a vestige now remains of the ancient stained glass which once made the church beautiful" (1911: 341). Harris primarily credits the destruction of the stained-glass windows to the eighteenth-century masons, who "revelled in the work of *mutilating* the window traceries [author's emphasis]" (1911: 341). Harris's emphasis on the 'mutilation' of the windows is striking as it echoes the use of the term 'ravages' in nineteenth-century newspaper articles (see Chapter Four).

One key reason why Harris lamented the loss of Coventry's medieval stained-glass windows was because she perceived them to be a reminder of the talent and "handicraft" of the medieval craftsmen (1911: 213). Coventry's medieval craftsmen were particularly important to Harris as she points out how "we owe a great deal to those dear dead folk who knew so many things we have forgotten and loved so many things we have ceased to care for" (1911: 319). She goes on to suggest that the preservation of their art was vital to the nation's future as they "knew what to do with stone and glass and metal" (Harris 1911: 319). John Thornton was described as the most 'skilful' and talented stained-glass craftsmen as he had designed the "fifteenth-century glass in St Mary's Hall" (Harris 1911: 314). This is perhaps not surprising as his art and workshop had become the focus of significant attention in the late nineteenth century, but there were also increasingly concerns over the loss of the North window's colouristic and iconographic power (see Chapter Four).

Figure 5.38 Albert Chanler, *Holy Trinity Church* [digitally sharpened by the author], 1911

Harris herself may have sought to subtly remind the tourist of the loss of Coventry's vibrant medieval past by only including black and white engravings in her guidebook. Holy Trinity's Church windows, for instance, are depicted in a black line engraving (see Figure 5.38). The Doom painting above the Chancel Arch also appears to have completely faded from view by the early twentieth century. Harris was shocked and upset by the fading of the Last Judgement as she reminds the sight-seer that it had once been so "bright" and visually appealing that "even the most ignorant could learn" from the painting (1911: 273). The painting had also only been "rediscovered" within "living memory" which made its loss further painful and tragic (Harris

1911: 273). Harris nonetheless continued to build the taste for Coventry's Catholic art, by deploying the same terminologies as A.W.N Pugin. In her discussion on St Mary's Hall Kitchen, for example, she notes that "[the] arches on the north side bear *rudely* sculptured figures of angels, each holding a shield on which is a merchant's mark, bearing the initials J.P" (1911: 330). Harris's use of the term 'rudely' clearly resonates with Pugin's description of Holy Trinity's 'rude' appearance and suggests that the building had its roots in the Catholic past (see Chapter Three).

5.7 Conclusion

This chapter has analysed previously undocumented and uncollected picture postcards to illustrate how there was an expanding interest in Coventry's medieval heritage between 1900 and 1920. It has argued that female tourists collected picture postcards of Coventry's medieval heritage as they were one of the key ways in which they could publicly express their taste and individuality when few other opportunities were available. Coventry's medieval timber-framed dwellings particularly appealed to female audiences as they were frequently collected for their charming, aesthetic qualities. We have also discovered that picture postcard publishers carefully staged and re-imagined Coventry's medieval buildings to appeal to female audiences. Valentine's picture postcards are perhaps the most interesting as they used Godiva's legend to build a more romantic, mystical, and comprehensive vision of St Mary's Hall. They appear to have been successful in stimulating the interest in the medieval guildhall as their postcards were collected by a range of women across the country.

Furthermore, this chapter has shed new light on how picture postcards of Coventry's medieval architecture crossed beyond the borders of Warwickshire. Wrench and Tuck played a key role in bringing Coventry's medieval buildings to German audiences by producing their postcards in Saxony and Bavaria. Coventry was clearly on the route to many other important Gothic capitals as it was included within Dent's *Medieval Town Series*. We have discovered that the journey to medieval Coventry was as much an actual voyage, as well an ephemeral one, as the tourist was encouraged to make use of new railway routes and schedules. Tourists could similarly gain a more complete view of Coventry's medieval past by following a specific route, beginning at the train station, using fold-out maps in contemporary guidebooks.

