RUPERT BUNNY'S
SYMBOLIST DECADE

A study of the religious and occult images
1887-1898

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
in the
School of Fine Arts, Classical Studies and Archaeology

July, 1998

Volume I
DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I, Barbara Brabazon Kane, declare that this thesis comprises only my original work, except where due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other materials used. This thesis does not exceed 30,000 words in length, exclusive of bibliographies, footnotes and appendices.

(Signature)
Abstract

The late 19th century, Australian-born artist, Rupert Bunny has not been sufficiently acknowledged as a Symbolist figure. This study of his religious and occult works (the most explicit manifestation of the Symbolist preoccupation) shows how they engage with the Symbolist discourse of the day, both in France and in Britain. In the 1880s and 1890s there was a resurgence in religious belief and a general interest in religion, magic and the occult. Bunny began to paint images of the spiritual world, and a distinct occult thread, either from esoteric religions or classical myth, appears beside the Christian legends of the saints and bible stories. His depictions of the occult world are little known, as only photographic and literary evidence remains of rare paintings such as La Tentation de St. Antoine, and a group of works on paper housed at the Museum of Art, The University of Melbourne, is unpublished. The iconography of these works of Satanism, the Catholic occult, and ancient Greek and Nordic myths of death is examined in their contemporary context. However, like his contemporary Maurice Denis, Bunny’s flutter with the occult is confined to his youthful period. In the new century, after a brief engagement with a more dramatic and naturalistic religious image, based on the Old Masters such as Rembrandt and Titian, he returns to the images of beautiful women at leisure which drew critical acclaim for him.

Bunny’s British cultural heritage has largely been ignored, yet his paintings fit more easily into the broad Symbolist canon if read in such a context. Paintings such as Les roses de St. Dorothée and the Burial of St. Catherine of Alexandria are analysed through their iconography, style and fresh contemporary critical sources which allows them to be reintegrated into the broader Symbolist dialectic. Although Bunny was a cosmopolitan by birth and education the question of nationalism arises as rival critics in France and Britain encouraged him to choose either Paris or London, and to paint a relevant style and subject.

Bunny sought recognition as an artist in the conservative venues of the Royal Academy and the Société des Artistes français and his style reflects this context. Clearly, he did not engage with the radical Symbolism seen in the private images of
Odilon Redon; nor did he lose touch with the sculptured form of the human body. However, Bunny was genuinely a Symbolist in his subject matter and it is hoped that through this study of his religious and occult work a broad reassessment of his oeuvre in the Symbolist decade will begin.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My research on Rupert Bunny began with the extensive collection of works on paper held by the Museum of Art at The University of Melbourne. I wish to thank the many people there who have encouraged and facilitated my research: Frances Lindsay, Lyn Nossal, Annette Welkamp, Rachel Kent, Heather Gaunt; with Robyn Sloggett and Rosie Carmichael at the Ian Potter Conservation Centre, The University of Melbourne.

The staff of many institutions have been most helpful. The University of Melbourne: Cecily Close (Archives), Dr Irma Kosa (Department of Germanic Studies & Russian); The National Gallery of Victoria: Jane Clark, John Payne, Terence Lane, Michael Watson, Irena Zdanowich; Art Gallery of New South Wales: Ursula Prunster, Deborah Edwards, Amanda Beresford; National Gallery of Australia: Roger Butler and Mary Eagle; Queensland Art Gallery, Bettina MacAulay; Art Gallery of South Australia: Jane Hylton and Angus Trumble; Art Gallery of Western Australia: John Stringer, Margaret Moore, Anne Machin, Janda Gooding; The Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery, The University of Western Australia: Anne Gray, Naomi Horridge; The University of Queensland: Nancy Underhill; David Thomas, Bendigo Art Gallery; Newcastle Region Art Gallery.

Staff at several auction houses and private galleries: Frank MacDonald, Thirty Victoria Street; Mrs. McClelland, Joshua McLelland Gallery; Dr. Joseph Brown, Joseph Brown Gallery, Philip Bacon, Philip Bacon Galleries, Charles Nodrum, Charles Nodrum Gallery; Stuart Purves, Australian Galleries; Christie’s Australia: Patrician MacDonald, Kathie Robb; Sotheby’s: Patricia MacDonald and Jane Clark; Christine Schmid, Spink & Son, Wesfarmers, Bond Collection, Kerry Stokes Collection; Robert Holmes à Court Collection.

I have been most grateful to Bunny’s family and friends both here and in England: Colette Reddin, Richard and Caroline Travers, Nigel Buesst, David and Grace Bunny, Rupert and Elizabeth Bunny, Mrs. & Mrs. D.O Sands, Phyllis Bunny, Mrs. Tchili Boston, Mr & Mrs Widdrington.
Several institutions, libraries and private galleries overseas have been most helpful: Victorian and Albert Museum; John Sunderland, Witt Librarian, Courtauld Institute of Art; Nevill Keating Pictures Ltd; Adrian Mibus, Whitford & Hughes, London: the Musée d’Orsay, Paris; Virginia Barton and Paula Baxter, the New York Public Library.

My thanks to Margaret Manion, Margaret Riddle, Ann Galbally and Ruth Zubans for their valuable advice and encouragement; I am most grateful to Ursula Hoff, Daniel Rechtman, Myra Scott, John Pigot and Ian Britain for their advice and support; to Alison Inglis my particular thanks for her invaluable suggestions and encouragement. To Laurence Course and John Poynter, my thanks for their generosity in allowing me access to their research.

I am indebted to my supervisor, Roger Benjamin, for his scholarship, his pertinent advice and guidance, and for his consistent encouragement.

I owe much to the support and encouragement of my friends, particularly Royce Craven (for his creative computing skills in a crisis), Jennifer Cutts, Suzanne and Robin Hunt, Alison Inglis, Margaret Kearney, Daniel and Katherine Rechtman, Elizabeth and Keith Redman (the latter for his skilled proof-reading), Christine Reid, Helen Seward and Angus Trumble. Finally, I wish to thank my family for their encouragement and forbearance.

The reader can find a catalogue entry for each major work in the Appendix which attempts to establish catalogue information for the previously uncatalogued works in The University of Melbourne. As most of these works are untitled I have supplied my own descriptive titles in the square brackets. Throughout the text, where both English and French titles for Bunny’s works exist, I have precisely transcribed the 19th century catalogue title given to the work at its first place of exhibition.
Abbreviations

AGNSW - Art Gallery of New South Wales
AGSA - Art Gallery of South Australia
AGWA - Art Gallery of Western Australia
comp. - compiler
ed. - editor or edition
ill. - illustration
NGV - National Gallery of Victoria
QLDAG - Queensland Art Gallery
RA - Royal Academy
RBA - Royal Society of British Artists
repr. - reproduction
SA - Salon d'Automne
SdAf - Société des Artistes français
SI - Salon des indépendants
SLV - State Library of Victoria
SNdBA - Société National des Beaux-Arts
University of WA - The University of Western Australia
Introduction

Just as the young Australian painter Rupert Bunny (1864-1947), fig. 1, arrived in Paris in 1886, Symbolism, one of the most diffuse and diverse movements of the latter part of the 19th century, emerged fully with the publication of Jean Moréas’ manifesto in Le Figaro. In common with many of the artists of his generation Bunny shared certain ideas and concerns which underpin this movement. Symbolists sought to express their inner world, the poetic idea. The ability of music to engage the senses and convey emotion or an Idea without intellectual involvement, was admired and emulated. Visual artists, who worked necessarily in a material form, created a ‘symbol’ to express ideas, the immaterial. Maurice Denis, Symbolist artist (and historian) explains: ‘the symbol reaches the soul without having to go through the rational mind’. With the search for the soul, there was a resurgence of interest in religion, and in magic and the occult. Bunny began to paint images of the spiritual world, such as legends of female saints - a particular obsession of the Symbolist decade. His many biblical subjects were largely concentrated in the 1890s and the first years of the 20th century. Bunny has not been sufficiently acknowledged as a Symbolist figure, and this study of his religious works shows how they connect with the Symbolist debate of the day, both in France and in Britain. His religious and occult works are the most explicit manifestation of the Symbolist preoccupation, and it is hoped that by addressing them the way will be paved for a broad reassessment of Bunny in the Symbolist decade.

In part reflecting the 20th century’s lack of interest in religion, scholarly attention to the field of 19th century religious imagery has been limited until recent years. Similarly, scant scholarly attention has been paid to Bunny’s religious works. Thus

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1 Rupert Charles Wulston Bunny was born on September 24th, 1864 in Melbourne; he died on May 25, 1947 in Melbourne. This is a family photograph of Bunny as a young man, possibly during the 1890s. Private collection, Sydney.

2 ‘Manifeste du symbolisme’, Le Figaro, September 18, 1886.


the major Australian reference books do not define him by his religious imagery: 5
William Moore in The Story of Australian Art mentions only his 'portraiture' and
'figure subjects', 6 while Bernard Smith in Australian Painting describes him
particularly as a painter of beautiful women, though he notes that his early work
contained 'a strong literary element drawn from classical literature and the Bible'. 7
Alan McCulloch makes no mention of his religious work. 8 The first monograph on
the artist, Sydney Ure Smith's The Art of Rupert Bunny, contains a brief personal
'Biographical Sketch' by Bunny's nephew, Tristan Buesst, and a lengthier
'Appreciation' by Clive Turnbull. 9 While these articles contain valuable
contemporary anecdotes of Bunny as both man and artist, the monograph as a whole
fails to give the religious work the attention it deserves.

Knowledge of Bunny has been much improved since the publication of David
Thomas's 1970 monograph Rupert Bunny 1864-1947, 10 and Mary Eagle's The Art of
Rupert Bunny in the Australian National Gallery, 1991. 11 Thomas compiled a
comprehensive catalogue with a chronological survey and analysis of Bunny's
oeuvre, the emphasis falling on his mythological works of the two distinct periods
(1890s and 1913) and the great middle period after his marriage and before the War,
when a froth of chattering, gossiping and slumberous females filled his canvases
during the halcyon days of the belle époque, in a style Thomas terms 'academic
impressionism'. Thomas observes the importance of biblical subject matter to Bunny
throughout his career and notes the Pre-Raphaelite influence in some works, but does
not enlarge on the topic, nor does he seek to set the works in either their social context
or in the context of Bunny's chosen places of exhibition.

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5 E. Bénézit, Dictionnaire critique et documentaire des Peintres, Sculpteurs, Dessinateurs et Gravure,
drawn from classical literature and the Bible.
6 The Story of Australian Art. From the Earliest Known Art of the Continent to the Art of Today,
vol.1, Sydney, Angus & Robertson, 1934, p. 150 and p.192.
(Sydney, A Ure Smith Publication, 1948) lists Bunny's paintings in Australian collections at that time.
It was undoubtedly inspired by the successful retrospective exhibition given Bunny by Daryl Lindsay
at the National Gallery of Victoria in October 1946.
Mary Eagle has meticulously catalogued the sixty-three works in the collection of the Australian National Gallery and includes an informative overview of Bunny’s art. The book adds greatly to the knowledge of Bunny’s movements about France and Britain, his exhibitions and friendships. Although several religious images are reproduced, the discussion is brief (limited to its relationship to works in the NGA collections) and in some places, disparaging. When referring to the post-1900 works The Sacrifice of Abraham (fig. 64), St. Christopher (fig. 58) and The Prodigal Son (fig. 59), Eagle notes: ‘He could expect little public appreciation for these vast paintings, which in subject and treatment were undoubtedly ugly... Naturally, these pictures proved unsaleable.’

It is only in the wide-ranging, anecdotal and very personal book of Colette Reddin, Rupert Bunny Himself: His Final Years in Melbourne that the significance of religion to Bunny is given its proper place. Bunny knew Reddin well; he visited her family during his last years in Melbourne, enjoying the opportunity to speak of France and his experiences there with her mother, Mrs Reddin, a Frenchwoman. He collaborated with the young Colette on the writing of several ballets. Reddin details the significance of religion in his life in a chapter entitled: ‘Bunny and His Bible’.

The third son of Brice Frederick Bunny, a British lawyer, and his German wife, Marie Hedwig Dorothea Wulston, Rupert had a privileged upbringing which left him better equipped for the foreign environment than many of his Australian colleagues from other backgrounds. Brice Bunny is described as a ‘linguist, a music lover, and widely read’, which qualities he successfully encouraged in his talented son. Judge Bunny had an active legal career in Melbourne, culminating in his appointment as Commissioner of Titles for Victoria. Bunny’s mother was equally gifted linguistically and of near professional standard musically; she supported Bunny’s artistic career until her death in 1902. Religion was an important ritual in Bunny’s early life. From the account of Bunny’s younger sister, Hilda, the family walked to the Anglican church (All Saints, St. Kilda) each Sunday, dressed in their best outfits.

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12 Ibid., p.15.
14 For biographical details see Thomas, Rupert Bunny, pp.11-14 & Eagle, The Art of Rupert Bunny, pp.2-3.
for quiet worship and then meetings with friends. They maintained this practice with their mother's German family during an extended European trip made in Bunny's youth. This cosmopolitan upbringing in youth doubtless contributed to the urbane and personable man who fitted well into the sophisticated Parisian milieu when he arrived there in 1886. John Longstaff, a good friend during those Parisian years of the late 1880s and early 1890s found Bunny's 'education and charm of manner' impressive. 'Charming chap, Bunny!' he reminisced, 'There was always something so elegant about him.' The eminent French critic, Gustave Geffroy remembered the young Bunny: 'C'était alors un homme jeune, souriant, parlant français avec un excellent accent anglais qui donnait à tout ce qu'il disait le charme d'une traduction parfois hésitante'. However, it is another perceptive French critic, Raymond Bouyer, who paints a picture of a more retiring, driven artist when he wrote of the young Bunny at the end of that decade: 'on devine un timide, un modeste, un convaincu préférant l'art à l'intrigue, économisant pour les délicieuses fatigues de l'atelier les heures gâchées par la chasse incertaine aux récompenses'.

Choosing to extend his early artistic training in Melbourne, Bunny left for London in 1884. Europe at this time was experiencing the fallout from some decades of scientific discovery. Linked with the reaction against the engineering discoveries which had fuelled the industrial revolution and the pragmatic science that described the erstwhile mysteries of nature, the fin-de-siècle was characterized by an urgent search for some sort of spiritual grounding. In France a renewed and passionate embrace of Catholicism was evident, as in the Rosicrucians' flamboyant Catholicism, and the Ultramontanists’ reactionary beliefs. For some in Britain the spiritual lacuna was filled by art, virtually the new religion. In both Britain and France there was a

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16 Hilda Mackinnon, 'Before the Nineties', *Table Talk*, March 22, 1934, p.16. This article details their two month stay in London with family, and their trip back to Melbourne on board the 'Carlisle Castle'.

17 From the age of just over nine, Bunny spent some two and a half years in Europe (mainly Germany and Switzerland) with his mother and siblings where he learned German and French. For an excellent description of Bunny's family, their early life and the trip abroad, see Mackinnon’s articles, ‘Before the Nineties’, in *Table Talk*, particularly parts 3 (March 8, 1934, p.10) & 4 (March 15, 1934, p.10).


growth in spiritualism (often in the guise of scientific enquiry), and an avid exploration of esoteric religions such as Theosophy. The fascination with the occult and its powers, investigated by Symbolists such as G. F. Watts or Odilon Redon, can be seen to extend the element of magic that was already present in ancient Greek myth (so familiar to the 19th century audience). In Bunny’s case, his father’s teaching of the classical myths had fuelled his interest in the occult; there is evidence that Bunny was fascinated by, although sceptical about, the intellectual debate which surrounded him. Throughout Bunny’s oeuvre, but particularly in the 1890s, a distinct thread of magic and the occult, either from esoteric religions or classical myth, emerges and appears unselfconsciously with the Christian legends of saints or bible stories. It is hoped that from the elucidation of this body of work, hitherto given insufficient attention, a greater understanding of Bunny as a Symbolist artist emerges.

The first chapter sets out a re-definition of Symbolism as a pan-European phenomenon, drawing upon recent scholarship that allows for the inclusion of British Symbolism and its strands of classicism and Aestheticism. This provides a context in which Bunny’s fin-de-siècle religious works can be seen to be informed by Symbolism. The hitherto little-examined religious and occult works are the focus of the thesis as they are a manifestation of the search for meaning in a period of shifting faith and beliefs, a significant factor in the psychology which underpins Symbolist theory. However, given the broader definition of Symbolism some of the imaginative subject paintings, whether mythological or of beautiful women, can be seen to be a partner to the religious and occult works of the Symbolist decade. Pastoral, c.1893, for example is a depiction of an imagined land from the golden age in which the woodland satyrs and sea sprites are drawn in harmony to the lyrical notes of an idealized youth and attendant nymph. Similarly, the images of beautiful women in works such as Dolce far niente, c.1897, (fig.52) have a nuance of the essential Symbolist ambiguity in their reading: a group of healthy young women (not the fragile saints) costumed in decorative draperies, ribbons and roses, lounge by a just-glimpsed shore, signifier of a land of ease and pleasure beyond the monotony of daily

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21 Bunny accompanied his ailing father to Karlsbad in Germany. For details of this trip and his early training with George Folingsby at the National Gallery School, see Eagle, The Art of Rupert Bunny, p.4.
22 For Bunny’s familiarity with the characters of classical myth, see Lucy Swanton, ‘Memoir of Rupert Bunny’, [Sydney] typescript, Newcastle Region Art Gallery, [1968].
life. The creation of a world beyond the real in the former and the suggestion of it in the latter, associates these works with the Symbolist canon.

The pagan myths and Christian legends which Bunny explores fall loosely into three categories: the first to be treated is the occult or magical, the second comprises the virgin martyr saints, and the third relates to scenes centred around Christ. A chapter will be devoted to each of these in turn.

In chapter two the occult works and the contemporary intellectual interests they reflect are largely confined to ephemeral works on paper, or works known only through photographs or literary evidence. They are nevertheless an intriguing element in Bunny’s oeuvre and deserve close attention, particularly as he kept the works on paper by him throughout his life. He made his Salon debut in 1887 with a monochrome water-colour, *Une nuit de Valpurgis*, which presaged his first oil painting the following year, *Un Sabbat*. The depiction of these northern witches and their gruesome rites is concluded at the end of the century by the two monotypes *Death the Reaper*, fig. 31, and *[Death’s Summons]*, fig. 29, displayed in 1898 at the Fine Art Society’s rooms in London. These are the last known such works exhibited. Further illustrating his interest in the occult, there are his monochrome studies of Egyptians studying great tomes; these are all works on paper, often just compositional sketches which have not been realised in large compositions. Finally, there are classical mythology’s witches (a generally popular subject), known to us only by two magnificent embroideries, *Circe* and *Medea* (fig. 8), and a series of works on paper of witches cursing. Associated through the fin-de-siècle fascination with the *femme fatale*, there is the now lost painting of the ascetic, St. Anthony, in which Bunny’s interpretation of the theme broaches the heretical (if not Satanic) regions dominated by Félicien Rops.

In chapter three the importance of the British context, until now underplayed by scholars, is redressed. Bunny’s own comments with regard to the teaching he received in London were negative and played down the British influence. However this ignores Bunny’s formal education in the British Colony of Australia, the early lessons he absorbed from his Eton-educated father and his informed passion for the poetry and literature of Victorian England. Concomitant with this was, of course, his
extensive Channel-hopping, during which he imbibed Britain's visual culture as much as that of France. The British intellectual history which largely underpins the paintings of those muses of Christian poetic art, St. Cecilia and St. Catherine, is established in this chapter, with specific attention paid to the English writer Anna Jameson. Rossetti and his circle, particularly Edward Burne-Jones and the poet Algernon Charles Swinburne, are shown to be essential to Bunny's interpretation of St. Dorothy. Finally, the full realisation of the tenets of Aestheticism, a very British component of Symbolism, is seen in the thematically associated work, *Angels Descending*, fig. 45.

In chapter four the concept of national identity and its impact on the hybrid character of Bunny is explored. The child of British and German parents, by birth Australian (a colony of Great Britain), married to a Frenchwoman, and ultimately spending the greater part of his working life (nearly fifty years) in France, Bunny was a true cosmopolitan. Although he in fact transcended such notions, this was a period of emerging nationalism and it presented some problems for Bunny. His attempts, chameleon-like, to respond to the call of art critics to place his loyalty either in London or Paris are examined through the paintings most closely associated with episodes from the life of Christ: an annunciation and a lamentation. The critical reception of the fin-de-siècle paintings, both sacred and secular, is analysed.

The epilogue charts Bunny's marked change in style in the sacred images of the beginning of the 20th century, particularly during his brief residence in London after his marriage. That Bunny increasingly referred to Old Masters like Titian and Rembrandt was noted by contemporary reviewers, as he deserted the ideal of beauty and searched for a confronting human drama. The sense of peace vanishes and the dramatic impact of the story is reinforced by Bunny's naturalistic depiction of crisis.

One of the major gaps in material for this study is the lack of letters from or to Bunny which may detail his activities, thoughts or beliefs during the 1890s. Evidence is accrued largely from contemporary reviews in both Britain and France, coupled with an attempt to systematically research in detail the history of specific pictures. To this

23 The earliest known letter from Bunny is that to Norman Carter, Paris, October 27 1912; Norman Carter Papers, ML MSS 471/1, Mitchell Library, State Library of N.S.W., Sydney.
end an Appendix is added which contains working catalogue entries for each of the Bunnys discussed. A number of the unfamiliar works on paper treating religious or occult themes are housed in the Museum of Art at The University of Melbourne. It was a search for the art-historical context of these curious images that sparked the broader treatment of Rupert Bunny in the Symbolist context that is presented here.
Chapter One

A TALE OF TWO CITIES: THE CONTEXT OF FRENCH AND BRITISH SYMBOLISM

One of the major cultural movements of the second half of the 19th century was Symbolism, which cast its net over the creative world in many fields. It was defined by Moréas’ famous manifesto in Paris just as Bunny commenced his training there in 1886. As will be discussed in the next chapter, it can be seen as part of the philosophical revolution against positivism and materialism: beginning in poetry, it moved to literature, the visual arts and music. Symbolist poets, such as Verlaine or Mallarmé and musicians such as Debussy attempted the expression of a delicate sensuousness, suggesting meaning rather than stating it. In art, Symbolism was seen as a rebuttal of naturalism, the early Impressionists and more particularly, the social realists, whose principles had been expressed by Courbet. Both David Thomas and Mary Eagle make passing reference to Bunny in a symbolist context, but both see him exclusively in terms of French Symbolism and restrict its influence in Bunny’s work to the first decade of the 20th century. It will be argued in later chapters that, in terms of the broader definition that has emerged in recent scholarship, Symbolism informs Bunny’s oeuvre from the late 1880s, and throughout the 1890s.

For Thomas, works such as Echo and Narcissus (c.1914-19) are ‘strangely reminiscent of Gauguin, with touches of Symbolist and art nouveau influences’ largely evident in the ‘flatness’ of the painting and a ‘rich and decorative’ colour. He further notes similarities between Bunny’s Portrait of the Artist’s Wife (c.1914) and the work of the intimistes Bonnard and Vuillard. Like Thomas, Eagle points out Bunny’s use of ‘rhythmic forms, flatness and vibrant colour’ and adds the symbolist preoccupations of ‘imaginative nuance’ and ‘subtleties of meaning’. She describes

24 Jean Moréas ‘Manifeste du symbolisme’, Le Figaro, September 18, 1886.
25 See Thomas, Rupert Bunny, p.70
26 The relationship between Bunny and the intimistes involves their shared portrayal of a domestic interior in a flat, decorative style. Thomas, ibid.
Bunny’s images of night and distant music as being ‘perhaps ... closest to the French Symbolists’.

As well, she makes the association between music, poetry, and the visual arts, central to that movement and evident in images such as *The distant song* or *Nocturne* (both c.1908). Nevertheless, although Eagle states that the young Bunny ‘participated fully in the poetic symbolism of the 1880s and 1890s,’ adding that ‘it became the major theme of his career’, she does not investigate this more fully through early mythological works such as *Pastoral* of c.1893.

Recent scholarship notes that Victorian painting ‘has rarely been considered as part of the international mainstream of art from which Britain was so effectively severed by the criticism of Roger Fry and Clive Bell in the first decades of this century.’ Simon Watney in *English Post-Impressionism* has pointed out the manner in which Roger Fry’s concept of Post-Impressionism, coined by him for the exhibition *Manet and the Post-Impressionists* of 1910, influenced the perception of European art. In particular, it promoted French art at the expense of the standing of 19th century British art. Watney examines Fry’s writings and analyses the inconsistencies, arguing that it is the ambiguity of the term which creates the dilemma. Fry’s aesthetic was based on a belief ‘in the existence of some essence, or lowest common denominator, shared by all “great” works of art’.

As Watney states, in ‘Fry’s theories there was no room for subject-matter, or iconography, or concrete issues of usage. Good art and good design were dependent solely upon transcendent categories of value. All was a matter of form.’ This essentially formalist position was further disseminated by Clive Bell in Britain and the influential American critic Clement Greenberg from the 1940s.

There are further inconsistencies, an understanding of which is essential to the revised concept of Symbolism. Fry was both an Anglophobe and Francophile; he emerged...
from the British tradition of Aestheticism, only to describe the work of its senior exponents as ‘sugared poison’, and ‘pseudo-art’.\(^{35}\) Although he sidelined Symbolism because of his disdain for narrative, one of his major arguments for a ‘pure’ art restates the symbolist doctrine that art is for the elect, those with the correct ‘aesthetic sensibility’. Watney continues: ‘Fry’s objections to “literary” painting were in fact objections to painting related to a specific literature - the culture of late Pre-Raphaelitism… [yet] the aesthetic position within which Fry located late 19\(^{th}\) century French painting derives quite as much from the explicitly anti-literary assumptions of the British Aesthetic Movement as from the writings of Maurice Denis.\(^{36}\) It is this disparity which current scholarship seeks to redress.

Exhibitions such as the comprehensive *Lost Paradise: Symbolist Europe*, held at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts in 1995 have shown the global aspects of Symbolism, its shared theories and favoured themes. French Symbolism is seen to be merely a part of a wider continental movement, centred not in Paris, but in Brussels, and moving through the German and Austro-Hungarian empires, to Russia and the Baltic countries, to Scandinavia and to Britain.\(^{37}\) Two recent exhibitions, one in Washington, *The Victorians. British Painting 1837-1901* (1997), the other in London, *The Age of Rossetti, Burne-Jones & Watts. Symbolism in Britain 1860-1910* (1997-1998), continue this re-evaluation of Victorian art. In an essay for the latter, Andrew Wilton shows the impressive literary genealogy which underpins British Symbolism, in some cases anticipating its French counterpart.\(^{38}\) The work of the widely-read writer and historian, Thomas Carlyle, is a significant cross-Channel influence, for example.\(^{39}\) This assists in a far wider definition of Symbolism in which the trans-cultural traveller, Bunny, can be seen to fully participate.


\(^{35}\) ibid., p.4.

\(^{36}\) Watney, *English Post-Impressionism*, p.8


\(^{39}\) Maeterlinck and Gauguin referred to Carlyle’s *Sartor Resartus* (1832) for example. Wilton’s argument covers also the work of Arthur Symons, the poetry of Keats, Tennyson, Browning, and the younger poets Swinburne, Christine Rossetti; finally, Edward Fitzgerald’s translation of the *Rubā’iyāt of Omar Khayyām* (1859) and the writings of Walter Pater (see, ibid., pp.11-32).
A summary of Symbolism, according to the dominant French interpretation, is instructive. Symbolism in the visual arts did not emerge from an aesthetic vacuum, rather a theory was advocated which drew on current philosophies and established masters. The Symbolists sought a return to the spiritual in response to the inroads of Positivism. Central to this were the metaphysical philosophies of the Germans, Hegel and Schopenhauer. Through his poetry (particularly *Les fleurs du mal*), Baudelaire introduced the French, and also several influential British intellects, to the theories of 'correspondence' of the Swedish mystic, Swedenborg. What appealed to the Symbolists was, as Stevens explains, the notion that 'Absolute ideas of truths exist in the world beyond and are perceived by the mind. Objects in the relative world...can act as “representatives” of these absolute truths or ideas.' This led to the notion of the artist (the perceiver and interpreter) as genius. For the dedicated Symbolist, this introduced a natural elitism to art; hence the poet and ardent Wagnerian, Téodore Wyzéwa, could state in 1886: 'the aesthetic value of a work of art is always in inverse relationship to the number of people who can understand it.' This, of course, was completely opposed to Bunny's demonstrated views; he sought the large, conservative and commercially successful venues of the Salon and the Academy in order to find recognition as an artist.

The rejection of the natural world and the mundane as subject did not mean no subject, rather it signalled a new subject predicated on the Idea. One of the central tenets of Symbolism seems to be the dialogue between the artist and viewer in the interpretation of this idea. The viewer no longer reads the narrative according to a tradition of symbols or through recognized natural images, he must interpret the Idea the artist wishes to express. So Christian legends and classical myths, which were considered to express universal truths, became favoured themes which were reinterpreted and reclothed in differing styles. The work of Pierre Puvis de Chavannes (1824-1898) or Gustave Moreau (1826-1898) in France, or Dante Gabriel Rossetti

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41 For an excellent summary of the development of Symbolism in France see Stevens, ibid., pp.33-37. For a broader definition, see her 'Symbolism a French Monopoly?', *The Age of Rossetti, Burne-Jones & Watts*, particularly pp.52-54.
42 Stevens, 'Symbolism - A French Monopoly?', p.54.
(1828-1882), Edward Burne-Jones (1833-1898) and George Frederic Watts (1817-1904) in England all expressed shared values: the rejection of naturalism and the painting of contemporary life, and the choice of techniques which aided the artist's creation of a timeless, alternative world of the imagination.

When the poet Jean Moréas published the Symbolist Manifesto in Le Figaro on 18th September, 1886, he stated that the essential principle was to 'clothe the idea in sensuous form' and to resolve the conflict between the material and spiritual world. Gustave Kahn clarified these ideas. The artists Emile Bernard and Louis Anquetin, associates of the symbolist literary coterie, then began their search for the Idea in the visual arts. This resulted initially in 'cloisonnisme', a style founded on the decorative as expressed in the art of Puvis de Chavannes, van Gogh's early work, Japanese prints and medieval stained glass windows. But it was Bernard's Pardon at Pont Aven, painted in 1888, which was considered by some the realisation of 'Pictorial Symbolism' and which gave Gauguin a formal mode for expressing the ideas he had begun exploring some three years earlier. The critic, Albert Aurier, an enthusiastic supporter of Gauguin, refined these ideas when in 1891, in an article published in the Mercure de France, he affirmed that the work of art must be idéiste, symbolist, synthetic, subjective and hence decorative. Gauguin's The Vision after the Sermon, 1888, achieves these objectives: it is an expression of another reality, encompassing the concept (Idea) of the religious imagination and faith in the peasant, presented in a style which removes the event from the observed to the imagined, leaving the flat decorative surface intact.

Robert Goldwater's standard book on French Symbolism endorses Aurier's definition:

the distinction is roughly that intended by Albert Aurier when he separated the idéisme of the symbolists from the idéalisme of the academy; where the former sought for an expressive unit of form and meaning, the latter were

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43 In a defence of Moréas' manifesto, 'La Réponse des symbolistes', L'Evénement September 28, 1886. Quoted in Stevens, 'Towards a Definition of Symbolism', p.37.
content to have them remain parallel: the one was true symbolism, the other merely personification or allegory.\footnote{Symbolism, N.Y., Icon Editions/Harper & Row, 1979, p.9.}

For Goldwater, the work of Gauguin, Edvard Munch and Odilon Redon, for example, was genuinely Symbolist, with the necessary fusion of form and meaning.

It is unsatisfactory to try and place Bunny's work only in the context of this French Symbolism. In matters of style, though not subject, he often sits uneasily with the artists whom Albert Aurier proposed in 1892: Redon, Bernard, Gauguin, Paul Sérusier, Charles Filigier and Paul Ranson.\footnote{‘Les Symbolistes’, \textit{La Revue Encyclopédique}, No.32, (t.II), 1892, p.474-486. He also lists Maurice Denis, Paul Bonnard and Eduard Vuillard, \textit{ibid.} Features Bunny shares with these artists have been noted by Thomas (see p.1 this chapter). Bunny’s sketch books and illustrated poems show some reference to the work of these artists.} Bunny was a creature of at least two cultures, and what is needed to detect the Symbolist grain of his fin-de-siècle work, is a new, broader definition that accepts the British contribution to this truly European movement.

Arthur Symons, the English poet and critic who attempted in Britain the first serious definition of Symbolism in its contemporary setting, saw it primarily as a literary movement, and a decadent one at that.\footnote{See Wilton, \textit{The Age of Rossetti, Burne-Jones & Watts}, p.14. The book, initially titled \textit{The Decadent Movement in Literature}, was retitled \textit{The Symbolist Movement in Literature} at the persuasion of Symons’ friend W.B. Yeats and was published in London in 1900. (The book is recorded as being published by Heineman in 1899. Wilton states that it was actually published in March 1900 - see, \textit{ibid.} fn.10, p.288).} The fin-de-siècle Decadence in Britain was seen clearly to be a French import, and hence suspect. The confronting work of Oscar Wilde and Aubrey Beardsley, particularly in the Salome legend, reinforced this perception. Hence the ‘failure of the British to recognise Symbolism as a category into which their own art might fall was largely a cultural matter.\footnote{Wilton, \textit{The Age of Rossetti, Burne-Jones & Watts}, p.16.}

Aestheticism, one of the major contemporary British art movements, with its maxim ‘Art for Art’s Sake’ borrowed from Gautier, had a strong cross-Channel presence. It shared important features with Symbolism, particularly the relationship between art and music. The critic Walter Pater asserted that ‘All art constantly aspires towards the condition of music’ and Whistler realised this with his painted ‘Harmonies and
Nocturnes'.\textsuperscript{49} Furthermore, Aestheticism sought the negation of the narrative and a concentration on formal qualities which valued the paint surface. Elements of the negation of the narrative could be seen in the art of the ‘Olympians’ which, Wilton argues, emerged from Aestheticism. Sir Frederic Leighton and Lawrence Alma-Tadema were prominent Olympians whose art reflected the Victorian interest in the classical world. Leighton was renowned for his portrayal of the nude which he placed in the purified atmosphere of the ‘pristine dawn of civilization’ using clear bright colours.\textsuperscript{50} This removed the Victorian moral concern for nudity (of little concern in France). As Wilton notes:

Aestheticism played its part in removing narrative elements that might have ...compromised this purity; but in practice the ambivalence of the whole subject remained undeniably in place, and that ambivalence is often crucial in creating the atmosphere in which symbolism operates.\textsuperscript{51}

It will be argued that Bunny’s religious imagery of the late 1890s shares characteristics seen in Aestheticism and the work of the Olympians and that these schools participated in the Symbolist canon.

