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Introduction

‘The Changing colours of 19th century art and literature’

Charlotte Ribeyrol

A new colour-sense ?

One is struck at first by the luxuriance of Keats’s colour. When we come to analyse it we find it is very largely verbal colour. His colour-words are not epithets of colours he has seen ; they are words that have appealed to his ear, that he found in books and brooded over, vague, exotic colour-words that no one would think of using in the presence of actual colour. Keats showed a miraculous mastery in the use of such colour-words ; in the perception of colour he seems to have been a child. The one colour that he calls constantly by its simple name, and with genuine simple delight, is the colour that happened to be then the most popular with poets — green. He seems to have loved the green of fields and trees with the enthusiasm of a city child to whom the country is ‘green felicity.’¹

This passage is taken from Henry Havelock Ellis’s article on ‘The Colour-Sense in Literature’, first published in the *Contemporary Review* for May 1896. In the 1931 edition of the essay in book-form, Ellis claimed that this was ‘the earliest attempt to put on an impersonal and objective foundation the study of the reactions experienced by poets to the colour of the world in which they lived.’² The study was a most ambitious one as it analysed the use of colour-terms not only in the works of 19th century British authors such as John Keats, D.G. Rossetti or A.C. Swinburne, but also in texts as diverse as the Bible, ancient Greek and Latin poetry (Homer, Catullus), the Icelandic *Völsunga* saga, Renaissance plays (Shakespeare, Marlowe), American poetry (Poe, Whitman), French poetry (Baudelaire,

Verlaine) and contemporary South African and Italian writings (Olive Schreiner, D'Annunzio). And yet, the issue of how to translate colour-terms is not once raised from a linguistic perspective as Ellis seems more interested in translations from one medium to another (as in the case of William Blake or Rossetti translating their pictorial colours into texts) or from one sense to another. In the passage on Keats, Ellis suggests that in the Romantic age, poets started to envisage colour differently, that is to say in ways that went beyond the recording of simple visual stimulations – in order to encompass other, more complex sensations, in particular coloured hearing. By the end of the century, synaesthesia and its translation into language had indeed become the object of intense scrutiny as scientists increasingly investigated the complexities of colour perception.³ Although Ellis describes his own approach as 'scientific', his reading of Keats's synesthetic imagery emphasizes aesthetic rather than normative physiological considerations: 'the question belongs, not to the region of physiology, but to that of philology and that of aesthetics. It is in this last field that I wish to pursue the investigation'.⁴ His example of Keats's 'green felicity' (taken from the poem 'Stanza') evidently brings to mind Charles Baudelaire's programmatic poem 'Correspondances', which explores 'vertical' correspondences between emotions and colours, as much as 'horizontal' intersensorial connexions:

And scents there are, like infant's flesh as chaste,
As sweet as oboes, and as meadows fair,
And others, proud, corrupted, rich and vast.⁵

Two years before the publication of *Les Fleurs du Mal*, Baudelaire had already celebrated the newly acquired autonomy of romantic colour in his essay on 'L'exposition universelle, 1855' in which Eugène Delacroix's *Chasse aux Lions* (fig.1) is described as 'a chromatic explosion' revealing that: 'this colour thinks by herself [...] independently of the objects she

clothes'.⁶ Colour may be personified as a 'she' ('elle') implicitly associated with female fashion ('clothes') – which, during this period, was certainly more colourful than men's, –⁷ it no longer appears as subservient to form or as a secondary quality of the object it clothes, but as an agentive substance,⁸ a new creative force in modern art and literature.⁹

Keats's delight in complex colour-words – what Ellis describes as his 'mastery' of 'verbal colour' – reflects a similar form of chromatic autonomy, a severing of colour from all forms of mimetic injunctions. But by emphasizing the rift between the poet's elaborate colour terminology and his supposedly simpler colour perception (here compared to that of a child),¹⁰ Ellis took part in a much wider debate. Colour perception was indeed a key concern in the second half of the 19th century – not only in literary circles, but also in the overlapping fields of psychology, ethnography and even education, as the 'evolution' of the colour-sense was more and more frequently discussed from a physiological perspective. And yet, as noted by Nicholas Gaskill, such discussions did not originate 'in the psychology lab, nor in the polemical pages of those calling for perceptual education, but in a work of literary scholarship':¹¹ W. E. Gladstone's three volumes of *Studies in Homer and the Homeric Age* (1858) which was to shape subsequent multidisciplinary approaches to the colour-sense and to which Ellis alludes in his essay.¹² Given the 'paucity' of colour terms in Homer's epic poems – a judgment which Ellis's more 'scientific aesthetic' approach to the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* intended to correct –¹³ Gladstone claimed that 'the organ of colour and its impression were but partially developed among the Greeks of the heroic age.'¹⁴ This, Gladstone partly ascribed to a lack of chromatic stimulation:

The art of painting was wholly, and that of dyeing was almost, unknown ; and we may estimate the importance of this element of the case by recollecting how much, with the advance of chemistry, the taste of this country in colour has improved within the last twenty years. The artificial colours, with which the

human eye was conversant, were chiefly the ill-defined, and anything but full-bodied, tints of metals. The materials, therefore, for a system of colour did not offer themselves to Homer's vision as they do to ours.¹⁵

Drawing on the erroneous premises that the Greeks of Antiquity ignored the 'art of painting' and 'dyeing', Gladstone asserted the superiority of the British colour-sense on the grounds that the devising of 'artificial colours' by modern chemists like William Perkin, the inventor in 1856 of mauveine, the first synthetic dye, had 'improved' the colour vision of his contemporaries.¹⁶

Gladstone's claim reveals an evolutionary bias which his later exchanges with prominent scientists would further strengthen. For instance, Gladstone knew of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* as soon as it was published.¹⁷ In 1877, after having read the works of Hugo Magnus who was interested in colour vision both as an opthalmologist and as a student of the classics,¹⁸ he concluded that the Greeks of the Homeric age were 'colour-blind' in an article entitled 'The Colour sense'¹⁹ published in *Nineteenth Century* in October 1877. But on reading this piece, Darwin immediately wrote to Gladstone the following day to correct some of Gladstone's and Magnus's assumptions. As 'some facts tending to show that very young children have great difficulty in distinguishing colours; or as I suspect, of attaching the right names to them', it was indeed clear to Darwin that 'early colour naming was a matter of word association, not of colour perception *per se*; a refined colour vocabulary would tend to develop around some focus of interest.'²⁰ Ellis equally refused to analyse 'color *terms* as reliable indications of color *sensations*.'²¹ In the context of this debate about Homer's colour-sense, with which Ellis was evidently familiar,²² the reference to Keats's supposed child-like delight in 'green' takes on a new meaning: rather than a symptom of a 'primitive' form of colour-perception, green, the Romantic colour par excellence,²³ appears as an innocent,

felicitous colour, the colour of an Edenic Nature threatened by urbanization and industrial modernity as well as by rational classifications – what Gladstone calls the modern ‘system of colours’, which since Isaac Newton, had sought to ‘unweave the rainbow’ celebrated in Keats’s ‘Lamia’.²⁴ Ellis was particularly wary of his contemporaries’ obsession with the signs of chromatic primitivism:

There is now no doubt whatever that all races of men, concerning which any evidence can be obtained, have been acquainted with the same regions of the spectrum which we know. The colour-vision of savages, whenever carefully tested, is found to be admirable, as is also that of the lower animals, and there is no reason to suppose that so useful an aptitude ever fell into abeyance. It remains true, however, that while man’s colour-vision has in all probability always been excellent, his colour-vocabulary has sometimes been extremely defective, even among ourselves to-day remaining very vague ; and it is also probable that at different periods and among different races, as well as among individuals, very varying colour preferences have arisen.²⁵

If Ellis defended the idea that the colour-sense was culturally relative rather than physiologically pre-determined, he was also careful to avoid another pitfall, that of tracking the signs of a possible ‘degeneration’ of the colour-sense among contemporary writers and artists:

Many foolish things have been written about the ‘degeneration’ of latter-day art. It is easy to dogmatise when you think that you are safe from the evidence of precise tests. But here is a reasonably precise test. And the evidence of this test, at all events, by no means furnishes support for the theory of decadence. On the contrary, it shows that the decadence, if anywhere, was at the end of the century,

and that our own vision of the world is fairly one with that of classic times, with Chaucer's and with Shakespeare's. At the end of the nineteenth century we can say this for the first time since Shakespeare died.²⁶

Ellis is here evidently referring to Max Nordau's essay on *Degeneration* (1892, translated into English in 1895) which stigmatized and pathologized perceptual deviance – and in particular synaesthesia – in the works of modern poets and painters across Europe, from A.C. Swinburne to Edouard Manet:

In any case, it is an evidence of diseased and debilitated brain-activity, if consciousness relinquishes the advantages of the differentiated perceptions of phenomena, and carelessly confounds the reports conveyed by the particular senses. It is a retrogression to the very beginning of organic development. It is a descent from the height of human perfection to the low level of the mollusc. To raise the combination, transposition and confusion of the perceptions of sound and sight to the rank of a principle of art, to see futurity in this principle, is to designate as progress the return from the consciousness of man to that of the oyster.²⁷

The 19th century as a chromatic turn

Whether 'primitive' or 'degenerate', the colour-sense as mediated through language was thus placed at the core of ideologically-charged debates which went beyond the sphere of art history and literary scholarship. This is due to the fact that something crucial happened to colour during this key century,²⁸ aptly framed by J.W. Goethe's *Farbenlehre* (1810, translated into English in 1840) and Wassily Kandinsky's *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1912). The mid-19th century was indeed in many ways a chromatic turn throughout Europe

and beyond. This period, particularly in Victorian Britain, is still often represented in popular culture as bleak and colourless – the colour of black and white, or sepia²⁹ photographs and polluted working-class slums – and yet, the industrial revolution radically transformed the perception as well as the production of colour, thanks to aniline dyes and ‘chromos’. As opposed to the long history of colour which pioneers such as Michel Pastoureau and John Gage have explored since the 1990s,³⁰ this special issue of *Word and Image* focuses on the literary and artistic impact of the 19th century ‘colour revolution’³¹ not only in the three countries then in the vanguard of industrial progress (Britain, France and Germany) but also in North America and India where synthetic dyes eventually caused the collapse of the indigo trade.³² Although some scholars have recently highlighted the key influence of the new science of colour production and perception, and notably Michel-Eugène Chevreul’s *Principles of Harmony and Contrast of Colors, and Their Application to the Arts* (published in 1839 and translated into English in 1855) on the French Impressionists, or on the expanding textile industry,³³ the impact of the new chromatic terminology devised by modern chemists on the colour-sense of poets and the artists in their circles is largely overlooked.³⁴ Literary studies on colour, for instance, still often tend to discuss colour symbolism at the expense of chromatic substance. Moreover, the material turn which is now inflecting 19th century literary studies³⁵ only rarely encompasses literary approaches to chromatic materialities. I here employ ‘chromatic materialities’ in the plural because of the diverse forms of sensuous responses the embodied observer may experience when seeing, handling, tasting, hearing or smelling chromatic matter but also of literature’s own complex relationship with the material, ranging from the way texts depict objects, to the materiality of the book itself (the printed word, the illustrations, the book cover etc.).

It is true that black and white texts cannot easily satisfy the scopic desire for colour, except of course when they are illustrated with colour reproductions, as was increasingly the case in the

second half of the 19th century thanks to the new technique of chromolithography. But more often than not in a novel or in a poem, we see no colour, only colour words, arbitrary signs which require the temporality of reading to be fully grasped – as well as the knowledge of the language in which the text is written. This evidently contrasts with the immediate, universal, sensual response we experience when we see for instance a bright patch of red in a painting. And yet, in art history too colour has long been shunned and relegated to a secondary position.³⁶ This issue aims, on the contrary, to show that colour ‘mattered’ to major 19th century writers and artists, who both explored the complexities of colour perception and responded in diverse ways to the changing status of pigments and dyes.

The industrial age witnessed a proliferation of discourses on the chromatic and most of the ‘grammars’ of colour which were published during this period aimed to control through rules and classifications the explosion of colour brought about by modern chemists.³⁷ And yet, the inflation of chromatic debates signalled a major change in the history of aesthetics, where colour had long been perceived as entailing a ‘crumbling of all discursive modes’.³⁸ As key writers and painters began envisaging colour as a cultural construct of modernity, this chromophobic³⁹ stance no longer prevailed. Supplanting the traditional chromatic lexicon borrowed from medieval heraldry – for instance ‘azure’ for blue – the modern colours of ‘commerce’⁴⁰ even entered the poetic realm (including the controversial mauve),⁴¹ as in this ‘poem’ published in *Punch*:

There’s hardly a thing a man can name
Of beauty or use in life’s small game,
But you can extract in alembro or jar,
From the physical basis of black coal tar :
Oil and ointment, and wax and wine,
And the lovely colours called aniline :

You can make anything, from salve to a star
(If you only know how), from black coal tar.⁴²

Although *Punch* had initially expressed great distrust concerning the new artificial hues following the invention of mauveine,⁴³ these lines humorously celebrate the modern alchemy which succeeded in turning foul coal-tar into ‘the lovely colours called aniline’. Thomas Salter, in his 1871 reissuing of George Field’s *Chromatography* (1835) – one of the first colour ‘grammars’ for artists originally illustrated with a wealth of poetic quotations – was more skeptical as to these new artificial hues which had magically emerged from the darkest coal mines:

The violet mauve led the way, followed by the red magenta, the blue azuline, the yellow phosphine, the green emeraldine, the orange aurine, by purple, and brown, and black. [...] The world rubbed its eyes with astonishment; and truly it seemed almost as wonderful to produce the colours of the rainbow from a lump of coal, as to extract sunshine from cucumbers.

The history of these colours reads more like a romance than a sober story.⁴⁴

As this passage shows, the new dyes generated new forms of writing about colour throughout the world – and these texts resembled their object in their Romantic, Dionysian excesses.

The new rainbow of aniline dyes was first publicly displayed at the London International Exhibition of 1862 – a dazzling sight which seems to have also inspired the *New York Times* correspondent for the event:

Does it ever occur to Angelina, as she floats magnificently down Broadway, in all the lustre of youth and fashion, that the exquisite dress she wears, and whose faultless sheen seems to be robbed from the dewy blushes of Spring, is in fact

dipped and steeped in the essence of vile, smoky, stinky, crackly English coal? [...] Yes, frightful as it may seem, our wives and sweethearts are gradually becoming carboniferous, and the day may not be far distant when we shall have to hand them to dinner with a pair of tongs.⁴⁵

This passage may not be from a literary text, it nonetheless draws on literary tropes in order to suggest the newly acquired potency of colour in the industrial age. Imitating the tame ‘dewy blushes of spring’ – which sounds almost like a Homeric cliché – the colours of modernity extracted from English coal-mines turned American ladies into dangerous *femmes fatales* – who literally threatened to become ‘too hot’ (‘carboniferous’) for their husbands. The gendered anxiety which underlies the excerpt equally points to a new phenomenon: colour – which had been stigmatised for centuries as the ‘feminine’ pole of art –⁴⁶ suddenly *empowered* the women of the industrial age, whether they flaunted the new dyes in their everyday wear, or wrote about colour to assert their expertise in the field of fashion and colour harmonies.⁴⁷ Many 19th century writers and artists discussed in this special issue of *Word and Image* revisited this age-old gendered conception of the changing body of colour to redefine conceptions of the feminine, including the supposedly ‘feminine’ nature of colour itself.⁴⁸

And yet, despite this gendered *caveat*, the journalist of the *New York Times* celebrated the potential aesthetic applications of the new industrial hues:

When these new colors have been naturalized in the world of art, as well as in manufactures, what extraordinary results may be anticipated from the pencils of great colorists! At present, the manufacturers carry everything before them. They can make a silk dress of tough, durable, palpable material, a hundred times brighter and more beautiful than the best artist can paint it.⁴⁹

The need for the aniline dyes to be ‘naturalized’ so that artists might accept using them clearly suggests that the application of industrial colours to artistic practice was a challenge as much as an opportunity for painters and writers. The word ‘naturalized’ points to the artificiality of these new dyes which had very little in common with the organic and mineral pigments the painters of the past used to grind, although by the mid-19th century most artists relied on colourmen who, as noted by Philip Ball ‘did little more than package the ready-made paints from manufacturers.’⁵⁰ As paint and dye manufacture progressively became almost solely ‘a matter of chemical synthesis’, colour appeared more and more de-materialized to the artist – as well as to the poet – who was either confronted with abstract chemical formulas or with a chromatic terminology which had little to do with a ‘natural’ provenance, as with the dye and pigment Magenta named after one of Napoleon’s victories. For Michael Taussig, the radical transformation of materials brought about by the aniline revolution thus paradoxically led to a ‘killing off’ of the body of colour – in both art and industry.⁵¹ This contrasts with the embodied response to colour often found in the works of writers and painters of the period, such as Alice Meynell, William Morris, John Ruskin, or Paul Cézanne, who sought to retrieve the lost body of colour by inscribing chromatic materiality back into the very texture of their work.