Nonetheless, this chapter has also uncovered how postcard publishers portrayed the loss and destruction of Coventry's medieval art and architecture. Tuck, Wrench, and Valentine all emphasised the loss of Coventry's vibrant medieval past by using grey colours and muted tones to depict many of the City's medieval buildings. They focused on Coventry's decaying cathedral ruins, the fading of the stained-glass windows, and the loss of the red sandstone walls. Coventry's medieval streets, too, were purposefully uninhabited in picture postcards to project a sense of loss and longing for the distant medieval environment. The destruction of Coventry's medieval heritage nonetheless fuelled a powerful drive for more expanded encounters, deeper experiences, and heightened sensory responses. Early twentieth-century guidebooks offered new opportunities for imaginative travellers to experience Coventry's medieval past by encouraging them to visualise steel-clad knights, women in rich robes, and bearded craftsmen walking through the buildings.

Harris played a central role in enlarging and heightening the tourists' understanding of Coventry's medieval architecture by encouraging them to use portable maps, opera glasses, and other useful travel accessories. At the same time, her guidebook demonstrates how the taste for Coventry's Catholic past was still being built and developed in the early twentieth century. It uses key terminologies to amplify the taste for Coventry's Catholic art and builds a more appealing impression of the Coventry's Marian iconography. Picture postcard publishers, including Valentines, were similarly eager to draw attention to Coventry's medieval heritage as they were Catholic sympathisers.

Ultimately this chapter has interwoven key arguments, new visual and material evidence, and findings discussed throughout this thesis. It has further underlined the enduring influence of John Britton, Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin, and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe in shaping the treatment of Coventry's medieval heritage. In the final chapter of this study, I discuss my overarching research aims, my main research findings, and my original contributions to scholarly knowledge. It similarly brings greater attention to the new thread of connections developed throughout this thesis and creates routes for further scholarly study.

This thesis has sought to provide the first interconnected, developed and joined-up view of the reception of Coventry's medieval art and architecture between 1800 and 1920. In order to develop this view, it was essential to shed greater light on the survival and visibility of Coventry's medieval heritage using key archaeological methods. Mapping regression was an important tool as it illuminated how Coventry's medieval walls and fortifications had become ruinous over time due to new architectural developments. However, as this thesis has uncovered, the fragmentary and incomplete appearance of Coventry's medieval fortifications acted as a stimulus for larger imaginative responses during the nineteenth century. Chapter One showed that William Henry Brooke's watercolour paintings re-imagined and reinvented Coventry's medieval walls as substantial fortifications in order to appeal to nineteenth-century travellers. Chapter Three expanded on this research by arguing that Coventry's medieval cross was imaginatively reconstructed as a large and richly decorated monument by key nineteenth-century historians.

Nevertheless, mapping regression techniques also revealed that Coventry's rich and varied medieval past was still a present and enduring feature for a range of audiences, including antiquarian scholars. Rosemary's Hill's *Time's Witness* is shown to have rehabilitated the antiquaries' reputation by revealing how they played a central role in bringing key Gothic buildings, such as Salisbury Cathedral, back into popular taste and mainstream culture. However, this thesis has expanded on her selective approach by uncovering the hidden significance of Coventry's medieval heritage for an interconnected network of local antiquaries. This network consisted of Thomas Sharp, William Reader, Benjamin Poole and William George Fretton. Fretton played a central role in building the taste for Coventry's medieval archaeological heritage by conducting tours of surviving remains and ruins. His tour of the remains of Greyfriars' Monastery is arguably the most significant as it reinforces how Coventry's 'buried' medieval past was emerging from the darkness into the sunlight.

However, this study has likewise discovered that Coventry's medieval heritage was treated and received by wider networks of antiquarian scholars, key amongst them Augustus Charles Pugin

and John Britton. Britton's vision of Coventry's medieval skyscape as the tangible manifestation of a local spirit and people is presented as significant, as it captured the attention of leading architectural publications and journals, who portrayed the ancient churches as being amongst the most important in the country. Britton's interest in Coventry's medieval skyscape is similarly shown to have inspired leading visual artists to depict the churches from different and distant vantage points. In turn, this research has developed new knowledge on how Coventry's image as a 'City of Three Spires' was developed and imaged during the early nineteenth century.