However, it was above all in the art of the Pre-Raphaelites, particularly Rossetti and his follower, Burne-Jones, that the most distinctive form of British Symbolism emerged. The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (PRB) was a youthful group formed in 1848 in rebellion against the current trends at the Academy and the current art hero, Raphael. A second circle, under the leadership of Rossetti formed at Oxford during the 1850s.\textsuperscript{52} Despite the relatively short life of the PRB - it was declared dead by Ruskin in 1857 - it had tremendous resonance over the rest of the century.\textsuperscript{53} The most influential of the founding members were William Holman Hunt (1827-1910), John Everett Millais (1829-1882) and Rossetti; of the second generation, William Morris (1834-1896) and Burne-Jones. Recent scholarship has sought a re-evaluation of the

\textsuperscript{50} Wilton, The Age of Rossetti, Burne-Jones & Watts., p.17.
\textsuperscript{51} ibid, p.17.
\textsuperscript{52} For an excellent and concise account of the second group, see Elizabeth Prettejohn, Rossetti and his Circle, London, Tate Gallery Publishing, 1997.
Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in its European context, and it shows clearly the active cross-currents between London and Paris. The Pre-Raphaelites had been exhibiting in Paris with some critical success since the 1855 Exposition universelle but it was, as Jacques Lethève notes, Huysmans who brought the Pre-Raphaelites decisively into the symbolist milieu in 1884 with the publication of A Rebours when he included paintings of Watts and Millais' La veillée de sainte Agnès. From that year the Pre-Raphaelites were celebrated in several French journals, including Le Journal des Débats and the Revue indépendante, and definitively in 1887 in the Gazette des Beaux-Arts. One critic wrote that Rossetti 's'est emparé de moi avec une indicible puissance'.

As will be seen, the art of Rossetti and his circle was a significant inspiration for Bunny. One of the originals of the PRB, Rossetti developed a unique style away from the intense realism and sharp surfaces of his fellows. His favoured subjects were situated in the mediæval past, a feature adopted in several of Bunny’s works. It was Rossetti’s obsession with beautiful women, however, seen first in Bocca Baciata, 1859, which defined the allusive, mystical woman of British Symbolism. In Beata Beatrix, fig. 2, the work which honours his dead wife, Lizzie Siddall, Rossetti seems to suggest the polarities of the ‘sexual and the divine, between orgasm and revelation.’ It is these conflicting images of passion and death, spiritual and physical ecstasy which create a mysterious energy in the image and make it a part of the Symbolist canon. Bunny’s depictions of the young martyred saints lack Rossetti’s passion, but, especially in the more mature work of The Burial of St. Catherine of

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56 ‘La connaissance des peintres préraphaélites anglais en France (1855-1900)’, Gazette des Beaux-Arts, (Mai-Juin 1959, Vie périodique t.LIII, pp.315-328), p.321. Watts was never a member of the PRB, however this indicates how the term ‘Pre-Raphaelite’ was used in a general way to describe British artists, (largely Rossetti, his circle and their followers), who worked in the Symbolist manner.
Alexandria (c.1896), fig. 44, there is an intriguing ambiguity between divine sleep and death.

As the French public became acquainted with the history and work of the Pre-Raphaelites, it was Burne-Jones of the second generation who eclipsed his forbears, including Rossetti. This was to be reinforced in 1889 when King Cophetua and the Beggar Maid was exhibited at the Exposition universelle in Paris to great acclaim from those in the symbolist circles, ‘les esthètes français’. Watts, too, exhibited there and his allusive art was appreciated. The work of both artists was acquired by the Luxembourg Museum. Together, the British artists forged a particular aesthetic of feminine beauty, of a pale, slender female in the ethereal, Botticellian style, dwelling in an ideal realm. Like Burne-Jones in particular, Bunny’s depictions of saints share this adolescent female form, and he too, sets them in another world, often a costumed mediæval one.

Burne-Jones, Puvis de Chavannes, Moreau and Watts exhibited in London at the opening of the Grosvenor Gallery in 1877. Stevens remarks that ‘a natural affinity of style and subject-matter was perceived between Moreau and Burne-Jones and may...have fuelled the enthusiasm for the English artist’s work in Paris’ in the following years. Puvis was so impressed with Burne-Jones’ work for the 1889 Exposition universelle, that he apparently assisted in the award of a Légion d’honneur to the artist. Burne-Jones wrote that ‘the sympathy that has been shewn to me in France...has touched me very deeply.’ Burne-Jones then exhibited his work at the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts (where Puvis was President), for some four years. Burne-Jones’ allusive and wistful imagery of idealized females in an imagined world drew the attention of the renowned occult figure, the Sâr Joséphin Péladan.

Péladan (1858-1918) was a writer and Salon critic. Intensely Catholic, he established the Salons de la Rose + Croix in 1892, creating huge publicity for them with his

59 The term is used by Letheève, ‘La connaissance des peintres préraphaélites anglais en France’, p.323.
60 Stevens, The Last Romantics, p.36.
manifesto in *Le Figaro* of 1891. He shared many aims of the earlier British group, and mirrored their style, issuing a manifesto and proclaiming a devoted brotherhood, to be known by their initials ‘artistes R + C’. He condemned the Realists, the Naturalists and the Academy, and called for a return to the mystical and the ideal. He believed passionately in the redemptive qualities in Catholic art; he celebrated the art of the ‘Italian primitives’ for their creation of a ‘mystical ideal’; and he found their contemporary equivalent in France in the work of Puvis de Chavannes, Moreau and Félicien Rops, and in England, largely in the work of Burne-Jones and Watts. He invited these artists to submit their work (in which he saw occult mystery and sublime spirituality), to his Salons to establish the tone. However, none of them ever exhibited with Peladan. Puvis immediately demanded a public retraction of his association with the Salon and Burne-Jones told Watts that he found it to be a ‘disgracefully silly manifesto’. Bunny, I suspect, would have been in complete accord with Burne-Jones. However, although he never exhibited in such an outrageous venue, several of his subjects, particularly the earlier female saints, would not have looked amiss there. The major tenets of Peladan were religion, ideality and beauty: ‘Masterpieces of art are all religious’. The English Pre-Raphaelites were a natural source. Many young artists who also exhibited successfully in the traditional salons exhibited there, including Edmond Aman-Jean and Maurice Chabas. Others such as Bernard, Alexandre Séon, Alphonse Osbert and Khnopff, whose symbolist works have received scholarly attention, also exhibited in this vibrant venue. The successful publicity master-minded by the Sâr ensured that his Salons received maximum attention for the specific, often markedly Pre-Raphaelite, beauty of the works exhibited. Thus the distinctive British Symbolist idiom was lauded in a French Catholic context and Bunny could imbibe it in either capital.

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63 He included several un-named Pre-Raphaelite artists in his invitation to exhibit at his salons, ibid., pp.32-34.
64 ibid., p.32.
65 ibid., p.57.
67 Pincus-Witten, *Occult Symbolism in France*, p.32.
It can be seen that the polarities, the Decadent and the Ideal, essential elements of French Symbolism, were in fact present in British art and literature of a comparable period. The climax of international Symbolism occurred in the 1890s during the time in which Bunny was an avid Channel-hopper, exhibiting regularly in both the Salon of the Société des Artistes français (hereafter referred to as the Artistes français or SdAf) and at the Royal Academy. Although resident in Paris, he was a regular guest of his British relatives in Surrey and undoubtedly attended exhibitions in both London and Paris. As well, the British artists mentioned were known through the international network of exhibitions, showing regularly in London, Paris, Brussels, Munich and even Stockholm. The British journal Studio from 1893 disseminated British art abroad. Seen in the context of this broader definition, it will be shown that Bunny's religious paintings of this period reflect clearly the spirit of the age.

69 For details of their participation in the Salons de la Rose+Croix, see Pincus Witten, Occult Symbolism in France, pp.106-121.

70 For a detailed analysis of Bunny's movements, see Eagle, The Art of Rupert Bunny, 'Chronology of Addresses, Movements and Exhibitions', pp.243-246.

71 For a summation of British artistic activity in the final decade of the 19th century, see The Age of Rossetti, Burne-Jones & Watts, p.246.

Chapter Two

THE OCCULT: A SMALL ADVENTURE, 1885-1898

Many of the oil paintings which Bunny submitted to exhibition on either side of the channel in the period 1885-1900 conformed, it will be argued in chapters three to five, to certain precepts of European Symbolism. The Pre-Raphaelitism of his Les roses de ste Dorothee, fig.40, the Puvisian decoration of his Ste. Cécile, fig. 36, are reasonably familiar, if insufficiently explored aspects of his art. What is very little known however is that Bunny also engaged with the radical wing of Symbolist thematics: the Occult. In a small group of unpublished works on paper (mostly held at the University of Melbourne Museum of Art) and in rare oil paintings (for which only photographic and literary evidence survives) Bunny engaged with the iconography of Satanism and the Catholic occult, with ancient Greek magic, and with Nordic myths of death. The fact that such works rarely went beyond the embryonic or have not survived suggest that Bunny did not see in them a pathway to the mainstream success he came to enjoy by the late 1890s. Nevertheless, many of the smaller works on paper were important enough for Bunny to keep by him until the end of his life, and they provide a keen insight into the imaginative workings of this most intellectually sophisticated of Australian painters and his response to the European milieu.

Bunny, in contradistinction to many of his compatriots (such as E. Phillips Fox or Frederick McCubbin) had enjoyed an excellent formal education and was at least bilingual thanks to his parents' skills and a lengthy European trip in his youth. He read widely and maintained his intellectual curiosity about current trends right to his final years in Melbourne. The later 19th century was a tumultuous period of extreme reactions to the prevailing positivist philosophy. Bunny would have been aware of the great polarization of attitudes, even though he chose a conventional path through them. The first edition of James Frazer’s great world study of national religious and magical beliefs, The Golden Bough. A Study in Magic and Religion had been

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73 Bunny matriculated from the Alma Road Grammar School.- for further biographical details, see Thomas, Rupert Bunny, pp.11-14 & Eagle, The Art of Rupert Bunny, pp.2-3.
published in 1890. This work, which ultimately saw the parallel in all systems of belief, whether magical or Christian, was conceived as addressing not only a small group of anthropologists, but also a ‘much larger public of educated readers, who perused the notice columns of the Academy and the Athenaeum’ and who indeed bought his book in substantial numbers. One can assume that Bunny formed part of Frazer’s public.

The *Golden Bough* was just one symptom of the late 19th century reaction against the materialism, positivism and scientific methodology that had largely defined the century. It can be coupled with a passionate desire to believe in the supernatural which spawned new philosophies or reinvigorated old beliefs. This saw a conservative Catholic revival, the rise of spiritualism, the popularity of Theosophy and a resurgence of interest in Satanism. In literature and then the visual arts it was realised through the Symbolist movement. Symbolist precepts determined that ‘evocation’ rather than ‘specification’ should be the aim of the artist, hence the innate ambiguity of such esoteric work. The esoteric theory here under discussion is eclectic itself, allowing expansion of the visual language. Having said this, the identification of Bunny’s occult subjects is pursued as it can throw real light on his creative process and the analysis of his imagery is taken further than has been done before.

Since mid-century a large proportion of respectable European society, including some progressive ministers of religion, had been attending seances and enjoying table-turning, lights, bells, levitation and other such marvellous manifestations. By the time Bunny arrived in London in 1884 the Society for Psychical Research, founded

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76 The term ‘Positivism’ was first used by Saint-Simon ‘to designate scientific method and its extension to philosophy’. For a full discussion of Positivism, its history and branches, see *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. in chief, Paul Edwards (N.Y & London, The Macmillan Co. & the Free Press, 1967), vol. 6, pp.414-419.

to investigate such phenomena, was just two years old. General interest in the movement is demonstrated through its influential membership which included John Ruskin, Lord Tennyson, W.E. Gladstone and Watts. Coincidentally, in 1884 the Society for Psychical Research began an investigation of the Theosophical Society, founded by Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, Colonel Henry Steele Olcott and William Q. Judge in the United States in 1875. Blavatsky settled in London in the Spring of 1887. Isis Unveiled, the bible for this new 'scientific' religion, had been written by Madame Blavatsky, largely under the 'divine dictation' of her Masters. An interpretation of Egyptian occultism and the cult of the Great Mother, it became extremely popular. The notion of an ancient religion emerging from pharaonic Egypt, with its secrets and magical capacities disclosed only to initiates, captivated Annie Besant who succeeded Madame Blavatsky as leader (after her death in 1891). Besant, a prolific and charismatic public speaker, had a high public profile and attracted a great deal of publicity to the causes she espoused. It was unfortunate for the Theosophical Society that just as the Society for Psychical Research began its investigation, a collection of letters purportedly from Madame Blavatsky to her housekeeper, Emma Coulomb, revealed Blavatsky to be 'one of the most accomplished, ingenious, and interesting imposters of history.' It was also hinted that she was a spy, working for the Russian interest, in the Raj. Naturally, these activities received publicity and Bunny is likely to have read contemporary newspaper reports and discussed such events with his family and friends in London. That he

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78 He accompanied his father, Judge Bunny on the S.S. Orient which sailed for London, via Adelaide, on 8th February, 1884. See Shipping Lists, Public Record Office, Melbourne.
80 Washington, Madame Blavatsky’s Baboon, pp.53-55
81 Ibid., p.90.
82 Published in 1877; Anne Taylor, Annie Besant A Biography, (Oxford, N.Y., Oxford University Press, 19920), p. 227
83 Ibid. pp.51-52
84 Early in her life Annie Besant had been intrigued by a copy of the Fathers of the Church in which the Egyptian mysteries had been discussed, ibid., p.15.
85 According to Richard Hodgson, the investigator appointed by the Society for Psychical Research, in his report handed down in December 1885 (Washington, Madame Blavatsky’s Baboon), pp.82-84 & fn. 18, p.411.
86 The newspaper publicity came through, for example, Pall Mall Gazette, January 3rd, 1889 (Taylor, Annie Besant, fn.19, p.411)and the Westminster Gazette, which published a series of articles, ‘Isis very much unveiled’ around the time. Washington also refers to further publicity around 1894. (See Washington, Madame Blavatsky’s Baboon, pp.103-4.) Colette Reddin in Rupert Bunny Himself relates
and his friends were very much aware of the Society for Psychical Research is evident from an amusing story he told after his return to live permanently in Melbourne.\(^87\) He was to have attended a seance at the Society and although he often passed their premises and had noted their nameplate, on the said night, despite much searching he could not locate the building. He wryly commented that they must have known he was a non-believer. The story indicated not only his cynicism, but also his knowledge of the Society.

**Two occult drawings**

Signs of Bunny's active interest in the Occult first surface in his works on paper, including the tiny compositional pen or pencil sketches in his notebooks, watercolours and monotypes. These media allowed Bunny immediacy of action and the ability to record the fleeting notations of the mind, in contrast to the lengthy and methodical academic methods which he employed to work up large oil paintings. Two of these images, *Untitled ['Egyptian' Sorcerer, consulting tome]*, fig. 3,\(^88\) and *Untitled ['Egyptian' Sorceress, consulting tome]*, fig. 4,\(^89\) imply an educated knowledge of the Theosophical cult, its preoccupation with magical omens and its embrace of early Egyptian cult figures.\(^90\) In these unfinished works in black watercolour wash both subjects wear what may be loosely described as Egyptian costume; the male, with muscular arms and bare-chested, leans over a large book, attention focused. He wears a long pleated garment and a headband with emblem across the forehead; he consults his book in an enclosed space with the suggestion of skulls resting on huge beams behind him. The woman, also in 'Egyptian' costume of a long pleated dress, draped top and head band, swirls a cloak, splashed with a rusty red, whilst standing before a large open book on the floor. She stands in a curtained-off space. Bunny would have been familiar with Egyptian costume, examples of which were visible in wall paintings or low reliefs he would have seen at the British

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87 ibid. p. 225
88 The University of Melbourne Art Collection (UMAC hereafter); for details, see the Appendix.
89 UMAC, see the Appendix.
90 Particularly Isis, which is believed to have penetrated the Cult of Mary.
Museum or at the Louvre (for example, the relief from the Tomb of Sethos I). However, as in his depictions of oriental costume in post-World War I mythologies such as Salomé, it is his imagination which dictates the dress, not historical accuracy.

In both works Bunny creates an atmosphere of mystery and of arcane knowledge suggesting, with his props of large tomes, the enclosed space and the ancient costume, that the viewer is a privileged witness to an intimate, esoteric scene. Bunny neither dissolves form nor creates coloured auras, as seen in the work of Watts, for example, nor does he specifically imitate the hieratic forms of Egypt.

To the extent that these works are Symbolist, we find Bunny eschewing the literal attempts at archeological descriptions found in more academic art. Ambiguity is built into the properly Symbolist work of art. Thus, the female of [Egyptian Sorceress, consulting tome] could of course be Circe, the great witch of classical myth, beloved in the 1890s particularly as an archetypal femme fatale. She is known in Bunny’s oeuvre from an early watercolour which shows a reclining Circe, before whom a bound man kneels, fig. 5; a burning brazier stands between them. There is another unfinished black watercolour wash Untitled [Circe’s Magic], fig. 6 (and an accompanying sketch, fig. 7), which shows a standing nude female gesturing over a brazier; she wears only a hooded cloak which flows out behind her. Circe was a

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91 See Fig. 5 Relief from the Tomb of Sethos I, Paris, Louvre, in ‘Paul Gauguin’s “Self-Portrait with halo and Snake”: The Artist as Initiate and Magus’ by Vojtech Jirat-Wasiutynski in Art Journal Spring 1987 Volume 46, No. 1, p.24. For an interpretation of the esoteric and Egyptian references in Gauguin’s work, see Jirat-Wasiutynski, ibid., pp.22-28.


93 For example, Watts’ work, She shall be called Woman, originally painted in 1878, but reworked according to theosophical tenets between 1890-92, according to David Stewart (see his ‘Theosophy and Abstraction in the Victorian Era: The Paintings of G. F. Watts’, Apollo, vol. CXXXIX, no.381 (new series) November 1993, pp. 298-302 for discussion). Barbara Bryant warns that Stewart is incorrect in limiting Watts’ interests to only Theosophy (see her ‘G. F. Watts and the Symbolist Vision’, The Age of Rossetti, Burne-Jones & Watts, fn. 40, p.292).

94 c.1887, see Thomas, Rupert Bunny, cat. [W6].

95 The sketches belong in the UMAC, see Appendix for details. Although the dating of the works on paper is notoriously difficult they are, on stylistic grounds, likely to be around the late 1880s, early 1890s; the two costumed works have painted black frames, a device Bunny used through this decade; the black watercolour wash was a medium he used around the end of the 1880s, early 1890s. For a discussion of the dating of Bunny’s works on paper, with some reference to the use of the black frame, see Robyn Sloggett & Lois Maltheson, ‘Rupert Bunny Structure and Surface’, AICCM Journal, December 1993.
popular image at both the Royal Academy in London, and in the Paris Salons through the 1890s. The image of the standing Circe figure with arms outstretched was splendidly realised in the work of J.W. Waterhouse’s Circe Invidiosa of 1892 and in the Australian Bertram Mackennal’s bronze Circe of 1893. At the end of the 1890s Bunny designed a magnificent pair of embroidered panels depicting classical mythology’s two great female sorceresses: Circe and Medea, fig. 8. The interest in the decorative arts was informed by the Arts and Crafts Movement and its nostalgia for mediæval skills, popularized in Britain particularly by William Morris and his circle. Burne-Jones, for example, designed several large-scale allegorical figures for the company, both as embroideries and for tapestry. Very much a man attuned to his period, Bunny too works in this medium, showing an equal decorative skill. The witches wear classical draperies and both display the most infamous elements of their respective myths. Medea holds up the edge of her cloak, which is bordered with the heads of her slaughtered children, while Circe, her hair a Medusan knot of snakes, offers the magic potion which will turn men to swine. Smoke from the philtre remaining in the brazier rises in a sinuous art nouveau curve. To further his pursuit of witches however, Bunny turned to other sources.

Witches, the Occult, and Faust

Where spiritualism and psychic phenomena preoccupied the public in England and Scandinavia, people in France, Belgium and Germany were also intrigued with Satanism and alchemy. There was even a reconstruction of an alchemist’s

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97 See illustration in Royal Academy Pictures, 1894, p.139.
98 The panels, designed by Bunny and worked by his cousin Dora Douglas Binney (the initial monogram of each artist is embroidered on each panel) are dated ‘(c.1899) 1897-1901’. For details of the embroidery, see Marion Fletcher, with the assistance of Leigh Purdy, Needlework in Australia. A History of the Development of Embroidery (Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1989), p.28.
99 For example, Flora, a large-scale allegorical figure for a tapestry designed by Burne-Jones in 1885 (see fig. 197, Harrison & Waters, Burne-Jones, p.137). This is confirmed in a letter of August 29, 1984 from Linda Parry, Research Assistant, Department of Textiles and Dress, Victoria and Albert, to John McFhee at the NGA, stating: ‘Classical subjects for large-scale embroidery are unusual at this time although Edward Burne-Jones designed a series of allegorical female figures for embroidery’. Rupert Bunny file, NGA.
100 Note Ibsen (Ghosts) and Strindberg (Dreamplay) who explore the psychic world. See MaryAnne Stevens, The Last Romantics, pp.33-37.
laboratory at the *Exposition universelle* of 1889,\(^{101}\) which probably inspired the painting, *L’Alchimiste* of that year by Bunny’s esteemed teacher, J.-P. Laurens (fig. 9). There was a burst of publications on the occult in Paris at this time, such as Edouard Schuré’s *Les Grands Initiés* (1889),\(^ {102}\) *Le Temple de Satan* by Stanislas de Guaita\(^ {103}\) and Jules Bois’ *Le Satanisme et la magie* (1895). Bois also wrote for *Mercure de France, Gil Blas*, and *La Revue des Revues*; and Jacques Brieu wrote a regular series on ‘Esoterisme et spiritisme’ in the *Mercure de France*, commencing in 1891.\(^ {104}\) The publication which appears to have galvanised the public was Huysmans’ infamous novel of satanic practices and alchemical studies, *Là-Bas* (1891).\(^ {105}\) Based on occult ‘documents’ supplied to him by Abbé Boullan, the novel was initially serialized in the *Echo de Paris* early in 1891. In it Huysmans described the obscene black masses and magic which the defrocked Abbé Doce performed in the heart of Paris with apparently respectable Parisians.\(^ {106}\)

*Là-Bas* created great havoc in the popular press and as Huysmans observed:

> The truth is that I have brought out into the light again, even into fashion, Satanism, which had been done away with since the Middle Ages. There are no end of people asking me to take them to black masses!! And everyone is talking about it. Charcot and the materialist school have come down on me, treating me as a mystic and madman; the occultists, who are much attacked in *Là-Bas*, are prancing about. And Zola, not at all pleased, is making all his little naturalists protest, and is crying out the book is splendid but mad!!\(^ {107}\)


\(^{103}\) Guaita was a Rosicrucian who infiltrated the Abbé Boullan’s black magic sect and then revealed his vile satanic practices. Later defrocked, Boullan told Huysmans of satanic practices, whilst disguising the fact that he was also a practitioner. See Robert Baldick, *The Life of J.-K. Huysmans* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1955), Chapter 6 ‘The Magician’, pp.154-171.

\(^{104}\) See Bergman-Carton, ‘The Medium is the Medium’.


\(^{107}\) ibid., pp.137-151.
He also noted that the religious press was divided, one sector reviling him, the other stating that ‘the book was Catholic and mystic’.

Husymans was a writer who enacted the polarities of the age whilst recording them: he practised the occult (as instructed by Abbé Boullan),\textsuperscript{108} he adored the Middle Ages, and celebrated Chartres Cathedral and the Primitives (particularly Fra Angelico) in \textit{La Cathédrale} of 1898.\textsuperscript{109} He had always been interested in the occult, referring to incubi and succubi and the Cabbala in \textit{En Rade} (1887).\textsuperscript{110} And finally, after the publication of \textit{Là-Bas} he made a spectacular return to the Catholic faith (much as Maurice Denis was to do).

Where Bunny chose the solid world of the Salons, Huysmans championed a number of artists, whether visual or literary, whose work could be seen to explore ‘the other’. In his introductory chapter to \textit{Certains} (1889) Huysmans extolled Edgar Allan Poe, Baudelaire, Flaubert, Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, Villiers de l’Isle-Adam, Moreau, Odilon Redon and Félicien Rops as ‘exceptional beings who retrace their steps down the centuries and, out of disgust for the shameful promiscuities which they are forced to suffer, throw themselves into the abyss of the ages, into the tumultuous spaces of dream and nightmare’.\textsuperscript{111} Huysmans goes on to praise Rops’ \textit{Les Sataniques}, in which he recognized ‘the supernatural aspects of perversity’ and he continued:

\begin{quote}
all art must gravitate...to one of these two poles: purity and wantonness, the heaven and hell of art...and to be truly great, a work of art must be either satanic or mystic, for between these extremes there is only a temperate zone, an artistic purgatory, filled with more or less contemptible works of purely human interest.\textsuperscript{112}
\end{quote}

Clearly Bunny largely occupies this ‘temperate zone...of purely human interest’, however several of the images dating from his early years in Paris show an interest in

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{108} ibid., p. 171.
\item \textsuperscript{109} Letter to Auguste Lauzet, January 5, 1896, ibid. p.155.
\item \textsuperscript{110} ibid., p.140.
\item \textsuperscript{111} ibid. p.147.
\item \textsuperscript{112} ibid. p.147
\end{itemize}
wickedness and witchery. Indeed, he made his debut in the French Salon in 1887 with the drawing *Une nuit de Valpurgis*. Unhappy with the instruction he was receiving in London, Bunny had come to Paris in 1886, where, on the advice of Thomas Gotch and Henry Tuke, he enrolled at the private studio of Jean Paul Laurens (1838-1921). Bunny was delighted to be accepted by Laurens for he ‘would not take just anybody’ and he stipulated a minimum period of study of at least three years. Whilst developing his own distinctive style, Bunny remained loyal to his master, commenting ‘his élève I have always remained’. As remarked above, the interest in the occult as subject had touched even this Officier de la Légion d’honneur, whilst not altering his realistic style.

Bunny was more responsive to the general mood surrounding him. In the summer break he made several sketching trips to Brittany and his reaction to that strange landscape is recorded in at least one of the sketchbooks of 1887. Brittany with its bloody history and concomitant myths was to feed the imagination of many of his fellow artists, including the Nabis, who explored the occult there. Spurred by the area’s weird and melancholic landscape of dolmens and menhirs (still visible today), Bunny’s imagination sought the bizarre. He probed occult ritual in a series of sketches in early notebooks and in loose wash drawings. They form part of the ephemera which he kept for his lifetime and which were given to The University of Melbourne by his Trustees in 1948. In a sketchbook of 1887 there are several images of note, including a scene of a torture room; in another a woman is stretched across a rock, a knife plunged into her breast, whilst a figure stands by. Two are titled in

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114 Eagle, *The Art of Mr. Rupert Bunny, An Eminent Australian*, *The Southern Sphere*, July 1, 1911, p.15.


116 Sketchbook Cl3 (47), UMAC 1948.37, box 12. This is a beige clothbound sketchbook with a handle. Inside the front cover is written in Bunny’s hand ‘C.R.W. Bunny/2 Rue Odessa/ Gare Montparnasse’. The Odessa address (that given for his first Salon entry, in 1887) and the inversion of his initials, used only in the first years of his arrival in Paris, date the book at 1887.

117 For a full discussion of the occult practices of the Nabis see George L. Mauner, *The Nabis: Their History and Their Art, 1888-1896* (N.Y. & London: Garland Publishing, 1978). Gilles de Rais, the 15th century Marshall known as the ‘Bluebeard’ of Tiffauges, whose history was told by Huysmans in *La-Bas*, lived in Brittany and performed many of his monstrous deeds there; Huysmans visited the ruins of his castle in 1889.

118 See Sketchbook Cl3(47) UMAC 1948.37.25, box 12. There is an enlarged study of this image (UMAC, 1948.81) but no known completed work.

119 UMAC, Sketchbook Cl3 (47), 1948.37.33A.
Bunny’s hand, *The Curse*, (figs. 10 & 11): in the first, a cloaked female figure with demonic face stands before a dolmen set in a ring, her arms extended uttering her curse; in the second the female figure, without her demon-visage sketched in, raises her arm in which there is a notion of a wand, as she performs her curse before an encircled obelisk. In both images Bunny created a real sense of evil through the furious gesture of the witch, through the harsh, jagged pencil line which delineates the figures and through the skimpy, windblown trees which enclose her. Finally, there are two sketches of a magician on a loose-leaf paper, fig. 12. In the upper image a figure in a long garment gestures, wand in left hand, at a cauldron over which someone bends. In the lower image a female, in long costume, holds both arms upright, the left holding a wand. The upper image is less powerful, but the lower image, with its rapid slashes of ink, suggests with economy the force of her maledition.

There is a spectrum of contemporary responses to the current interest in the occult. From Laurens’ *L’Alchimiste*, a depiction of an elderly man, clad in medieval cap leaning over his books (reminiscent of Rembrandt’s philosophers), to Bunny, who conveys a sense of evil through the conventional imagery of witches, to the most extreme in Rops, who opened a new and shocking vocabulary in his series of etchings, *Les Sataniques*, 1882. Rops’ *L’Idole*, fig. 13, exemplifies this: a woman, clad only in shoes, is in intimate embrace with an idol; flanking this are two obelisks topped by creatures with large erect phalluses, apparently ejaculating. Where each work records the occult, Rops uses explicit profane imagery while Bunny creates a sense of evil through gesture.

Bunny’s first two presentations to the *Artistes Français, Une nuit de Valpurgis* (1887) and *Un Sabbat* (1888), conform to this theme of evil. Both are apparently lost, known only through literary descriptions, and a small oil study, presumed to be related to *Un Sabbat*. Various factors may have stimulated Bunny’s adoption of such a topic for his Salon debut. Thomas and Eagle hold diametrically opposed opinions regarding his

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120 Both works, UMAC, see Appendix for details.
121 Page of 2 sketches, *Untitled [Sorcer]*, UMAC; see Appendix for details.
choice of subjects; Thomas noting that the 'subject of a witches’ sabbath is not far removed from Laurens own melancholy subjects of death.'\textsuperscript{123} Eagle however remarks that the ‘Germanic subjects and murky, “gruesome” treatment were not what one would expect from a student of Jean-Paul Laurens.'\textsuperscript{124} Both are partially correct.

Laurens was an academic history painter in whose often melancholy works corpses appear to predominate, as in Mort de Caton d’Utique (Laurens’ own debut at the Salon of 1863),\textsuperscript{125} for his most prestigious public decoration, the cycle for the Paris Pantheon on the life of Saint Genevieve, Laurens painted Sainte Geneviève à son lit de mort and the Funérailles de Sainte Geneviève.\textsuperscript{126} He often chose confronting moments, such as Les derniers moments de Maximilien, Empereur de Mexique but they are drawn almost exclusively from within an historical context, not from tales of another world. However, in 1885, the year before Bunny joined him as a student, Laurens exhibited a painting of Faust and around the same time he illustrated the story for the publisher Jouaust.\textsuperscript{127} It is believed, however, that his interpretation was mainly through the filter of Gounod’s opera.\textsuperscript{128}

Une nuit de Valpurgis, the subject of Bunny’s lost drawing exhibited at the Salon of 1887, was well-known largely through Goethe’s Faust. Part One,\textsuperscript{129} although, after the tremendous success of his opera, Gounod revised it (1869) by adding a ballet

\textsuperscript{121} Thomas, Rupert Bunny, .,22
\textsuperscript{122} Eagle, The Art of Rupert Bunny, p.24.
\textsuperscript{123} See typed notes, Jean-Paul Laurens, dated Paris, le 8 avril 1982 Conservation, O.GL/KL 1069, Musée d’Orsay.
\textsuperscript{124} It is not known whether he chose this particular part of the cycle, or if it was given to him (due to his thorough grounding in the subject). There are many more works starring the corpse, see ‘Oeuvres principales de J.-P. Laurens exposées pour la plupart aux salons de Paris’ in Thiollier, L’Oeuvre de J.-P. Laurens, pp.20-25.
\textsuperscript{125} The painting was exhibited at the Société des Artistes français, 1885, cat.1473 (Catalogue illustré du Salon. Paris: Librairie d’Art) In the ‘Oeuvre principales de J.-P. Laurens’ Thiollier notes as with other paintings ‘1884 Faust. App. A M. Boissonneau. Angers’ (p.23). He also notes that Laurens illustrated other works such as ‘L’Imitation de Jesus-Christ, Le Pepe, la Canne de Jonc, l’Abbé Tigrane, Faust, etc.’ (the writer’s emphasis) and concludes ‘Les reproductions de deux croquis et de quatre dessins appartenant au musée du Luxembourg pourront donner une idée des compositions destinées à ce dernier livre.’ (p.18).
\textsuperscript{126} Two operas based on Faust were produced, the first by Hector Berlioz (in 1846), followed by C.F. Gounod’s in 1859. In Gounod’s highly successful work, the librettists, Michel Carré and Jules Barbier, had, in true gallic style, concentrated on the love story between Faust and Marguerite and on her final redemption.(Kobbé, The Complete Opera Book p.717 & pp.741-749). According to Thiollier, Laurens ’adored’ music (L’Oeuvre de J.-P. Laurens), p.8.
\textsuperscript{127} I am grateful to Dr Irma Kosa of the Department of Germanic Studies and Russian, The University of Melbourne, for her advice in the area.
based on the revels of Walpurgis Night. Bunny, like Laurens a lover of music and, indeed, an excellent musician himself, is likely to have seen Gounod's opera in either London or Paris. However, it is the wilder, Germanic path he has chosen. The scene 'Walpurgis Night' occurs on May-Day eve in celebration of the ancient pagan spring festival. In it the great orgiastic witches' ride to the Brocken (Blocksberg), the highest peak of the Harz Mountains, takes place. Goethe's imagination had first been stimulated by the old folktale of Faust which he had seen as a boy in the marionette theatre in Frankfurt. Bunny could well have seen such a puppet theatre production when a nine-year old, on an extended visit with his relations in Frankfurt. His mother, Marie Hedwig Dorothea Wulsten, daughter of a distinguished Prussian who became an adviser to the central Prussian government, was a member of the educated middle class who read Goethe. Indeed, Goethe was in the educated person's canon of literature in Europe generally. Moreover, just as Bunny's father read the classical myths to him, it is reasonable to suggest that his mother would have told him of the popular myths of her country. In 1887, the year in which Bunny's wash drawing Une nuit de Valpurgis was accepted by the French Salon, a copy of Goethe's Urfaust was discovered, to huge publicity in Germany. Goethe was considered a pan-European figure, on a par with Shakespeare, and it is therefore likely that the location

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130 The ballet appeared at the Grand Opera, Paris. However, these revels appear comparatively mild, as Faust meets antiquity's great courtesans, such as Cleopatra, Helen of Troy, etc. (Kobbé's Complete Opera Book, ed. and revised by The Earl of Harewood, London, Putnam & Company, 1969, p.748. For a comprehensive report see pp.741-749.)
131 Gounod was very popular in England: Faust was Queen Victoria's favourite opera. (The Concise Dictionary of Opera, John Warrack and Ewan West, Oxford & N.Y., Oxford University Press, 1996, 3rd edition, p.206.)
133 See Goethe Faust. Part One, trans. Philip Wayne (G.B., Penguin Books, this translation first published 1949, this reprint, 1960) for a description of the origins of the Faust story. It was picked up by Marlowe and brought back to Germany from England, only to be picked up by the puppet theatre (ibid. pp.15-17).
134 Dr. Irma Kosa confirmed that such puppet plays are still popular. For details of trip, see Eagle, The Art of Rupert Bunny, p.3.
135 Wolfgang Leppmann, The German Image of Goethe (Oxford, at the Clarendon Press, 1961), p.7, but for wider perspective see Chapter 1 'Goethe and the Public of his Time', pp.1-47. Hilda Mackinnon, in her series of articles 'Before the Nineties', wrote of the society to whom they were related; see 'Before the Nineties: Part 3', Table Talk, March 8, 1934, p.10.
136 For Judge Bunny's influence on his son, see Turnbull, 'Rupert Bunny: An Appreciation', p.10; Swanton, 'Rupert Bunny'; Thomas, Rupert Bunny, p.11.
of a copy of Goethe’s original text for *Faust* would have occasioned comment in the French press as well.\(^{137}\)

Goethe’s *Faust* was well-known to the French, not only through opera, but also through the visual arts. Various French artists had been responding to the work since the beginning of the 19\(^{th}\) century and several painters of the Romantic school had, in the 1840s, sought inspiration from the popular German source.\(^{138}\) Artists such as Ary Scheffer interpreted the subject many times.\(^{139}\) Eugène Delacroix had produced one of the first great *livres d'artiste* of the 19\(^{th}\) century when he illustrated Goethe’s *Faust* in 1828. The book drew critical attention; very positive from Goethe himself, who approved of the power of the images.\(^{140}\) Whether Bunny had seen a copy of one of these rare books of original lithographs, or whether he had heard of it is not known, however, on the evidence, his interpretation of ‘Walpurgis Night’ is quite different from the two images which appear in Delacroix’ work, for example, fig. 14.