It is the multifaceted reception of the scientific changes that affected colour during this pivotal period as well as the literary inscription of shifting – and often culturally-charged – hues and coloured materials in 19th century texts and art works that this issue of *Word and Image* addresses. Bringing together literary scholars and art historians working on a wide range of geographical areas (Victorian Britain, 19th century France, Germany, India, and North

America), this collection of articles sheds light on how discussions of colour perception and production became closely intertwined in the second half of the 19th century.

The first two articles explore the complex relation between colour perception and language. In his essay entitled 'Charlotte Perkins Gilman and the Atmospheric Arrangements of Interior Design; or, How to Read Color', Nicholas Gaskill discusses and contextualises the mental effects of certain chromatic arrangements described in Gilman's 'Yellow Wall-Paper'. As Gaskill notes, the discourse on interior design which shapes this short story 'provide(s) a practical meeting point for chromatic materials and color language; it also takes the relation between materiality and psychology as one of its central concerns'. This discussion in turn sheds an essential light on the literary representations of colour experience at a key historical moment. In her piece on 'The Colours of Vowels. Synaesthesia in Physiology and Aesthetics (1850-1900)', Jutta Müller-Tamm addresses the partial convergence between literary and scientific discourses on synaesthesia which emerged in Germany in the 1870s, in the wake of Arthur Rimbaud's poem 'Voyelles'.

The next two articles analyse how the new approaches to colour perception and chromatic matter which emerged in the second half of the 19th century unsettled the very temporality of colour itself. In her essay on Walter Pater's unfinished *Gaston de Latour* (1888-1894), Lene Østermark-Johansen discusses how the author's 'profound understanding of 16th century' painting and decorative art was paradoxically 'mediated' through Ruskin's lectures on Iron as well as through 'a late nineteenth-century synaesthesia of Whistlerian harmonies and symphonies'. In spite of his predilection for the Gothic 'school of colour', Ruskin certainly appears as one of the most prolific of 19th century writers on the modernity of colour, from the work of J.M.W Turner to that of the Pre-Raphaelites. A similar overlapping of the colours of the past and the hues of modernity is the focus of my article on Victorian readings of the polychromy of Amiens cathedral which confronts the fading colours of the Gothic edifice in

essays by Morris, Ruskin and Pater with more Impressionistic responses to the ‘nuance of the hour’ captured by Claude Monet’s cathedral series and celebrated by Marcel Proust in his translation of Ruskin’s *Bible of Amiens*.

Translation – whether from one language to another or from one medium to another – takes on a more intermedial meaning in Hilary Fraser’s essay on the colours of the ‘sister arts’ of art critic Alice Meynell and painter Elizabeth Butler, whose colourist technique Ruskin praised. The two sisters were both chromophiles but their work challenged traditional conceptions of colour as seductive and feminine. Alice Meynell, in particular, drew on her expertise in ancient and modern chromatic practices in her critical and poetic writing about art and life. In comparison to blood red, which was Meynell’s secret ‘colour of life’, sepia could appear as a fairly ‘neutral’⁵² and elusive colour. And yet, as Natasha Eaton shows, this faded hue, generally perceived as a colour of the past, encoding nostalgia, played a central role in 19th century debates relating to poetry and drawing, photography and colonialism.

The shifting geography of pigments is equally evoked by Paul Smith in his reading of Cézanne’s ‘vermilion’ in the light of the Goncourts’ *Manette Salomon* (1867) – in which Coriolis’s experience of colour is partly displaced to the Orient – and Marius Roux’s lesser known *La Proie et l’ombre* (1878). Both texts explore the painter’s ‘alienation from his medium’ which Smith argues may have cautioned Cézanne in his relationship to his coloured materials and shaped his theory of ‘tons’. But colour also ‘mattered’ to Honoré de Balzac, whose chromatic itinerary Tim Farrant retraces in his essay devoted to the French author’s understanding of colour as both matter and light from his earliest philosophical writings to *Séraphîta*.