Moreover, this thesis closely aligns with recent studies which have sought to reappraise antiquarianism, by offering new insights into how and why women antiquaries responded to Coventry's medieval art and architecture. I have proposed that women antiquaries sought to build a more immersive view of Coventry's medieval domestic architecture in order to challenge and expand the traditional view of the home. Isabel Stuart Robson had not previously been considered as an antiquary in existing scholarly literature, yet this thesis has shed new light on how she offered a detailed and forensic examination of Coventry's medieval houses in leading antiquarian journals. Nonetheless, this study proposes that Mary Dormer Harris was the most important female antiquary to respond to Coventry's medieval art and architecture, as her work was widely consumed by antiquarian circles and domestic tourists. Harris's *Story of Coventry* was particularly important as it offered domestic tourists expanded encounters with and experiences of Coventry's medieval buildings. This study has also discovered new connections between Harris's *Story of Coventry* and Britton's *Picturesque Antiquities of the English Cities* which had not been previously acknowledged or examined. In particular, it proposes that both Harris and Britton portrayed Coventry's medieval buildings as a 'homegrown' product of the local environment.

Another original contribution of this thesis to existing knowledge has been the building of an inventory of the key picturesque terminologies used by both men and women antiquaries to heighten the interest in Coventry's medieval heritage. Chapter Two informed this inventory by illuminating how the terms 'varied' and 'irregular' were deployed by the nineteenth-century antiquaries to suggest that Coventry's medieval past was emotionally stimulating to the beholder. However, I have also argued that the terms 'interesting' and 'enriched' were the most significant,

as they were frequently used by a variety of antiquaries' to express a sense of longing for the wealth and power of Coventry's medieval guilds. In Chapter Three, I provided an in-depth comparison of the terms used to classify Coventry's medieval heritage with the key terms used to describe Birmingham's industrial architecture. This study's comparison of Coventry's 'rich' medieval heritage with Birmingham's so-called 'monstrous' industrial growth is significant, since it develops a new understanding of how the medieval past was emerging into view and prominence during the nineteenth century.

Furthermore, this thesis has developed new insight into the connections between the antiquarian scholar and Catholicism. Chapter Two revealed that the Romantic antiquaries depicted carvings of the Virgin Mary on St Mary's Hall entrance-way as they were propagandists for the Catholic faith and its mystical meanings. Nevertheless, this thesis has also discovered that the nineteenth-century antiquaries negotiated a complex terrain surrounding the Catholic origins of Coventry's medieval art and architecture. They were clearly unable to openly embrace Coventry's Catholic heritage in their writings as they were afraid of public censorship and opprobrium. This fear created an underlying tension to their work, as demonstrable in Edward Willson's descriptive letter-press in *Ornamental Timber Gables*, which avoids mentioning the Catholic roots of Coventry's medieval timber-framed dwellings. Chapter Five expanded on the theme of tension surrounding Coventry's medieval buildings as it proposed that twentieth-century postcard publishers were uneasy about the aesthetic appearance of Whitefriars and its use as a workhouse.

In addition, this thesis is the first such exploration to provide a detailed analysis into A.W.N Pugin's response to Coventry's Catholic art and architecture, as it had previously been overlooked in Roderick O'Donnell's *The Pugins and the Catholic Midlands*. Pugin was interested in Coventry's medieval churches because they had been sensitively and sympathetically depicted by Wenceslaus Hollar, whose architectural and topographical prints shaped his vision of pre-Reformation England. Hollar's drawing of Coventry's medieval skyscape emerges as a significant historic and visual touchstone throughout this thesis as it demonstrates the enduring importance and visibility of the medieval spires.

Additionally, this study has continued to expand on O'Donnell's research, by uncovering how A.W.N Pugin's treatment of the Doom painting in Holy Trinity Church was influenced by Friedrich Overbeck and the Nazarene Movement. It has proposed that he built the taste for Coventry's so-called 'primitive' medieval art by drawing on a set of terminologies, which continued to thrive and endure in the writings of Mary Dormer Harris, who was similarly seeking to appeal to Catholic audiences in the early twentieth century. This study has illuminated that Catholic tourists were particularly drawn to Coventry's medieval buildings as they still exhibited the pre-Reformation faith in their fabric.