Bunny’s drawing, unfortunately lost, is variously described as a ‘little water-colour in black and white’\(^{141}\) and a ‘wash drawing’\(^{142}\) so it is assumed that it was technically similar to a wash drawing like *Untitled ['Egyptian' Sorcerer, consulting tome]*.\(^{143}\) Obviously, in both subject and tone it presaged Bunny’s first oil painting, *Un Sabbat*, submitted successfully to the Salon the following year, 1888.\(^{144}\) The painting is also

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138 Gustave Doré also had a project to illustrate Goethe’s *Faust* but it was not realised. (See Gustave Doré. 1832-1883 (exhibition catalogue, Strasbourg Musée d’Art Moderne, Cabinet des Estampes, 1983, p.82.

139 For example, Scheffer’s study for *Faust in the Walpurgisnacht*, 1845. Scheffer had been engaged with *Faust* interpretations since the early 1820s. See Ingres & Delacroix through Degas & Puvis de Chavannes, p.68.


141 C.R. Bradish, ‘Rupert Bunny. Painter of International Reputation’, *Table Talk*, August 9, 1928, p.11.


143 Exhibited at the *SaAf*, no. 2673, in the section *Dessins, Cartons, etc.* See *Société des Artistes français, catalogue illustré du Salon*, Palais des Champs-Elysées, Paris, 105\(^{th}\) exhibition., May 1, 1887.

144 *SaAf*, no. 429; see *Société des Artistes français, catalogue illustré du Salon*, Palais des Champs-Elysées, Paris, 106\(^{th}\) exhibition., May 1, 1888.
lost, but it is thought to have been brought back to Australia and sold.\textsuperscript{145} Bunny’s ‘weird and gruesome Witches’ Sabbath’, whose ‘cleverness’ and ‘genius’ was noted by \textit{The Age} correspondent, nevertheless was seen as a sign of the decadence of the modern French school.\textsuperscript{146} Fortunately, a presumed study for the work in monochrome ink and watercolour on board is known, fig.15.\textsuperscript{147} In this image females, many bare-breasted, loins clad in black drapery, either dance ecstatically, with skulls dangling from their waists, arms linked and punching the air rhythmically, or crawl around the base of a skeletal tree on which a lone black bird sits. A single figure with pale waistcloth and white-painted face stands beneath the tree, gesticulating and possibly orchestrating the macabre ritual. The stylized figures as they dance and crawl set a rhythmic drumming across the composition.

Where Delacroix’s images clearly illustrate Goethe’s text, and those of Laurens appear to be drawn from the opera,\textsuperscript{148} it is debateable whether Bunny refers to either. Yet he has encapsulated Goethe’s frantic scene, setting it ‘on the upland.../Where glowing fires begin and whirls of smoke’ and, as Mephistopheles describes it, the witches ‘chatter, dance, brew, drink, have love’s caress’.\textsuperscript{149} The witches certainly fit the description: ‘Witches I see stark naked, Sir, and young,/And old ones, who do well to veil their charms.’ Both Delacroix’ images crawl with snakes in response to such lines: ‘What are those, in thickets crawling?/Salamanders, belly-sprawling?/And the roots like wondrous snakes/Rise from rock and sandy soil’.\textsuperscript{150} Perhaps the crawling witches in Bunny’s work result from a transient memory of the lines. It is in the depiction of a flickering, silvery light, with which Goethe’s lyrical imagery suffuses the scene: ‘Then threads of light in network surging/Their silver veins through valleys run,...The sundered filaments are one’, and in the recurring motif of

\textsuperscript{145} Purchased from Fletcher’s Art Gallery, Collins Street, Melbourne (‘The Witches’ Sabbath’, \textit{Table Talk}, October 18, 1889, p.5) by a Mrs. Gavan Duffy. I grateful to Mr. Laurence Course for the name of the purchaser.

\textsuperscript{146} ‘The Students Exhibition at the National Gallery Award of Prizes’, \textit{The Age}, November 13, 1889, p.6.

\textsuperscript{147} UMAC 1948, see Appendix. The description of the painting by ‘Glencoe’ in the article, ‘The Witches Sabbath’ shows that the study is closely aligned with the painting in details such as the colour (‘almost a monotone’), the bag at her cauldron, and the ‘human heads hanging at the waists of the partly nude central figures’.

\textsuperscript{148} Unfortunately, an analysis of Laurens’ work is beyond the scope of this thesis.


\textsuperscript{150} ibid. p169.
glow-worms and fireflies, that Bunny encapsulates the pictorial tone of the poem by allowing the board to vibrate through the translucent wash paint.\textsuperscript{151}

It has been shown that these works which have, to date, puzzled scholars, emerge from a confluence of diverse influences: the subject is treated by Bunny's respected teacher, Laurens,\textsuperscript{152} and broad interest in \textit{Faust} is shown both in the visual arts and in music. However Bunny's choice of topic and the wild interpretation of the scene comes more from the Germanic folktale which underpins Goethe's \textit{Faust}, in conjunction with the impetus of the general interest in the satanic underworld shown by his colleagues in art and literature. Despite the grotesque imagery, the silvery light in Bunny's work has a restrained beauty which emerges more powerfully in the poetic images of the spiritual female saints he begins the following year (1889). In 1891 however, in common with many fin-de-siècle Symbolist artists, he turned to the theme of the \textit{femme fatale} in his interpretation of the temptation of the ascetic desert father, St. Anthony, fig.16.

\textbf{La tentation de St. Antoine, c.1891}

Bunny's only depiction of the \textit{femme fatale} in an 1890s salon painting appears to have been a failed effort for him. In an 1891 article, Bunny is reported to be 'engaged upon a St. Anthony, showing novelty of treatment'.\textsuperscript{153} However there is no record of this work in his exhibition history in either Paris or London for that year,\textsuperscript{154} and the painting is now apparently lost. On the basis of an old photograph and a series of sketch-drawings in the collection of the The University of Melbourne Museum of Art, it is nevertheless possible to reconstruct this work and Bunny's eccentric

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{151} ibid., p.170.
\item \textsuperscript{152} The painting was exhibited at the Salon the year before Bunny's arrival in Paris, but the subject would undoubtedly have been discussed.
\item \textsuperscript{153} Alison Rae, 'Fine Arts. Australian Artists in Paris', \textit{The Australasian}, March 14, 1891, p.524. The work is known through a photograph in the collections of the State Library of Victoria (MS 7970). On the verso is written in pencil 'Hilda/St. Anthony/in the third Salon, Paris, 1891'. Hilda and her mother were in Paris at the time Bunny was painting the work (see Mackinnon, 'Before the Nineties'). The annotation indicates that the painting was to be shown in the Paris Salon and that it belonged to a family member (probably his younger sister, Hilda Mackinnon; possibly his niece Hilda Barkly). Both families were patrons to Bunny.
\item \textsuperscript{154} For the decade (1890-1900) catalogues of the \textit{SdAf}, the \textit{SNdBA}, the \textit{Salon des Indépendants}, the RA, the RBA, the Institute of Painters in Oil Colours and the New Gallery have been searched.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
iconographical treatment, which is so redolent of the Symbolist interpretation of Christian themes.

The *St. Anthony* represents the only gap in Bunny's exhibition history at the *Artistes français* from his first exhibited work in 1887, to his last in 1900; it is therefore probable that the work was rejected. Bunny himself had observed that salon acceptance was luck:

> like playing bridge; the fate of the pictures like cards depends on how they're placed together. If one comes after something exceptional, it stands a good chance of being passed out; on the other hand, if shown after a lot of indifferent canvases, it is probably accepted.

Perhaps Bunny was a victim of the split in the Salon (1890) after which, as contemporary critics observed, both Salons showed more careful selection of work. I think it more likely that Bunny's *St. Anthony* was seen to be overtly blasphemous.

The mid-century surge in religious art revived the subject of St. Anthony in France, its popularity ensured particularly by the episode in which the ascetic confronts a wanton seductress in an Egyptian desert. Flaubert's publication of *La Tentation de St. Antoine* in 1874 proved a fecund source for fin-de-siècle artists. Whereas the erotic element of the hermit's visions was treated cursorily in earlier works, Flaubert's

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155 It could, of course, have been submitted too late, or subjected to some accident in the studio, but given the photograph in the family collection and the annotation on the rear, suggesting that a photograph has been proudly sent (or taken) home, this scenario seems unlikely.


157 Gustave Larroumet, *The Salon 1892*, trans. Henry Bacon, Goupil & Co (plates), (Paris & London, Boussod, Valadon & Cie, [1892])), p.54. Larroumet is specifically referring to both Salons weeding out the technically inept, which would not be applicable to Bunny's painting.

156 Statistically, the popularity of the subject in the annual salon peaked sharply between the years 1831-1848, occurring 12 times. In the two flanking periods, 1817-1827 and 1848-1899, the subject occurred just once and twice respectively. (See Foucart, *Le Renouveau de la Peinture Religieuse*, p. 99.)

prose-drama elaborated it, with the Queen of Sheba as chief seductress. His highly visual description of the exotic Queen of Sheba and of the esoteric episodes (particularly the Sphinx and the Chimera, and Simon and Ennoia/Helen) caught the imagination of the decadent and symbolist writers, even inspiring a shadow play at the Chat Noir in the late 1880s.

By this time the symbolist and decadent visual artists were freely interpreting the story too. Of these, some maintained the erotic line of the Romantics, though interpreted in a more shocking way, as in the versions of Rops or indeed, Bunny. And there were the more esoteric artists who were intrigued by the metaphysical elements of the story. In the work of James Ensor and of Odilon Redon, it is a symbolist aesthetic which informs their arcane images, in which the erotic is suppressed while the bizarre or grotesque predominate. In Redon’s lithograph _Tentation de saint Antoine_ (1896), fig. 17, for example, the head of the temptress floats in isolation on the page; the exotic exists only in the darkly shadowed eyes and the pouting mouth, the exotic emphasized through the glint of her elaborate headdress. Ensor’s drawing is a compilation of images, drawn largely from Flaubert’s narrative, in which the nude figure of the Queen of Sheba is centrally placed, but subjugated to the floating, radiant head of Christ and the seated Buddha. Less radical responses were seen in the _Artistes français_. These range from work such as that of J. Henry Sharp’s _Devant Saint Antoine_ (1896) to Fantin-Latour’s _La Tentation de St. Antoine_ (1897). Sharp omits the saint and paints an academic study ‘de nudité décence’ of a full-breasted woman, her back turned discretely to the viewer. However Fantin-Latour, like Bunny, was an artist who worked within the academic canon but toyed with aspects of...

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163 See commentary and ill. _Le Panorama Salon_ text by Gaston Schéfer (Paris: Librairie d’Art, 1896)n.p. Also see _Catalogue illustré de Peintures et Sculptures. Salon de 1896...Palais des Champs-Élysées_ (Paris: Librairie d’Art, 1896), cat.1827, and ill. (line drawing)p.183. One other work on the theme was shown in the 1896 salon, L.-A Bellemont’s _La Tentation de saint Antoine_, cat.152 (unfortunately, not illustrated.)
Symbolism. A fin-de-siècle contempt for materialism is expressed through a soft haziness (or leonardesque sfumato) whilst, as Mathieu observes, ‘never ris[ing] above the conventional language of allegory’.

The subject of St. Anthony appeared regularly in the Artistes français during the last fifteen years of the century, falling off only in the final couple of years. Eugène Isabey’s frankly erotic Salon entry of 1869, in which voluptuous nudes circle the recumbent figure of the saint, is typical of the romantic interpretation. Despite this early example of religious erotica, a critic extolled the ‘modernized’ interpretation of the theme by Aimé Morot in his La Tentation de St. Antoine, fig.18, exhibited over a decade later at the 1881 Salon. After establishing that the theme had become banal, ‘tant il a été traité de fois, par les peintres de tous les siècles et de toutes les écoles. Il a hanté leur esprit comme une vision,’ the critic praised Morot for his realization that a saint’s virtue was not tested by the sight of half a dozen witches flying to a Sabbath, nor by a chorus of croaking frogs, hissing snakes, nor, indeed, by a flight of owls. Rather, one young and pretty woman, ‘blonde suave ou brune piquante’ who:

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s’assied sur vos genoux frémissante et nue, et... fait couler jusque dans vos veines la chaleur de son corps tiède et parfumé; dont les doigts fins ...
\]
\[
s’enlacent à vos doigts, tandis que son autre main, caressante et fluette se joue dans les touffes de votre barbe grise, et que le flot soyeux et parfumé de sa chevelure inonde votre poitrine et monte jusqu’à vos lèvres
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Mathieu notes this of one of Fantin-Latour’s Wagnerian themed paintings, but it is applicable to the St. Anthony. See Mathieu, The Symbolist Generation, pp.56-57.

The subject of St. Anthony (if not specifically his temptation) appeared from 1884-1899, at least once in every salon, bar those of 1893 and possibly 1895 (catalogue not examined), eg G. Surand’s Saint Antoine et saint Paul L’Ermité in SdAf of 1894. The temptation is not seen in 1898 and 1899. (See relevant catalogues.) It was not as popular with those artists who exhibited with the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, occurring only once in that decade: S. Binet, La Tentation de Saint-Antoine, 1894 (Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts: Exposition de 1894. Catalogue illustré. Cat. 121). The work is not illustrated. Other ‘temptation’ scenes were shown, including that of the local priest tormented by physical desire: G.-P. A Surand’s Tentation, SdAf, 1892, cat. 1564, ill. p.244). No work on the theme has been traced in any of the six Geste Esthétique. Catalogue du Salon de la Rose+Croix 1892-1897 (T. Reff (comp.) Exhibition of the Rosicrucian Salons, 1892-1897, N.Y. & London, Garland Publishing, 1891.)

Reff notes that the work (painted in 1868) was the earliest to respond to Flaubert’s Queen of Sheba episode, although contemporary critics did not pick this up. See Reff, ‘Images of Flaubert’s Queen of Sheba in Later Nineteenth-Century Art’, pp.126-133, ill.34. For an early oil sketch of the work in which the Rubenescque qualities of the image predominate, see Christian Imagery in French Nineteenth Century Art 1789-1906, cat.63, p.202-203.


ibid., p.37.
represented real temptation. It seems to me that although the temptress (and the critic) appears to be enjoying herself, Morot’s saint looks more despairingly bored than despairing: one can imagine that the circulation to the outstretched leg upon which she lounges is seriously impaired, and the rocky shelf against which he leans appears to offer the only comfort. St. Anthony’s attribute, the pig, snuffles in the right foreground. By comparison, Bunny’s interpretation of the theme, fig. 16, is in one way, less markedly sensuous (there is no bodily contact between saint and vision); and yet in Christian terms, it is shockingly confronting as the vision assumes the position of the crucified Christ.

In the photograph of the finished work *Untitled [La tentation de st. Antoine]*, the figure of the young saint stands in the right foreground, transfixed by the sight of a naked female who is suspended between the barren desert and the heavens. She hangs still in space, her body absolutely straight, frontal, her long legs tapering to slender feet, clenched at the ankles. Her arms extend straight from the shoulder, the hands cupped as if to receive the stigmata of the nails. Abundant dark hair streams down to her buttocks, with the occasional tress flaring as it is caressed by desert breezes. The sight of such a carnal temptress, her lascivious curves softly contoured, assuming the position of the crucified Christ would, surely, have been offensive to many on the Salon’s selection committee. This was a period of appeasement between Church and State and Bunny’s tampering with the symbol of Christ’s ultimate sacrifice may well have been seen as heretical. Moreover it appears to have been inspired by the lascivious and anticlerical work of the Belgian, Félicien Rops (1833-1898).

The sole images traced in which the temptress adopts a position as crucifix are those of Rops’ *Les sataniques. Le Calvaire*, 1882, fig.19, and the drawing *La Tentation de saint Antoine*, 1878, fig.20, which created a scandal at the time of its release.

169 Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903) established a program between 1889-1898 through which he wished to change the allegiance of Catholics from loyalty to the monarchy to loyalty to (or acceptance of) the Republic. See Francis X. Flood, “The Catholic Church in 19th Century France” *Christian Imagery in French 19th Century Art*, pp.63-64.

Bunny’s rare iconography suggests that he knew of Rops’ images.171 A drawing, Rop’s *Tentation de saint Antoine*, was included in a collection which sold in Paris, undoubtedly to much publicity, in 1887.172 (Apparently Rops’ engraving of the subject was the only contemporary image to be cited by Sigmund Freud [in explanation of repressed desire in saints and penitents.])173 Rops was a popular and prolific illustrator for Symbolist writers, such as Baudelaire, Verlaine, Mallarmé and Péladan. Although we may see his art as pruriently erotic, during the fin-de-siècle he was considered, as Mathieu suggests, an ‘artist who revealed Satan’s hold on mankind (it was an era of belief in the Devil) and exposed the sexual and religious hypocrisies of the late nineteenth century with a pencil dipped in acid.’174 In Rops’ image of St. Anthony the laughing, voluptuous female actually displaces the crucified Christ on the cross; a grey snake-tongued, horned devil pushes the emaciated body of the tortured Christ to the side and ‘EROS’ replaces the traditional lettering (I.N.R.I.) on the head of the cross. At the foot of the cross an elderly bearded St. Anthony rears back in horror, his hands to his head. In many ways, lewd though this doubtless is, the grotesque elements, (devil, skeletal cherubim, dishevelled saint, etc.) exist comfortably in the iconography of older northern artists, such as Bosch and Bruegel.175 In Bunny’s image, on the other hand, the eroticism is pared down and an iconic Byzantine stillness ensues.

The creation of this work is recorded through two compositional sketches and two figure studies, which relate in some way to two of the *St. Anthonys* exhibited in the Salon in the couple of years preceding Bunny’s painting.176 In 1888 Paul Quinsac exhibited *La Tentation* and two years later, Carl Guthner showed a work of the same

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171 Rops does not appear to have illustrated a specific edition of Flaubert’s *La Tentation de saint Antoine* (see ‘Ouvrages illustrés par Félicien Rops’, Delevoy, et al., pp.308-310), although Mathieu refers to ‘a Rops engraving for Flaubert’s *The Temptation of Saint Anthony*, The Symbolist Generation, p.23.

172 Delevoy, et al., ‘Ouvrages illustrés par Félicien Rops’, p.144. & p.150. The collection, bound into two volumes, entitled *Les Cent lègers croquis pour rejouir les honnestes gens* was sold by Noilly. There may well have been other copies as the coloured crayon belonging to the Bibliothèque royale Albert 1er, Brussels, appears to have belonged initially to Edmond Picard. See cat. 106 *La Tentation de Saint Antoine, Félicien Rops 1833-1898*, pp.119-120.

173 Mathieu, The Symbolist Generation, p.23. For an excellent summation of Rops, in which Freud’s article, ‘Delirium and Dreams in Jensen’s Gradiva’ (1907) is cited, see ibid., p.124-126.

174 ibid., p.125.

175 It is Ensor who extends their grotesqueries into a world of bitter personal obsessions, such as his *Tribulations of Saint Anthony*, 1887 (MOMA, NY). For an historical survey of the theme, its iconography and relevance to contemporary depictions, see Jean Seznec, ‘The Temptation of St. Anthony in Art’, *Magazine of Art*, Vol.XL, March, 1947, pp.126-133.
title (figs.21 & 22). In each of these paintings, however, although the female is temptingly lubricious she assumes only the accepted role of seductress, not displacer of Christ. Bunny apparently did not want to alter this, for in the known alternate version the female’s form remains fixed; it is the saint’s form which is changed. In Bunny’s two studies, fig.23 and fig.24, a muscular St. Anthony kneels, his torso bare, a rolled cloth his only clothing, as in Quinsac’s depiction. He faces his tormentor, but puts up his arms as though to both hold off the vision and to protect himself from the sight. Curiously, it is the form of the female temptress in Gutherz’s later version which approaches Bunny’s pose for the saint. Here, fig.22, the woman kneels, right leg thrust back to the viewer, shapely buttocks prominent. As in Bunny’s tiny compositional sketch for this version, fig.25, the kneeling hermit turns away from the vision, his arm thrusting her back, so too, Gutherz’s monk cowers against rocks, his head buried in his arms, one delicate hand held up in protest. Where Bunny’s earlier saints cringe and writhe in emotional turmoil, his painted Anthony seems frozen in an iconic stance (incidentally, a classic studio position) as he halts with a pitcher in his hand, arrested by the distant vision.

This stasis relates the painting to, amongst others, the renowned decadent images of Moreau. Mario Praz observed that many of the artists of the fin-de-siècle aligned themselves spiritually with Byzantium, in reaction against positivism and its aesthetic realization, naturalism. Huysmans was one of the first to celebrate the aesthetic with the description in his novel A Rebours (1884) of Moreau’s Salomé dansant devant Hérode (1876). It is an extravagantly decorative world he describes but concomitant with that is the hieratic stillness of the king and his guards, or what Moreau called the ‘Beauty of Inertia’. Byzantium was revisited on the stage and the page, from Sardou’s Théodora, written for Sarah Bernhardt, to articles in the Revue Blanche, to poems by Laurent Tailhade or Symbolism’s theoretician, Albert

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176 All four works are in the UMAC. See Appendix for details.
178 For an examination of the Byzantium aesthetic from Moreau to the end of the century, see Praz The Romantic Agony, the penultimate chapter ‘Byzantium’, pp.303-434.
179 ibid. p.303.
Aurier. Its influence was seen in the work of artists from the Academy to the avant-garde. J.-P. Laurens parodied it in his *Le Bas-Empire Honorius* (1880), fig.26, and that most trenchant Academician, William Bouguereau, celebrated it in works such as *Vierge et enfant* (1888). Equally, the young symbolist avant-garde saw that it fulfilled their charter for a subjective interpretation of the world through formal means rather than through narrative. Maurice Denis in his controversial essay 'Définition du néo-Traditionnisme' listed as one of his goals a return to an art which mirrored the 'sacred, hermetic and imposing icons' of Byzantium. Analysis of Denis' painting *Le mystère catholique* (1889), fig.27 shows a work in which the formal attributes transcend the reality of the detail (the contemporary garments of the priest and altar boys). The figures are both stiff and static, the simple outline predominates and the plane they inhabit is flat and linear, quite unlike temporal space. As noted, Bunny's image concurs with these basic tenets: the figures are static, the composition arranged on flat hieratic planes even if his use of relief is more traditional. When examining fig.23 and fig.24, the two studies of the woman and St. Anthony, it can be seen that in one the mysteriously smiling model assumes a slightly contraposto stance which is more relaxed and seductive, whilst in the other, the woman's hips are even, the figure strictly frontal, the smile absent. Through the use of this latter model in the painting, Bunny controls the erotic (cf. all of the examples shown), making the image iconic. Moreover the fixed stance of the painted saint as he sees the woman (a demon in disguise), is in stark contrast to the horrified response seen in figs. 23 and 24, or in the small pen and ink sketch for the work. Here, fig.28, the saint swings round, aghast, his hands raised to his face (as in the Rops or the Quinsac); his pitcher lies at his feet. By contrast, in the completed oil all notions of rending lust are removed. The saint

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180 For a thorough examination of the Byzantine aesthetic, its relationship to the contemporary religious political situation, the social context, its ramifications for religious art at the end of the century, see Driskel, *Representing Belief*, pp.227-252.

181 Driskel argues that Laurens was opposed to the political ideology underpinning the promulgation of the Byzantine aesthetic in the conservative Church and he produces convincing contemporary analyses of the work to support his argument. See his *Representing Belief*, p.234-236. The Bouguereau is in the collections of the AGSA, see ill. *Paris in the Late 19th Century*, (Canberra, National Gallery of Australia, 1996) p.73.

182 Quoted in Driskel, *Representing Belief*, op.cit.,p236. For analysis of Maurice Denis' Byzantine aesthetic and its relationship to symbolism, see Driskel, ibid., pp.236-237.

183 A pointillist version of this work (1890) was exhibited to great critical acclaim at the Salon des Indépendants of 1891. For details and ill. see cat 65, *Post-Impressionism. Cross-Currents in European Painting*, (Royal Academy of Arts, London 1979-80; published in assoc. with Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London) p.65
stands transfixed, pitcher in hand as though on the way to collect water. So Bunny, perhaps attempting to mitigate his shocking image, renders it merely banal.

In keeping with the iconic idiom, in Bunny’s painting the landscape detail is kept to a minimum. It seems, however, to be based on actual topography, if one compares the cave and coastline of *Burial of a saint*, fig.48, with the cave and desert of this image. The siting of the cave, the slight step to its level, and the curved coastline are similar in both works, although Bunny exchanges sea for desert. An awning (a realistic addition by the Australian) extends from the cave. However, extraneous detail is kept to a minimum. There are no familiar religious attributes (such as Anthony’s crutch, bell, asperses, or hog); the only indicator of his faith is the small crucifix which hangs from his simple loincloth. Thus perhaps Bunny felt that the iconic formality of his work would subdue the painting’s seeming apotheosis of lust, allowing the emergence of a powerful spirituality.

*Death’s Summons* c.1898

The final great unknown, death, was a recognized and accepted part of the life cycle in Victorian and Edwardian periods, with its own comforting rituals of dress and behaviour. Although unknown in an oil painting, there are at least three Bunny monotypes which deal with the subject: *Death’s Chariot, Untitled [Death’s Summons]* and *Death the Reaper*. The first two are listed in Bunny’s inaugural exhibition of monotypes at the Fine Art Society’s Galleries, London, in November 1898; the third is illustrated in an article ‘Mr Bunny’s Oil Drawings’ in *The Magazine of Art* of 1899. These are the last known examples of such imagery in Bunny’s work.

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185 Roger Butler has suggested a broad method of dating the monotypes (see his ‘Rupert Bunny: The Monotypes’, *Rupert Bunny’s Mythologies at the Australian National Gallery*, with essays by Mary Eagle and Roger Butler, exhibition catalogue, June 7 - November 16, 1986, n.p.). His proposal that the earliest monotypes are in ‘dark and brooding colours’ and that the artist uses a ‘reductive’ method, in which paint is removed from the plate (through brush tip, for example), support an early dating for the work.

186 It is suggested that the untitled work may have been in the first exhibition of monotypes at the Fine Art Society’s Galleries under the name *Death’s Summons*. Alternately, the work *Death the Reaper* which *The Magazine of Art* implies was in that exhibition, but whose title is not on the original
In contrast to the allegorical figures of death favoured by Watts, Moreau or even Laurens, I propose here that in *Untitled [Death's Summons]*, fig.29, Bunny is drawing on Northern myth, heard at his German mother’s knee, or possibly read in either a common Victorian book of mythology such as the popular British publication, Alexander Murray’s *Manual of Mythology for the use of Schools, Art Students, and General Readers*, 1873, or, curiously, illustrated in Adolphe Didron’s renowned *Christian Iconography*. Others also turned to the eddas and sagas of the north: Fantin-Latour, Beardsley, and Burne-Jones for example. Burne-Jones drew *Odin*, lord of the gods, and *Frey*, god of ‘golden sunshine’; but whereas he depicted the gods who interest themselves in the good of mankind, Bunny described the vile goddess of death. Working in the intimate, tactile medium of the monotype Bunny avoided the sunlit poetry of his major paintings of the period, such as *A Summer Morning*, c.1897, in which beautiful young maidens do very little in charming draperies. This is the very antithesis of such scenes: the giant goddess Hel is a bat-winged monster, wading towards her cowering victim through viscous mud. The Norse deity, Hel, ruled the Lower World to which all those who did not die nobly in battle must come; instead of the Christian notions of a fiery hell, hers was a sleet-cold one. The palette of dark brown and black with small highlights of a deep blue reflects catalogue, may have appeared under the title *Death's Summons*. See ‘Mr. Rupert Bunny’s Oil Drawings’, *The Magazine of Art*, [August,], 1899, p.376-7

For example, Watts’ *Love and Death*, 1887 (repr. 7.28, Ann Galbally, *The Collections of the National Gallery of Victoria* Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1987, p.186); Moreau uses the *femme fatale* to describe Death in *The Young Man and Death*, c.1865, (ill. no. 225, *Lost Paradise*, p.179); Laurens sketched Death as a skeletal form wrapped in a cloak. The *croquis* is clearly dated 1866; it is not known if Bunny was aware of the sketch. See “*bz Croquis*” in Thiollier, *L'Oeuvre de J.-P. Laurens* (n.p. for plates). An alternate source for the images of skeletons is Dare’s popular graphic art, particularly his illustrations of Balzac’s *Contes Drôlatiques* (published in England in 1874). See *Contes Drôlatiques. Droll Stories* by Honoré de Balzac. Illustrated by Gustave Doré. London: The Bibliophiliast Society, 1874.

Murray was first published in London, Asher & Co, 1873. The book was substantially revised, including new chapters on Northern mythology, for publication in Philadelphia, Henry Altemus Company, 1897. Didron’s *Christian Iconography. The History of Christian Art in the Middle Ages*, Vol. II, was first published in 1886.

An enthusiasm for Wagner’s works inspired many artists of the time; see Fantin-Latour’s *Prelude to 'Lohengrin'*, 1882, *Lost Paradise*, op.cit. pl 25, p.47 or Beardsley’s illustrations for *The Ring*, ibid. plates 26-28, pp.48-49.


* A *Summer Morning*, MJM Carter Collection, AGSA.
Hel is variously described as being parti-coloured or, in the earlier edition of Murray as ‘black, and of a grim aspect’. Bunny certainly paints her grim; of fierce visage, sagging breasts and with large talons on her huge limbs. Her gaping mouth calls to the frail human who cowers away from her on the edge of the rock. Hel is livid in hue, her legs a light green, talons emerald, and with a burgundy mouth. The tail of the brush is used to spike her hair. The iconography of the pendant breasts, although radical for Bunny, was described and illustrated by Didron in the second volume of *Christian Iconography* published in 1886, the year of Bunny’s arrival in Paris (fig.30). Didron observed of frescos at Campo Santo, Pisa, that like Orcagna’s treatment of Death in the church of Sta. Maria Novella at Florence, they referred to northern myths. Death ‘resembles...black-winged beings...corresponding to the Norns, Valkyrie of the Scandinavians’, moreover, she is a ‘fearful-looking woman, with wild streaming hair, claws instead of nails swooping from the sky on large bat’s wings’. Similar images of female death could be seen in illuminated French manuscripts. Thus the imagery, which has to date been an enigma, can be explained if regarded as part of the great northern eddas.

The emergence of the macabre at the end of the 1890s prefigures the confronting religious images exhibited in London between 1902-03. His restrained painting, *The Descent from the Cross*, fig.54, c.1898, had already, as argued in chapter four, shown a change in Bunny’s approach. The powerful *Death the Reaper*, fig. 31, shows a mediæval image of skeletal Death, grasping the scythe and reaching out a bony hand to hold fast the shoulder of a person slumped over an open book. There are three

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192 For a discussion of the technique of the monotype see ‘Mr Rupert Bunny’s Oil Drawings’, pp.376-7; for a broad method of the dating of Bunny’s monotypes, see Butler, ‘Rupert Bunny: The Monotypes’.
193 Half black and half blue (Murray, *Manual of Mythology*, ed. 1897, p. 370); or half black and half white (*The Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend*, ed. Maria Leach, N.Y., Funk & Wagnalls Co., 1950, vol. 1) or alternatively half ‘of hue like to raw flesh, while the other was livid and horrible’, (Mackenzie, *Teutonic Myth and Legend*, p.91).
197 The monotype has been described as *(Winged figure approaching man)*in *Rupert C.W. Bunny 1869-1947*, exhibition catalogue, July 19 - August 18, 1972, The University of Melbourne, cat. No. 14; or as *(Winged figure with talons approaching a man)*, exhibition catalogue, *Artists under Saturn: Melancholy and the Macabre in Melbourne Art*, Ian Potter Gallery, The University of Melbourne, November 15th - December 16th, 1989, cat. No. 11.
studies on paper of *Untitled [Death's Knock]*, including a sketch, fig. 32, in which a cloaked figure knocks at an arched door, and one of a similar figure knocking at a door with portico. A curious photograph of a cloaked figure posed to knock at a door, with skull positioned at his feet, is one of a couple of images in which Bunny and his friends created mock 'sets.' The image of the cloaked, knocking figure is possibly a reference to William Holman Hunt's mystical picture *The Light of the World*, 1851-3, in which Christ, bearing a light, knocks at a door. The work was probably known by Bunny as it became immensely popular through the sale of engravings. Rather than showing the mystery of salvation seen in the earlier work Bunny, however, engenders a sense of fear of the unknown, as a face peers out through the peephole in the arched doorway. Such images of Death disappear with the closing of the century.

What happened to the initial occult adventure of 1887/88? Why did Bunny not pursue these current themes more in Salon painting? There are solid precedents in the work of Royal Academicians, Watts or Waterhouse, or established figures such as Moreau for such subjects. However, by the turn of the century Symbolism and its partner, Decadence were a depleted force. Although open to the contemporary intellectual currents which directed the art of so many of his era, perhaps Bunny was not, ultimately, intellectually committed to these ideas. Indeed, by this time many of the early initiators and enthusiasts, such as Huysmans and Denis, had turned from their youthful experiments. In the absence of other evidence, and after surveying the major paintings which interweave this work through the decade, I would suggest that the subjects simply did not hold the appeal for him to develop on a large scale. Moreover, his modest reputation in the French and British press was gained largely through the

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198 UMAC; see Appendix for details.
199 The photographs are in the Collection of the University of Melbourne and show Bunny and friends cavorting by the sea, dressing up and creating 'sets'. Photography was used for the composition of paintings in the 1890s and earlier.
poetic work, whether mythological or sacred. Apart from his early paintings for the Salon, these musings appear as works on paper. They are basically intimate pieces in which Bunny relished the close contact between pen and paper or, in the monotype, with the paint on smooth surface. It has been shown that in his most spontaneous works, Bunny shared with his generation a certain curiosity about the more radical aspect of the Symbolist canon, the occult. The predominant thrust of his major Salon and Academy paintings, however, was towards the Ideal. The beautiful images of young female saints, a phenomenon of Bunny's work of the 1890s, look to this.