Acknowledgements

This special issue is partly based on the proceedings of a one-day symposium on *The Changing colours of 19th century art and literature* which was held at the Ashmolean Museum on 2nd June 2017. The aim of this symposium was to shed light on how 19th century writers and artists responded to new forms of chromatic materiality in the wake of the aniline revolution. A bespoke exhibition of colourful drawings by Paul Cézanne, Edward Burne-Jones, D.G. Rossetti and John Ruskin was organised by Katherine Wodehouse and Caroline Palmer for the event so as to further highlight the connexions between the texts and the art works discussed at the conference. I would like to address my warmest thanks to the co-organisers of this symposium (Stefano Evangelista, Colin Harrison and Matthew Winterbottom) as well as to the respondents (Elizabeth Prettejohn, Kate Nichols, John Barrie Bullen, and Mallica Kumbera Landrus) who all took part in the debates which shaped this volume. Finally, the conference and this publication would not have been possible without the invaluable support of the following institutions and funding bodies: the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford; Trinity College, Oxford; the English Faculty, Oxford; Marie Skłodowska Curie Actions and the *Institut Universitaire de France*.

¹ Henry Havelock Ellis, *The Colour-sense in Literature* (London: The Ulysses Book Shop, 1931), 18.

² *Ibid.*, 3.

³ See Jutta Müller-Tamm's contribution to this issue.

⁴ Ellis, 'The Colour-Sense in Literature', 5-6.

⁵ Il est des parfums frais comme des chairs d'enfants,

Doux comme les hautbois, verts comme les prairies,

Et d'autres, corrompus, riches et triomphants (l.9-11)

This is Cyril Scott's translation of the poem, in *Baudelaire, The Flowers of Evil* (London: Elkin Mathews, 1909),

10. Scott dedicated his *Flowers of Evil* to Arthur Symons and also translated the poetry of Stefan Georg, which

Rey Conquer discusses in this issue.

⁶ 'Il semble que cette couleur [...] pense par elle-même, indépendamment des objets qu'elle habille.' (my translation) The context of this quotation is eminently synaesthetic: 'Puis ces admirables accords de sa couleur font souvent rêver d'harmonie et de mélodie, et l'impression qu'on emporte de ses tableaux est souvent quasi musicale.' Charles Baudelaire, 'Exposition universelle, 1855' in *Œuvres complètes de Charles Baudelaire* (Paris: Michel Lévy frères, 1868), *Curiosités esthétiques*, 2:211-244, at 241.

⁷ As noted by Harvey, many 19th century writers, including Baudelaire himself, believed that they were living in a funereal age, due to the bleak spectacle of the dark clothes worn by men of all sections of society. See John Harvey, *Men in Black* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 26.

⁸ On 'agentive' chromatic materiality, see Diana Young, 'The colour of things', in *Handbook of Material Culture*, ed. Christopher Tilley, Webb Keane, Susanne Kuechler, Mike Rowlands and Patricia Spyer (London: Sage publications, 2006), 173-185, at 178.

⁹ For Baudelaire, colour was central to modern art: 'Qui dit romantisme, dit art moderne, - c'est-à-dire intimité, spiritualité, couleur, aspiration vers l'infini, exprimées par tous les moyens que contiennent les arts' Charles Baudelaire, 'Salon de 1846', in *Oeuvres Complètes*, ed. Claude Pichois (Paris: Gallimard, 1961), 876.

¹⁰ This idea that the love of colour was a 'primitive' instinct for both children and 'savages' can be found in J.W. von Goethe's *Farbenlehre* (1810, trans. into English in 1840) as well as in one of the first texts discussing ancient Greek polychromy, Antoine Chrysostome Quatremère de Quincy's *Jupiter olympien* (Paris: Didot frères, 1815), 3: 'la couleur, qui 'est pour l'œil d'un sauvage ou d'un enfant l'image de la vie: le mélange du relief et du coloris fait une illusion complète'.

¹¹ Nicholas Gaskill, *Chromographia: American Literature and the Modernization of Color* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, forthcoming 2018). See also Gaskill's contribution to this special issue.