Nonetheless, as this study has discovered through substantial primary source evidence, Pugin was principally interested in Coventry's medieval houses and furnishings. A.C Pugin's *Ornamental Timber Gables*, which had been consistently neglected and overlooked, played a pivotal role in encouraging his son to view Coventry's medieval houses as aesthetically and architecturally pleasing. However, my research has discovered that Pugin built and expanded on his father's research by suggesting that Coventry's medieval dwellings were crucial to his vision of a Catholic 'utopia'. It thereby develops new insight into how Pugin 'reinvented' Coventry's medieval timber-framed houses for the nation's Catholic homes, by analysing his rarely-examined pencil drawings for Scarisbrick Cottage and Scarisbrick Hall.

In turn, this thesis brings fresh visual and material evidence to argue that Pugin's drawing of the Blessed Sacrament for Daniel Rock's *Church of our Fathers* was based on Coventry's medieval timber-framed houses and churches. It has similarly expanded on Alexandra Wedgwood's *Catalogue of the Drawings Collection of the Royal Institute of British Architects: The Pugin Family* by arguing that Pugin's drawing of the Blessed Sacrament was based on Coventry's medieval ceremonies and communities. Pugin's vision of Coventry's Corpus Christi celebrations owed much to Dugdale's *Antiquities of Warwickshire*, which similarly emerges as a significant cultural touchstone for nineteenth-century historians and antiquaries, since it provided them with crucial information on the medieval past.

Moreover, this thesis opens new approaches to Pugin scholarship by focusing on his sensory and emotional responses to the medieval past, as well as his architectural interests. It has suggested

that A.W.N Pugin had a heightened emotional response to Coventry's medieval timber-framed dwellings as he feared for their survival and safety in an increasingly industrialised world. The potential destruction of Coventry's medieval buildings motivated Pugin to visit and record them before they were lost to the hands of the 'destroyer'. Pugin's sensory response was by no means unique, however, as Chapter Five sheds new light on how early twentieth-century guidebooks encouraged picturesque tourists to imagine the sounds and smells of Coventry's medieval past. Harris's *Story of Coventry* projected a tantalizing image of the kitchen in St Mary's Hall by recalling how it had previously been used to create 'smoking hot' dishes and feasts.

Moreover, this study has uncovered how the heightened interest in the sounds and sensations of Coventry's medieval past, entwined with the period's rediscovery of legendary and mythological figures. Chapter Five brings new attention to the Botoner brothers, their revival and rediscovery in the early twentieth century to shed greater light on the construction of St Michael's Church. Their involvement in the church's construction was widely celebrated and used to draw greater to the power of the medieval guilds. Yet, this thesis has also illuminated how Lady Godiva's legend was particularly used to project a much more romantic, and more appealing, vision of Coventry's medieval past. Early twentieth-century postcard publishers capitalised on the demand for Godiva's legend by labelling their picture postcards of medieval Coventry under the title 'Godiva's Series'.

Nevertheless, this study has opened new understanding of how the reception of Coventry's medieval heritage was informed by German taste-makers, in order to situate it within a wider nexus of Continental developments. In Chapter One, we discovered that George Scharf considered the Coventry Tapestry to be an example of Flemish workmanship because he had been influenced by the leading German art historian, Gustav Waagen. Scharf's painting of the Coventry Tapestry has been treated to detailed analysis as it had hitherto remained unpublished and overlooked within existing scholarly literature. The analysis revealed that the painting had been studied by Waagen, who declared that the crown before the *prie-dieu* was an imperial crown, which may have belonged to a German emperor. Chapter Two expanded on this research by arguing that the Romantic antiquaries likened Coventry's medieval churches to 'Trees of

God', as they had been influenced by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's treatment of Strasbourg Cathedral as the almost living manifestation of the German landscape.