Chapter Three

IN SEARCH OF THE IDEAL

Ste. Cécile (c.1889), Les roses de sainte Dorothee (1892), The Burial of St. Catherine of Alexandria (c.1896), and Angels Descending (c.1897)

Bunny was raised in a traditional Protestant family; his Bible was well read and the pencilled annotations show his scepticism of the Gospels.203 The lives of the saints, however, held a general appeal. Like the Greek myths, they describe the plethora of human difference. Emile Mâle noted this when describing the continuous popularity of Voragine’s *Golden Legend* which had been reprinted in both Britain and France in the 19th century.204 The stories were not only set in exotic places, they required that the artist reflect the subtle diversity of human emotion and ‘reveal the soul’, which gave them particular appeal to artists of the late 19th century.205 There was a yearning for faith in, as Carlyle so eloquently expressed it, ‘an age fallen into spiritual languor, destitute of belief, yet terrified at scepticism’.206 For many in Britain art became the new religion.207 Malcolm Warner explains that art’s ‘sacred object [was] not the God who may or may not be there… but a deity created in the beholder’s own eye, beauty.’208 When Burne-Jones was asked if he believed in the story of the Star and the Magi he replied: ‘It is too beautiful not to be true’.209 Thus an ideal of beauty and poetry became the new article of faith. Bunny explored this ideal through the legends of three virgin martyrs, each one of whom faced vile tortures before her divine consumation. In keeping with the ethos of the decade, particularly in Britain, Bunny

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203 For example, beside the first columns of the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke, Bunny wrote in pencil ‘Once upon a time’. Against Luke 1:35-40 he wrote: ‘How does Luke know all this?’. My thanks to Colette Reddin for her generosity in allowing me access to Bunny’s Bible given to her mother, Mrs Reddin, by Bunny during his friendship with the family in the 1930s. For an analysis of Bunny’s pencilled annotations, see Reddin *Rupert Bunny Himself*, particularly ‘Bunny and His Bible’ pp.221-229.

204 For an authoritative analysis of the role of the saints in the Middle Ages, see Emile Mâle, *Religious Art From the Twelfth to the Eighteenth Century* (USA: The Noonday Press, 1st ed. 1958, fifth printing, 1964) pp.82-86.

205 Ibid., p.85.

206 The quote comes from Carlyle’s explanation of the popularity of Walter Scott’s novels; quoted in Warner, *The Victorians*, p.31.

207 For an excellent review of this thesis, see ibid., particularly pp.30-33.

208 Ibid., p.39.

209 Quoted ibid. p.32.
repressed the potential horror of martyrdom, seeking to portray in these works an apotheosis of beauty.

Bunny’s *Ste. Cécile*, fig. 36, was painted in Paris and exhibited at the *Artistes français* in 1889. The subject can be seen to be indebted to J. P. Laurens, Bunny’s revered teacher, whose oeuvre included many saints, and who accepted religious commissions. However, in this chapter I will argue that St. Cecilia and her companion saints (and angels) can equally be understood as a product that emerged from the English late 19th century art world where Bunny had spent several formative years. These connections tend to be played down by scholars who have endorsed Bunny’s derogatory observations of his British training. However, I believe that the following analysis of the subject, iconography and style of the religious work for the years 1889-1897, establishes the importance of Bunny’s British experience.

Four of Bunny’s major religious works of the 1890s reflect strongly the influence of the late Pre-Raphaelites, now associated with Rossetti’s circle. Despite the apparently French Catholic iconography of these images (female virgin martyrs), there was a strong English tradition aligned with the Aesthetic Movement, its practitioners, their interest in music, the poetry of Tennyson and Swinburne and their often mystical, religious themes. As discussed in chapter one, by the 1880s the work of Rossetti and particularly Burne-Jones was both widely acclaimed and known in France. French symbolists showed a strong interest in British artists for their evocation of a mysterious and elusive world, characteristics their work shared with that of Puvis de Chavannes and Gustave Moreau. Sàr Joséphin Péladan’s small but highly publicized Salons of the Rose+Croix lauded the aesthetics of these French and British artists. Both groups of artists shared not only an interest in the creation of the mystical through mythology, but also the creation of the mystical and spiritual in religious subjects. These cross-currents are demonstrated clearly in Bunny’s sacred art of the 1890s. However, when depicting the female saints and accompanying angels he shows himself a man attuned to the prevailing British intellectual climate.

Rupert Bunny in Britain: the Pre-Raphaelite influence

Bunny's scorn for the teaching he received in England at the St. John’s Wood Art School under Philip Calderon, and his flight to France has been noted by Thomas and Eagle. It was first observed early in his career in an article in *The Magazine of Art* of 1895 when R. Jope-Slade wrote that Bunny had failed 'to obtain instruction or advantage at the St. Johns Wood Art Schools'; it was confirmed in 1948 when Clive Turnbull recounted that Bunny told him of the School 'I spent 18 months there...It was a complete waste of time.' Yet Thomas acknowledges the influence of the Pre-Raphaelites in Bunny's work of the 1890s, observing it particularly in relation to the religious work and the book illustrations. That the techniques taught at the School did not appeal to Bunny is not challenged, however a vital aspect of this first London period is ignored. When Bunny arrived in London, fresh from the Colonies, a young man with a passion for art, he undoubtedly would have viewed all aspects of art currently displayed in London. This ranged from the work at the Royal Academy, crowded though it was, to the venues of the Aesthetes - the Grosvenor Gallery and its successor, the New Gallery. Moreover, much of the work of these latter artists, such as Watts, Whistler and notably Burne-Jones, was lauded in France by the Symbolists.

From mid-century in Britain the female saint had become part of the vocabulary of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in such work as Millais' *La Veille de la Sainte-Agnès,* (seen by Verlaine on his London visit with Rimbaud in 1873), or Burne-Jones' *St. Cecilia,* or even Rossetti’s Dantesque subject *Beata Beatrix* (the latter two works said to

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211 Prettejohn coins this term to differentiate the PRB from the second wave of artists who gathered around Rossetti in the 1860s; see *her Rossetti and his Circle,* p.6.
212 *The Magazine of Art,* 1895, p.392.
214 Thomas *Rupert Bunny,* pp.30-34.
216 The New English Art Club, founded in 1886, offered an alternative exhibition venue. It proved useful for those artist of the plein-air schools at, eg., Newlyn and St. Ives.
be widely known through reproduction\(^{218}\). While at first glance the subject of virgin Christian martyrs seems essentially Catholic and therefore French, in fact they can equally be British, often linked to Aestheticism and to the poetry of Keats, Tennyson and Swinburne.\(^{219}\) By the final decades of the 19\(^{th}\) century the female saint was an integral component of the prevailing cult of ideal female beauty.\(^{220}\) I suggest that when considering his interpretations of St. Cecilia, St. Catherine and St. Dorothy Bunny naturally would look to this prevailing British aesthetic.

**St. Cecilia, St. Dorothy and St. Catherine of Alexandria: the iconography in Britain**

A brief survey of *Royal Academy Pictures* of the 1890s shows, not surprisingly, that St. George, the patron saint of England, whose cult reached its apogee in the middle ages, was the saint most frequently depicted.\(^{221}\) His legend was closely followed in popularity by the Arthurian cycle and the search for the Holy Grail, another mediaval romance. Both of these subjects attracted the attention of the Pre-Raphaelites, but Bunny shows no interest in these tales of masculine sanctity. It was, rather, the dominant cult of ideal feminine beauty which attracted him.

The 19\(^{th}\) century British writer, Mrs Jameson, described St. Cecilia and St. Catherine as 'the muses of Christian poetic art';\(^{222}\) Cecilia is the patron saint of music and song whilst St. Catherine presides over literature and philosophy. Bunny's image of St. Dorothy appears to be a response to Swinburne's epic narrative poem *St. Dorothy* as


\(^{219}\) The poets were often an inspiration acknowledged by the artists through the title or appended lines, for example, Anna Lea Merritt, *St. Cecilia*, RA, 1886. The catalogue specifically acknowledges Tennyson's *Palace of Art* (see *The Exhibition of the Royal Academy of Arts 1886*, exhibition catalogue, London, cat.1340) or J. W. Waterhouse *St. Cecilia*, with an appended quote from Tennyson's *Palace of Art* (*The Exhibition of the Royal Academy of Arts 1895*, exhibition catalogue, London, cat.97).

\(^{220}\) Often these saints were quite uncommon and they appeared right into the years of the 20\(^{th}\) century; for example Waterhouse, *Saint Eulalia*, 1885, see ill.34, (Anthony Hobson *The Art and Life of J.W. Waterhouse RA 1849-1917* London: Studio Vista/Christie's, 1980) p.44; E.R. Frampton, *St. Clare as Patron Saint of Embroidery*, 1905, cat.63, see ill. *The Last Romantics*, p.99; or F.C. Cowper *St.Agnes in Prison*, 1905, cat.159, see ill. (ibid.) p.27.

\(^{221}\) eg George Hitchcock's *St. George in Royal Academy Pictures* 1897, p.21 or Henry C. Fehr's 9ft statue, *St. George and the rescued maiden*, *Royal Academy Pictures* 1898, p.120; Briton Riviere, RA, *St. George in Royal Academy Pictures* 1900, p.122 and in the same year Alfred Drury, ARA, *The Dragon Slayer*, a statuette, illustrated p.124.

the saint is not dealt with in the French Salons, nor does she appear at the Royal Academy. Music and literature were two arts which Bunny, along with many of his fellow Victorians, held dear throughout his life. So each of these works is redolent of contemporary British interests.

Cecilia was the saint to receive most attention on both sides of the Channel during the 1890s. However earlier in the century, as Mrs. Jameson had observed, the subject (despite its beauty) was not one frequently depicted. In France, the lists of religious paintings commissioned by the Seine Prefecture and installed in Parisian churches between 1816-1860 shows a similar lack of interest in Cecilia and her fellow martyrs Catherine and Dorothy. The growth in popularity of the legends of the female saints in the second half of the century can be attributed partly to the Pre-Raphaelites, who were associated with the mid-century religious revival in Britain and had attempted to revive religious art in the 1850s. At that time an increased number of churches were built (particularly those influenced by High Anglicanism) and their decoration was encouraged. Members of the Oxford Movement, those supporters of High Anglicanism, advocated a return to early church rituals which, they felt, encouraged a profound spirituality. A revived interest in the Catholic heritage of Anglicanism resulted, which saw an emphasis on the miraculous and a concomitant interest in Catholic saints. By the last decades of the century a serious classical scholar such as F.W.H. Myers could interpret Rossetti’s images of women as ‘the sacred pictures of a new religion’. This elevation of the spiritual female was an important factor for many artists and poets of the 19th century.

223 She observes this ‘particularly by the old French artists’. See Sacred and Legendary Art p.219.
224 See Tables A, B and C, in Foucart, Le renouveau de la peinture religieuse en France, pp. 358-374. According to Foucart’s table, ‘Représentations peintes de saints et saintes dans les salons de 1800 à 1860’, the peak period for the depiction of Sts. Cecilia and Catherine (St. Dorothy is not mentioned) was 1831-1848; ibid., 358-374.
226 Harrison and Waters observe Ruskin’s influence with the publication of Seven Lamps of Architecture (1849) and Stones of Venice (1851) which promoted the use of Gothic materials. Hence beautiful decorative work, largely mosaic, mural and stained glass, was commissioned for them. (Burne-Jones, p.48)
228 From an essay published in 1883; quoted in Pretejohn, Rossetti and his Circle, p. 74. Pretejohn explains that Myers interpreted Rossetti’s art according to Plato’s philosophy.
Burne-Jones for example undertook commissions through Morris & Co to design several important stained glass windows in which St. Catherine, St. Cecilia and St. Dorothy feature. These are likely to have been seen by Bunny. There are, for example, two important cycles by Burne-Jones at Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford, which detail episodes in the lives of St. Cecilia and St. Catherine and both could be sources for Bunny's particular choice of episode. Below the large traditional figure of each saint is a panel of episodes from her life. For St. Cecilia, Burne-Jones included the Conversion of Valerian and for St. Catherine, her transportation by angels, called The Entombment of St. Catherine, fig. 33. These scenes do not commonly occur in painting and perhaps may have been a spur to Bunny’s imagination when he was composing his paintings.

The subject of St. Cecilia appeared occasionally in exhibitions in Paris and London prior to Bunny’s commissioned work of 1889 and became very popular during the 1890s in both cities. Anna Lea Merritt’s St. Cecilia, exhibited at the Royal Academy of 1886 and based on Tennyson’s Palace of Art may have been known by Bunny; or his patron, Alfred Felton, may have drawn his attention to it when he commissioned the subject a couple of years later. But the images of the saint by Rossetti and Burne-Jones were the most widely known contemporary works, through reproduction, in both London and Paris. Tennyson’s poem The Palace of Art was a primary source for the depictions of St. Cecilia in the work of the Pre-Raphaelites. Rossetti, one of the illustrators for E. Moxon’s edition of Tennyson, designed such an

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229 For example, Burne-Jones executed cartoons for St. Cecilia at Cambridge, All Saints, 1866 and Bloxham, 1869 before the commission at Christ Church, Oxford in 1874. St Cecilia is the east window; the other scenes are Valerian and the Angel and the Martyrdom of St. Cecilia. Charles Sewter reproduces the predellas, see The Stained Glass of William Morris and his Circle (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1974), repr. 497-500. The St. Catherine is in the Regimental Chapel, east window; the other scenes being St. Catherine’s appearance in the Temple and her Vision ibid., repr. 530-532.


232 Camille Mauclair in his L'Art en silence (Paris, Société d'Éditions Littéraires et Artistiques, 1901, p.199) notes that reproductions of Burne-Jones' St. Cecilia, Moreau's Salomé and Rossetti's Beata Beatrix were owned by some 500 people at the time. (See also Casteras, Pre-Raphaelite Art in its European Context, p.37). For a description of the tapestries, see Harris & Waters, Burne-Jones, p.137-138.
image. Although not a financial success, the Moxon Tennyson (published 1857) provided an opportunity for the work of the group to reach a wider audience, and by the last decade of the century was a source of admiration and reference for their followers. Rossetti's images of St. Cecilia are striking in their sensuous appeal as the angel, (described in Tennyson's verse as merely looking at the saint), embraces her with passion, fig.34. The boundaries between virgin martyr and saint, and passionate patron saint of music are thus blurred as she leans back in the angel's embrace, apparently in a state of ecstasy (or ecstatic death), her hands still quivering on the organ's keyboard. Burne-Jones' St. Cecilia, fig. 35, is a single-figure design for stained glass window in which the elegantly draped saint stands playing an organ. Bunny's interpretation of the scene rigorously excludes ecstatic passion, rather he embraces an iconic stillness.

Regarding Bunny's next subject, St. Catherine (fig. 44), Jameson observed that she was particularly popular in Britain, perhaps inspiring the first play there in the early 12th century. There are many images of St. Catherine's life in cathedrals, churches and museums around France and Britain. However, the subject does not appear in the Royal Academy and it rarely appeared in the French Salons during the last 15 years of the 19th century. So Bunny's choice of topic and the episode he chose is original in the context of both major venues in which he exhibited. Rossetti had depicted St. Catherine in a small, brilliantly coloured work of c.1857-9. He showed the saint in a mediæval artist's workshop, where a model in contemporary costume

233 Hunt, Millais and Woolner were contributors to Moxon's illustrated edition of Tennyson's Poems, Bowness, The Pre-Raphaelites, p.157.
235 For a more detailed discussion of the work, see Alicia Craig Faxon, Dante Gabriel Rossetti (Oxford, Phaidon Press, 1989), p.97. There are several sketches of St. Cecilia reproduced, including a study for the woodcut, but the variations are minor; see ibid., figs. 88, 89, 90, pp.96-97.
237 Jameson notes particularly Geoffrey, a Norman, who wrote a play of the saint for the schools of the Abbey of Dunstable, and Dryden's Tyranic Love. See Sacred and Legendary Ar., p.87.
238 And occasionally, paintings of the specific incident depicted by Bunny, eg, H. Lehmann's Saine Catherine d'Alexandrie portée au tombeau (Salon of 1840), Montpellier, Musée Fabre, see Foucart, op.cit. fig. 100.
239 No painting of that title is seen in the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, nor, unlike St. Cecilia, does it appear in the Salons de la Rose+Croix, (although there is a bas-relief in wood, cat.448, 1892).
240 In the catalogues of the Société des Artistes Français 1885-1900, only the following have been located: M. Villeroy Ste Catherine, cat. 2474, 1888 (no ill.) and D.-U.-N. Maillard Jeanne d'Arc et les voix celestes: St. Michel, Sainte Marguerite et Sainte Catherine (no ill) 1890;1894 E.E. Lemencrel (ill. names the female saint holding a spindle St. Genevieve).
carries the palm and wheel (symbols of her martyrdom). There is no sense of the tragedy of the legend, rather it is a scene of mediæval industry. There were of course, examples of the subject in public collections. The Louvre holds Correggio's *The Mystic Marriage of St. Catherine*, perhaps his most famous and beautiful work, and in London Gerard David's similarly titled work was acquired, to modest publicity, by the National Gallery, London, in 1895. The National Gallery held other important images, including those of Pintoricchio, Crivelli and of course, Raphael. However, these images show the saint with her conventional attributes, particularly the wheel. So St. Catherine's legend was in the public domain, but Bunny's choice of episode was contemporary in its reflection of one of the favoured themes of the Aesthetes: peaceful death.

The subject of Bunny's third female saint, the miracle of St. Dorothy's roses is, once again, difficult to explain merely in the context of either the Royal Academy or the French Salons (fig. 41). The first highly successful Rosicrucian Salon may well have reinforced Bunny's decision to take up again the subject of this particular female saint, and indeed, to deal with it in a style characteristic of the popular Pre-Raphaelite fashion. Miracles of roses, encompassing the legends of Saint Elizabeth of Hungary and St. Francis, were not uncommon in the Salons. However, Bunny's painterly depiction of St. Dorothy of Cappadocia, was virtually unprecedented. For the subject

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242 'Chronicles of Art - June', *Magazine of Art*, (London, 1895) p.316. There is no record of this work in *The National Gallery Complete Illustrated Catalogue*, compiled by C. Baker and T. Henry (London: National Gallery Publications, 1995). The work may have been de-accessioned or re-attributed.
243 See examples in *The National Gallery Complete Illustrated Catalogue*.
244 Both major Salons and the *Salon de la Rose + Croix* have been surveyed. In the last fifteen years of the decade, although two other works entitled *Miracle des roses* appear in the catalogues of the *SdAF*, one in 1884, the other in 1899 the former involves St. Francis, the latter can be identified as pertaining to the legend of St. Elisabeth. E.-A. Duez *St. François d'Assise; - miracle des roses* cat. 829, see *Société des Artistes français, Catalogue illustré du Salon*, Paris, Palais des Champs-Elysées, May 1, 1884)). For J. Wagen Le miracle des roses, see cat.1971, *Société des Artistes français, Catalogue illustré du Salon de 1899*, Paris, Palais des Champs-Elysées, May 1, 1899. See ill. p.58 which clearly identifies this subject as that of Elisabeth of Hungary. It is the moment at which the gifts to the poor she had hidden in her cloak are changed into roses before her husband's eyes. St. Dorothy does not appear in the *Salons de la Rose+Croix*, although St. Elisabeth's miraculous roses appear once in the Salon of 1893 (E. Habert, cat.107 *Sainte Elisabeth; le Miracle des Roses*, p.xv. Reff, Exhibitions of the Rosicrucian Salons, 1893). Montalembert wrote a book on the life of the Hungarian saint (first published in 1836). Driskel does not give the precise title, however it was reissued over twenty times during the 19th century and was one of the most widely read devotional works of the period. See Driskel, *Representing Belief*, pp.143-144. St. Elisabeth's legend, clearly identified through title, appears occasionally, as with P.-H. Flandrin's *Sainte Elisabeth; - le miracle des roses* at the *SdAF* 1890.
came from British sources rather than French. Its only apparent precursors were again in the circle of Rossetti, as the legend of St. Dorothea was known in England through the poetry of Swinburne and the work of Burne-Jones.

It has been suggested here that Bunny’s choice of subject largely emerged from his British intellectual heritage, through the poetry, illustrated books and images of Rossetti and his circle. Bunny’s likely familiarity with the lives of the saints as told by the British author, Anna Jameson, was another element of his cultural inheritance, and should be examined briefly.

Anna Jameson

Anna Jameson (1794-1860) was a highly respected author, with a scholarly knowledge of the visual arts. She was greatly admired by Sir Charles Eastlake, first Director of the National Gallery and past-President of the Royal Academy, and his wife, Lady Eastlake, a couple with tremendous influence in upper middle-class society in its intellectual and social spheres. When Jameson published Sacred and Legendary Art in two volumes in 1848 it was the first work in English to ‘interpret both systematically and genetically (sic) the symbolism of Christian art.’ In the book she noted that the revived interest in medievart created a desire to understand the traditions of the medieval world which had spurred these ‘once popular Catholic legends’. Her thesis that in art the Christian tradition should be able to be related to contemporary life is, as Holcomb records, very close to the views of the Pre-

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245 The subject has not been traced in the last decade of the century at the RA. There is record of a St. Dorothea: The Procession of aphrodite which describes a different legend. (See Royal Academy of Arts. Exhibition Catalogue.1885, cat.301) ‘Dorothea’, however, appears very regularly as the name of girls in portraits.

246 She published Galleries, a guide to the public galleries of art in London (1842) and its sequel, the Companion to the Most Celebrated Private Galleries of Art in London (1844).


249 For study of Mrs. Jameson’s life and career see ibid., pp.93-121; specific quote, p.107.

250 Mrs. Jameson Sacred and Legendary Art, p.108.
Raphaelites.\textsuperscript{251} The book was well received and freely available.\textsuperscript{252} It was also a ready iconographic source for both writers and artists: George Eliot, for example, consulted it for her work \textit{Middlemarch},\textsuperscript{253} and it is acknowledged as a source occasionally in the Royal Academy catalogues. So Bunny, and, indeed, his British family were very likely to have read her. Her pragmatic approach to the stories as legends ‘founded in fact, though mixed up with...marvels, parables, and precepts, poetry and allegory’ concurs with the scepticism Bunny exhibited in the annotations to the Gospels in his Bible.\textsuperscript{254}

In 1889 Bunny was entering his final years of study in Paris with Laurens, who, in his very public commission for the Pantheon, had addressed the theme of the female saint with his depictions of St. Genevieve (1882). However, Bunny’s choice of St. Cecilia, which initiated the body of religious work executed by him into the early years of the century, was due, it was reported, to a commission from his patron and family friend, Alfred Felton.\textsuperscript{255} It is the only one of his religious works known to have been commissioned. Although the details are unknown, the subject was one which would have pleased both men with their shared interest in music, and a brief survey of Felton’s interests and beliefs indicates that the St. Cecilia was chosen not as a Catholic icon, but rather for her role as a ‘poetic muse’.

\textbf{Alfred Felton: patron}

Although probably self-educated, Felton had a great interest in literature and the arts.\textsuperscript{256} Felton (1831-1904) was born in Essex, England to a modest family (his father

\textsuperscript{251} Holman Hunt acknowledged the importance of Jameson’s writing to his own work.
\textsuperscript{252} See Holcomb, ‘Anna Jameson’, pp.112-113 for the Pre-Raphaelite connection.
\textsuperscript{255} \textit{Table Talk} July 26, 1889, p.4 notes: ‘Mr. Rupert Bunny...has had a picture accepted and hung in the Salon. The painting - St. Cécile - is the commission of Mr. Felton, of Melbourne.’ Felton continued in his support of Bunny, leaving annuities of £100 to both Bunny and his mother on his death (See Last Will and Testament, copy from ANZ Trustees, p.3; John Poynter notes this in \textit{Alfred Felton} (Great Australians, Melbourne, OUP, 1974), p.20. However, only Rupert Bunny benefited as Felton, whose will was drawn up in 1900, (Poynter, \textit{Alfred Felton}, p.23) was predeceased by Mrs. Bunny. (She died on 9th September, 1902. See Eagle, \textit{The Art of Rupert Bunny}, p.244). Eagle notes that Felton was visiting Paris in 1889 when he commissioned \textit{Ste. Cécile}; ibid., p.8.
was a tanner).  He came to Australia in 1853 and became a highly successful business man, going into partnership with F.S. Grimwade. He was a close friend of the Bunny family, 'batching' with Judge Brice F. Bunny, when Mrs Bunny took the children to Europe for two and half years in 1874. He was a committed supporter of Charles Strong, the controversial founder in 1884 of the Australian Church. The congregation was composed largely of disaffected members of the Scots Church and religious liberals, so there was no particular association with either Roman Catholicism, nor with High Anglicanism in Felton's case. His biographer, John Poynter, notes that he was 'neither a natural churchman nor a natural sectary', his support of Charles Strong being founded on his admiration of his 'independence and generosity'. So Felton's commissioning of the saint is unlikely to be explained on religious grounds. However, although the St. Cecilia he commissioned from Bunny was not, apparently, in his possession on his death some fifteen years later, he still possessed an image of the saint. After his death in 1904, the sale catalogue of Felton's personal art collection which had crowded the walls of his room at the Esplanade Hotel, St. Kilda, show that he owned only one Bunny, *Idle Moments* (which failed to sell). The majority of his paintings were landscapes, including two of churches; the only religious works were a copy of Murillo's *The Flight into Egypt* (Lot 66), a *Holy Night* on porcelain (Lot 51) and, intriguingly, a signed artist's

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257 I am indebted to Professor Emeritus John Poynter, The University of Melbourne, who has given me access to much of his research material on Alfred Felton. See his Alfred Felton, p.20; also, "Alfred Felton" *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 4, pp.161-162.

258 Bunny and Felton shared a house with a Professor Strong (presumably the Professor of Classical and Comparative Philology and Logic at the University of Melbourne, appointed 1871). See Mackinnon, 'Before the Nineties: Part 2 - A Trip to Europe Under Sail', *Table Talk* March 1, 1934, p.6 for details of the lengthy excursion by Mrs. Bunny to visit her family. The family sailed for London on 11th April 1874, returning to Australia on 30th October 1976. See also Eagle, *The Art of Rupert Bunny*, p.243.

259 See Poynter Alfred Felton, p.22. In Russell Grimwade’s recollections of Felton, however, he posits that when Felton was considering to whom to leave his estate, he immediately left out one brother who had married 'a stranger in religion', which suggests some consideration of belief. See Grimwade, *Flinders Lane. Recollections of Alfred Felton*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1947, p.10.

260 It is possible that the work was still owned by Felton in 1893 as a painting by Bunny entitled 'St. Cecilia, 1892 (sic), lent by A. Felton Esq' is listed in the catalogue for a VAS exhibition in 1893. (See *The Victorian Artists Society Exhibition of Australian Art, Past and Present* August 1893, cat. no. 151.) Bunny files at 30 Victoria Street indicate that St. Cecilia was owned by the Good Shepherd Convent, Abbotsford until 1977. How or when the work arrived at the Convent has not been traced. It was not listed in the sale of his art collection.

261 Lot no.74, valued for probate at £1; from the sale catalogue *Paintings. The Felton Collection*, Gemmell, Tuckett & Co., Auctioneers. Sale days - April 27th & 28th 1904. My thanks to Professor Poynter for giving me a copy of this document. The work is not known.

proof etching by British artist, Anna Lea Merritt of a St. Cecilia.\textsuperscript{264} Lea Merritt was known for her religious work, including church frescoes; and she also became a prominent etcher.\textsuperscript{265} Bunny may well have seen the painting, \textit{St. Cecilia}, which she exhibited in the Royal Academy in 1886.\textsuperscript{266}  

Felton was very interested in music, with a large collection of early phonograph records. In particular, he took great pride in the phonograph itself, holding musical evenings in which his guests endured renditions of \textit{Faust} or \textit{La Bohème} (and others) through the rather tortuous scratching of this machine. I suggest that it is St. Cecilia's position as Patron Saint of Music which endeared her to Felton and was behind the commission to Bunny. Felton would have been well aware that this would be an interesting commission for a young man who came from a strongly musical family and who had great personal musical talent himself. Moreover, Alfred Felton's commission of a St. Cecilia lay within British artistic taste of the period. Interestingly, at the time the National Gallery in London held no paintings of her, but there is the renowned series of the saint painted by Domenichino, one of which is held in the Louvre, and works by artists as various as Cimabue, Parmigiano, Raphael and Poussin.\textsuperscript{267}

\textit{Ste Cécile, c. 1889, Société des artistes français}

The legend, as told by Mrs. Jameson\textsuperscript{268}

St. Cecilia was a noble Roman of the 3\textsuperscript{rd} century A.D. and was, like her parents, a secret Christian. She had been remarkably pious since early childhood and was known for her outstanding musical abilities, showing great capacity on all instruments and composing hymns to God which she sang in a voice of great sweetness, whilst accompanying herself on the organ (which she is credited with inventing). She had taken a secret vow of chastity, but at sixteen her parents married her to a noble young

\textsuperscript{264} The work (Lot 164) was valued at Three Guineas, three times the valuation of Bunny's oil painting (valued £1) and it too, failed to sell.

\textsuperscript{265} 1844-1930; born in Philadelphia, USA. See entry in \textit{The Dictionary of Art}, vol. 21, p.165.

\textsuperscript{266} Cat.134, see \textit{The Exhibition of the Royal Academy of Arts. The 118\textsuperscript{th}}. London, 1886. The catalogue entry specifies a debt to Tennyson's \textit{Palace of Art}.

\textsuperscript{267} For detailed iconographical history, see Jameson, \textit{Sacred and Legendary Art}, p.206-219.
Roman, Valerian, who was however a heathen. As she walked to the temple for the marriage service, clad in coarse penitential garments beneath her wedding robe, she renewed her vow of chastity with such eloquence that her husband not only respected her vow, but converted himself. On her advice he consulted St. Urban and was baptized. When he returned to his wife he heard glorious music and standing by her was her guardian angel, holding two garlands of celestial roses, which could only be seen by Christians. The angel crowned the couple with the immortal roses, and, before vanishing, granted Valerian's wish that his brother, Tiburtius, should be shown the true faith. When Tiburtius entered the room he was astonished by the perfume of the unseasonal flowers, invisible to his non-believing eyes. Upon Cecilia's explanation of the doctrine of the Gospels, he converted immediately. The two brothers were then martyred at the hands of the Roman prefect; and the martyrdom of St. Cecilia soon followed. She, however, was far more difficult to kill, surviving untouched immersion in a bath of boiling water, and so intimidating the executioner sent to dispatch her later, that his hand trembled and the three wounds to her neck and breast took three days to kill her. During this time she instructed St. Urban to convert her home into a place of Christian worship, and then died singing 'praises and hymns to the last moment'.

It was to the poetry of this legend that Bunny responded. The legend of a martyr must necessarily be a bloody one, but, as was consistent in Bunny's work of the 1890s, he chose the sacred moment of conversion, rather than the grisly end. In his painting, fig.36, the devout pair, centrally placed and quite motionless, seem linked in a sublime state in their chalky, pillared space. The angel departs through the garden, trailing roses, having blessed the couple and set in train the process which will lead to Tiburtius' conversion. Tiburtius stands behind them, leaning thoughtfully against a pillar, perhaps detecting the elusive perfume of the miraculous roses. In showing such a sweetly pretty but austere saint in her immaculate whites and pure clear blues, standing beside her praying husband, Bunny is portraying the virgin eschewing the worldly passions of the nuptial chamber for heavenly celibacy. Colour is used in the manner of Puvis de Chavannes, to create an elusive and spiritual world, but it is also used emotively as Bunny contrasts her diaphanous pale colours with her husband's

rich passionate burgundy garment. The picture surface is smoothly painted with a little impasto on the petals of the roses at the couple’s feet. Attributes to the saint’s patronage of music (harp, aulos and sheet music) lean in the shadows against the front right pillar, but they are ancillary to the spiritual event in train.

This is an early work and Bunny’s debt to Puvis de Chavannes is clear. The reviewer for *The Age* noted the marked influence of Puvis, commenting that ‘the work possesses more of unconscious imitation than anything else’, but observing that ‘his own individuality has asserted itself more strongly in every subsequent work’. Puvis’ influence is seen in the bleached colour harmonies of grey, blue, soft sage green, in the elongated form of the saint and in the very white skin tones. The world Puvis created was distinctive: in the well-known *Sacred Wood* (1884), for example, it is a flat, pale-toned land of soft pastels in which muses are frozen in mid-air, forever voicing their poetry and music. The figures are grouped in a frieze-like formation across the canvas, and the composition is characteristically developed in a grid of verticals and horizontalso. However, in its italianate architectural setting, Bunny’s work is strongly reminiscent of Puvis’ *Inspiration Chrétienne*, fig. 37, with the pillared space, the distinctive red tiles and the cypress trees. Exhibited at the *Exposition Universelle* of 1889, there is some doubt that Bunny would have seen the work in time to respond to it; but it could have been seen in Brussels, the previous year. The setting for Puvis’ work is the Camposanto at Pisa, whereas Bunny, perhaps thinking of the legend as told by Mrs. Jameson, set the event in Cecilia’s home. He nevertheless created for the Roman noble a charming Tuscan villa, with a distinctive pool and spouting lions. The Tuscan setting could however just as well reflect the popularity of the works of Fra Angelico, who was lauded as a cult figure from the 1840s, and was still venerated for his innocent and seraphic vision in the spiritual 1890s.

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270 This is a reduced version for the work commissioned for the *Musée des Beaux-Arts* of Lyon. For a comprehensive catalogue entry, see Aimée Brown Price *Pierre Puvis de Chavannes* (Rizzoli, NY/Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam), cat.101, pp.183-186.


However, the work can, equally, be read in relation to Burne-Jones. Burne-Jones, too, in his work of this period, used a subdued, austere palette, ‘chalky tones’ and often set his compositions in detailed architectural settings. Bunny’s debt to him lies in the peculiar poignant stillness of his work, and in the precise physiognomy of the saint’s oval face, upturned lip and long hair. Both artists, too, celebrate an ideal of the adolescent female as can be seen in Burne-Jones’ King Cophetua and the Beggar Maid, fig.38. This painting had been exhibited at the Grosvenor Gallery in 1884 (the year of Bunny’s arrival in London), and subsequently received much attention at the Exposition Universelle of 1889. It is the quality of stillness, of an arrested narrative evident in such works that Bunny emulates.

Bunny returned again to the subject of St. Cecilia in the following decades in, for example, Portrait of the Artist’s wife Jeanne as St. Cecile, c.1901, fig.39. Where in the earlier work Bunny was searching for a voice, by then he is assured. The work has far darker tonalities which appeared from the beginning of the century and reflect Bunny’s growing interest in the work of Rembrandt, Velasquez and Whistler. The dreamy portrait of Jeanne, who rests elegantly against a pillar, clad in soft draperies of cream, gold and pink, contains no overt sign of the saint’s history, nor of her position as Patron of Music. Rather, through the title the viewer assumes that it is distant music which causes the sitter’s blissful, evocative mood.