¹² Ellis, *The Colour-sense*, 5.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 6. Interestingly, Ellis finds 9 occurrences of 'green' in Homer – whereas Gladstone had claimed that there was 'no green' in the Homeric epics. See J.A. Symonds's letter to Charlotte Symonds, 8 Decembre 1865 in *The Letters of John Addington Symonds*, 3 vols, ed. Herbert M. Schueller and Robert L. Peters (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1967-1969), 1: 596-597. Havelock Ellis and Symonds were friends so Ellis must certainly have known Symonds's earlier writings on the 'colour-sense' such as his essay 'The Colour-sense and Language', where Symonds reached the same anti-Gladstonian conclusion as Ellis:

The sense of colour cannot be judged by colour-nomenclature. People in a primitive state of society, may be acutely sensitive to colours, as indeed they have all their senses in fine working order, and yet may have no names to denote the shades of hues. That is due mainly to the fact that colours are not connected with utility. [...] Suppose the currency were established, not on varying weight of precious metals, but on varying tints of red, blue, yellow; then we should soon find a nomenclature springing up to denote the finest gradations of those colours. [...] The shifts we submit to in order to communicate sensations of colour ought to teach us that in the Homeric or other early ages colours were fully appreciated by the senses, but had not found their analogue in language.

Symonds, 'The Colour-sense and Language', *Essays, Speculative and Suggestive*, 2 vols (London: Chapman & Hall, 1890) 2: 307.

¹⁴ W. E. Gladstone, *Studies on Homer and the Homeric age*, 3 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1858), 3: 488.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Gladstone indeed believed that the British had 'some special aptitude in this respect (as) we may judge from the comparatively advantageous position, which the British painters have always held as colourists among other contemporary schools'. *Ibid.*, 457. In an article entitled 'Color in Science and Poetry,' and published in *The Scientific Monthly* in 1930, just a year before Ellis's essay, the literary critic George R. Stewart had also implied that colour perception was a historical accomplishment by predicting that '[w]hen the perfect history of English literature is written [...],' it would include 'W. H. Perkin's discovery in 1856 of phenylphenosafranine (C₂₇H₂₅N₄Cl)'— the chemical formula of mauveine —as '[o]ne of the most important events in the history of

poetry during the nineteenth century.’ George R. Stewart, ‘Color in Science and Poetry,’ *The Scientific Monthly* 30.1 (January 1930), 71. I would like to thank Nick Gaskill for drawing my attention to this essay.

¹⁷ On Darwin and colour, see Elizabeth Henry Bellmer, ‘The Statesman and the Ophthalmologist : Gladstone and Magnus on the Evolution of Human Colour Vision, One Small Episode of the Nineteenth-century Darwinian Debate’, *Annals of Science*, 56 :1 (1999) : 25-45, at 28.

¹⁸ See Eleanor Irwin, *Colour Terms in Greek Poetry* (Toronto: Hakkert, 1974), 7 and Bellmer, ‘The Statesman and the Ophthalmologist’, 29.

¹⁹ William E. Gladstone, ‘The Colour-Sense’, *The Nineteenth Century*, 8 (Octobre 1877): 366-388, at 366.

²⁰ Quoted in Bellmer, ‘The Statesman and the Ophthalmologist’, 34.

²¹ Gaskill, *Chromographia*, forthcoming. See also John Lyons, ‘Colour in Language’ in *Colour: Art and Science*, ed. Trevor Lamb and Janine Bourriau (Cambridge : CUP, 1995), 194-224, esp. 216.

²² Gladstone’s discussion of the Greek colour-sense is mentioned in the first lines of Ellis’s essay (‘The Colour-Sense in Literature’, 5). Darwin and Grant Allen are equally evoked in the preface to the 1931 edition (*ibid.*, 3).

²³ In the Middle Ages, green was viewed with suspicion as the colour of chance and disorder - due to its toxicity and chemical instability. But in the 19th century, the Romantics’s championing of green as the colour of nature in the context of the industrial revolution partly modified this perception. See Michel Pastoureau, ‘Formes et couleurs du désordre : le jaune avec le vert, *Médiévales*, n°4 (1983) : 62-73 and *Vert : Histoire d’une couleur*, (Paris: Le Seuil, 2013).

²⁴ On Romantic and Victorian rainbows, see Charlotte Ribeyrol’s ‘Victorian rainbow makers: variations on colour poetics,’ in *Unstable states, mutable conditions*, ed. Cornelius Crowley. *Angles*. N°4 (December 2016). <http://angles.saesfrance.org/index.php?id=865>

²⁵ Ellis, ‘The Colour-Sense in Literature’, 5-6.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 29-30.

²⁷ Max Nordau, *Degeneration* (New York: Appleton, 1895), 142.

²⁸ See the special issue *La Couleur au XIXème siècle*, ed. A. Vaillant. *Romantisme*. N°157 (2012-2013).