At the same time, a core objective of this thesis was to demonstrate how Coventry's medieval heritage transcended national boundaries and different imaginaries. It has addressed this research aim by uncovering how Coventry's medieval art and architecture attracted considerable attention in the German lands in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Chapter Four illuminated that Coventry's medieval stained-glass windows became of central importance to German chemists, who were seeking to understand the techniques of the stained-glass craftsmen in greater depth, after they had almost been wiped-out during the Reformation. Nonetheless, Chapter Five's analysis of previously undocumented and unseen picture postcards, reveals that Coventry's medieval art and architecture primarily became the focus of transnational attention in the early twentieth century. Postcards of Coventry's medieval buildings were produced, consumed, and circulated by a range of German printing companies. Evelyn Wrench's postcards of Coventry's medieval buildings were produced by the firm of Stengel & Co, for example, who reserved the rights for the circulation and reproduction of the cards.

Crucially, this thesis has discovered that Coventry's medieval churches and timber-framed dwellings were often likened to those seen in the German lands. Chapter Four illuminated that St Michael's closest counterpart was Cologne Cathedral as their height, appearance, and builders were often compared in nineteenth-century newspaper articles and educational journals. Chapter Five offered deeper insight into the connections between Coventry and the German lands by uncovering how it was originally perceived to have borne the look of an English Nuremberg due to its timber-framed dwellings. It also revealed that Coventry had been included in Dent's *Medieval Town Series*, which placed it in the same league as other great Gothic cities, including Cologne and Bruges.

Further, this study's research into Dent's *Medieval Town Series* challenges the traditional viewing of Coventry as a post-1945 city. Coventry's identity was firmly rooted in the medieval past as the series offers considerable insight into the history of its timber-framed dwellings, churches, almshouses and guildhall. It illuminates that Coventry was fundamentally viewed as a

medieval city by almost entirely overlooking its modern industries and factories. Coventry's image as a medieval city was widely appreciated by modern audiences, who not only explored its former status as the fourth wealthiest city in England in the fourteenth century, but also its importance as key centre for trade.

At each stage, this study's chapters have also developed new evidence of the motivations for visiting Coventry's medieval art works and architecture. Chapter Two revealed that the Romantic antiquaries were motivated to visit Coventry's medieval timber-framed dwellings as they were linked to expanding ideas of nationhood and nationalism. Chapter Three discovered that Coventry was a key destination on the route to many other important sites of medieval pilgrimage. Chapter Four opened new insights relating to G.R Webster, who was stimulated to visit Coventry's medieval buildings as he admired their carvings, decorative features, and craftsmanship. In Chapter Five, we found that the journey to medieval Coventry was as much an actual one as an imaginary one. It reveals how Harris's *Story of Coventry* not only offered the imaginative traveller greater opportunities to experience Coventry's medieval buildings, but also made particular use of maps to provide a more expansive perspective view of the City's history.

Yet, in spite of Coventry's emerging importance as a great Gothic city during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this research has also discovered that the destruction of its medieval heritage stimulated a deep sense of loss. I have argued that the fading of Coventry's medieval stained-glass windows triggered a particularly charged response from nineteenth-century artists as they were depicted with pale and muted colours. However, this study has also shown that visual artists artificially heightened and reinvented the colour of Coventry's medieval visual art in order to transport the viewer's mind to a distant past. The Coventry Tapestry, which had faded over time due to extensive sunlight exposure, is shown to have been re-imagined with a vivid blue background in the early nineteenth century. Britton deliberately intensified the colours of the Coventry Tapestry as he had been inspired by Friedrich von Schlegel's interest in the imaginative associations of the colourful Gothic past. Drawings and artistic productions are therefore shown to have played a pivotal role in developing the taste for Coventry's medieval heritage. They allowed artists to re-imagine Coventry's 'dark' medieval past in a more colourful light during the nineteenth century. Oil paints were specifically chosen to depict Coventry's

medieval buildings as they created an alluring 'aura' which evoked the rich and prosperous Gothic past.

Nonetheless, this thesis has also uncovered how the loss of Coventry's medieval art and architecture was conveyed in print and word. I have argued that key terminologies such as 'mutilation' and 'ravages' were often deployed to decry the loss of Coventry's medieval art and architecture. The thesis has argued that such terms were similarly used by leading Catholic artists to condemn the destruction of the Gothic monuments on the Continent. G.R Webster's use of the term 'ravages' to describe the destruction of St Michael's stone carvings, for example, clearly resonated with W.H. James Weale's descriptions of the 'ravages' of the medieval buildings in Belgium.