273 When the paintings of Burne-Jones’ Pygmalion series (1869-78) were first exhibited at the Grosvenor Gallery their ‘chalky tones’ upset some contemporary critics. The Pygmalion paintings (two series) were displayed at the Grosvenor in 1879 and at the New Gallery in 1893. For an excellent discussion of these series see Girolami Cheney ‘Burne-Jones: Mannerist in an Age of Modernism, Pre-Raphaelite Art in its European Context, pp.103-116.

274 Burne Jones was awarded the Cross of the Legion of Honour at this time. See Burne-Jones Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones, vol.II, p.201.

275 Bunny possibly painted another St. Cecilia in 1892 (see fn.59 above). A St. Cecilia was exhibited at RBA, London, 1901, (cat.7), which may well be the work discussed above. The palette and composition support this dating. There was another painting, The Conversion of Valerian, (exhibited at the Victorian Gold Jubilee Exhibition 1851-1901, Bendigo, cat. 51) which is associated with the St. Cecilia legend. The French critic, Raymond Bouyer mentioned Bunny’s Conversion de saint Valérien which was apparently exhibited in an Exposition Internationale in ‘Un salonnier aux salons de 1899”, p. 138. Neither the French exhibition history nor an image of the work has been traced.

276 The image can be seen as a precursor of the Nocturne series of c.1907 in which music is an ever-present theme and Jeanne is often posed with her head resting on her hand, elbow on knee, entranced. For a comprehensive summation of Bunny’s work on the 21 ‘night balcony scenes’ he painted between 1907-1910, see Eagle, The Art of Rupert Bunny, p. 72. Examples are The Distant Song and Nocturne both c.1908 (ANG), cats. 11 & 13 respectively. 
Les roses de sainte Dorothée (1892), Société des Artistes français

In 1892, three years after the exhibition of Ste. Cécile Bunny returned to the theme of the female saint with Les roses de sainte Dorothée, figs.40 & 41. The intervening years had witnessed great success and challenging failure. In 1890 Bunny had been awarded a Mention honorable at the Paris Salon for the mythological work Tritons, the first Australian ever to be so honoured. This presaged the success of his next mythology, Pastoral (NGA), which was given a prominent position at the Salon of 1893, and featured in the year’s Catalogue illustré of the Artistes français and also in The Magazine of Art, London, in 1894. However, when in 1891 Bunny had prepared for the Artistes français his work [La tentation de saint Antoine], a subject frequently seen in the French Salons, it was apparently not accepted. As discussed in chapter two, the work contained a confronting image of the femme fatale; it is interesting, therefore, that the following year Bunny painted another religious work but returned to the ideal rather than the fatal female.

Ste. Dorothee may have been commissioned; it is said to have belonged to his niece, Mrs. Dulcie Luard. Bunny often stayed with her relations, the Coote family, over the summer and they became patrons, commissioning portraits, introducing him to their circle of friends in Cambridgeshire, and buying paintings. Or it may be that the success of the first Salon of the Rose+Croix also encouraged Bunny to return to this ideal form. Mysterious female saints were a feature of Péladan’s Salons, the first of which had opened in March 1892 to immense publicity. Certainly, the walls of

277 This work was purchased from the Artistes français by Alfred Felton; in 1904 it was given to the Hon. Donald Mackinnon and Mrs. Mackinnon (née Hilda Bunny); it was acquired by AGNSW in 1969.
278 For catalogue details see Eagle, Rupert Bunny, p.26.
279 Mrs. Luard was the daughter of Bunny’s sister Annette Coote (Mrs. Walter Coote, later Mrs Herbert Jones). Reddin records Luard’s ownership of the painting and notes that it was given to a friend of Mrs. Luard’s in Australia (Rupert Bunny Himself, p.125). However, it is documented as belonging to the Rev. E.J. Golston, and John Barry, London (Letter from John Barry, London, 3rd January 1980 Curators files, AGSA.) It was sold in 1971 by Leonard Joel’s auction, 20th February, 1970, lot 143; sold by Sotheby’s Auctions, London 1981 (purchaser undisclosed).
280 Mr. Herbert Jones commissioned Bunny to paint a portrait of Lord Sandwich, which he donated to the town of Huntingdon (where the family lived); see ‘Anglo-Australia’, British Australianian, London, October 1st, 1903, p.1397. Also, see Reddin, Rupert Bunny Himself, p.125. For further discussion of the patronage of Russell and Effie Coote see Eagle, The Art of Rupert Bunny, p.8; for details of his holidays with the Coote family, see ibid. ‘Chronology of Addresses, Movements and Exhibitions’, pp.243ff.
281 The exhibition literally stopped the traffic and over 22,600 visiting cards were left. See Pincus-Witten, Occult Symbolism in France, pp.104-105. Although Bunny never exhibited in such an outrageous venue, his subjects reflect much of the art exhibited in the Salons de la Rose+Croix.
the Royal Academy and the New Gallery were hung with innumerable examples of
mystical, slumbering or, indeed, dead females to reinforce this choice.282

The legend, as told by Mrs. Jameson283

St. Dorothy lived in Cesarea, in the province of Cappadocia in Asia Minor.284 She
was (as ever in these legends) beautiful, a virgin and a Christian. The governor of the
city, hearing of her beauty, summoned her and challenged her beliefs, threatening her
with death if she failed to worship their gods. Unfazed, Dorothy told him she would
be happy with this outcome for she would then be with ‘the son of God, Christ, mine
espoused’. She described the delights of paradise to him, detailing the garden of
‘celestial fruits and roses that never fade.’285 The governor then attempted to convert
Dorothy through the agency of two sisters, lapsed Christians.286 When this failed, the
two sisters, now converted again to Christianity, were tortured and put to death.
Dorothy’s own condemnation to torture and death soon followed. However, as she
walked to her death, Dorothy was challenged by a young lawyer, Theophilus, who
had heard her description of heavenly fruit and flowers and, mockingly, demanded
proof of such a place. She calmly assented and when she knelt in prayer before the
execution, a golden-haired boy, bearing a basket of unseasonal fruit and flowers
appeared before her. With her last words Dorothy sent him to Theophilus who
converted immediately (to find his own martyrdom). It is the basket of fruit and
flowers which distinguishes images of the saint.

The legend of St. Dorothea of Cappadocia was not favoured in France. It became
known in England through Rossetti and his circle: the poetry of Swinburne and the

Shared subjects include the Virgin Mary, other saints, the sphinx, and the numerous references to
music (although Bunny showed no interest in Wagner, the master who dominated the Rose+Croix
salons.) The exhibition was compact (only 228 works shown) and of those works, the subjects of
around 22% were either old or new testament, and included saints. (This was considerably higher than
the percentage in the other two salons.) See Reff, Exhibitions of the Rosicrucian Salon.
282 For example at the RA of 1892 Leighton exhibited ‘And the Sea Gave Up the Dead which Were in
it’ and Watts exhibited ‘She Shall Be Called Woman’, ill. cats.120 & 124, The Age of Rossetti, Burne-
Jones & Watts.
284 Voragine’s account is fuller than that of Mrs. Jameson’s, differing in some minor details (and far
more descriptive of the various tortures), but the core story of the miracle is comparable. See his The
Golden Legend, pp.42-47.
285 Jameson, Sacred and Legendary Art., p.185.
work of Burne-Jones. Swinburne became a close friend of Burne-Jones particularly through the 1860s, a period when he was composing his narrative poem *St. Dorothy*. During the same years (1863-67) Burne-Jones was engaged with *St. Theophilus and the Angel*; William Morris also wrote a version of the tale. Swinburne was a great admirer of contemporary French poetry, particularly Baudelaire, and this was reciprocated by Verlaine, who considered Swinburne one of his masters. By the last decade of the century Swinburne was inextricably linked with the decadent: with the *femme fatale*, with sadism and with the androgynous figure type which Burne-Jones had made his own. Swinburne was lauded in both Britain and France so it can be assumed that Bunny would have been familiar with his work.

Bunny’s interest in, and knowledge of, poetry can be established. He tried his own hand at composition from time to time and also, for a number of years in the mid 1890s, he illustrated poems for *The Magazine of Art* and other such journals. The poets he illustrated ranged from Shakespeare, Dr. Henry King, the Bishop of Chichester and Robert Herrick to Sir Edward Sherburne, T. Lovell Beddoes and Bunny’s contemporary, Norman Gale. The illustrations for *The Magazine of Art*, such as that for Dr. King’s ‘Song’ (illustrated in 1895) or for Shakespeare’s ‘Sigh no more, ladies’ (1896), fig. 42, clearly show his interest in Aesthetic preoccupations; and in the lower frieze of the latter, a flowing art nouveau line is present. Although

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286 Voragine describes them as Dorothy’s sisters (Christine and Celestine). Mrs. Jameson (who names them Calista and Christeta) does not relate them to Dorothy.

287 For the relationship between Burne-Jones and Swinburne, see Harrison & Waters, *Burne-Jones*, pp.64-67; for Rossetti’s friendship with him, see Praz, *The Romantic Agony*, p.237.

288 Harrison & Waters note that he shared this interest with Whistler, see *Burne-Jones*, p.64.


290 For the ‘unlikely trio’ of Swinburne, Simeon Solomon and Burne-Jones and the effect on the figure-type in Burne-Jones’ art, see Harrison & Waters, pp.67-70.

291 In the collection given to The University of Melbourne in 1948 there are several samples of designs for illustrated poems, for example, *Untitled [Standing Girl]* (cat.1948.273), in which a girl in aesthetic costume holds flowers whilst gazing wistfully into a mirror; outside the window a female figure (Winter?) blows the trees. The image seems to involve those aesthetic preoccupations of love, time, the transitoriness of life. In the bottom third of the composition space is left for the poem.


293 Dr Henry King, Bishop of Chichester (1592-1669) *Song*, published in *The Magazine of Art* 1895, p.411; Shakespeare’s *Sigh no more, ladies*, published *The Magazine of Art* 1896, p.149. There is an Artist’s Proof for this work in the UMAC, 1948/270.
it is in the more exalted medium of oil on canvas, Bunny’s Ste. Dorothee fits well with this literary milieu he clearly knew so well.294

In Les roses de ste. Dorothee Theophilus, in mediæval costume, stands in the right foreground with the child who draws his attention to the glowing celestial basket of fruit and lush roses. Theophilus’ right arm is lifted in the traditional expression of surprise. Behind and to the left of the pair, hovers the saintly, departed Dorothy. She is an insubstantial figure, wearing a pale, simple gown; her hands are clasped before her and she looks rather wistfully towards the miracle, enacted immediately after her martyrdom. Again, the precise physiognomy recalls Burne-Jones: the smooth oval face, with small straight nose, curvaceous lips, high forehead and distinctive hair line. The predominantly grey/brown palette owes much, surely, to Burne-Jones’ King Cophetua. The pale orb of Dorothy’s full circle halo glows in contrast to the dark grey figure of the pipe-playing Pan of the frozen fountain in the left foreground. Thus pagan image is carefully balanced by Christian miracle. The martyr’s distinctive halo is seen in cartoons for stained glass and the early work of Burne-Jones, such as The Blessed Damozel of 1866.295 A Byzantine idiom, it appeared frequently in the paintings of British contemporary ‘romantic artists’ such as Gotch or Edward Frampton,296 and could be seen in France at, for example, the 2nd Rosicrucian Salon in the work of Osbert or Emile-Antoine Coulon.297

Bunny’s composition is uncannily like the description in Swinburne’s lengthy narrative poem St. Dorothy and shares the radiant imagery:

And when they came upon the paven place
That was called sometime the place amorous,
There came a child before Theophilus,

295 Harrison & Waters, Burne-Jones, fig.45, p.39.
296 For catalogue entries and ills. see Christian, The Last Romantics.; Gotch, The Child Enthroned (RA, 1894) cat.121, p.123; Frampton, St. Clare, as Patron Saint of Embroidery (1905) cat.63, p.99; it could also be seen in the work of the Scottish artists George Henry and A. E Hornel, eg. The Star in the East (1891), fig.11, p.48.
297 For ills. see ‘Deuxieme Geste Esthetique’, Reff, Exhibitions of the Rosicrucian Salon; Osbert, Vision, pl. p.32; Coulon, Étude pour une sainte Cécile, pl. p.31 (the pagination here is unclear); also Arild de Rosencrantz, Sainte, pl. p.89.
Bearing a basket, and said suddenly:

Fair sir, this is my mistress Dorothy

That sends you gifts; and with this he was gone.

In all this earth there is not such an one

For color (sic) and straight stature made so fair.

The tender growing gold of his pure hair

Was as wheat growing, and his mouth as flame,

...But for the fair green basket that he had,

It was filled up with heavy white and red:

Great roses stained still where the first rose bled.

Like Swinburne, Bunny sets the story in winter, a month which also establishes the colour of both the canvas and the episode as described by Swinburne. Snow is piled around the frozen fountain and between the cobblestones; the sky in the background is a soft white, against which a cold grey statue is silhouetted. Swinburne makes several references to the chill, the bitter cold, the wind and snow, stressing as did Voragine in *The Golden Legend*, the miracle of greenery, flowers and fruit in the ‘sharp and white’ weather of winter. Furthermore, Swinburne describes a street with ‘white stonework’ and specifies the ‘paven place’ in which the miracle is enacted. Bunny imagines a cobbled Florentine square and costumes Theophilus in mediæval (rather than Roman) garments, perhaps reflecting the interest of Rossetti and his circle in the period. As in Swinburne the child’s hair glows fair, as he offers the basket in which full-blown roses, white and red, predominate (large pale apples line the middle of the basket). Moreover much of Swinburne’s imagery of the episode is incandescent, from the descriptions of the sharp, white weather to the ‘growing gold’ of the boy’s hair, to his ‘mouth as flame’ and the ‘gold cloth like fire burning’ of his garments. Although Bunny’s palette is muted, the work glows with a white (rather than gold), radiance, from the lucent child and basket to the luminous pallor of the martyred saint with her halo.


299 ibid. That the story takes place in winter is noted in Voragine’s *The Golden Legend*, vol.VII, p.46.
There were other literary sources of the legend in Britain, including Mrs. Jameson, of course, who particularly commented on the allegorical significance of the interview between Theophilus and the angel and regretted the lack of examples of this 'picturesque and poetical' legend. Voragine's *Golden Legend* was readily available and new publications emerged from time to time, such as Lewis Morris' epic poem *A Vision of Saints*, first published in 1890 and again in an illustrated format in 1892. But none of them share the similarity of image and tone. As a visual comparison, the National Gallery, London, already held traditional 15th century examples of the subject, but these figure the saint standing alone with her attributes.

Burne-Jones had worked with the story himself, as noted above, at the same time as Swinburne. Moreover, however rare her appearance was on exhibition walls, St. Dorothy played a role in Burne-Jones' oeuvre, appearing in several cartoons for stained-glass. It is striking that it is only Burne-Jones of his circle who apparently favoured St. Dorothy. Most relevant to Bunny was Burne-Jones' water-colour image of the subject, completed in 1866 and exhibited under the title *St. Theophilus and the Angel*. The description by Malcolm Bell, the contemporary writer, establishes the connection: Theophilus walked into the law-courts, unaware that the angel stood within the portal 'bearing to him the miraculous flowers and fruit with the words, "My sister Dorothea sends these to thee from the place where she now is". He further describes in the foreground 'a fountain surmounted by a brazen statue of Pan' and a party of other maidens 'p[ r]aying to a statue of Venus'. It was Dorothy's

301 Lewis Morris, *A Vision of Saints* 1st ed. Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co, Ltd., 1890; republished with 20 full-page illustrations ‘after works by the old masters and contemporary portraits’ (London, Cassell & Co, 1892). Unfortunately, only a copy of the first publication has been located. The illustrated work was advertised in *Royal Academy Pictures* 1893.
303 See *The National Gallery Complete Illustrated Catalogue*, Associate of Francesco de Giorgio, cat.no. NG 1682, P.228, Circle of the Master of Liesborn, cat. no. NG 2152, p. 430, and Master of St. Bartholomew altarpiece, cat. no. NG 707, p.437. (The latter work includes St. Peter.)
303 Burne Jones designed the following images of the saint: St. Dorothy (1866), Cambridge, All Saints, in company with other female saints, such as St. Agnes and St. Barbara; see Sewter *The Stained Glass of William Morris and his Circle*, pl.263; St. Dorothy (1873) Cambridge, Jesus College Chapel, where she joined Sts. Ursula, Cecilia and Catherine (the latter by William Morris) in an *Angelicheirachy*, ibid., pl.413 and St. Dorothy (1880) in Brampton, St. Martin's, (a church by Phillip Webb ) Cumberland, where St. Dorothy and the Virgin Mary flank the central image, ibid. col.pl.XIII.
304 None of Burne-Jones' close circle and their followers, such as Ford Madox Brown, Rossetti, Morris, Walter Crane or Arthur Hughes ever portray Dorothy in this medium. See 'Appendix V. Chronological check-list of principal designs', ibid.,pp.241-249.
refusal to worship at the pagan Roman statues which led to her sentence of death and
Bunny, in common with Burne-Jones, features a Pan figure.\textsuperscript{306} He does not, however,
show a statue of Venus (as does Burne-Jones and Swinburne), rather he evokes the
martyrdoms (and perhaps, revisits the Decadent) through an image of Perseus holding
aloft the head of Medusa, inspired by Cellini's bronze.\textsuperscript{307} Bunny may have been
aware of this Burne-Jones' work (perhaps through an engraving) but, equally, the
similarities in composition simply reinforce the argument that similar sources inform
the images.

It gives a sense of Bunny’s standing in England by this time that the work was
selected with \textit{The Burial of St. Catherine of Alexandria} to be sent to the International
Exhibition, Brussels in 1897 as one of the representatives of British art. The selection
committee included Sir Edward Poynter, PRA, Val Prinsep, RA and M.H
Spielmann.\textsuperscript{308} All three men were influential in British academic art and all three were
receptive to French techniques.\textsuperscript{309} Poynter and Prinsep trained in France, with
Poynter introducing French techniques when he became Slade Professor at University
College, London.\textsuperscript{310} But whilst Spielmann, editor of the \textit{Magazine of Art}, admired,
and indeed, championed, French technique, he had one firm reservation.\textsuperscript{311} He wrote
in 1897:

\textsuperscript{306} Voragine mentions only a god or idol and Jameson records that Dorothy was ordered to 'serve our
gods, or die' (\textit{Sacred and Legendary Art}, p.184).
\textsuperscript{307} Identified by David Thomas, \textit{Rupert Bunny}, p.32. If it isindeed set in Florence (high up on the
city walls, not in the Loggia dei Lanzi), Bunny is ignoring one of the prevailing religious aesthetics of the
1890s (again, in both Britain and France) in which the orientalist fascination with archaeological finds,
the actual geography of the Holy Land, the daily activities of the people, was to be fed into the art work
in order to ground religion in indisputable fact. Many artists worked in this mode, eg. Holman
Hunt in Britain, James Tissot in France.
\textsuperscript{308} Boswell, ‘Table Talk’, \textit{Table Talk}, April 16, 1897, front page.
\textsuperscript{309} Poynter had held the position of Director of the National Gallery, London, since 1894. (See Alison
\textsuperscript{310} Poynter was elected first Slade Professor in 1871 and used the five years in this position to teach
many of the techniques learned at Charles Gleyre’s studio in Paris. (This involved the encouragement
of better drawing, drawing from the nude, composition of the painting, knowledge of tonal values -
"valeurs"), ibid. Prinsep also trained at the studio of Charles Gleyre and Rossetti and Burne-Jones
were early influences on his work; the major later influence was his close friend Frederic Leighton. He
became Professor of Painting at the RA in 1900. See Nagham Wyllie, \textit{The Dictionary of Art}, vol.25,
p.587.
\textsuperscript{311} Spielmann was secretary for the committee organizing the British Fine Art Section at the Paris
Exhibition in 1900, working again with Sir Edward Poynter. See ‘The British Fine Art Section at the
Art is of no country we all recognise; but national feeling is a prime factor in every sincere manifestation of it, and to paint 'with a French accent' adopting the Gallic point of view as well as Gallic technique - is flattering neither to the painter's own individuality nor to the Frenchmen whom he copies.  

Spielmann does not clearly define what constitutes the excellence of French technique, however it is inferred in an earlier article (1892) when he wrote of 'the subtler truths of modern execution', the 'superior, artistic ensemble' and the 'admirable manner of brush-work' of French art. Further, despite its technical superiority, he complained that in the Salon 'you will be struck by the general feeling of sameness of conception, of realisation, of execution' which he said, is all very well for the French for 'even though the individual is unhappily content to sacrifice his identity, he is wholly national in his work'. 'With us', he continued, 'the same rule cannot be allowed to prevail'. The American, John Singer Sargent and the Englishman, John William Waterhouse are the two artists he consistently names in whose work 'we see how French influence has been assimilated rather than blindly accepted.'

Spielmann had shown steady support for Bunny since his work Pastoral was illustrated in the journal in 1894 and he was undoubtedly responsible for the commissioning of Bunny to illustrate poetry for the Magazine of Art. In other illustrations such as A Finishing Touch, fig.43, for the Pall Mall Budget, Bunny had further demonstrated an ability to work in a British idiom. His interpretation of the female saints was largely grounded in a British iconographic tradition. It seems apparent that significant British critical support was available to Bunny if he continued to plumb his British cultural heritage for subjects.

The two final works discussed in this chapter, the Burial of St. Catherine of Alexandria and Descending Angels, comply most closely with British Aestheticism. Aestheticism was complex, encompassing the initial poetic mediævalism of Burne-

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314 Spielmann, 'Introduction', Royal Academy Pictures 1897.
Jones, the spare, allegorical figures of Watts, the decorative and abstract art of Albert Moore and Whistler, and the Academic classicism of Lord Leighton and Alma-Tadema. Its central tenets involve a concentration on formal values at the expense of narrative, allowing an appreciation of beauty, not truth, in art. Although a story is obliquely told in Bunny’s *St. Catherine* (c. 1896), by the later work, *Descending Angels* (c.1897), it had virtually disappeared (although we may guess at it) and the notion of ‘l’art pour l’art’ had triumphed. A comparison of the *St. Catherine* with the detailed legend as it was known to the Victorians, shows Bunny’s awareness of Aesthetic preoccupations.

**Burial of St. Catherine of Alexandria, Royal Academy, 1896**

The legend, as told by Mrs. Jameson

Catherine was a Roman Princess, half-sister to the Emperor Constantine. By the age of fifteen, she was as wise as she was beautiful, mastering science and mathematics, and drawing particularly on Plato and Socrates. On her accession to the throne, her people desired her to marry, but her requirements were so high, no human could fill them. Even so, she had a battle to maintain her virginity. Then, after one dream in which Christ refused her as his wife as she was not baptized, she converted and experienced the vision in which the Virgin Mary (who acted as her godmother) presented Catherine to her Son, and Catherine woke with a betrothal ring from her heavenly spouse on her finger. Through her passionate faith and informed eloquence she converted hundreds of the tyrant Maximin’s (sic) sages who had joined her in debate over Christianity. Upon their conversion, Maximin ordered their death by fire. He then pursued two methods of death by torture for St. Catherine, including starvation (she is nurtured by angels), and the blade-studded wheel (it is broken into thousands of pieces and destroyed by heavenly fire). So finally she was beheaded,

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315 See *Pall Mall Budget*, August 30, 1894, p.15.
317 *Sacred & Legendary Art*, vol. II, pp.79-86.
after being 'scourged by rods'. Angels carried her body over the desert and the Red Sea, leaving her on the summit of Mt. Sinai.

In Bunny's image of St. Catherine, fig. 44, the horror is leached out leaving only the moving image of a beautiful girl, transported by angels, in the long sleep of peaceful death. A pearly evening light of primarily misty, chalky greys and musky pinks, suffuses the image, transporting the viewer to another world, and establishing the mood of poignant sadness. St. Catherine was widely represented by artists such as Correggio, Titian, Paul Veronese, Tintoretto, Caracci, Domenichino, and Dürer, but typically in these works the figure of the saint and her attributes (particularly the wheel) dominate. Bunny avoided all worldly emblems: neither her crown, her palm, her books and instruments, nor her wheel appear. Only a fine halo denotes her saintly status. Although St. Catherine's body lies centrally along the horizontal axis, it is the white-complexioned angel on the central vertical axis who first commands attention. While the underlying narrative is inferred, the traditional symbolic content is excised, leaving the viewer to concentrate on the painting's formal aspects. The removal of the narrative element had been a central goal of the proponents of the Aesthetic Movement, defended initially by Walter Pater, then Whistler, and followed by Oscar Wilde.

Painted c.1896, the Burial of St. Catherine of Alexandria is the first of Bunny's religious works to show an assured, mature style and it is a British idiom he uses. The detailed iconography of the story was known to the Victorians through such authors as Voragine and Mrs Jameson; Bunny ignores this traditional iconography. Rather, in his portrayal of the saint, Bunny chooses an incident reflecting themes which had preoccupied aesthetes and their followers since Millais' Ophelia: sleep and death, transience and beauty. As observed earlier, when selecting the episode, Bunny may

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318 See Appendix for details.  
319 The varnish surface is dirty and discoloured which alters the impact of the colours considerably. John Payne, Conservator, NGV, suggests that on cleaning the pink and blue would be colder and clearer; the green and brown quite different. I am most grateful to then curator, Jane Clark, and John Payne for the opportunity to study the work in the laboratory (October, 1990).  
321 For a discussion of the use of these themes, their promulgation through the work of British artists such as Albert Moore, Leighton, Burne-Jones, etc. and their reception and emulation in France after the success of Millais' Ophelia see Lambourne, The Aesthetic Movement, especially 'The Sleeping Woman Awakes', pp.192-198.
well have recalled Burne-Jones’ portrayal of the *Entombment of St. Catherine*, fig. 33, in a window for Christ Church, Oxford. However, the motif of sleep, which was understood as a metaphor for death, could be seen throughout the London galleries. From Albert Moore’s *Midsummer* (1887) to Burne-Jones’ renowned *The Briar Rose* series (1873-90), and Frederic Leighton’s great Academy success of 1895, *Flaming June*, voluminous fabrics are folded and draped around somnolent, womanly forms, falling off a soft white shoulder here, moulding a breast there.\(^{322}\) With some the sting of death is present. In *Flaming June*, redolent though it is of ripe fruition, a symbolic portent of Death is evident in the poisonous oleander to the left of the slumbering woman.\(^{323}\) By contrast, St. Catherine appears to be sleeping peacefully, her insubstantial body making no weight in the burial cloth as she is carried across the deserted country by four angels. Reality is suppressed: her severed head is replaced firmly on her shoulders, her sleep is dreamlike. Unlike the languorous, sleeping females of the other works, however, there is no trace of erotic possibility in Bunny’s painting. Only the central blonde angel reveals a shoulder and she is intent on her task. Bunny’s familiarity with Leighton’s work is evident in some of his contemporary mythological paintings, such as *Venus and Cupid* (c.1899) and particularly in the painting for his inaugural appearance at the National in 1901, *An Idyll* (AGSA).\(^{324}\)

Warner analyses the Victorian interest in classical culture, evident in the work of ‘Olympians’ such as Leighton: ‘Victorians looked to classical culture as they looked to mediæval culture, for qualities of which they felt bereft in their own.’\(^{325}\) He notes that they avoided the virile male figure of the heroic Apollo Belvedere, for example, rather looking to the goddesses of the Parthenon who were serene and graceful, but above all, ‘female and passive’. It was this quiet female strength (and large scale), to

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\(^{322}\) For reprs., see Kenneth Bendiner, *An Introduction to Victorian Painting* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1985): Moore, fig.72, p. 131; Leighton, Plate 7. See Harrison & Waters, *Burne-Jones*, for reprs. of Burne-Jones *Briar Rose* series, pls.43, 43a, 43b, 44.


\(^{324}\) *Venus and Cupid* is known only by a photograph (SLV,Melbourne, MS7970, 499/1); clearly Titian is a famous source for both artists. *An Idyll* (first exhibited as *L’Age d’Or*) relates most clearly to the composition of Leighton’s *Cymon and Iphegenia*, 1884, (AGNSW): a sleeping woman (in Bunny’s case, a couple) is watched by a figure on the left, balanced by a tree on the right, with a backdrop of the sea.

\(^{325}\) *The Victorians*, p.34-35.
which the Victorians added a sense of mystery, which could be seen in the London galleries. The figures in the *Burial of St. Catherine of Alexandria* are larger than those in the earlier works, or even in *Ancilla Domini* (also c.1896), fig. 50, and the action dominates the shallow frontal plane, as in classical relief sculpture. This format was seen in the work of Leighton and Albert Moore, for example, where lines and planes parallel to the surface are more important than perspectival depth. In Bunny’s painting there is no middle ground, only a distant background, in which reference is made to the monastery built over St. Catherine’s remains in the 8th century.

One of the decade’s prominent calls was for Beauty. This echoed and re-echoed across the channel and critics from both countries vied with each other’s poetic descriptions and musical metaphors. The French critic Raymond Bouyer was no exception. In a review of the Salons for the important journal, *L’Artiste*, he again noted Bunny’s work, praising both *St. Catherine of Alexandria* and the *Descent from the Cross*, shown together at the *Artistes français* of 1899. He stressed that artists such as Bunny were rediscovering ‘le sentiment oublié du Beau.’ Bouyer noted Bunny’s ‘modern’ approach with his shared debt to Puvis de Chavannes and to Burne-Jones, and his approving comments indicate how much in accord were the two centres, London and Paris, and how well Bunny’s work expressed the period’s ethos:

*C’est un délicat, qui rhythmé un poème, un fervent de l’antiquité voluptueuse, qui transpose dans le mode mineur d’un crépuscule décoratif des profils exquis, des chevelures classiques sous la bandelette harmonieuse...cet ‘Enterrement’ surnaturel d’une sainte est non seulement un légende qui séduit l’âme, mais une harmonie qui parle aux yeux.*

Bunny’s painting is compared with a poem, whose harmonious tones are in the ‘minor mode’, with subtle internal rhythms of the ‘profils exquis, des chevelures classiques sous la bandelette harmonieuse’. It shows a passion for ‘l’antiquité voluptueuse’ and moreover, it is decorative and transports the viewer to a preternatural world. Through

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326 For an comprehensive account of the British enthusiasm for the Greeks, particularly as reflected in their literature, see Richard Jenkyns *The Victorians and Ancient Greece* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980).
this French review, Bunny’s work is seen to have qualities inherent in Aestheticism.

*St. Catherine* had been exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1896. Unlike Bunny’s *The Descent from the Cross* of two years later, it was hung in a side gallery (no.5), not the more prestigious central gallery (no.3). However, it appeared in *Royal Academy Pictures* of that year, and, in 1897, was chosen to travel to Brussels as part of the British exhibition with *Les roses de sainte Dorothee*. It received international recognition when awarded a bronze medal on its exhibition in the British section of the *Exposition internationale universale* of 1900 and was then hung with *The Descent from the Cross* in St. Petersburg. Curiously, it was not, apparently, Bunny’s initial choice for the Paris Exhibition. The official catalogue notes Bunny’s entry as *L’Attente*, however in a photograph of the British section, the *Burial of St. Catherine of Alexandria* can be clearly seen. Perhaps Poynter and Spielmann, both of whom were on the committee which sent the work to Brussels in 1897, suggested the change as, in its image of a ‘sleeping’ woman, it more clearly represented a British aesthetic. Certainly a reviewer in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* felt that the painting evoked ‘l’ombre ardente et tragique de Rossetti’.

In Bunny’s poetic depiction of St. Catherine the narrative is restrained, and a poignant beauty predominates. Bunny, with an educated Victorian’s detailed

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328 For an Australian reviewer in 1928 the large, outspread wings of the angel in the lower left corner ‘makes the painting seem chaotic and restless, instead of serene, as it ought to be in order to harmonise with the subject’. *Sydney Morning Herald* September 11, 1928, p.8. The work was exhibited at the Athenaeum (Melbourne) and Hordern (Sydney) on Bunny’s return trip in 1928. It was purchased by the NGV at this time.


330 cat. 197, (see *The Exhibition of the Royal Academy of Arts.1898* London: Clowes & Sons, 1898).

331 *Royal Academy Pictures. 1896*, part III, p.89.

332 One can only guess at Bunny’s change of mind, but perhaps Laurens so advised him; Laurens, a member of the French Institute, was a vice-president of the French jury and would have had some influence in the awarding of the medals. The Jury is named in *Catalogue General Officiel of the Exposition Internationale Universelle de 1900*, Theodore Reff (comp.) Modern Art in Paris (NY & London, Garland Publishing, 1981)p.3.

333 ‘The British Fine Art Section at the Paris Exhibition’, *The Magazine of Art* (London, February 1901), pp.218ff; the image is top left in a photograph labelled ‘Room XXIX South Side’, (p.221). Unfortunately, I have not been able to locate the work *L’attente* to make comparison.

334 Fellow British artists to also receive bronze medals included such followers of the Pre-Raphaelites as Walter Crane and Byam Shaw.

knowledge of the legend, has chosen an episode which reflects the themes that had long absorbed the circle of Aesthetes: sleep and death, transience and beauty. This is, ultimately, an Aesthetic interpretation of St. Catherine. Although not so named, it is described in such terms by Bouyer, who writes of the work:

_Cette aspiration vers la Beauté nuancée par l'heure est touchante; elle enveloppe le travail du peintre dans les ailes des séraphins; elle idéalise son effort avec le magic du soir._  

_Angels Descending, Royal Academy, c.1897_

_Angels Descending_, fig. 45, brings to a close in a fittingly decorative manner the images of female saints in the 1890s. Generically different (as it is not explicitly an image of sainthood), nevertheless the work is related and fits stylistically within the broad thematic approach.

When reviewing an exhibition in the New Gallery, a critic wrote of Burne-Jones' _Vespertina Quies_: 'We are weary, weary, weary of young ladies whose only hope is hopelessness, whose only thought is elegance, whose only thought of health is bloodlessness.' By contrast in Bunny's picture _Angels Descending_, although the Burne-Jones physiognomy predominates differing little from girl to girl, their porcelain cheeks are rosy, their figures substantial. As much as anything, it reflects Pater's dictum that beauty, not truth is the true end of art. At first glance, it could be five pretty girls descending, beautifully costumed in tucked and draped garments and gracefully joined by this presumably funereal winding sheet. Totally absorbed in their

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337 The earliest exhibiting title, _Angels Descending_, is used, see cat. 223, RA, 1897. Inscriptions on a label on the rear of the frame indicate it went to the selection committee for Pittsburgh as _Angels Descending_. (No record of its exhibition there has been located: catalogues searched 1896-1914, although the companion work at the RA _A Summer Morning_ was shown in Pittsburgh, cat.36 at the 2nd Annual Exhibition, November 1897-January 1898 (see catalogue). Presumably _Angels Descending_ was not accepted.) The reason for the reversal of the title is unknown. Ron Radford and Jane Hylton in _Australian Colonial Art 1800-1900_, (Adelaide: Art Gallery Board of South Australia, 1995), p.197, refer to the work as _Descending Angels_. My thanks to Angus Trumble, Associate Curator, Art Gallery of South Australia, for this reference.
338 'New Gallery's Exhibition', _The Sketch_ (London) vol.VI, May 9, 1894, p.82. The painting (Tate Gallery, London) is of the model Bessie Keene. (See Harrison & Waters, _Burne-Jones_, ill.236, p.158.)
world, they pass majestically down the canvas, hugging the shallow frontal plane whilst far below them a vast cliff rises and waves break upon a distant shore.