²⁹ See Natasha Eaton’s article in this issue.

³⁰ See Pastoureau’s *Bleu. Histoire d’une couleur* (Paris : Le Seuil, 2000) and John Gage’s *Colour and Culture, Practice and Meaning from Antiquity to Abstraction* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1993).

³¹ Regina Lee Blaszczyk, *The Color Revolution* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2012).

³² See Natasha Eaton, *Color, Art and Empire, Visual Culture and the Nomadism of Representation* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013).

³³ See George Roque, *Art et science de la couleur, Chevreul et les peintres, de Delacroix à l'abstraction*, (Paris: Gallimard, 2009); Laura Kalba, *Color in the Age of Impressionism: Commerce, Technology, and Art* (University Park: Penn State Press, 2017); Alison Matthews Davis, *Fashion Victims, The Dangers of Dress Past and Present* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015).

³⁴ In *The Culture of Yellow* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), Sabine Doran does, however, address the centrality of the colour 'yellow' in 'The Visual Politics of Late Modernity'. In his own forthcoming discussion of the colour-sense, Nicholas Gaskill (*Chromagraphia*) will engage more thoroughly with these aspects, by exploring the connexions between the experimental psychology of colour and 19th-century American literature. See also Gaskill's contribution to this issue.

³⁵ Elaine Freedgood, *The Ideas in Things: Fugitive Meaning in the Victorian Novel* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2006); Katharina Boehm and Victoria Mills (ed.), *Mediating the materiality of the past, 1700-1930, Word and Image*, vol.33, iss.3 (2017).

³⁶ See George Roque, 'Quelques préalables à l'analyse des couleurs en peinture' *Technè* n°9-10 (1999).

³⁷ This need to discipline colour through language and charts, systems and rules and to 'educate' or train the colour sense, is evoked in Remi Labrusse, 'Face au chaos : grammaires de l'ornement', *Perspectives*, (2010) : 97-121 ; Kalba, *Color* (2017) and Gaskill, *Chromagraphia* (forthcoming).

³⁸ Jacqueline Lichtenstein, *The Eloquence of Color: Rhetoric and Painting in the French Classical Age* (University of California Press, 1993), 195.

³⁹ See David Batchelor, *Chromophobia* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000).

⁴⁰ John Addington Symonds, *In the Key of Blue and Other Prose Essays by John Addington Symonds* (London: Elkin Matthews & John Lane, 1893), 2.

⁴¹ See for instance the poem 'Mauve, Black and Rose' by Arthur Symonds written in 1894 and published in the collection *London Nights* (1895) in Arthur Symonds, *Selected early poetry*, ed. Jane Desmarais, Chris Baldick, (Cambridge: MHRA Jewelled Tortoise, 2017), 114.

⁴² *Punch* quoted in Philip Ball, *Bright Earth: The Invention of Colour* (London: Penguin, 2001), 251.

⁴³ See *Punch*, 'The Mauve Measles', 20th August 1859, 81.

⁴⁴ Thomas W. Salter (ed.), *Field's Chromatography* (London: Winsor and Newton, 1871), 162-3.

⁴⁵ 'THE GREAT EXHIBITION.; About Dyes and Beauty and Coal-Tar Mauve and Magenta How Made Extraordinary Specimen of Aniline Art and the New Colors', *New York Times* (28 July 1862), 2.

⁴⁶ Charles Blanc, in his own 'Grammaire', still described colour in these very gendered terms: *Grammaire des arts du dessin : architecture, sculpture, peinture* (Paris, J. Renouard, 1867), 22.

⁴⁷ On Mary Merrifield, see Alexandra Loske, 'Mary Philadelphia Merrifield: Color History as Expertise', *Visual Resources* (2016): 1-16.

⁴⁸ See Hilary Fraser's essay in this issue.

⁴⁹ *New York Times*, 2.

⁵⁰ Ball, *Bright Earth*, 201. See also Marjolijn Bol, 'Technique and the Art of Immortality, 1800–1900' *History of Humanities* 2, no. 1 (Spring 2017): 179-199.

⁵¹ Michael Taussig, *What color is the sacred?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 43. On how science 'dematerialized' colour, see also Diana Young, 'The colour of things', 174.

⁵² See Roland Barthes, *The Neutral: Lecture course at the College de France, 1977-78*, trans. Rosalind E. Krauss and Denis Hollier (New York: Columbia, 2005).