In conclusion, the research discoveries and new knowledge developed by this thesis, has opened several key avenues and opportunities for further scholarly engagement. First, my study has illuminated how Mary Dormer Harris and Isabel Stuart Robson created a more immersive view of Coventry's medieval architecture, but it shows demonstrable potential for further exploration of their connections with women antiquaries on the Continent since they were clearly amongst a handful of women who were interested in the medieval past. These gaps open rich scope for fresh approaches and further study to redress the deep-rooted mistreatment of antiquarianism in scholarly literature. Further scholarly study on how and why women antiquaries responded to Coventry's medieval heritage may similarly serve to bring previously unseen figures and voices into new visibility.

Second, this research has proposed that there was an emerging market for Coventry's medieval furnishings due to the opening of new antique and curiosity shops. However, it has been unable to establish the exact number of art dealers and private collectors who purchased Coventry's medieval heritage, as it has primarily been concerned with antiquarian scholars and the rehabilitation of antiquarianism in historical scholarship. This suggests fertile scope to build on the research findings detailed in my thesis, by uncovering if there were any private collectors who specifically journeyed to Coventry from the Catholic Continent in order to purchase its medieval art and architecture.

Third, throughout this research project I have sought to bring Coventry's Marian iconography back into visibility, by tracing the awakening of interest in the carvings of the Virgin Mary and the Annunciation in the nineteenth century. Yet, it may be beneficial to devote an entire study to the reception of Coventry's Marian iconography as this thesis has emphasised that it was one of the severest casualties of the Reformation. Images of the Virgin Mary need to be treated to detailed discussions as they were erased, omitted, and deliberately avoided for hundreds of years.

Taken together, the five chapters that comprise this thesis offer a more expansive, but interlinked view of the reception of Coventry's medieval heritage during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The key discovery of this study is the hidden centrality of Coventry's medieval past for leading nineteenth-century artists, picturesque travellers, archaeologists, and Catholic Revivalists. In their writings and artistic productions, as this study has shown, Coventry's medieval past moved into a centre-stage position as a potent and powerful site of memory. Past communities of craftsmen were nostalgically 'remembered' and rediscovered in order to build a new understanding of an almost forgotten world. Yet more than this, this study's analysis of previously unseen archival material, reveals that Coventry's medieval heritage was imaginatively reinvented in order to construct newer narratives of nationhood and modernity. The nineteenth-century reception of Coventry's medieval heritage is undoubtedly significant as it illuminates how a dark, distant, and 'superstitious' past was re-imagined as a colourful, and living present.

Word Count: 79,550

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Appendix 1 (Inventory of Picturesque Descriptors)

Picturesque term	Date of use and source
Curious	- A.C Pugin used the term 'interesting' in *Gothic Furniture; Consisting of Twenty-seven Coloured Engravings from Designs* to describe St Mary's Guild Chair (1827: 12) - Willson similarly used the term 'curious' in *Ornamental Timber Gables* to describe Coventry's medieval timber-framed houses (1831: 6). - A.W.N Pugin used the term in his *Examples of Gothic Architecture* to describe Coventry's medieval timber framed houses (1836: viii). - Pugin appears to have been influenced by his father as he used the term in his *Present State of Ecclesiastical Architecture in England* to describe Holy Trinity's Doom painting (1843: 25). - Benjamin Poole deployed the word on several occasion in his *New History of Coventry* to describe Holy Trinity's Doom painting, Ford's Hospital, the fluting on Holy Trinity's tower and Holy Trinity's epitaphs (1847). - Used five times in the *Illustrative Papers on the History and Antiquities of the City of Coventry* to describe Coventry's medieval antiquities (1871).
Elaborate, elaborately	- Willson used the term 'elaborate' in *Ornamental Timber Gables* to describe Ford's Hospital (1831: 8). - Britton deployed the term on three occasions in *Picturesque Antiquities of the English Cities* to describe St Mary's Guildhall bosses, Coventry's medieval cross and the tracery on Bond's Hospital (1830). Variations of the term were also deployed throughout the publication. The term 'elaborately', for instance, was used to describe St Mary's Guild Chair.
Interesting	- Britton used the term six times in *Picturesque Antiquities of the English Cities* to describe Coventry's medieval hospitals, timber framed buildings and visual arts heritage (1830). - Willson also used the term 'interesting' in *Ornamental Timber Gables* to describe Ford's Hospital (Pugin 1831: 10). - Pugin's *Examples of Gothic Architecture* used the term 'interesting' to describe Coventry's medieval timber framed houses (Pugin 1836: viii). However, several years later, Pugin's *Glossary of Ecclesiastical Ornament and Costume* described Holy Trinity's Doom painting as "interesting" (1844: 110). - Like A.W.N Pugin, Poole used the term 'interesting' in his *New History of Coventry* to describe Holy Trinity's Doom painting (1847). - Mary Dormer Harris's *Story of Coventry* described Holy Trinity Church as the "most interesting of all the churches in Coventry" (1911: 339). She also