It is the use of the vertical canvas and the peculiar construction of descending girls which links the work firmly to Burne-Jones' *The Golden Stairs*, fig. 46. Such a canvas was common in the Pre-Raphaelite group, as in Rossetti's *Ecce Ancilla Domini*, for example or Burne-Jones' *Wheel of Fortune* or *King Cophetua*. But the use of a vertical composition in which figures descend stairs was original and Rossetti failed to complete his work *Boat of Love*, 1871-72, when he feared that Burne-Jones' *The Golden Stairs*, 1876-80, had usurped the originality of his composition. The *Golden Stairs* was first exhibited at the Grosvenor Gallery in 1880, well before Bunny arrived in London. It was seen as a flagship for Aestheticism and many engravings were made, significantly that of Felix Jasinski who published an edition in 1894. This, together with his retrospective exhibition, had brought Burne-Jones' work resounding to the public eye. *Angels Descending*, shown initially at the Royal Academy, uses a close-up variant of the vertical composition of *Golden Stairs* and the sinuous movement, left-right-left, across and down the canvas. Furthermore, in his recapitulation of this significant Aesthetic work Bunny, either consciously or otherwise, evokes the descending scale of music. This is clear in Burne-Jones' *Golden Stairs*, as all the girls carry musical instruments, perhaps fulfilling Pater's maxim that 'all art consistently aspires towards the condition of music'.

Curiously, 1897 was a peak year for religious art both at the Royal Academy and at the *Artistes français*. It was also the final year of the Sâr Péladan's Salons, always a fertile source of religious images. So, despite the notable decline at the *Nationale*, religious subject painting reached its zenith for the decade in the official venues of

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339 Lambourne suggests that the long, narrow form may have come from Burne-Jones' considerable experience in the design of stained-glass windows and notes that they looked well on the 'lofty walls of the Grosvenor' (*The Aesthetic Movement*, p.110).


341 The work then entered the private collection of Cyril Flower, later Lord Battersea.

342 For a full discussion of the provenance of this work, see Bowness (ed.), *The Pre-Raphaelites*, (Christian), cat. no.154, ibid. pp.235-6.

both London and Paris in that year. \(^{344}\) *Angels Descending* was hung in the main gallery of the Royal Academy (unlike its companion work of that year, *A Summer Morning*, which was exhibited in a side room) and was reproduced in *Royal Academy Notes*.\(^{345}\) The first of Bunny’s paintings to be purchased by an Australian gallery, it is an appealing image in which a glowing vibrant red rings a joyous note, despite the girls’ solemn expressions.\(^{346}\) The overt narrative has virtually disappeared; the painting is to be enjoyed for its pretty girls and the decorative roses they wear and carry, for the subtly differentiated fabrics and the luminous colours.

The flying or hovering female, be she muse or angel, was popular in both Britain and France. In conversation with Oscar Wilde, Burne-Jones succinctly expressed their appeal in this decade of shifting beliefs: ‘The more materialistic science becomes, the more angels I shall paint’.\(^{347}\) At the Royal Academy, Arthur Hacker and Thomas Gotch employed the device.\(^{348}\) Similarly, Puvis de Chavannes’ *The Sacred Grove* had inspired many artists, such as Henri Martin and Pierre Lagarde.\(^{349}\) However, the only contemporary work traced which involved a descent of angels is *Saint Niçaise et sainte Eutrope, martyrs (SdAF 1896)*, fig.47 by the future Orientalist, André Sureda.\(^{350}\) In this work eight angels, with large halos and wings, descend to the dead

\(^{341}\) One critic observed of the *SndBA* that ‘the neo-Christian fervour seems to have calmed down, and the painters try less to convince us that they are as naïve as in the first ages of faith.’ *(The Salon 1897* Gaston Schefer, Paris & London: Goupil & Co., 1897) p.14.  
\(^{345}\) 1897, p.53.  
\(^{346}\) Purchased by the AGSA through the Morgan Thomas Bequest Fund in 1904. The NGV had acquired their Bunny work as a gift of Alfred Felton.  
\(^{348}\) For example, Hacker’s *The Cloister or the world?* (1896) or ‘And there was a great cry in Egypt’ (RA 1897). See reprs. *Royal Academy Pictures* (1896), p.122, and *Royal Academy Pictures* (1897), p.151 respectively. Or Gotch, in *The Awakening* (RA, 1898), repr. *Royal Academy Pictures* (1898) p.153 and *The Dawn of Womanhood* (RA, 1900) for example, repr. *Royal Academy Pictures* (1900) p.25.  
saints.\textsuperscript{351} Their sanctity here is very clear; in Bunny’s work, however, there are no halos and the only prominent wing is that of the female, located centrally at the top of the canvas. Even here, the wing is carefully toned into the storm clouds. Like Burne-Jones, Bunny’s work is an escape. The narrative is spare, the religious content is subsumed to the decorative: beauty and colour are the focus.

The story can be interpreted. There is a charming untitled watercolour [\textit{Burial of a Saint}], fig. 48, by Bunny in which angels carry the body of a woman to a beach cave.\textsuperscript{352} Unlike \textit{Angels Descending} or even the \textit{Burial of St. Catherine of Alexandria}, which give little sign of mortality, the angel holding the feet of the body seems to stumble under the weight. The other angels carry roses for scattering, whilst one guards the tomb.\textsuperscript{353} In \textit{Angels Descending} three angels bear either a golden chalice (symbol of the Christian faith) or roses (a circlet and some for scattering at the grave). The others carry the white cloth which can be read as a winding sheet. Thus the angels descend so prettily to give fitting burial to a saint, their delicate profiles expressive of a sense of mourning.

It was not for the religious narrative in \textit{Angels Descending} that Bunny drew contemporary praise, but rather for his ‘decorative sense’, as one critic put it.\textsuperscript{354} In the painting Bunny creates in a decorative manner, an image of an elusive world of beautiful women on mysterious distant shores. This demonstrates that his preoccupations at the end of the century are those expressed earlier by Burne-Jones:

\[\text{\textsuperscript{351} Carl Gutherez’s} \textit{Lux Incarnationis} (Salon, 1888) features a mass of large descending angels, but they too are celestial beings. (See ill. \textit{Salon de 1888. Catalogue illustré}. Paris: Librairie d’Art, 1888, p.84).}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{352} The work could be an assumption of Mary Magdalene; her cult was extremely strong in France with shrines at Vézelay and La Sainte-Baume. For a full iconographical study, see Martha Mel Edmunds ‘La Sainte-Baume and the Iconography of Mary Magdalene’, \textit{Gazette des Beaux-Arts} VI p. t. CXIV July-August 1989, pp.11-28).}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{353} This takes place on a curving shoreline, like that glimpsed in the background of \textit{Angels Descending} and \textit{[La Tentation de St. Antoine]}.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{354} The reviewer linked this quality to both of Bunny’s Academy works that year, \textit{Angels Descending} and \textit{A Summer Morning}. Their shared absence of narrative and beautiful females as subject appealed strongly to the British aesthetic. See ‘The Chronicle of Art - May’, \textit{The Magazine of Art} (London) May-October, 1897, p.47).}\]
I mean by a picture, a beautiful romantic dream of something that never was, never will be - in a light better than any light that ever shone - in a land no one can define or remember, only desire.\textsuperscript{355}

Such statements underpin the two major principles of British Aestheticism, the reduction of narrative and the creation of beauty. For Bunny at this time the 'importance of religion was not its truth, but its beauty and its poetry'.\textsuperscript{356} Bunny's two penultimate religious works of the decade articulate this ideal.


\textsuperscript{356} Warner states this with reference to the mediævalist-aesthetic, seen in Burne-Jones, op.cit., p.33. For a seminal discussion of the importance of religion and art to the Victorians, see ibid., pp.32-34.
Chapter Four

A QUESTION OF NATIONAL IDENTITY

*Ancilla Domini* (c.1896) & *Descent from the Cross* (c.1898)

The 19th century was a period in Europe in which imposed nations, or ‘official nationalism’ emerged. The nation states of France, Germany and Hungary for example, were emerging from the power of aristocratic dynasties. The British Empire was at its height (Victoria had been proclaimed ‘Empress of India’ in 1876). But her colony, Australia, was not faring so well. The bank crash and economic depression of the 1890s left its people disheartened and, perhaps understandably, calling for a national expression in the arts. Bunny, however, did not address the issue during this decade. Although part of the ‘united group’ of Australian expatriates and friendly with many, such as Emanuel Phillips Fox and John Longstaff, Bunny’s privileged upbringing and education gave him access to a wider, more sophisticated circle. Longstaff, for example, was impressed by his charm and education, referring to his ‘aristocratic grace.’ Bunny was a cosmopolitan by virtue of his birth and inclination who, in the end, transcended national stereotypes. However a concept of national identity underpinned much of the artistic criticism of the day in both Europe and Australia and, as has been argued in chapter three, Bunny can be seen responding to this in his religious work of the 1890s.

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359 Australian nationalism was seen to be expressed in the subject paintings of Tom Roberts and Frederick McCubbin, or in the lyrical landscapes of Arthur Streeton. For an excellent summary of the emergence of nationalism in Australian art and for pertinent documentation, see Bernard Smith (ed.), ‘Nationalism’, *Documents on art and taste in Australia* (Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1st publ. 1975, repr. 1979), pp.230-281.
360 Alison Rae gives a delightful description of the united group of Australian artists, ‘free from petty jealousies, more generously helpful towards one another...more honestly delighted over each other’s successes’; see ‘Australian artists in Paris’, p.542. Bunny’s friends in the 1890s included Alastair Cary-Elwes, nephew of the Earl of Denbigh, (a former Governor of South Australia), Douglas Robinson (son of Sir William) and Harold Mostyn (son of a Welsh baronet), according to Murdoch, *Portrait in Youth of Sir John Longstaff*, pp.129-130. For the relationship between Bunny and his wife, and Fox, after Fox’s marriage to the English artist, Ethel Carrick in 1905, see Ruth Zubans, *E. Phillips Fox. His Life and Art*, Melbourne, The Miegunyah Press, 1995, p. 121 & 147-8.
361 Quoted in Murdoch, *Portrait in Youth*, p.130.
In 1895 the critic R. Jope-Slade wrote in the influential *Magazine of Art* of four young Australian artists whose work was attracting 'considerable attention at Burlington House'.

These were Bertram Mackennal, John Longstaff, Abbey Alison and Bunny. Indeed, Bunny's Royal Academy entry for that year, *The Forerunners*, was hung in a most prestigious position directly above the President, Sir Frederic Leighton's *Flaming June*.

In the article it is clear that Jope-Slade admired Bunny's work, praising its decorative qualities and the often bold use of colour; and he remarked particularly on Bunny's 'powerful and original imagination'.

However, of the four artists, it is Bunny he cautions, recalling him to a British sensibility:

Mr Bunny has reached the crisis of his career. We want no more student's work, however strong. He must give up Paris, and come to London, and live painter-like a painter's life if he means to achieve anything more than seasonal sensations.

Bunny was in a complex position. Like many of his colleagues, such as Roberts, McCubbin, Fox or Longstaff, Bunny had felt the need to further his training in Europe. Born in Australia of a German mother and a British father, he saw himself as Australian. Like many Australians, particularly of their social standing (his father was Eton-educated and was Commissioner of Titles for the State of Victoria), Britain, equally, was 'home'. It is worth quoting at some length an extract from an article on Longstaff and Bunny published in *The Age*, Melbourne, in 1894. After analysing Bunny's current work, *The Forerunners* and *Una and the Fauns* the journalist continued:

Like all Australian artists abroad Mr. Bunny is full of indecisions and uncertainty concerning his future moves, and as to whether he will eventually

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363 *The Forerunners* was exhibited as *Avant l'orage*, cat.326, at the SdAf in the preceding year, 1894.
364 The work which had particularly attracted comment was *The Intruders*, exhibited at the RBA in the Winter of 1893. This painting (whereabouts unknown) of mermen and fishermen had a 'barbaric vehemence of colour' and was a bold decoration. (See Jope-Slade, 'An Australian Quartette', p.392.
return to work in and for his own country. But I think anyone who has any experience of Australia, or at least Victoria, from the point of view of its artistic development, would agree that it is not the right field for his art. His talent is of such a personal and uncommon order that he should have a far better chance of ultimate success in England, where he has already obtained considerable appreciation and where his academy pictures of the last two years have been very favourably noticed by the English press.\textsuperscript{366}

By the 1930s, again resident in Australia after an absence of over 50 years, Bunny expressed firm views on his Australian nationality. When it was suggested that he would have benefited from renouncing his Australian citizenship to become French, he is reported as saying: ‘No. I would be regarded as an interloper by Frenchmen and as a deserter by Australians.’\textsuperscript{367} The assumptions implicit in this opinion were confirmed as early as the 1890s when the sympathetic French critic, Raymond Bouyer, described him as ‘l’artiste étranger’ amongst them. Although acknowledging Bunny’s Australian birth, Bouyer referred to him as ‘English’ (whilst including him in an analysis of Scottish artists).\textsuperscript{368}

While the distinction between French and Australian nationality was clear, even into the 1930s the distinction between British and Australian was problematic. This is made evident by the same Age journalist writing that Bunny was ‘one of three British artists to enjoy the rare distinction of having more than one work in the Luxembourg.’\textsuperscript{369} Further evidence confirming this colonial psychology is evident when Bunny’s sister, Hilda Mackinnon, referred to Australian men in the Crimea as having ‘the honour of helping the motherland’.\textsuperscript{370} So, despite the surge of nationalism, for Bunny at least during the 1890s it must have been a period of flux, where he could see himself either as Australian or British without compromising either. However, shortly after his marriage in March 1902 to the Frenchwoman, Jeanne Morel, France

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{365} ibid. p.393. Mackennel was eventually accepted by the British establishment. He was knighted in 1921, the first Australian-born artist so honoured and he was elected RA the following year, the first and only Australian sculptor so honoured. (Australian Dictionary of Biography).
\textsuperscript{366} The writer’s italics; ‘Australian Artists in Paris’ (by E.R.) \textit{The Age}, May 19, 1894, p.4.
\textsuperscript{367} Eminent Living Australians: Rupert Bunny: Artist of International Repute \textit{The Age Literary Supplement}, August 20, 1938, p.3.
\textsuperscript{368} Bouyer, ‘Un Salonier aux Salons de 1899’, p. 137.
\textsuperscript{369} Writer’s italics; ‘Eminent Living Australians: Rupert Bunny’, p.3.
\textsuperscript{370} Mackinnon, ‘Before the Nineties: Schooldays and Deportment’, March 29, 1934, p.16.
\end{footnotes}
became his chosen home and primary exhibition centre for a further 30 years.\textsuperscript{371} Linked to this decision could be the fact that as a colonial he (and his Australian colleagues) were almost always seen as ranked below the British-born.\textsuperscript{372}

It is evident that at \textit{The Magazine of Art} there was concern for the preservation of a 'British' art in the face of the rush to Paris for training. The British may have predominated through their industrial progress and Empire but the French had their own emergent colonies, and with their advanced training systems had challenged British art. As has been observed in the preceding chapter, Spielmann, the influential editor of \textit{The Magazine of Art}, used his position to warn that 'the national school which pawns its national independence and distinctiveness of feeling to acquire a foreign, although perhaps at the time a superior, artistic ensemble, predisposes of its artistic salvation'.\textsuperscript{373} As noted earlier, Jope-Slade issued a similar warning to Bunny, writing 'give up Paris, and come to London'. Notably, the work which won Jope-Slade's unfettered praise for its 'charm of colour and technical dexterity' in the 1895 article was \textit{Una and the Fauns}, (QLDAG) fig.49.\textsuperscript{374} Inspired by Spencer's epic \textit{Faery Queen}, lines of the poem accompany it as was customary at the Royal Academy.\textsuperscript{375} In style the richly patterned canvas can be likened to Burne-Jones' \textit{The Briar Rose} series or to the 'Impressionism' of plein-air artists such as the American, Alexander Harrison.\textsuperscript{376} Bunny's \textit{Una} is of an undoubtedly British subject and sits comfortably within a broad British aesthetic.

It is hardly surprising that Bunny was 'full of indecisions and uncertainty concerning his future moves'. Seen as a ‘foreigner’ by the French, put on notice that his work would not please an Australian market, and with the call to return to London by the

\textsuperscript{371} Bunny married Jeanne Morel on 1\textsuperscript{st} March 1902. See Eagle, \textit{The Art of Rupert Bunny}, p.244.
\textsuperscript{372} For a detailed discussion of the colonial position see Anderson, 'Official Nationalism and Imperialism', \textit{Imagined Communities}, pp.80-103. For an interesting discussion of the difficult position of Australian artists in Britain in competition with those in Australia, see Myra Scott, \textit{The Art of George James Coates (1869- 1930) and Dora Meeson Coates (1869- 1955)}, MA, The University of Melbourne, 1992, particularly chapter 5, pp.110-125.
\textsuperscript{373} 'Epilogue', \textit{Royal Academy Pictures}, 1892, p.156.
\textsuperscript{374} \textit{The Exhibition of the Royal Academy of Arts. 1894. The 126\textsuperscript{th}}, London, cat.319, 1894.
\textsuperscript{375} cat. 319, Royal Academy, 1894 with lines 'Her gentle wit she plyes/To teach them truth/which worshipped her in vain'; \textit{Faery Queen}, First Book, Canto 6, Stanza 19.
\textsuperscript{376} Harrison's \textit{En Arcadie} of nude women standing in dappled sunlight, was tremendously successful at the 1886 Salon. Léonce Bénédite, by then Keeper of the Luxembourg, illustrated it in his \textit{Great Painters of the XIXth Century and their Paintings} (1910, Sir Isaac Pitman and Sons, Ltd., London, p.244).
British, it appears that around 1896 Bunny responded to this crisis of identity by painting two religious works with an identifiable British aesthetic: the *Burial of St. Catherine of Alexandria* to which, as has been shown in the preceding chapter, Bunny gave an aesthetic interpretation, and *Ancilla Domini*, fig. 50, which has clear echoes of the early Pre-Raphaelite style.

*Ancilla Domini* (c.1896)

The subject of the annunciation to the Virgin Mary is obviously one which has claimed the skills and imagination of the gifted through the decades; Bunny could find inspiration from a variety of sources in both France and Britain. Nevertheless it is interesting to observe that in both countries a fresh emphasis was given to the Virgin in the 19th century. In both Britain and (largely, Catholic) France, there was a rise in interest in the cult of the Madonna prior to Pius IX's proclamation of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception in 1854. Holcolm suggests that this was probably one of the reasons for Anna Jameson’s publication of *Legends of the Madonna* in 1852. She further observes that it appears to be the ‘first extensive study of the imagery of the Virgin in the literature of art.’ Neither in Didron’s *Christian Iconography* nor in Rio’s *Poésie chrétienne*, did the Marian iconography receive extensive, considered attention. So Jameson was an iconographical source for the rise in High Church imagery dating from this period.

Versions of the annunciation appear not only in the Salons, but also at the Royal Academy and other British galleries. Bunny had been exploring the theme of the Annunciate Virgin on paper for some time and had tried various settings - the enclosed garden (*hortus conclusus*), the cell and the church - but common to all works, and suggesting an interest in mediæval iconography, is the intimacy Bunny

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377 For detailed discussion and analysis of Jameson’s interpretation of the historical impact of the Marian cult, see Holcomb ‘Anna Jameson, pp.113-114. Holcolm suggests that the major stimulus to the study in England was the belief that the ‘women’s sphere’ was an issue with the rise of female suffrage and such disparate and powerful females in the public forum, such as Queen Victoria, George Eliot, Florence Nightingale.

378 ibid., p.113.

379 However, it is argued that the work of Rio informed the arguments of all the influential exponents of Christian art in Britain, including Jameson and Ruskin. For an interesting discussion of the history of ideas see Hilary Fraser *The Victorians and Renaissance Italy* (Oxford & Mass: Blackwell Publishers, 1992) Chapter 3 ‘Pre-Raphaelitism’, particularly pp.97-99.
creates in each depiction. Ancilla Domini (AGSA) was exhibited at the Royal Society of British Artists (RBA) in 1896, the year that the Burial of St. Catherine of Alexandria was exhibited at the Royal Academy. The painting is of medium size (smaller than St. Catherine) and appears to be in its original gilt frame of neo-classical design. Bunny had now been in Europe for 12 years; his drawing is assured, his handling of colour skilful and sensuous, particularly in the porcelain-like patina of the angel’s garments. The canvas is painted smoothly, the highlights thinly applied, except for a slight scumbling along the upper level of the Archangel’s wings. This painting shows an awareness of the work of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (PRB) and their followers and of the original primitifs, Botticelli and particularly Fra Angelico, whose work was popular both in Britain and France.

An interesting comparison can be made with the work of Bunny’s slightly older British contemporary, Arthur Hacker. When Hacker (1858-1919) exhibited his painting The Annunciation, fig.51, at the Royal Academy in 1892, it so impressed the President and the Council of the Academy that they purchased it for the Chantrey Bequest. In a later review of the work as it hung in the Tate Gallery, the era’s paradox was identified by Rose Kingsley:

Our modern artists...have learned that truth to nature is absolutely essential to art. And therefore, we get the singular phenomenon of men who are at one and the same time mystics and realists; men who attempt the daring experiment of endeavouring to express the supernatural by the natural.

So the tension and ambiguity common to so many works of this period is articulated. Hacker, she felt, succeeded with this balance, introducing ‘the supernatural into the natural, to clothe what is purely spiritual, mystical, in actual form’.

Several popular French artists whose works had been exhibited at the Paris Exposition of 1900 are

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380 There are a number of works on paper, UMAC (see Appendix). For a brief discussion of the change in iconography from the Middle Ages to the 16th Century, see Male, Religious Art, pp. 183-184.
381 Cat.349 RBA; listed at £42 (a slight variation from that written on the back label).
382 See, for example, Arnold Boecklin’s frame for The Island of the Dead. I am grateful to John Jones, Director, Benalla Art Gallery, for this observation.
383 Royal Academy Pictures 1892, Part IV, p.122; opposite the title page is an illustration of the painting.
385 ibid. p.8.
criticized for taking realism to excess, particularly Jean Béraud, whose painting *La Madeleine chez le Pharisienc* drew shocked crowds when it was shown at the 1891 *Nationale*. What had titillated the audience was the juxtaposition of Christ in traditional costume seated with members of the upper bourgeoisie, painted as identifiable portraits, in a contemporary Parisian club.306 Alternately, Bunny and Hacker attempt to reconcile these stated polarities.

*Ancilla Domini* is clearly divided in half, one side dedicated to Mary who kneels on the raised stone floor of her chamber; the other dedicated to the Annunciate Angel, silhouetted against the startling red curtain and contrasting black and white flagstones. The Archangel (despite his glorious wings), is substantial and firmly grounded. His profile is distinctive with its jutting chin and straight nose; the musculature in the arms is defined, the weight-bearing feet well-drawn. There is little attempt to convey through attributes the heavenly nature of his origin, such as a gold nimbus, as seen in Fra Angelico’s *The Annunciation* or in Rossetti’s *Ecce Ancilla Domini*, nor does Bunny imitate the heavenly flames which propel the feet of the latter’s (admittedly, wingless) angel.307 However the angel does recall that of Rossetti’s in the length and simplicity of the costume, which leaves muscled arms bare, in the profile view and in the page-boy bob. Hacker’s angel, a ‘blue cloud, thin as smoke that flies upward,’ his physical presence cleverly obfuscated by his foreshortened placement directly behind the Virgin, has long hair and complex draperies which drift insubstantially into the firmament.308 Contemporaneous French annunciate angels such as those in Alfred Bramtot’s *Le rêve de Marie* (1890), Louis Ridel’s *Annonciation* (1894) and G. Dubufe’s *Ave Marie* (1895), also show elaborately draped and tied gowns with sleeves, and an intricate and longer coiffure.309 Thus Bunny restates the simplicity and, in some ways, the tangibility of the Rossettian angel.


307 This conceit is taken up by Frank Cadogan Cowper in *St. Agnes in Prison receiving from Heaven the Shining White Garment* 1905 (see illustrated in Christian (ed.), *The Last Romantics*, p.27. A renowned example of Fra Angelico’s work is his *The Annunciation*, Cortona. (See John Pope-Hennessy, *Fra Angelico*, London, Phaidon, 1974, cat.p.192, repr.18.)


Elements of detailed reality, a significant feature of the work of the PRB, inform both paintings.\textsuperscript{390} In Hacker it is the ‘copper waterpot at the well, the flowers of the field, the sparse grey foliage of the olives, the shining white-walled city’,\textsuperscript{391} and, despite the fragile body of the Virgin, her face, which is clearly individualized. In Bunny’s painting there is a meticulous attention to the details of Mary’s costume, her symbols, and the furnishings. The reference to mediævalism (a component of British Symbolism) in the costumes and setting, although obviously not historically logical, would recall the pious, pure faith of that period to the contemporary British or French viewer.\textsuperscript{392} So, the translucent cloth of Mary’s sleeves is gathered in the mediæval manner made popular by the Pre-Raphaelites, as in Millais’ \textit{A Hugenot}.\textsuperscript{393} A missal stands on the lecturn behind the kneeling Virgin. Her left arm rests on a bench, whose legs are formed by elongated angels with crossed arms. This Gothic feature again recalls strongly the interests of Ruskin and the Pre-Raphaelites, for whom (as in Gothic art) art has a moral and ethical message. White and pink roses continue the traditional symbolism and are a favoured Bunny motif.

Bunny adheres more closely to earlier iconographic practice than Hacker, although the latter does place the Virgin in a conventional walled garden.\textsuperscript{394} Traditionally, the Virgin sits in an arched and curtained space, missal to hand, and an Expulsion scene reminds the viewer of the fall from grace. This aligns the Old testament with the New, whilst heralding the birth of Christ and the new era for Christianity. Bunny’s interpretation incorporates these features, including the frescoed Expulsion. His familiarity with the \textit{primitifs}, particularly Fra Angelico, is marked.\textsuperscript{395} The spirituality

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\begin{enumerate}
\item Millais, \textit{Isabella} 1848-9, Hunt A Converted British Family Sheltering a Christian Missionary from the Persecution of the Druids 1849-50; for colour ills and full catalogue entries see Bowness (ed.), \textit{The Pre-Raphaelites}, cat.18, pp.68-70 and cat.25, pp.76-77, respectively.
\item Kingsley, ‘The Ideal in Modern Art’, p.8.
\item For a concise elucidation of this point, see Warner, \textit{The Victorians}, p.31ff.
\item Full title: \textit{A Hugenot, on St. Bartholomew’s Day, Refusing to Shield Himself from Danger by Wearing the Roman Catholic Badge} 1851-52. The work was widely known through a published mezzotint and there had been a retrospective exhibition of Millais work in London in 1886. The mezzotint was published in 1856 and a wood-engraving was published in 1852 in the \textit{Illustrated London News}. For extensive catalogue entry and ill., see Bowness (ed.), \textit{The Pre-Raphaelites}, cat.41, pp.98-99.
\item For example, Duccio’s \textit{The Annunciation}, 1311, National Gallery, London, acquired 1883 (\textit{The National Gallery Complete Illustrated Catalogue}, cat.NG 1139, repr. p.197.
\item Bunny probably saw a panel, \textit{The Annunciation}, after Fra Angelico, which entered the collection of the National Gallery, London, in 1894. (Martin Davies, \textit{National Gallery Catalogues: The Earlier Italian Schools}, London, printed for the Trustees, 1951, cat. 1406, pp.26-27.) The expulsion scene is
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
of the pious Dominican had been celebrated in both France and Britain since mid-
century and the cult was reconfirmed in essays written by Péladan and Denis.\textsuperscript{396}

Where Hacker evokes the spiritual through the use of ‘harmonies of white, grey and
blue’,\textsuperscript{397} in the manner of Puvis (seen earlier in Bunny’s \textit{Ste. Cécile}, fig.36), Bunny’s
passionate red ‘express(es) the supernatural by the natural’, establishing a surreal
emotional intensity.\textsuperscript{398} The canvas glows as light pours through the vibrant scarlet
curtain which covers the archway. Given that Bunny was resident in Paris at the
period, a large area of intense, flat colour could signal knowledge of the work of the
Nabis and certainly, at this time their paintings could be seen.\textsuperscript{399} The Nabis sought to
restore the emotional function of colour, freeing it from its representational function,
as typically seen in Gauguin’s \textit{The Vision after the Sermon} (1888). But they were
reacting against the realism of the impressionists and they distorted the shapes and the
perspective in a further effort to grasp the spiritual meaning. Bunny, on the other
hand, has described an apparently real setting in the manner of the original PRB.
Through colour he established the emotional intensity of one of Christianity’s great
mysteries.

If this was Bunny’s answer to the British critics, it failed to attract specific attention
from reviewers at a selection of journals, such as \textit{The Magazine of Art, The Studio,
The Art Journal} or \textit{The Sketch}.\textsuperscript{400} Bunny had been attracting flattering attention from
a number of influential French critics from mid-decade. These included Léonce
Bénédite (curator of the Luxembourg Museum), Gustave Geffroy and Raymond
Bouyer, all of whom had noticed Bunny’s poetic depictions of women. These could
be either the mythological works such as \textit{Eōs} (SdAf, 1896), or women from the realist

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missing from this panel; however in the demeanour and nudity of Bunny’s pair, Masaccio’s \textit{Expulsion
from Paradise} in the Brancacci Chapel seems a closer parallel. See Paul Joannides, \textit{Masaccio and
\textsuperscript{396} For discussion of the emergence of the cult of Fra Angelico, see Driskel \textit{Representing Belief}, pp.
61-69.
\textsuperscript{397} Kingsley, ‘The Ideal in Modern Art’, p.8.
\textsuperscript{398} ibid.
\textsuperscript{399} The first exhibition of the Nabis was in 1892 at the gallery of the dealer Le Barc de Bouteville. For
the history of the group see Mauner, \textit{The Nabis}.
\textsuperscript{400} \textit{The Studio} did observe of Cayley Robinson and Bunny’s work that it ‘touch[ed] an unexpected note
of romantic invention’, but that is more likely to refer to \textit{Mermaids Dancing}, shown with \textit{Ancilla Domini.}
painting shown at that RBA exhibition, \textit{Eōs}. (London: 1896, p.377). \textit{The Sketch} dedicates some
sentences to \textit{Mermaids Dancing}. (‘The Art of the Day’, February 10, 1897, p.111.)
\end{flushleft}
tradition yet set in a dreamy ‘other world’ in such works as *Dolce far niente* (*SdAf*, 1897), fig 52, and *Au bord de la mer* (*SdAf*, 1898), fig. 53.\(^{401}\) Bouyer, uncannily echoing Jope-Slade’s edict of 1895 issued his own retaliatory demand in 1898, but from a French perspective: Bunny ‘veut oublier Londres’ for ‘il ne suivra ni William Hogarth..., ni Burne-Jones,’ he was ‘un Vénitien d’adoption, qui ne montre aucun goût pour les scrupules préraphaëliques, ni pour la “morale en action” de la peinture ruskinienne’.\(^{402}\) The growing critical acclaim on both sides of the channel would have given Bunny confidence in the continuing development of the assured, individual style seen in the *Burial of St. Catherine of Alexandria*, and *The Descent from the Cross*. Paradoxically, it would also contribute to the crisis of identity experienced by Bunny in the early years of the new century.

**The Descent from the Cross c.1898**

*The Descent from the Cross*, fig. 54, was painted in the final years of the century immediately following the exhibition of the *Burial of St. Catherine of Alexandria* (1896) and *Descending Angels* (1897). By now the categories of French and British art were no longer so relevant to Bunny and *Descent from the Cross*, the last of his 19th century religious works, shares stylistic features with these two earlier images whilst prefiguring the changes in style and approach in Bunny’s religious work of the early 20th century.

Hung in the main gallery of the Royal Academy in London in 1898, *Descent from the Cross* attracted such attention it was reproduced in both *Royal Academy Notes*\(^{403}\) and *Royal Academy Pictures*.\(^{404}\) It was then exhibited as *Descente de Croix* with the earlier work, *Enterrement de Ste. Catherine à Alexandrie* at the 1899 Salon where both received critical attention from important French reviewers.\(^{405}\) Bunny’s choice


\(^{402}\) Bouyer ‘L’Art et la Beauté aux Salons de 1898’, *L’Artiste*, t.137, 1898, pp.143-155; quote pp. 147-148, writer’s emphasis.

\(^{403}\) 1898, p.50

\(^{404}\) 1898, p.85

\(^{405}\) Société des Artistes français. From here the work was sent to the prestigious Carnegie Art Galleries, Pittsburgh; and in 1901 it joined *St. Catherine* on exhibition in St. Petersburg. For the exhibition history of both works, see Appendix.
of these two works to exhibit in Paris (after the seven year pause from the religious subject) is astute. Rather than the frankly decorative and Aesthetic *Angels Descending*, Bunny chose works of a similar sombre, poetic mood. Bouyer, in a five page review of Bunny's paintings for the journal *L'Artiste* in 1899, stated the shared paradox expressed by the British reviewer 'l'artiste moderne unit mystérieusement le songe avec la réalité, le décor avec l'expression'. Bouyer judged that Bunny achieved this through setting both the works in a soft twilight: 'Les longs rayons couchants sont le décor propice à notre rêverie: dans leur ombre chaleureuse renaît la magie de l'Art.' Bunny is still identified as separate from the French: he 'voisine unconsciemment avec nos maîtres nouveaux, son âme sympathise avec les meilleurs de nos désirs, soirs profonds de René Ménard, soirées éthérées d'Henri Martin.'

Scenes from the Crucifixion (Deposition, Entombment and Lamentation) were very rare in the Royal Academy, London. Bunny's *Descent from the Cross* of 1898 is the only such titled work in records surveyed from 1885-1900. Largely, the few British artists directly addressing Christ's life preferred more anecdotal scenes than that of His Passion, such as J.R. Herbert's *Our Lord Stilling the Tempest*, (cat.3, 1886) or his *Our Lord with his disciples* (cat.984, 1886). Bunny's image should be viewed in the French context, if only for its subject which was essentially a Catholic preoccupation. There was no fixed tradition of religious imagery focussing on the Passion in the established British

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406 After 1892 and the exhibition of *Les Roses de Ste. Dorothee* at the *Artistes français* Bunny did not exhibit a religious work in the Paris Salons until 1899. Bunny switched his religious work to London in 1893 when he exhibited a small *Annunciation* at the Institute of Painters in Oil Colours (cat.481, *Institute of Painters in Oil Colours. Catalogue of the 11th Exhibition*. Piccadilly, 1893-1894.) He exhibited possibly one other work with religious content here (*An Allegory*, 1897) but the bulk of such work was shown at the Royal Society of British Artists. Two works shown at the RA, 1893, may have been of religious subjects. Unfortunately neither *Le Passant* nor *The Neophyte* has been sighted and the titles are ambiguous. However, H. Blackburn in *Academy Notes* (1893) comments of *Le Passant*: 'Is it Azrad, the Angel of Death, striking a fair girl in passing; or is it Eros, the God of Love.' (Laurence Course Research Papers: Laurence Course, Melbourne). The subject of the watercolour, *The Neophyte*, may be that of a new convert (with particular reference to the early Christian church).


408 ibid., writer's emphasis.

410 Nathaniel H.J. Westlake exhibited *The Entombment* (cat.831) in 1887 and 'Noli me tangere', (cat.833) in 1890 and Joseph Tonneau exhibited *The Entombment of Christ*, (cat.911) in 1891, but these are the only such works.

411 There is a painting by Sigismund Goetze, *Eloquent Silence*, (also RA, 1898, repr. *Royal Academy Pictures* 1898, p.103) which is as mystical as its title implies. It shows Christ in the embrace of two richly garbed angels, (one of whom hushes the viewer with a finger to her lips), and is a very British blend of the decorative with the coy anecdotal
Church. In France the Société des Artistes français, with whom Bunny had been exhibiting for the past decade, was the powerhouse for the production of these images: in the Salon of 1899 Bunny was one of at least eight other artists to depict scenes from Christ’s Passion.\textsuperscript{412}

There was a natural boost to the depictions of Jesus in France after the publication of Ernest Renan’s \textit{Vie de Jésus} created a storm in 1863. It was republished in 1870 with illustrations by Godefroy Durand, who, in the manner of prominent orientalists such as Alexandre Bida, attempted to situate Christ in an appropriately Palestinian setting. This was in keeping with Renan’s efforts to establish the humanity of Christ at, some said, the expense of His divinity.\textsuperscript{413} The ramifications were still very much evident in the 1890s. However, even by the 1880s Driskel argues that there was no longer one ‘well-defined aesthetic of Christian art’ for artists.\textsuperscript{414} Artists such as James Tissot sought historical accuracy for some of their work, as in his \textit{Vie de Notre-Seigneur Jésus-Christ}, whilst he located other compositions in his own time, seen in his work \textit{The Prodigal Son in Modern Life}.\textsuperscript{415} When this contemporary location was given a political bias by artists such as Jean Béraud it shocked the Parisian public. Béraud’s \textit{La Descente de croix} (1892) sets the crucifixion on Montmartre and shows ordinary workers mourning by Christ’s body. In its quality of depicting ordinary humans, quietly grieving, and in its passing acknowledgment of oriental costume, Bunny’s interpretation of the story bears some relationship to these works.\textsuperscript{416} However, there were alternate strands of the complex aesthetic of the 1890s.


\textsuperscript{413} For ills. and analysis of the orientalist settings of Bida and Durand and their difficulty in resolving Christ’s divinity, see Driskel, \textit{Representing Belief}, pp.200-203. For discussion of Renan’s positivist philosophy, see ibid.,pp.169-170.

\textsuperscript{414} See ibid., p.211.

\textsuperscript{415} For a contemporary view on the religious work of this most prolific artist, see Roger Milès, \textit{The Salon 1894}, tran. Henry Bacon; plates Goupil (Paris & London: Boussod, Valadon & Co, 1894), pp.85-89. See also Driskel, \textit{Representing Belief}, pp.214-220; for oriental details in for example \textit{Consummatum est}, 1896 (for \textit{Vie de Notre-Seigneur Jésus-Christ}) see ibid., fig.85, p.217 and for \textit{The Prodigal Son in Modern Life}, see fig.86, p.219.
Both Tissot and Béraud exhibited at the Nationale, but there were many more depictions of Christ’s Passion and Crucifixion at the Artistes français, often using the same format. Jean-Jacques Henner (1829-1905) was a very popular contemporary French Salon painter of the religious subject. He was preoccupied by one theme, the nude corpse, and employed the horizontal canvas and dual plane construction seen in Bunny’s work. It is interesting to compare say, Henner’s Dead Christ (1896), fig.55 with Bunny’s Descent from the Cross as they are both contemporary Salon works, from a shared realist tradition and with a shared construction.

Henner’s painting received contemporary accolades for its qualities of poetry and ‘pure melody’, the latter terminology, in particular, used by symbolist critics. And yet in the two major aspects of his style, his use of chiaroscuro and sfumato, he harks back to his studies in Rome and the influence, respectively, of Caravaggio and Correggio. French Romantic artists had already revisited Leonardo’s sfumato and for fin-de-siècle artists, it was a useful tool against the hard light of materialism and for softening its equivalent in art, naturalism. Eugène Carrière, for example, founded a very successful Salon career on this technique, acquired directly from Henner, in which his depictions of family life are universalized through the misty haze of

416 Earlier in the century, Delacroix in his Pietà (1844) had shown human grief, but it was a passionate, tumultuous grief, not the quiet restraint evident in Bunny’s work. See repr. Driskel, Representing Belief, Fig.2.
417 For example, Doucet’s The dead Christ, repr. Thiébault-Sisson, The Salon 1896 trans. Henry Bacon, plates, Goupil (Paris & London: Boussod, Valadon & Co, 1896) p.17. Along with Holbein’s Dead Christ, the very famous work by Philippe de Champagne, Le Christ Mort, in the Salon Carré of the Louvre (copied by Matisse and many others), is the archetype for all the horizontal dead Christ figures.
418 Although there is an unpublished diss. (Isabelle de Lannoy, Jean-Jacques Henner (1829-1905): Essai de catalogue, Paris, Ecole Louvre, 1986) Henner has received very little scholarly attention in the late 20th century. Neither Foucart (Le Renouveau de la peinture religieuse en France), nor Driskel (Representing Belief), include him in their studies of 19th religious art in France. However he is represented in Reymert & Kashey (eds & curators) Christian Imagery in French 19th Century Art, pp.326-332. There is also a museum dedicated to him in Paris.
419 He won the medal of honour at the 1898 salon for The Levite of Ephraim and His Dead Wife (a female version of the subject).
his brushstrokes and the monochromatic colour. Bunny too, makes use of a slight *sfumato* when he softens the distant backdrop, but, as is common to his work of the 1890s the whole surface is very evenly painted with only a slight texture in the varied colours of the loin cloth and winding sheet. Bunny’s method of reconciling the realism of the figures with the transcendental event was, as in *Ancilla Domini*, to use colour and light. Here he casts the figures in the yellow glow of twilight. Bouyer recognized Bunny’s affinity with Henner:

*Bunny représente parmi nous l’artiste étranger sans rengaines d’écoles, indépendant mais élevé, qui aime d’instinct le style, la Renaissance et les maîtres, qui aime d’amour la romantique poésie de l’ombre ou les charmes voilés de la demi-teinte, en les reconnaissant dans les poèmes de nos aînés, Henner, Pointelin, Fantin-Latour.*

Although titled a ‘descent’, Bunny’s work is in the tradition of a lamentation and the predominant quality in his painting is the solemn and human tenderness between the Virgin, St. John and Mary Magdalene as they tend to Christ’s body. The painting is anchored by the body of Christ, which lies across the front plane, and by the sweep of the Virgin’s striking cobalt green cloak, which curves through the vertical. Unlike the dead Christ in Flandrin’s *Pieta* (1842-44) for example, the body is not idealized and lying in a perfect line; it is rigid, the limbs turned stiffly out. The lifeless toes of Christ’s left foot pierce the envelope of the shallow plane in which Bunny works. St. John is completing the task of wrapping Christ’s body in the shroud, but he hesitates to allow Mary Magdalene a final kiss and places a comforting arm around her. The Virgin, her brow drawn in grief, nurses her Son’s head. The figures are large, realistically depicted and fill the frontal plane, and their response to their task is quiet, compelling and dignified. It was this classical *gravitas* which the eminent critic, Gustave Geffroy observed when he described the painting succinctly as a ‘*peinture savante et grave*’.  

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425 The Magdalene on the left reflects his familiarity with Titian’s female figures in the Louvre, such as the *Vierge au Lapin*.  
When comparing *Descent from the Cross*, the *Burial of St. Catherine of Alexandria*, and *Descending Angels* a slight but significant change in Bunny’s approach and style can be seen. Whereas in the earlier paintings there is a conscious abrogation of narrative and a reduction of horrific detail (as discussed in chapter 2) here signs of Christ’s torture and humiliation are prominent. The narrative is clarified through the use of traditional symbols; in the distant plane of the background three empty crosses, two figures and a ladder can just be seen through the soft blurred strokes. The crown of thorns and its flanking three large nails are placed on a scarlet cloth in the foreground, the stigmata are visible on hand and foot and a faint scratching from the thorns can be discerned on Christ’s forehead. Furthermore, not only has Bunny ensured the notion of rigor mortis in the stiff turn of the legs, but Christ’s dead flesh has a yellow tone when compared to the living blush of the Magdalene and the pallor of Mary. In *The Burial of St. Catherine* by comparison, both the saint and her celestial bearers have the same pale, glowing complexions. So the narrative and a sense of drama are assumed which prefigures Bunny’s religious work of the early 20th century.

Gustave Geffroy first reviewed Bunny’s work a couple of years earlier when he praised both *Dolce far niente*, fig. 52, and *Au bord de la mer*, fig. 53, at some length. From their titles, Bunny is signalling that these are interpretations of reality and it is this, their charm, ‘poésie’, and their decorative qualities which attracted Geffroy.⁴²⁷ Geffroy, who vigorously opposed symbolism (and the preraphaelites), was a great admirer and supporter of both Rodin and Monet.⁴²⁸ He is also described as being faithful to the realist tradition and this can be seen in his criticisms of both Burne-Jones and of Bunny.⁴²⁹ In an article written just after Burne-Jones’ death (June, 1898) Geffroy condemned his work, ‘nées de l’imagination’, for being ‘trop péniblement inventées pour figurer le réel, et trop

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⁴²⁷ *Au bord de la mer* was known until recently as *Psyche at the Pool*. The title came from the estate (it is not known who attributed it), but with the standing statuesque nude, a mythological interpretation is reasonable.

⁴²⁸ He argued against the symbolism of Gauguin in particular, but accepts Denis and Bonnard for example. For a brief summary of the critic’s major works and his interests sees *La Promenade du critique influent: Anthologie de la critique d’art en France 1850-1900*, J-P Bouillon et al, eds. Paris, Hazan, 1990, pp.297-298.

⁴²⁹ *La Promenade du critique influent*, p.297
He obviously saw none of these failings in Bunny’s work. He praised *Dolce far niente* for its depiction of every-day life in which beautiful, living women, (as opposed to Burne-Jones’ ‘*créatures factices*’) dreamed by the seaside; yet the work ‘atteint naturellement à la grandeur’. And with *Au bord de la mer*, whilst acknowledging a debt to Veronese in the form of some of the women, his major praise is for Bunny’s colour and light, ‘tout cela m’a ravi par une ampleur et une grâce tranquille’. He concluded that Bunny would create excellent tapestries. So, although *Descente de croix* is noted and praised for its solemnity and scholarship, the religious subject simply does not receive the attention given to the two previous works.

In an introductory essay to Bunny’s March 1917 exhibition at Galeries Georges Petit Geffroy reflected with pleasure on these two 1890’s Salon works, *Dolce far niente* and *Au bord de la mer*, and he recalled meeting Bunny in ‘ces époques paisibles, où l’on ne connaissait que les batailles de l’art’ when Bunny was ‘un homme jeune, souriant’. They had renewed their acquaintance after the war and were now neighbours in a quiet street on the left bank. Perhaps on their initial acquaintance in the 1890s Geffroy had advised Bunny directly against the religious subject; or perhaps the lack of praise for such works from a powerful critic who would support his work through into the next century played a part in Bunny’s practical decision to restrict his religious images after the final fling in Britain in the years 1902-3.
By the end of the century Bunny can no longer be seen to be painting 'student's work'. His style was confident, informed by the various strands of poetic Symbolism which surrounded him in both Britain and France. After a brief, and largely unsuccessful eighteen months painting in Britain immediately after his marriage, he returned to France where he began to paint the images of women which captured the imagination of several French critics, and more importantly, won him some state patronage. This moderate success and acceptance in a foreign, though congenial environment, bound him to France for the next decade.
Epilogue
THE RELIGIOUS IMAGES, 1902-3: TOWARDS THE OLD MASTERS

1899 was in many ways a watershed year for Bunny. It was the last year he would throw himself wholeheartedly into the exhibition with the Société des Artistes français, to whom he had been loyal since 1887. With the two important religious works _The Burial of St. Catherine of Alexandria_ and _Descent from the Cross_, he also showed two embroidered panels (for mantelpiece and fireplace) designed by himself and embroidered by his cousin Miss Douglas-Binney.\(^{438}\) In 1900, his final year with the Artistes français he exhibited only a _Portrait de Mlle E._ whilst he sent _The Burial of St. Catherine of Alexandria_ to the British Section of the World’s Fair in Paris and _Descent from the Cross_ to Pittsburgh.\(^{439}\) In 1901 Bunny commenced exhibiting at the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts with a mythological work and a portrait.\(^{440}\) His next religious works would discard the fin-de-siècle style, adopting one closer to the example of the Old Masters. Narrative would return and a tougher, more dramatic interpretation of the story would be adopted.

One can only guess at Bunny’s reasons for switching to the Nationale. Laurens was no longer President of the Artistes français, so Bunny’s loyalty was not tested;\(^{441}\) the system of medals had benefited him only once (1890) and critics such as Bouyer felt that the Artistes français had treated him badly in this regard.\(^{442}\) Bouyer also complained of the lack of opportunity for seeing a greater number of Bunny’s works exhibited together: ‘Dois-je monter à Londres pour compléter mon portrait rêvé de


\(^{440}\) L’Age d’or and Danse espagnole (a portrait of the opera singer Rosa Calvé; see Thomas, Rupert Bunny, cat.O51)

\(^{441}\) It is noted in ‘Nouvelles’, Chronique des Arts et de la Curiosité, no.4, January 20\(^{th}\), 1901 that Bouguereau is President of the Société des Artistes français. Eagle is therefore, mistaken in writing that Laurens was President of the Artistes français at this time, and her conclusion that Bunny may have alienated Laurens is less likely; see Eagle, The Art of Rupert Bunny, p. 14. In the Chronique des Arts of the following year, January 11, 1902, no.2, p.10 Laurens is listed as President du jury de peinture (SdAf).
Bunny, d’après sa Vénus douillette de l’Exposition Internationale ou sa Conversion de saint Valérien?' and he in his review urged Bunny to switch to the Nationale where, theoretically, this could occur. Bunny’s new Salon, however, was slow to accord him these privileges. As the young Australian artist Hugh Ramsay wrote in 1902: ‘Poor Bunny was disgracefully treated by the New Salon for some unknown reason. He had 3 fired and one accepted, a landscape’; but even this (Bateaux en relache à Cercy) was badly hung.\footnote{Cat. 184; see Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts. Catalogue illustré, Grand Palais, Paris, 1902.} Ramsay concluded: ‘It’s a crying shame. I think there’s some personal reason’.\footnote{Letter from Ramsay to Bernard Hall, June 19, 1902. Quoted in Patricia Fullerton, Hugh Ramsay. His Life and Work, Hawthorn: Hudson Publishing, 1988, p.87.}

It is nevertheless arguable that the Nationale would have been a more appropriate venue for Bunny’s painting from around the mid 1890s. Since its inception as a splinter from the Artistes français in 1890, the Nationale had established a reputation as more welcoming to mildly progressive art. Its President through the 1890s was Puvis de Chavannes, who, for example, supported the young Matisse for Associate status in 1897. The President of the Artistes français, in contrast, was Bouguereau. The Nationale also pioneered the initiative of exhibiting contemporary decorative arts. Thus, the ‘decorative’ elements in Bunny’s work of the mid 1890s would have seemed better supported at the Nationale. The two Salons were rivals to some extent and some artists aligned themselves firmly with one side or the other.\footnote{This discussion draws from R. Benjamin, Matisse’s ‘Notes of a Painter’: Criticism, Theory and Context, 1891-1908, Ann Arbour: UMI Research Press, 1987, p.54.} However, with the new century and the caesura of the Exposition universelle, the Nationale was felt to have become more conservative: one reason for founding the Salon d’Automne in 1902, with its first exhibition in 1903.

This was a period of considerable personal change for Bunny. After hearing of the Nationale jury’s decision in 1902 Bunny left for London where he married Jeanne Morel in March; that September his mother, a committed patron of his work, died.\footnote{Eagle, The Art of Rupert Bunny., pp.14-15.} She left everything to her son-in-law, Donald Mackinnon, ‘who knows my wishes in regard to the disposal of my estate’, which, as Eagle observes, may well have left
Bunny uncertain that family support would continue.\textsuperscript{447} This was clearly a time of crisis. Perhaps he recalled Jope-Slade's earlier advice to come and live in London; certainly Bouyer's more recent tip to go to the Nationale had back-fired, and may have clinched Bunny's apparent decision to try London. During this time in London, Bunny exhibited the last of his significant religious paintings at the Royal Society of British Artists.

Although \textit{St. Veronica}, figs 56 & 57, c.1902, a smallish devotional work, differed markedly in size from the two large paintings, \textit{St. Christopher} (fig.58) and \textit{The Prodigal Son} (fig. 59), common to all three is the pronounced change in Bunny's approach to narrative.\textsuperscript{448} This is clearly illustrated when an early sketch of \textit{St. Veronica}, fig. 60, c.1895, is compared with the later painting.\textsuperscript{449} In the sketch the tall, graceful figure of the saint curves protectively round the slightly stooping figure of Christ as she seemingly offers him her veil to wipe his face. There is little indication of Christ's painful effort in carrying the cross and the saint's spiritual role is stressed through her central placement and her elongated figure. There is a complete contrast in the physicality and violence of the painting, exhibited in 1902 at the RBA, which shows Christ on his hands and knees, staggering beneath the weight of the cross. Veronica, whose white veil already bears the imprint of Christ's face, raises her arms to protect herself from a soldier's blow. Prefigured in the \textit{Descent from the Cross}, the shift from the miraculous to a harsh human reality is clear. The format relates to the earlier works of \textit{St. Catherine} and the \textit{Descent} in the disposition of large-scale figures across the front plane, whilst in the far background buildings are outlined against the sky (suitably lowering, in the case of the two images of the Passion). Bunny's facture is also consistent in the generally smooth handling, with a scumbling of paint in the highlighted areas, for example on Veronica's thigh and the stony ground in the right foreground. Also common to the new works is a muted palette, with occasional splashes of intense colour.\textsuperscript{450}


\textsuperscript{448} Private collection, WA; see Appendix for further details.

\textsuperscript{449} Early sketch for St. Veronica, c.1895, (on the same page as a sketch for \textit{The Burial of St. Catherine of Alexandria}, c.1896). UMAC; see Appendix for further details.

\textsuperscript{450} The \textit{St. Christopher} is known to me only through reproduction.
Evidence that Bunny was looking for a new mode is seen in the work *Venus & Cupid* exhibited at the RBA in 1899.\(^{451}\) A critic for the *Magazine of Art* observed of it:

‘Mr. R. Bunny’s *Venus and Cupid* is woefully lacking in life, yet it is modelled on a fine example and secures a little of the air of Titian’s stateliness which has manifestly been sought for.’\(^{452}\) Further, in Bunny’s *A Feather Fallen from the Wings of Cupid*, fig.61, c. 1901, the general composition and particularly the diving figure of the cupid show a striking resemblance to Titian’s *Perseus and Andromeda*, fig.62 in the Wallace Collection.\(^{453}\) It is not known if Bunny visited Italy, however it seems likely.\(^{454}\) Nevertheless, the holdings of the Louvre and the National Gallery, London provided fine examples of the Venetians and there were specialist exhibitions from time to time such as that in 1895 at the New Gallery featuring Giorgione and Titian.\(^{455}\)

As well, there were frequent publications, with increasingly high quality reproductions, such as the catalogue of the Accademia delle Belle Arti in Venice, issued by Heinemann in 1894.\(^{456}\)

Bunny’s *St. Christopher*, fig.58, c. 1903, shares an iconographic tradition with Titian’s *St. Christopher* in the Ducal Palace, Venice (fig. 63). The apocryphal parable of the saint was well-known and is recounted by Mrs. Jameson.\(^{457}\) Briefly, Christopher, a giant from the land of Canaan proud of his great strength, went in search of the greatest master on earth to serve. After service with a king, then with Satan, Christopher sought Christ. A hermit’s instructions in the ascetic manner of service - prayers and fasting - held no appeal for the giant, but he was content with the suggestion to help the weak to ford a particularly dangerous river, thus using his strength charitably. Equipping himself with a palm tree as a staff he did this by day and night. One night Christopher was called from his hut by a child; but as he strode

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\(^{451}\) The work is known only through a photograph, Rupert Bunny Papers, MS 7970, La Trobe Collection, SLV, Melbourne.

\(^{452}\) *Chronicles of Art - December* *The Magazine of Art*, 1900, p.94. The reviewer for *The Art Journal* felt that of the four large studies of the nude hung in the central gallery Bunny’s *Venus and Cupid* was ‘conceptively and technically, the most satisfactory’, *The Art Journal*, new series, London, 1899, p.377.

\(^{453}\) The Wallace Collection was left to the nation in 1897 and in 1899-1900 the work was cleaned. After this it was undoubtedly displayed. The diving figure of the cupid with his flying draperies, the positioning of a single, curving figure to the edge of the canvas and the circular central void, against which a distant city is seen is common to each work.

\(^{454}\) He may have continued down to Italy during his visit to Hungary in 1896 (for the latter, see Eagle, *The Art of Rupert Bunny*, p.243).

\(^{455}\) *Venetian Exhibition*, see *The Sketch*, vol. VIII, January 16, 1895, p.570.

\(^{456}\) See ibid., November 7, 1894, p.84.
through the waters the child on his shoulders became heavier and heavier and Christopher for the first time feared his ability. When on safely reaching the bank Christopher commented in amazement that it felt as though he bore the whole world on his back, the child revealed His divine identity.

Like Titian, in Bunny’s depiction of the saint Germanic custom is observed, giving St. Christopher a thick beard and bushy hair to signify his physical strength. Together with this, both works show the saint as aged, yet huge and muscular, straining to ford the river; his cloak billows behind him and he carries the Infant Christ on his shoulder. In Titian’s work as in Bunny’s, the large-scale figures stand on the frontal plane, with a distant shoreline sketched on the far plane. This decorative approach, appropriate to Titian’s fresco, was judged rigorously by a reviewer for *The Art Journal* who noted that Bunny’s work was ‘large and ambitious’ but ‘the decorative intent and the aim to convey a sense of massive strength under severe strain are in conflict - the issue is unsatisfactory’ - a judgement with which one may concur. Bunny had failed to observe Puvis’ injunctions about the withdrawal of detail from decorative works.

Aside from this sculptural depiction of masculine strength, so different from the images of soft idealized female beauty of the 1890s, as in St. Veronica it is the gritty incident which Bunny elects to tell. It has been argued that Bunny had an educated Victorian’s detailed knowledge of the legend, and Voragine describes Christ telling Christopher after the river-crossing that he must plant his staff and in the morning it will have born flowers and fruit. It is this serene episode, with its opportunity for the depiction of miraculous flowers, at dawn, beside a tranquil river, which Bunny may well have chosen in the idyllic 1890s.

During his first trip home to Australia in 1911, Bunny told a reporter for *The Southern Sphere*, of an ‘early work’ of his, the *Sacrifice of Isaac*. He continued: ‘I painted him

458 Typically, the Germans give the saint a black beard. Greeks artists traditionally depicted him beardless, where Italians usually gave him very little beard. (ibid., p.54). Titian’s saint has a curly dark beard.
eyes bandaged, mouth distorted with fear as he kneels expecting the stroke to fall.' In response to the interviewer, who established that the work was not like Opie's *Jephthah's Daughter*: 'where the face is as unagonized as if the victim were asleep', Bunny replied: 'No; mortal anguish, whether of soul or body, cannot be pretty. My picture was rejected everywhere, and a Philistine friend shed realms of light on the reason, afterwards, by the question- "Could you expect to have it accepted with that ugly face?" In his known work *The Sacrifice of Abraham*, fig. 64, Bunny appears to have looked to Rembrandt's *The Sacrifice of Isaac*, fig. 65, for inspiration. Eugène Fromentin had brought Rembrandt's genius to the fore again with his book, *Les Maîtres d'autrefois*. Published in 1876, almost half of it was devoted to Rembrandt. Artists such as Dagnan-Bouveret, who exhibited several sacred paintings at the *Nationale* during the 1890s, looked to the master's dramatic images. It is in the tormented, strongly featured face of Abraham, full-bearded, frozen over the supine body and vulnerable, exposed neck of Isaac that the parallel between the two works is clear. In Rembrandt, the angel literally stays Abraham's hand and the knife falls, whereas Bunny's Abraham turns to the sky, seemingly in the tortuous moments before a reprieve; the divine presence is symbolized by a small bird. There is tension in the painting, but it is not that born of ambiguity, as in Symbolist painting; rather it is the stress of a human drama. The strained open mouths of both Abraham and his son, the tumultuous storm clouds, and the grey tonality also establish this reading. This dramatic treatment is maintained in Bunny's painting, *The Prodigal Son*, fig. 59, c.1902, an extremely popular contemporary theme.

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460 Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, vol. IV, p.115; also Jameson, who describes the miracle as 'leaves and fruit' (*Sacred and Legendary Art*), p.52.
461 'An Eminent Australian', *The Southern Sphere*, Melbourne, July 1, 1911, p.15. Quoted in Eagle, *The Art of Rupert Bunny*, p.15 where the interviewer's referral to Opie's painting is included as though it was part of Bunny's answer.
462 For reasons of style and subject, I would suggest the work dates from around 1902-1903 (Thomas puts a slightly later date of c.1905 to the work - see his *Rupert Bunny*, cat.[087]). The canvas markings are unknown. See Appendix for further details.
466 The subject of *The Prodigal Son* was often picked as the subject of the monthly concours held at the *Academie Julian*; See A. S. Hartrick, *A Painter's Pilgrimage Through Fifty Years*. Cambridge,
Turning to the Old Masters for inspiration was common practice amongst Bunny’s expatriate Australian contemporaries. There are Lambert’s portraits, for example, and Fox, who looked to the ‘English grand manner’, particularly for his work The Landing of Captain Cook, 1902. Amongst the French Symbolists, a more extreme abandonment of a flat, decorative manner for physical tangibility and the inspiration of the Old Masters may be noted in Maurice Denis and Emile Bernard. Denis in the late 1890s espoused a return to classical principle and the ‘School of Rome’ (i.e. Raphael), while Bernard, resident in Cairo and having been to Venice, based his own newly naturalistic style, like Bunny, on the Venetian masters Veronese, Tintoretto and Titian.

It is the alteration from the poignant and beautiful Symbolist paintings of the previous decade to the uncomfortable and confronting religious subjects with their naturalistic rendition, which is so marked in Bunny’s religious work of this period. The only contemporary review of such works I have located was not enthusiastic, and the large paintings failed to sell. Fox wrote in May, 1903 that ‘Bunny is having a hard time’ and he continued: ‘he has just had an exhibit in Paris - I don’t know how it went off.’ The exhibition at the Galerie Silberberg was reviewed briefly in Studio, where the critic admired the portraits and the allegories of the Hours which he described as being ‘in the pre-Raphaelite manner, with a marked imitation of Rossetti’s heads’. In a similarly concise review of the same exhibition, the eminent French critic, Roger Marx, also admired Bunny’s work, commenting:

*Parmi la cohue annuelle des Salons, les tableaux de M. Rupert Bunny se sont d’emblée aristocratiquement différenciés. On les aimés pour l’originalité de la*
conception et l’aisance de la tenue, pour la particularité de l’éclairage et l’harmonie du coloris.\textsuperscript{471}

Together with his originality, it was the decorative quality of Bunny’s work (his characteristic abilities as a colourist and painter of light) which attracted Marx’s attention. He too selected the mythologies for particular notice, commenting that they were ‘d’agréable cartons de tapisserie’ and that with the other works (portraits and landscapes), they presaged ‘le décorateur charmant que pourrait être M. Rupert Bunny si l’occasion lui était fournie’.\textsuperscript{472} The experience appears to have been decisive for Bunny; the new religious images drew little notice and no praise for him in London and were not shown in Paris.\textsuperscript{473}

It seems that Bunny was making a statement against the ideal of beauty, a concept supported by his comment to the writer at the Southern Sphere in 1911. When discussing the impact of the work of Gauguin, Matisse and their colleagues he said: ‘The movement may achieve at last the downfall of the ideal of prettiness, which has not fallen yet, though it has been tottering for some time.’\textsuperscript{474} Perhaps for those few months in London Bunny took his own retaliatory step against the ‘prettiness’ of the ideal in these religious works. Perhaps the loss of his mother and his wife’s failure to settle in London added to his sense of uncertainty.\textsuperscript{475} It seems unlikely that the confrontation between Church and State in France would have impacted on this conventional Protestant, although it caused great distress to thousands of French families.\textsuperscript{476} The lack of contemporary correspondence from Bunny is sorely felt here.


\textsuperscript{472} Both mythologies are entitled ‘Les Heures’; one is known to be in a private collection, Sydney.

\textsuperscript{473} No religious work is recorded in the major Paris Salons again until L’Hymne du matin, cat.156, SNDBA, 1923 and La Fille de Jephé, cat.265, Salon d’Automne, 1924.

\textsuperscript{474} ‘An Eminent Australian’, Southern Sphere.

\textsuperscript{475} Mrs. Bunny is not listed as a guest at for example, ‘Mrs. Lowrey’s musical party’ in Chelsea on February 22, although Mr & Mrs. Mortimer Menpes are noted, along with Bunny, Percy Grainger, Mrs. J.H. Grainger, etc. (See ‘Anglo-Australian’, British Australasian, London, 5\textsuperscript{th} March 1903, p.330.) This occurs again when Bunny apparently attends Mrs. Zebina Lane’s supper party in Kensington Court without his wife. (See British Australasian, June 18\textsuperscript{th}, 1903, p.924) See also Eagle, The Art of Rupert Bunny, p.15.

\textsuperscript{476} The early years of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century saw a rapidly deteriorating relationship between the Church and State in France. By the late 1890s the Dreyfus affair had polarised the country, ensuring that the Church was again aligned with the reactionaries (the monarchists and the military). The State would no longer tolerate the Church’s influence, passing the Law of Associations in 1901 which ultimately
Whatever the reason, by 1904 he was resettled in France and his luck changed for the better. He was left an annuity of £100 after Alfred Felton’s death in 1904; in May of that same year the French state, probably represented by Roger Marx and Léonce Bénédite, purchased Après le bain. Also in 1904 Bunny was elected an Associé of the Nationale and he became a Sociétaire of the new Salon d’Automne (its second year).

This conjunction of recognition at the official Salon and at the new Salon for progressive art initiated a period of stability in Bunny’s life and art. That he had made the correct decision in moving back to France and abandoning the harsh religious imagery must have been confirmed for him when he read the glowing review of his solo exhibition at the Galerie Graves in 1905, in which Marx wrote of the grace of Bunny’s ‘imagination riante, neuve et fraîche’. An ‘imagination riante’ would not compose the confronting religious images of around 1902/3.

After this the religious images went into abeyance, but they never completely disappeared. In the early 1920s, well beyond the province of this thesis, there was another spate with the exhibition of two paintings on the theme of Jephthah and his daughter at the Galeries Georges Petit in 1922, L’Hymne du matin, fig.66, at the
1923 Nationale\textsuperscript{483} and \textit{La Fille de Jephté} at the Autumn Salon the following year.\textsuperscript{484} These may well have been spurred by the special sections for religious art promoted at the \textit{Nationale} in 1920, and the \textit{Salon d'Automne} in 1923.\textsuperscript{485} Certainly, in that most intimate of Bunny’s mediums, the monotype, biblical themes such as \textit{La Femme de Putiphar} and \textit{Suzanne} could be seen at the Galeries Georges Petit exhibitions in 1921 and 1924.\textsuperscript{486} It seems probable that the biblical themes remained as much a part of the fabric of Bunny’s imagination as the mythological characters from classical Greece which peopled his recent mythologies. Despite the redefinition of himself through stylistic change, in his subject paintings Bunny remained very much an educated gentleman of the Victorian era.

\textsuperscript{483} Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, catalogue illustré, Grand Palais, Paris, 1 May - 30 June 1923, cat. 156.
\textsuperscript{484} Salon d'Automne, Grand Palais, Paris, 1 November - 14 December 1924, \textit{La Fille de Jephté} (sic), cat. 265.
\textsuperscript{485} There was a special section for ‘Art religieux’ in 1920 and 1921, though not in 1923 at the \textit{Nationale}; A separate section, ‘Art religieux’, curated by George Devallières was instituted at the \textit{Salon d'Automne} in 1923, occurred again 1924 and in 1929. However, Bunny’s painting was not exhibited there in 1924.
\textsuperscript{486} Typescript entitled ‘Rupert Bunny 16-31 March 1921, Exhibition Georges Petit, Paris, Monotypes by RCWB’ which lists \textit{Suzanne}, cat. 19, \textit{La Femme de Putiphar}, cat. 28, and also \textit{Anges}, cat. 13. See also ‘Exposition de Monotypes par Rupert Bunny’, Galeries Georges Petit, rue de Sèze, Paris, 16-30 October, 1924, \textit{Anges}, cat. 12, \textit{Suzanne}, cat. 18 and \textit{La Femme de Putiphar}, cat. 24. These are probably the same works, represented at the later exhibition.
RUPERT BUNNY'S
SYMBOLIST DECADE

A study of the religious and occult images
1887-1898

Barbara Brabazon Kane B.A. (Hons)

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
in the
School of Fine Arts, Classical Studies and Archaeology

July, 1998

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Fig. 32. Rupert Bunny, sketch *Untitled (Death's Knock)*, late 1880s-early 1890s, pen, ink & watercolour on paper
Fig. 33. Edward Burne-Jones, *The Entombment of St. Catherine*, 1874, stained glass window, Regimental Chapel, east window, Christ Church, Oxford
Fig. 34. D.G. Rossetti, *St. Cecilia*, c.1856-7, pen & brown ink on paper
Fig. 55. Edward Burne-Jones, *St. Cecilia*, c.1866-70, design for stained glass window
Fig. 36. Rupert Bunny, *Ste. Cécile*, c.1889, oil on canvas
Fig. 37. Puvis de Chavannes, *Inspiration Chrétienne* (reduced version), c.1887-88, oil on paper, laid down on canvas
Fig. 38. Edward Burne-Jones, *King Cophetua and the Beggar Maid*, c.1884, oil on canvas
Fig. 39. Rupert Bunny, *Portrait of the Artist’s Wife Jeanne as Saint Cecile (Cecilia)*, c. 1901, oil on canvas
Fig. 40. Rupert Bunny, *Les roses de ste. Dorothée*, c.1892, oil on canvas
Fig. 41. Rupert Bunny, *Les roses de ste. Dorothée*, c.1892, b/w photograph
Sigh no more, ladies, sigh no more,
Men were deceivers ever;
One foot in sea, and one on shore,
To one thing constant never:
    Then sigh not so,
But let them go,
And be you blithe and bonny,
Converting all your sounds of woe
Into, Hey nonny, nonny.