	declared that Coventry had many "interesting [...] relics of legendary lore" (Harris 1911: 3).
Numerous	• Used three times in Britton's *Picturesque Antiquities of the English Cities* to describe Coventry's medieval antiquities (1830).
Rich, enriched, enrichment, richness, richest, richly	• A.C Pugin deployed the word 'rich' in *Gothic Furniture; Consisting of Twenty-seven Coloured Engravings from Designs* to describe St Mary's Guildhall chair (1827: 12). • Britton's *Picturesque Antiquities of the English Cities* employed the term 'richly' to describe the gables on Ford's Hospital (1830: 59). Britton also used the term 'enriched' to describe a gable on Bond's Hospital (1830: 59). • Willson deployed the term 'richly' in the *Ornamental Timber Gables* to describe Ford's Hospital (1831: 8). The term 'enriched' appears to have been more common as he used the term to describe Ford's Hospital and Bond's Hospital (Willson 1831: 8). Comparatively, Willson only used the term 'enrichment' to describe Bayley Lane's medieval timber-framed houses (1831: 9). • Pugin's *Examples of Gothic Architecture* used the term enriched to describe Coventry's medieval timber framed houses (1836: viii). • Benjamin Poole used the term 'rich' in *The New History of Coventry* to describe Holy Trinity's medieval ornaments and the remains of the Benedictine Priory (1847). He also used the term 'enriched' to describe Coventry's medieval cross and the Benedictine Priory (Poole 1847).
Varied, variety, various	• Britton employed the word 'varied' in his *Picturesque Antiquities of the English Cities* to describe Coventry's medieval antiquities (1830: 57). • Willson used the word 'variety' in *Ornamental Timber Gables* to describe the gables on Bond's Hospital and Ford's Hospital (1831: 8). • Various used once in *Ornamental Timber Gables* to describe Ford's Hospital (1831: 11). • Benjamin Poole used the term 'variety' three times in his *New History of Coventry* to describe the heraldic emblems in St Mary's Guildhall, Coventry's medieval cross and Holy Trinity's epitaphs (1847).

Figure 0.5 Wenceslaus Hollar, *The Prospect of Coventry* [digitally enhanced by the author as the illustration has faded over time], 1656

Figure 1.5 Samuel Bradford, *A Plan of the City of Coventry* [the street names may remain difficult to read as the map is very large], 1749-50

Figure 1.6 Thomas Sharp, *Coventry* [the street names may remain difficult to read as the map is very large], 1807

Figure 1.7 Board of Health, *Map of Coventry*, 1851

Figure 1.24 Nathaniel Troughton, *Town Wall, Eight Feet Thick* [digitally enhanced by the author. However, the drawing may remain difficult to interpret as it as the drawing was produced using a light pencil], c.1850-1860

Figure 1.35 W.G Sharp, *Swanswell Gate*, 1897

Figure 1.41 Nathaniel Troughton, *House on the East Side of Much Park Street* [digitally enhanced by the author as the drawing was produced using a light pencil], ca.1850-1860

Figure 1.49 Nathaniel Troughton, *Entrance Gate from the South East of Bayley Lane, St Mary's Hall, Coventry* [digitally enhanced by the author as the drawing was produced using a light pencil], c.1850-1860