Sing no more ditties, sing no more
Of dumps so dull and heavy;
The fraud of men was ever so,
Since summer first was leavy:
    Then sigh not so,
But let them go,
And be you blithe and bonny,
Converting all your sounds of woe
Into, Hey nonny, nonny.

SHAKESPEARE.

Fig. 42. Rupert Bunny, illustration for Shakespeare's 'Sigh no more, ladies', in The Magazine of Art, 1896
Fig. 43. Rupert Bunny, 'A Finishing Touch', b/w illustration, Pall Mall Budget, August 30, 1894
Fig. 44. Rupert Bunny, *Burial of St. Catherine of Alexandria*, c.1896
oil on canvas
Fig. 45. Rupert Bunny, *Angels Descending*, c. 1897, oil on canvas
Fig. 46. Edward Burne-Jones, *The Golden Stairs*, 1872-80, oil on canvas
Fig. 47. André Sureda, *Saint Niçaize et sainte Eutrope, martyrs*, c.1896, [oil on canvas]
Fig. 48. Rupert Bunny, *Untitled [Burial of a Saint]*, c. 1897, watercolour
Fig. 49. Rupert Bunny, *Una and the Fauns*, c.1890-94, oil on canvas
Fig. 50. Rupert Bunny, *Ancilla Domini*, c.1896, oil on canvas
Fig. 51. Arthur Hacker, *The Annunciation*, 1892, oil on canvas
Fig. 52. Rupert Bunny, *Dolce far niente*, c.1897, oil on canvas
Fig. 53. Rupert Bunny, *Au bord de la mer*, c.1898, oil on linen canvas.
Fig. 54. Rupert Bunny, *The Descent from the Cross*, c. 1898, oil on canvas.
Fig. 55. J.-J. Henner, *Dead Christ*, 1896, [oil on canvas]
Fig. 56. Rupert Bunny, St. Veronica, c.1902, oil on canvas
Fig. 57. Rupert Bunny, *St. Veronica*, c. 1902, b/w photograph.
Fig. 57. Rupert Bunny, *St. Veronica*, c. 1902, b/w photograph.
Fig. 58. Rupert Bunny, *St. Christopher*, c.1903, oil on canvas
Fig. 59. Rupert Bunny, *Prodigal Son*, c.1903, oil on canvas
Fig. 60. Rupert Bunny, early sketch for *St. Veronica*, c.1895, pencil on paper
Fig. 61. Rupert Bunny, *A Feather Fallen from the Wings of Cupid*, c. 1901, oil on canvas
Fig. 62. Titian, *Perseus and Andromeda*, 1544-56, oil on canvas
Fig. 63. Titian, *St. Christopher*, fresco, Ducal Palace, Venice
Fig. 64. Rupert Bunny, *The Sacrifice of Abraham*, c.1903
oil on canvas
Fig. 65. Rembrandt, *The Sacrifice of Isaac*, 1635, oil on canvas.
Fig. 66. Rupert Bunny, *L'hymne du matin*, c. 1923, oil on canvas
APPENDIX

A catalogue of Rupert Bunny's Occult, Religious and other Symbolist Works discussed in the text

NB: Chronological order is observed, and sketches where possible are grouped with the related oil painting

1. *The Curse*, fig.10  
The University of Melbourne Art Collection, 1948.37.35B  
Pencil on paper  
Inscr: In the artist's hand, in pencil, i.e. *The Curse*; verso, u.r. in ink '35'  
Prov: Gift of the Bunny Estate, 1948

The witch has a demonic face.

2. *The Curse*, fig.11.  
The University of Melbourne Art Collection, 1948.37.36B  
Pencil on paper  
Inscr: In the artist's hand, in pencil, i.e., *The Curse*; verso, u.r. in ink '36'  
Prov: Gift of the Bunny Estate, 1948

3. *Untitled [Circe's magic]*, fig.6  
The University of Melbourne Art Collection, 1948.84  
Pencil and watercolour wash (black)  
Inscr: Verso, u.r. in ink, *CD8*  
Prov: Gift of the Bunny Estate, 1948

4. Sketch, *Untitled [Circe's magic]*, fig.7  
The University of Melbourne Art Collection, 1948.202  
Pen and ink on paper  
Inscr: Verso, in ink, u.r. 'CH141'  
Prov: Gift of the Bunny Estate, 1948

The sketch is on squared paper; the page contains two framed compositions for landscape and some rough sketches.
5. Page of 2 sketches, *Untitled [Sorcery]*, fig.12
The University of Melbourne Art Collection, 1948.231B
Pen and ink on paper

Inscr: U.r. in ink CH136.
Prov: Gift of the Bunny Estate, 1948

On the verso (no photo) there is a pen and ink sketch (comp. c.10.0 x 4.5) of a woman in a cloak, possibly holding a wand. The image is difficult to read.

6. *Untitled [‘Egyptian’ Sorcerer, consulting tome]*, fig.3
The University of Melbourne Art Collection, 1948.83A
Pencil, watercolour wash (black) on paper

Inscr: Verso, in ink u.r. ‘CD11’?
Prov: Gift of the Bunny Estate, 1948

The work is unfinished.

6a. Sketch for *Untitled [‘Egyptian’ Sorcerer, consulting tome]*
late 1880s
The University of Melbourne Art Collection, 1948.37.
Pencil on paper

Inscr: In ink, u.r. ‘41’

This small sketch from Sketchbook Cl3 is virtually repeated in the watercolour on pencil study above, 7.

7. *Untitled [‘Egyptian’ Sorceress consulting tome]*, fig.4
c.late 1880s
The University of Melbourne Art Collection, 1948.98
Pencil, watercolour wash

Inscr: Verso, in ink u.r. ‘CD14’; centre in pencil ‘32’; l.r. in pencil ‘7 1/2” x 12”
Prov: Gift of the Bunny Estate, 1948

8. *Un Sabbat*
c. 1888
Unsighted

Prov: Purchased from Fletcher's Art Gallery, Collins Street, Melbourne, 1889 by a Mrs. Gavan Duffy.
Exh: *SdAf*, no. 429, 1888; Fletcher's Art Gallery, Melbourne, 1889; possibly the studios, the Public Gallery, Victoria, November, 1899.
8a. Untitled [Witches' Sabbath], fig.15.
The University of Melbourne Art Collection, 1948.268
Black ink and watercolour on board

Inscr: Signed l.l. C.R.W.(stet) BUNNY/PARIS; verso, u.r.in ink 'CD12'; l.r. stamp 'University of Melbourne Collection' l.r. in pencil 'C 378/4'; c. in pencil '42'.

Prov: Gift of the Bunny Estate, 1948

Exh: Rupert C.W. Bunny Exhibition, the University of Melbourne, July 19-August 18, 1972, cat. no.1.


9. Ste. Cécile, fig.36
Private collection, Brisbane, QLD
oil on canvas


Prov: Commissioned by Alfred Felton, to Good Shepherd Convent, Abbotsford, to 30 Victoria Street (still held in 1977), to present owner.

Exh: As Ste. Cécile, SDAf, Paris, 1889, No. 413; ?as Saint Cecilia, 1892 (sic), lent by A. Felton, Esq., The Victorian Artists Society Exhibition of Australian Art, Past and Present, August 1893, catalogue No. 151.

Lit: Table Talk, July 26, 1889, p.4; E.R. 'Australian Artists in Paris', Age, May 19, 1894, p.4; Thomas, Rupert Bunny. Cat. No. [05]


9a. Compositional sketch for Ste Cécile
The University of Melbourne Art Collection, 1948. 37.38A
Pencil on paper

Inscr: Sketchbook inscribed on front and back covers in pencil, C.R.W. Bunny, 2 rue Odessa, Gare Monparnasse.

Prov: Gift of the Bunny Estate, 1948

Bunny's listed address (SDAf entry) for 1887 was 2 rue Odessa. The work in sketchbook indicates that he travelled to Brittany that year, presumably during the summer break as was the custom with art students. The sketchbook has a mixture of subjects, ranging from genre scenes (p.28, woman ironing; p. 2 rear view of peasant's patched pants, seated on stool) to the contemporary (p.18 on the beach, p.6. dancer) to mythologies (p.12, mermaid, also verso, p.11) to the satanic (p.33 shows sketch of a woman sacrificed on a rock, or verso p.36 and 35, both works entitled The Curse (see above, cats.1 & 2). Strange rock formations are studied as in eg. p.14 and obverse, verso p.15, p.17 and verso p.34.
The sketch for *Ste. Cécile* on p.38 adheres most closely to the oil and its serenity, which is conveyed partly through the solitudes setting and contrasts strongly with the barbaric setting of the two vei *Curse* on the previous pages.

9b. Compositional sketches for *Ste. Cécile*  
The University of Melbourne Art Collection, 1948.253A & verso 1948.253B  
Pen and ink on paper  
Sheet: 31.2 x 20.0, torn  
Comp: 7.0 x 5.6  
Verso Comp: 6.5 x 8.0  
Inscr: l.r. in ink ‘CH43’  
Prov: Gift of the Bunny Estate, 1948

In this sketch Bunny concentrates on the position of the three figures, whereas on the verso the design of the composition is more complex: the sketch contains several more columns and as well as St. Cecilia, Valerian and Tibertius, other figures are grouped behind pillars. Possibly an earlier, more complex version.

10. *Untitled [La tentation de st. Antoine]*, fig.16  
Unsighted  
Inscr: Possible signature l.l., but cannot be certain from photographic evidence only.

See photograph MS 7970, SLV, for only known visual record of completed oil painting.

10a. Sketch for *Untitled [La tentation de st. Antoine]*, fig. 25  
The University of Melbourne Art Collection, 1948.251A  
Pen and ink on paper  
Sheet: 31.2 x 24.0  
Comp: 4.8 x 8.0  
Inscr: Verso, u.r. in ink ‘CH16’  

The compositional sketch is one of eight such studies on the page; the other seven are very difficult to read. On the verso is a framed sketch (comp: 7.5 x 8.7) of a man milking a cow while a woman watches from a doorway.

10b. Alternate study for *St. Antoine*, fig. 23  
The University of Melbourne Art Collection, 1948.181B  
Pencil and watercolour on cardboard  
Sheet: 25.4 x 18.0  
Verso, comp: 12.6 x 12.5  
Inscr: U.r. in ink ‘CD6’  
Prov: Gift of the Bunny Estate, 1948

The reverse side of the paper has a framed pen & ink and wash drawing of three figures on crosses; and one figure on the ground. In this study the woman is sensuous and smiling.
10c. Alternate study for *St. Antoine*, fig. 24  
The University of Melbourne Art Collection, 1948.328A  
Pencil on cardboard  
Inscr: Verso, u.r. in ink, ‘Cg36’  
Provision: Gift of the Bunny Estate, 1948  
The reverse side of the paper has a watercolour sketch of a female profile head, in  
splashes of colour.  

10d. Compositional sketch for *Untitled [La Tentation de st. Antoine]*  
on page of sketches, fig. 28  
The University of Melbourne Art Collection, 1948.218  
Pen and ink on paper  
Inscr: Verso, u.r. in ink ‘CH81’  
Provision: Gift of the Bunny Estate, 1948  
The compositional sketch is one of nineteen framed sketches and three unframed.  
Most of the sketches, where readable, are of women. The compositional sketch for  
St. Anthony is on the l.r. of sheet.

11. *Untitled [Death's knock]*  
The University of Melbourne Art Collection, 1948.82  
Pencil, watercolour wash (black) and gouache on thick paper  
Inscr: C.r. in pencil monogram ‘RCWB’; verso u.r. in ink ‘CD18’; u.r. in pencil ‘51’  
Provision: Gift of the Bunny Estate, 1948  
One of a series of monochrome wash drawings in a painted black frame.

The work has been sparingly painted, with bare paper below the image of Death. An  
early use of the monogram is seen here, or it could have been added later.

11a. Preparatory sketch for *Untitled [Death's Knock]*, fig. 32  
The University of Melbourne Art Collection, 1948.169A & verso 1948.169B  
Pen, ink and watercolour and gouache on paper  
Inscr: Verso, u.r. in ink ‘CH49’; in pencil, u.l. ‘56’  
Provision: Gift of the Bunny Estate, 1948  
Both sides of the paper record preparatory sketches for cat. no. 9.

On the obverse side (ii) a sickle with two different curvatures is drawn. There is  
a sketch (comp. c.8.5 x 7.0) in which all elements of the final watercolour’s  
composition are shown (seated figure, head at door, niche to left). There is a
further wash and gouache drawing of the cloaked figure beneath the sketch, again, virtually as in the watercolour.

11b. Related sketch for Untitled [Death's Knock] c.1890s
The University of Melbourne Art Collection, 1948.172
Pen and ink on paper
Inscr: Verso u.r. in ink ‘CH64’; u.r. in pencil ‘52’
Prov: Gift of the Bunny Estate, 1948

Sketch of cloaked and hooded figure who knocks at the door. Centrally placed is sketch of two-storeyed Tudor-style home; there is a standing cloaked figure under the timber portico; a figure looks down from a window u.l

12. Les roses de sainte Dorothée, figs.40 & 41 1892
Unsighted
Oil on canvas 150.5 x 161.3
Inscr: Signed and dated, l.l., Rupert C.W. Bunny/Paris, 92
Exh: SdAf, 1892, No. 311; as St. Dorothea's Roses Brussels, 1897.
Lit: Boswell, 'Table Talk', Table Talk, April 16, 1897, frontpage; The Age Literary Supplement, August 20, 1938, p. 3; Thomas, Rupert Bunny, [012]; 'Australian works excite bidders at Sotheby's', Financial Review, October 24, 1980, p. 16;
Repr: Sales catalogue, untraced.

12a. Page of sketches, including St. Dorothea c.1894
The University of Melbourne Art Collection, 1948.255
Pen and ink on paper
Sheet: c. 18.0 x 22.8, irreg;
Comp(i) 5.6 x 9.6; Comp(ii): 5.5 x 7.1
Comp(iii) 4.9 x 5.8; Comp(iv) 5.0 x 7.0
Inscr: In the artist's hand in ink under each composition, from left to right, A feather from Love's wings, St. Dorothea, Centaur & Cupid & nymphs verso in ink;
verso in ink u.r. 'CH11'
Prov: Gift of the Bunny Estate, 1948

This thumbnail sketch (ii) is one of four such sketches on the page. Of the others an untitled scene of three figures around a rock at sea (iii) relates to the series of tritons at leisure, particularly, for eg. Tritons at Play, (Figures on Foreshore). There is no known completed work related to Centaur & Cupid & nymphs (iv).

13. The Annunciation c.1894
Private collection, Sydney
Oil on canvas 48.0 x 64.0
Inscr: l.l. Rupert C.W. Bunny; verso, in pencil, 3.4.918

Prov: Probably purchased as *The Visitation* (signed, n.d., 50 x 64) from Adrian Mibus of Whitford & Hughes.

Exh: A small work entitled *The Annunciation*, was exhibited at RSBA Winter exhibition of 1894, no. 99. It is presumed to be small, or possibly a watercolour, as the asking price was Twelve Guineas, compared in the same year with £60 asked for *Nausicaa finding Odysseus*, presumably a large oil. Two years later, he asks £84 for *Eos* (c.1896), a large Salon painting.

14. Ancilla Domini, fig. 50

AGSA, M.J.M. Carter Collection

Oil on canvas

Inscr: l.r. RUPERT C.W. BUNNY; label, verso stretcher, l.c., ‘Whitford & Hughes/6 Duke S(illeg.)’ 77 Fine/Paintings 1880-1930/Exhibition Peintres de l’art (illeg.)/No.5, Rupert Charles/Wulsten Bunny’; Stamped verso canvas, u.r. ‘54 rue N.D. des Champs (illeg.); PAUL FOINET/(VAN EYCK)/TOILES COULEURS FINES’, enclosed in oval; Label verso frame u.c. printed and handwritten ink ‘INSTITUTE OF PAINTERS IN OIL COLOURS/BACK LABEL/No....9?/Title of Picture.(illeg.)/Artist's Name.(illeg.)/ and Address/(illeg.)ice, Sterling 41.s.d./Pleas atta(illeg.)/LA(illeg.) (illeg.)CK of picture,’ Written in pencil across bottom of label, ‘Given to me (illeg.) Se(illeg.)’.

Prov: Belonged to The Parish of Christ Church Doncaster with Holy Cross Church Belle Vue, South Yorkshire, England where it was known as *The Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, sold at Christies of London, ‘Commonwealth Sale’, 26th October 1983; AGSA acquired loan painting in 1984, therefore it was probably purchased directly from the exhibition *Peintres de l’Ame*, cat. no. 5, Whitford & Hughes, London, 1984.

Exh: Institute of Painters in Oil Colours, probably 1896.


14a. Untitled [Study for Angel]

The University of Melbourne Art Collection, 1948.0250

Pencil on paper

Inscr: Verso, u.r. in ink ‘Cg11’

Prov: Gift of the Bunny Estate, 1948

The study relates to the angel of Ancilla Domini.

14b. Untitled [Annunciation to the Virgin]

The University of Melbourne Art Collection, 1948.264A

Pencil and watercolour on paper

Inscr: Pencil, u.l., ‘40’; verso, u.r. in ink ‘CB1’ and watercolour of two contemporary heads.

Prov: Gift of the Bunny Estate, 1948
There is a thumbnail tack mark in the centre top of the paper, indicating that the work was displayed. The image is enclosed in a hand-painted black frame.

The figures are skilfully sketched and the space is controlled well, so this is probably painted in the late 1880s.

14bi. Possible figure study for Annunciate Virgin c. late 1880s
The University of Melbourne Art Collection, 1948.177A
Pencil on paper with watercolour (black) Sheet 22.8 x 14.0, irreg.
Inscr: Verso, u.r. in ink ‘Cg13’
Prov: Gift of the Bunny Estate, 1948

14c. Untitled [Annunciation to the Virgin] c. late 1880s
The University of Melbourne Art Collection, 1948.248
Pen and ink on paper Sheet: 9.7 x 20.1
Inscr: Verso, l.r. in ink ‘CH30’
Prov: Gift of the Bunny Estate, 1948

There are two compositional sketches on this page, one of a male figure with rays emerging from his head, descending (comp: 6.0 x 3.8); the other of the Virgin Annunciate. There is also a tiny (1.2 x 1.0) unframed sketch of a figure with outstretched arms, a figure similar to that of St. Anthony [cat.O3].

Dating with any accuracy on stylistic grounds alone is very difficult.

14d. Untitled [Annunciation to the Virgin] c.late 1880s
The University of Melbourne Art Collection, 1948.247
Pen and ink on paper Sheet:17.6 x 11.2
Inscr: Verso, u.r. in ink ‘CH26’
Prov: Gift of the Bunny Estate, 1948

There is a framed image (comp:4.9 x 9.1) above and intersecting that of the Virgin

All the angels of the four sketches/studies float, whereas in Ancilla Domini, Bunny firmly grounds the Annunciate Angel.

15. Burial of St. Catherine of Alexandria, fig. 44 c. 1896
NGV, 1928
Oil on canvas 130.5 x 200.1
Inscr: l.l. ‘Rupert C. W. Bunny’ in beige oil; verso,u.r., canvas stamped ‘54 RUE N.D. DES CHAMPS PARIS/PAUL FOINET/(VAN EYCK)/TOILES & COULEURS FINES’; verso, u.r., label ‘Saint-Petersbourg 1901’, with handwritten in pencil ‘Bunny, No. 321’; verso ‘Liverpool’ (torn); verso, centre, label ‘John Thallon/Carver and Gilder/24 Market Lane, off Bourke Street/Melbourne’; verso label in pencil ‘Mr. Bunny’ and in blue crayon
'135'; verso, centre canvas stretcher, handwritten label in pencil ‘Mr. Bunny’.

**Prov:** Acquired as *St. Catherine*, Felton Bequest, 1928.
**Exh:** RA, 1896, no. 393; Liverpool, 1896, no. 154; Brussels, 1897; SdA 1899, no. 322; British Section *Exposition Universelle*, Paris, 1900, no. 33, awarded Bronze Medal; St. Petersburg, 1901; Athenaeum 1928, no. 10; Hordern, 1928; *The Art of Rupert Bunny and E. Phillips Fox. Paintings from the Collections of the National Gallery of Victoria*, Banyule, April 1 - June 30, 1984, cat. no. 3.


**Repr:** *Royal Academy Pictures*, 1896, p.89.

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15a. Sketch for *Burial of St. Catherine of Alexandria*, fig. 60 (lower sketch) c.1895
The University of Melbourne Art Collection, 1948.245
Pencil on paper

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sheet</th>
<th>Comp. (i)</th>
<th>Comp. (ii)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15.7 x 20.0, irreg.</td>
<td>8.5 x 11.0</td>
<td>4.0 x 7.7, irreg.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Inscr:** Verso, u.r. in ink ‘Cg33’

**Prov:** Gift of the Bunny Estate, 1948.

The sheet contains, upper left, a larger early compositional sketch for St. Veronica (i); and, lower right a smaller sketch for *Burial of St. Catherine of Alexandria* (ii).

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16. *Angels Descending*, fig. 45 c. 1897
AGSA, 1904
Oil on canvas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inscr</th>
<th>Sheet</th>
<th>Comp.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ll. Rupert C.W. Bunny; oval-shaped stamp on canvas, l.r. corner, black ink ‘(illeg) 4 RUE N.D. DES CHAMPS PARIS/PAUL FOINET/(VAN EYCK)/TOILES &amp; COULEURS FINES’. Inscribed on label on frame; u.c.; ink and pencil ‘NO 1 Pittsburg’ ‘Angels descending’/(Sterling sign)210.00/Rupert L.N. Bunny/59 Avenue de Saxe/Paris’.</td>
<td>157.5 x 98.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Prov:** Purchased AGSA, 1904, through Morgan Thomas Bequest Fund.
**Exh:** RA, 1897, no. 223 as *Angels Descending*; Seventh Federal Exhibition, South Australian Society of Arts, Adelaide 1904; *A Lady of Fashion*, Adelaide Festival of Arts, Carclew, 1974; *Art Treasures for Adelaide*, Art Gallery of N.S.W., 1977.

**Lit:** *Royal Academy Notes*, 1897, p.53; Thomas, *Rupert Bunny*, [O25].
**Repr:** *Royal Academy Notes*, 1897, p.53.
This was the first work purchased by an Australian Gallery. The work was rejected by the European judges for inclusion in the Pittsburgh International exhibition.

16a. *Descent of Angels*  
The University of Melbourne Art Collection, 1948.30.39B  
Pencil on paper  
Inscr: In the artist's hand in pencil under relevant composition *Descent of Angels*, *On the Terrace*; verso in ink '37'  

Sketchbook ‘Cl7’; the sketch for *Dolce far niente* is on the preceding page.

16b. *Untitled [Angels Descending]*  
The University of Melbourne Art Collection, 1948.243  
Pen and ink on paper  
Inscr: U.r. in ink ‘CH46’  
Prov: Gift of the Bunny Estate, 1948  
The original composition has been shortened by 6mm to give a different shape to the proposed canvas. The page also carries mathematical additions in pencil.

This sketch of six figures is quite close to the final five-figured composition.

17. *Dolce far Niente*, fig. 52  
Private collection, Sydney  
Oil on canvas  
Inscr: I.l. Rupert C.W.Bunny/ Paris, in dark blue oil; centre front of the frame (which appears to be original) is attached a cardboard sign, 'Mentionné anterieurement'. Owner confirms that there are no canvas markings on the verso.  
Prov: The work was brought out to Australia by Whitford & Hughes where it was purchased by the present owner, c. 1981.  
Exh: SdAf,1897, no. 282; RBA, 1898, no. 6; Exposition Internationale des Beaux Arts, Monte Carlo, 1910;?as *Far niente*, the Baillie Gallery, *Days and Nights in August*, 1911; as *Dolce farniente*, Galeries Georges Petit, Paris, March, 1917, cat. no. 18  
Bunny asked £105 at the RSBA for the work, a considerable sum. It is not known whether it sold here, to resurface for private sale in 1910 in Monte Carlo. Jeanne Morel is the beautiful central model whose gaze engages the viewer.

There was a monotype of this title, cat. no. 18, exhibited at The Fine Art Society, London, 1898.

17a. Sketch for Dolce far Niente
The University of Melbourne Art Collection, 1948.30.38B
Pencil on paper

Inscr: Dolce far Niente in pencil; in ink, verso ‘36’
Prov: Gift of the Bunny Estate, 1948

This small sketch has three heads at the base of the composition, looking up. Water appears to be the background.

18. The Descent from the Cross, fig. 54
AGNSW, 1969
Oil on canvas

Inscr: I.l. ‘Rupert C.W. Bunny’ (in black); verso, l.r. ‘54 RUE N.D. DES CHAMPS PARIS/PAUL FOINET/(VAN EYCK)/TOILES & COULEURS FINES’; verso, on frame, l.r., label, ‘Saint Petersbourg 1901’, handwritten in ink, ‘Bunny, No. 246/Descente de Croix’; u.c. in pencil, ‘11 (enclosed in circle), Pitsburg’ (sic); centre stretcher bar, handwritten in black crayon, ‘182’; ‘Bunny’ in pencil, centre stretcher

Exh: RA, 1898, no. 197; SdAf, 1899, no. 321 (not 322 as in Thomas, Rupert Bunny); St. Petersburg, 1901, no. 426; Pittsburgh, 1899, no.28; Athenaeum, 1928, no. 11; Hordern 1928; Bunny Retrospective NGV, 1946, no. 67. On loan to Caulfield Technical College (dates unknown).


Repr: Royal Academy Notes, 1898, p.50; Royal Academy Pictures, 1898, p.85; Thomas, Rupert Bunny, pl.3.

In the ‘Rupert Bunny Collection’, SLV, M 7970/20, 499/1 (a) contains a photograph of this work. Handwritten on the verso of this is written: ‘Christ's mother was posed by Rupert Bunny's mother, Mrs. F.B. Bunny, widow of Judge Bunny.’
There is an early sketch for *Descent from the Cross*, entitled *Entombment*, (ink on loose sheet), in the Marie Buesst Papers, SLV (see illustrated Eagle, *The Art of Rupert Bunny*, p.179). There is a study for Mary’s head in the Print Room, NGV.

18a. Study for The *Descent from the Cross*  
*The University of Melbourne Art Collection*, 1948.249  
Pen and ink on paper  
Sheet: 18.0 x 23.3, irreg.  
Comp: 6.4 x 10.4  
Inscr: In ink, *Descent from the Cross*; verso, u.r. in ink ‘CH10’  
Prov: Gift of the Bunny Estate, 1948

There are three framed compositions on this page: u.l., *Descent from the Cross* (titled); l.l., untitled, showing five or six heads in a circle in the water (comp: 5.7 x 8.2); to the right, untitled, a figure climbs to reach the sphere held by a statue(?) (comp: 12.4 x 7.3, irreg.). There is a profile study of a veiled head, c.l., which is similar, though reversed, to the profile head of Mary in the finished oil. Bunny's mother (reputed to have posed for the head) and sister were in Paris for eighteen months from the end of 1889, arriving back in Australia at the end January, 1891 (*Table Talk*, January 23, 1891.)

19. *Au bord de la mer*, fig.53  
*Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery*, The University of W.A., 1950  
Oil on linen canvas  
191.4 x 171.0  
Inscr:  
ll. Rupert C. W. Bunny. Inscribed reverse top of stretcher ‘Dieppe’,  
‘Thallon’. Label ‘Monsieur Bunny/All Souls Place/ Langham Place/ (illeg)’;  
paper label ‘No. 21’ stapled to stretcher; Torn label (illeg.). Label ‘Transport Internationaux le (illeg) de Coupe Pour Salon 1920’; Stamp l.r. reverse canvas ‘(illeg.)4 RUE N.D. DES CHAMPS PARIS/PAUL FOINET/TOILES COULEURS FINES’.  
Prov: On the advice of Captain D.B. Bunny, presented by the Trustees of the estate of Rupert Bunny, 1949 as *Psyche at the pool*; accepted March, 1950.  
Exh: 1898, *SadAf*, no. 339  
Lit:  
Repr:  

The work was offered to the Pittsburgh International exhibition in 1898, as *On the border of the sea* (a literal translation) but was rejected by the European selection panel.  
(Laurence Course Research Papers, Laurence Course, Melbourne.)
20. *[Death's Summons]*, fig. 29  
The University of Melbourne Art Collection, 1972.0003  
Colour monotype on paper (thick wove)  

Inscr: u.l. Monogram, RCWB, in box; verso, in pencil, ‘2’ in circle.  
Prov: Purchased from Maurice Lefebvre of Lefebvre-Foinet et cie (Bunny's colourman), Paris, 1972, with funds from the C.D. Lloyd Trust.  
Lit: Barbara Kane, ‘Rupert Bunny and the University Art Collection’, *The University of Melbourne Gallery Society & the Department of Fine Arts*, vol., no.6, March 1987, n.p.  
Repr: Catalogue, *Artists under Saturn*, p.23

21.  *St. Cecilia*, fig. 39  
1901  
Oil on canvas, private collection  
Signed: l.l. Rupert C.W. Bunny, Paris in oil  
Repr: Sotheby's Auction Fine Australian Paintings Catalogue, Melbourne, August 14, 1989, cat. no. 437.  

Sotheby's (ibid.) lists the work as *Portrait of the Artist’s Wife Jeanne as Saint Cecile (Cecilia)* and incorrectly lists the work as that exhibited in the *SdAf 1889* (see Cat. 02) and possibly that titled ‘The Conversation(sic) of Valerian’.  

The dark, sonorous brown tones are indicative of a work of c.1901 (see *[The Organ Grinder]* c.1903, Eagle, *The Art of Rupert Bunny*, cat. No. 7 pp.48-51)

22.  *St. Veronica*, fig.56  
c. 1902  
Private collection, Perth  
Oil on canvas  
Inscr: Signed l.r. Rupert C.W. Bunny (in oil)  
Prov: Sold Paris-Drouot 24th June, 1988, cat. no. 83 as *Le Voile de Veronique* to Melbourne dealer, Lance Crawford; to present owners.  
Exh: RBA, 1902, no. 305; ?Fine Art Society, Melbourne, 1922, no. 8; ?Hordern, 1925,no. 8; then back to Paris, where later sold?  
which Thomas proposes, with query, a date of 1903 for the work, and queries its exhibition at RSBA.

Repr: Terry Ingram ‘As the Gavel Falls’.

22a. Sketch for St. Veronica
Unsighted
Oil on cardboard
Prov: Formerly, Mrs J.S. Reid, Somers, Vic.
Lit: Thomas, Rupert Bunny, [S22]

22b. Sketch for St. Veronica
The University of Melbourne Art Collection, 1948.246
Pencil, Pen and ink on paper
Sheet: 20.5 x 15.5;
Comp(i): 4.7 x 6.1; Comp(ii): 4.0 x 5.6
Comp (iii): 3.0 x 2.6; Comp(iv) 4.6 x 12.9, irreg.
Inscr: Ink, St. Veronica; verso, u.r. in ink ‘CH14’
Prov: Gift of the Bunny Estate, 1948

The sheet contains six compositional sketches, four of which are titled: St. Veronica(i), Danse (sic) of the hours(ii), Frieze. The Hours (iii) (the latter two discussed under ca. no. O40) and Perseus (iv). There is one contemporary sketch of a man talking to a seated woman in a bower (comp: 5.9 x 4.9) and the last sketch, u.r., is incomplete. There is no known finished work of Perseus.

22c. Compositional sketches for St. Veronica
The University of Melbourne Art Collection, 1948.17A
Pencil on paper
Sheet 9.3 x 14.7;
comps. c.5.2 x 6.8, u.l. & 5.5 x 7.0, l.r.
Inscr: U.r. in ink ‘17’
Prov: Gift of the Bunny Estate, 1948

This page of sketches is from Sketchbook ‘Cl 5’, a small clothbound book with handles (14.5 x 9.0). Rupert C.W. Bunny is inscribed in the inside front cover. There are sketches of peasants working in typical Breton clothing (eg. pp.4, 11, 16) and landscapes with extensive colour notes (eg. obverse 24, 25, 26). It can be dated to some time in the mid to late 90s.

There are three small sketches on this page, two of St. Veronica, are in clearly drawn frames and are easily decipherable; the third is much smaller and more difficult to decipher - a real notation of the mind.

Early sketch of St. Veronica, fig. 60
The University of Melbourne Art Collection, 1948.245
comp. 8.5 x 11.0

This early sketch for St. Veronica is on the same page as a sketch for The Burial of St. Catherine of Alexandria, cat.15, indicating that Bunny ponders ideas for his major works over a number of years. The shape of the putative canvas has been reduced (by 2.5) from a longer rectangle to a more square image.
22d. Sketch of St. Veronica, St. Christopher & Fortune, Destiny and the People
NGV, Print Department, Sol. box Bunny 4
Black ink on paper
Inscr: Three sketches are titled: St. Veronica, St. Christopher and Fortune, Destiny and the People.
Prov: Gift of Rupert Bunny Estate, 1948

There are five framed sketches on this leaf from one of Bunny's sketchbooks: St. Christopher (comp: 5.8 x 5.7), Fortune, Destiny and the People, (comp: 7.2 x 6.7), St. Veronica, and two untitled (c.r.comp: 5.6 x 3.4), and (l.r. comp: 7.4 x 4.0). The leaf comes from one of Bunny's medium-sized sketchbooks.

23. St. Christopher, fig. 58
Unsighted
Oil on canvas
Inscr: Rupert C.W. Bunny
Prov: Mrs. J.S. Reid, Victoria; ?Tchilli Boston
Exh: RBA, 1903, no. 94; Athenaeum 1928, no. 14; Hordern, 1928?, McClelland Gallery, 1972, no. 29.
Repr: Buesst & Turnbull, The Art of Rupert Bunny, op.cit. b/w pl.12

There are two monotypes of this subject (Newcastle Region Art Gallery and a private collection, Melbourne), and a compositional sketch (Print Department, NGV).

It is noted that the cloak has been repainted between the time of the photograph in the Manuscript Collection, SLV (MS 7970) and the illustration in Buesst & Turnbull. As the book was published in 1948 (the year after Bunny's death), it is assumed that the photograph in the State Library shows the work in its initial state.

24. The Prodigal Son, fig. 59
Wesley Church, Melbourne
Oil on canvas
Inscr: unsigned
Exh: RBA, 1903, No. 181; Athenaeum, 1928, no. 16 and 1933, no. 10; Bunny Retrospective, 1946, no. 49.
Repr: Buesst & Turnbull, plate 11.
Bunny asked £50 for the work at the RBA, cf. the £200 asked for the larger St. Christopher in the previous year.

25. *The Sacrifice of Abraham*, fig. 64
Wesley Church, Melbourne
Oil on canvas 248.3 x 227.4
Inscr: Ll. Rupert C. W. Bunny
Exh: Athenaeum, 1933, no. 1; as *Sacrifice of Abraham*, Bunny Retrospective, 1946, no. 48.

All measurements are in centimetres, height by width. If the work is held in a public collection, the date of acquisition follows the name of the institution.
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