Figure 1.59 John Le Creux, *Kitchen, St Mary's Hall, Coventry*, 1830

Figure 1.68 William Henry Brooke, *Top Middle Tapestry in St Mary's Hall*, 1819

Figure 1.76 William Turner of Allesley, *The Interior of St Michael's, Coventry*, 1839

Figure 2.1 George Fennel Robson, *S.E View of the City of Coventry*, 1827

Figure 2.9 F. Dollman, *Back of Chair, St Mary's Hall, Coventry* [digitally enhanced by the author for clarity], 1830

Figure 2.10 Benjamin Ferrey, *Oak Chair in St Mary's Hall, Coventry* [digitally enhanced by the author for clarity. The text remains difficult to read due to the faintness of the pencil lines], 1830

Figure 2.12 F. Dollman, *Gothic House at the End of Bayley Lane, Coventry* [digitally sharpened by the author for clarity. The text remains difficult to read due to the faintness of the pencil lines], 1830

Figure 2.14 Joseph Nash, *Wooden Gable, Bond's Hospital, Coventry* [digitally enhanced by the author for clarity. The text remains difficult to read due to the faintness of the pencil], 1830

Figure 3.11 Francis Dollman, *Ford's Hospital, Coventry, Principal Entrance, Grey Friar's Lane, West Front* [digitally enhanced by the author for clarity. The text remains difficult to read due to the faintness of the pencil lines], 1830

Figure 3.12 Benjamin Green, *Ford's Hospital*, *Built from Oak* [digitally enhanced by the author for clarity. The text remains difficult to read due to the faintness of the pencil lines]*, 1830

Figure 3.13 T.J Walker, *Ground Plan of Ford's Hospital, Grey Friar's Lane, Coventry, Warwickshire* [digitally enhanced by the author for clarity. The text remains difficult to read due to the faintness of the pencil lines], 1830

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Figure 4.1 George R. Webster, *Ancient Figures from the Canopies of the Steeple of St Michael's Church, Coventry*, ca.1880

Figure 4.2 George R. Webster, *Ancient Figures from the Canopies of the Steeple of St Michael's Church, Coventry*, ca.1880

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Figure 5.1 Evelyn Wrench, *The Three Spires, Coventry*, ca.1900-1920

Figure 5.3 Elmer Keene, *The Three Spires, Coventry*, ca.1900-1920

Figure 5.10 Evelyn Wrench, *St Michael's Church, Coventry* [digitally sharpened by the author], ca.1900-1920

Figure 5.17 Valentine and Sons, reverse of the card featuring *St Mary's Hall, Coventry* [digitally enhanced by the author clarity. The text remains difficult to read due to the faintness of the pencil lines], ca.1900-1920

Figure 5.21 Raphael Tuck and Sons, reverse of card featuring the Lychgate Cottages, *Priory Row, Coventry* [digitally enhanced by the author clarity. The text remains difficult to read due to the faintness of the pencil lines], ca.1900-1920

Figure 5.24 Raphael Tuck and Sons, *Bablake Hospital, Coventry*, ca.1900-1920

Figure 5.25 Raphael Tuck and Sons, reverse of the card featuring *Bablake Hospital, Coventry* [digitally enhanced by the author clarity. The text remains difficult to read due to the faintness of the pencil lines], ca.1900-1920

Figure 5.26 Evelyn Wrench, reverse of a card featuring the *Three Spires, Coventry* [postcard to Miss Ground] [digitally enhanced by the author clarity. The text remains difficult to read due to the faintness of the pencil lines], ca.1900-1920

Figure 5.27 Evelyn Wrench, reverse of a card featuring the *Three Spires, Coventry* [postcard to Miss Allison, flipped upside down] [digitally enhanced by the author clarity. The text remains difficult to read due to the faintness of the pencil lines], ca.1900-1920

Figure 5.32 Raphael Tuck and Sons, reverse of a card featuring the image of *St Mary's Hall, No.22 Bayley Lane and St Michael's Church* [digitally enhanced by the author clarity. The text remains difficult to read due to the faintness of the pencil lines], ca.1900-1920

Figure 5.36 Valentine and Sons, *St Mary's Hall, Coventry*, ca.1900-1920

Figure 5.37 Valentine and Sons, *Pulpit and Choir, Holy Trinity Church, Coventry*, ca.1900-1920